DOUBLE ISSUE – 50th special

50

participatory learning and action

50

Critical reflections, future directions

October 2004

iied
International Institute for Environment and Development

participatory learning and action

Participatory Learning and Action, (formerly *PLA Notes* and *RRA Notes)*, is published three times a year in April, August, and December. Established in 1988 by the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme (SARLs) of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), *Participatory Learning and Action* enables practitioners of participatory methodologies from around the world to share their field experiences, conceptual reflections, and methodological innovations. The series is informal and seeks to publish frank accounts, address issues of practical and immediate value, encourage innovation, and act as a 'voice from the field'.

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Participatory development
Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is an umbrella term for a wide range of similar approaches and methodologies, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Participatory Learning Methods (PALM), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Farming Systems Research (FSR), Méthod Active de Recherche et de Planification Participative (MARP), and many others. The common theme to all these approaches is the full **participation** of people in the processes of **learning** about their needs and opportunities, and in the **action** required to address them.

Participatory approaches offer a creative way of investigating issues of concern to poor people, and planning, implementing, and evaluating development activities. They challenge prevailing biases and preconceptions about people's knowledge.

The methods used range from visualisation, to interviewing and group work. The common theme is the promotion of interactive learning, shared knowledge, and flexible, yet structured analysis. These methods have proven valuable for understanding local perceptions of the functional value of resources, processes of agricultural intervention, and social and institutional relations. Participatory approaches can also bring together different disciplines, such as agriculture, health, and community development, to enable an integrated vision of livelihoods and well-being. They offer opportunities for mobilising local people for joint action.

In recent years, there has been a number of shifts in the scope and focus of participation:

- emphasis on sub-national, national and international decision-making, not just local decision-making;
- move from projects to policy processes and institutionalisation;
- greater recognition of issues of difference and power; and,
- emphasis on assessing the quality and understanding the impact of participation, rather than simply promoting participation.

Recent issues of *Participatory Learning and Action* have reflected, and will continue to reflect, these developments and shifts. We particularly recognise the importance of analysing and overcoming power differentials which work to exclude the already poor and marginalised.

participatory learning and action

Number 50
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Photo: Holly Ashley

Participants at *Participatory Learning and Action* 50th writeshop discuss the timeline. From left to right, back row: Michel Pimbert, Louise Chawla, Charlotte Flower, John Gaventa, Vicky Johnson, Robert Chambers, David Archer; front row: Sammy Musyoki, Jane Stevens

THEME SECTION: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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GENERAL SECTION

REGULARS

Photo: Nicole Kenton

Robert Chambers maps out the timeline at the *Participatory Learning and Action* 50th writeshop, April 2004

editorial

Celebrating the 50th issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*

Reaching our 50th issue has been no small feat on the part of the *Participatory Learning and Action* team, and for all the many people who have been involved over the past 16 years. We felt that such an occasion could not go unmarked in the series' history. So we decided to publish a bumper double issue, with a new look and a new name!

This anniversary led us to reflect on the achievements of our previous editors, guest editors, authors and other contributors, whose support and expertise have enabled us to continue producing the series. *Participatory Learning and Action* (formerly *PLA Notes* and *RRA Notes*) reaches more than 10,000 readers in over 200 countries, and our readership continues to grow, with more than 300 new subscribers each year. To think that we included a distribution list with *RRA Notes* 4! The series has published contributions from over 350 authors from across the globe and across multiple disciplines. We have benefited from the support of many donors and from the expert guidance of over forty guest editors, who have produced an impressive thirty special issues, out of the fifty that we have published so far. We would like to thank all our past editors and guest-editors, many of whom have contributed to this issue. You will find a list of editors with the full backlist of *Participatory Learning and Action* on page 223.

Participatory Learning and Action has always sought to publish frank accounts which provide a critique of best practice, confront issues of power and transformation, and contribute to the continuing and evolving discourses on participatory development. The wealth and calibre of shared experience and learning, and of time given freely, has meant that *Participatory Learning and Action* has continued to provide a forum for those engaged in participatory work – whether they be practitioners, trainers, activists, policy-makers or students – to share their experiences, reflections and innovations and to act as a 'voice from the field'. Even with the colossal amount of free time donated – by our authors, guest editors and reviewers – producing the series is expensive. We would like to have the resources to send free back issues to our many readers who request them. We would like all our articles to be available for free on our own and others' websites, from the moment of publication. The contributions of our paying subscribers have covered many of the costs of free dissemination. This has enabled us to extend free subscriptions to community and voluntary groups in the North as well as the South. And we would like to thank all our donors who have supported and continue to support the series over the years.

We are particularly indebted to the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) for their support of this issue. Not only did they host and fund a special writeshop, but they also co-financed the issue, together with our long-standing donors, Sida and the Department for International Development UK (DFID). IDS has been a solid partner over the years and we plan to collaborate further with future issues. We would also like to thank **Angela Milligan** for initiating this special issue.

Critical reflections, future directions: defining the context for the 50th issue

We decided it was time to celebrate this new milestone with a set of articles reflecting on key issues and trends in participation, past, present and particularly future.

In January this year, a group from IIED met with Robert Chambers from IDS to discuss the possibility of publishing a collaborative special 50th edition of the series. It was agreed that guest editors of past special issues would be approached and asked to update the overviews they had written for their issues, and that a writeshop would be held to brainstorm major changes and trends in PLA, to which all authors would be invited. The contributions in this special issue are based on the outcomes of this writeshop, held over two days on 23 and 24 April 2004 in room 221 at IDS, the very room in which the series began its life sixteen years earlier (see Box 1).

With the kind assistance and unflagging support of Robert Chambers and our colleagues at IDS, we held the 50th writeshop. Here we mapped out our workplan and assigned ourselves various writing tasks. This writeshop brought together the *Participatory Learning and Action* editorial team and several of our previous guest editors, all of whom have vast experiences of using participatory methods in their own particular field.

Participants at the 50th workshop were David Archer (ActionAid), Holly Ashley (IIED), Robert Chambers (IDS), Louise Chawla (Kentucky State University), Andrea Cornwall (IDS), Charlotte Flower (Oxfam), John Gaventa (IDS), Vicky Johnson (Development Focus), Nazneen Kanji

Box 1

RRA Notes No 1 was the outcome of the first RRA workshop held on 19 May 1988 at IDS. Participants were Robert Chambers (IDS), Graham Clarke (IDS/QEH), Gordon Conway (IIED), Sander Essers (ILEIA), Rosalid Eyben (ODA), Mick Howes (IDS), Naila Kabeer (IDS), Priscilla Magrath (ODA), Jenny McCracken (IIED), David Potten (Hunting Technical Services Ltd.), Jules Pretty (IIED), Ian Scoones (Imperial College of Science & Technology), Andrew Scott (ITDG), Lawrence Smith (Wye College), Shelia Smith (University of Sussex), Mary Tiffen (ODI) and Camilla Toulmin (IIED).

To quote Gordon Conway, the first editor,

..we established an informal newsletter, based at IIED, initially called RRA Notes. Later, the newsletter was renamed PLA Notes (Editors' note : now Participatory Learning and Action)…in recognition of the widening array of participatory research and development approaches. The idea was to provide a forum for practitioners to describe their experiences and innovations and so disseminate good practice. We envisaged that new ideas reported from an African village one week would be tried out in an Asian village the next – and that has happened.

Source: Conway, G. (2003) `Sustainable Agriculture' in Cross N. (ed), ***Evidence for Hope: The Search for Sustainable Development***. The Story of the International Institute for Environment and Development, Earthscan Publications Ltd, London, 2003.

(IIED), Nicole Kenton (IIED), Samuel Musyoki (IDS), Jethro Pettit (IDS), Michel Pimbert (IIED), Jane Stevens (IDS) and John Thompson (IIED). You can find more information about each of our contributors in the overview to this issue and in the contact details at the end of their articles. Our thanks also to those authors who were not able to attend our writeshop but who not only co-authored articles, but were also involved in the peer review process for this issue: Nandago Maria Goreth (Pamoja, Uganda), Sheela Patel (SPARC, India), Gill Gordon, (International HIV/AIDs Alliance, UK), Alice Welbourn (independent), Oga Steve Abah (Nigeria), Irene Guijt (Learning by Design, The Netherlands), Andy Catley (AU/IBAR, Kenya) and Jenny Rietbergen-McCracken (independent).

The plan was to take stock of the current state of play in participatory development, and to reflect upon how developments in people's individual fields of expertise have evolved since the publication of previous special issues. The question of 'where are we now?' inevitably led to 'where do we go next?'

Once drafted, articles for this issue went through a peer review process. Each author was given two articles to comment and feed back on, one in first draft and another in second draft. Robert Chambers then undertook the task of reviewing all the articles. You can read more about the writeshop process in the overview

Looking ahead enabled the workshop participants to identify gaps and brainstorm future themes for *Participatory Learning and Action*. Here's is a list of possible themes, the first of which is already in process:

- Civil society participation in the implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies (PRS);
- Gender;
- Participation and conflict;
- Participation in the North;
- Participation and global and local transformation;
- Land tenure;
- Methods for social and political analysis;
- Participatory budgeting and economic literacy;
- Participation and disability;
- Institutionalising participation;
- Immersions for development professionals: REALISE – Reflective Experiences and Learning In Situ Encounters.

We welcome contributions or collaboration on these themes or any other suggestions for future issues!

At this point we would like to thank our colleague John Thompson, a stalwart of *Participatory Learning and Action* since the early days. John's involvement with IIED goes back to 1989 when he met Jenny McCracken,[1] one of the first editors of *RRA Notes*, for lunch in a Nairobi trattoria and compared notes. Jenny and John had been corresponding for several months about their mutual interest in and experiments with Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). At that time, Jenny had been working in India with Gordon Conway (IIED) and Robert Chambers (IDS), in collaboration with Anil Shah, Meera Shah and Parmesh Shah of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), where they were developing an approach they called 'Participatory Rapid Rural Appraisal' (PRRA). John was working in Kenya on a programme entitled *From the Ground Up*, employing RRA to actively involve small farmers in the diagnostic process, working with them in the critical analysis of their own problems and opportunities, and supporting them in their efforts to generate and implement viable resource management plans. They decided the approach could be better termed 'Participatory Rural Appraisal' or 'PRA', as it sought to involve local

1. Jenny opens this issue with her memories of the early years (see Foreword).

people directly in the research process, to make the findings relevant to their lives, and to link analysis and reflection to action. In 1989, Robert Chambers, at Jenny's request, invited John to a workshop at IDS on RRA (documented in *RRA Notes* 7), where he presented some initial lessons on the application of PRA.

John joined IIED in 1991 and was Director of the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme from 1996 to 2003. John, who was present at the writeshop, was hoping to contribute an article on agriculture, a major theme throughout the series. However, production of this issue coincided with John's move in August to Just Food in New York, where he is now Director of Research and Development. Just Food works to develop a just and sustainable food system in New York City by fostering new marketing and food-growing opportunities that address the needs of rural family farms and poor urban communities. However, we are delighted that John's planned co-author for the article on agriculture, Andy Catley, was able to step in at the eleventh hour to provide us with an article on community-based animal healthcare. We wish John well as he focuses again on making a difference at the local level.

We would also like to make a special mention to **Regina Faul-Doyle**, our series' illustrator. She has provided her personal experience of working on the series on page 168 and you will see examples of her past work throughout this issue.

General section

We have three articles in our general section.

Many development and aid relief agencies, including NGOs and local governments assume that participatory approaches to development in war times is unfeasible. **Benedict Korf** relates his experiences of working with the Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP) in Sri Lanka. Using participatory approaches to work with local people, government officials, Tamil rebels and other NGOs and groups in the area, the IFSP has adopted a project approach aimed at rebuilding infrastructure whilst implementing income-generating activities – and helping local groups to work together more effectively.

Our next two articles are closely related. The first, by **Kumala Sari** and the **Pradipta Paramitha Team** in Indonesia share their experiences of using the Methodology for Participatory Assessments (MPA) to evaluate water and sanitation services in Wotawati hamlet, near Pucung. The community there were able to use the MPA, which included creating stratified maps based on villager's own poverty definitions, to replace open-air defecation by the installation and use of latrines, achieving almost 100% coverage by 2003.

The final article in our general section is a continuation of the first, in that it describes the experiences of adapting the MPA tools specifically for use in the Nepal context. **AJ James**, **Raju Khadka**, **Michelle Moffatt** and **Corine Otte** recount how Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH) adapted the MPA to create the NEWAH Participatory Assessment (NPA). Their article describes how the NPA was used to ensure that marginalized groups, in particular women, were included in decision-making processes related to water and sanitation projects and access.

Tips for trainers

As promised on our website, this issue has a bumper collection of training tips, provided by our authors for this issue.

Alice Welbourn shares her experiences of a workshop method called 'Quoting the issues'. It uses a series of quotes from people who have found themselves in disempowering situations to help open up debate among workshop participants about participatory approaches and issues of power and empowerment.

Next, an extract from **Reflect**'s *Communication and Power* manual describes how photographs can be used to tell a story or to make people think about issues. What is going on in the picture? What does the picture not tell us? And how can we use photographs as a powerful visual form of advocacy?

Andrea Cornwall and **Gill Gordon** then present their ideas for workshop ground rules, which can be agreed with participants at the start of a workshop to help create safer and more inclusive spaces for people to engage in.

Next, **Gill Gordon** writes about her experiences of using the fishbowl method. The fishbowl can be used to facilitate groups of both men and women to open up and share their thoughts and experiences, for example about sexuality and sexual health, in a safe environment.

Finally, **Vicky Johnson** and **Robert Nurick** explain how ranking lines can help people to explore issues such as wealth and health. Participants use the line to rank, for example, how rich or how poor, or how good or bad their diet is. They then can discuss strategies to improve these – in other words, how to move themselves 'up the line'.

Regular features

For this issue we have decided to expand our resources section to include reviews of several websites, books and videos mentioned in our theme articles in this issue. Some have been reviewed in previous issues, but are listed here again to take into account new updates and additions, or because of their particular relevance to this issue.

The **RCPLA Network** pages outline the exciting *Communications for Change* initiative and also provide updates on RCPLA member activities, such as the recent RCPLA write-workshop on Participatory Democracy held in April 2004 in Delhi, India. We also have news from the Eastern and Southern Africa RCPLA Network, the National Working Group on Participation (GNTP) and partners in Bolivia, and from European members, the Participation Group at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). Overall, the main focus of members' activities this year has been participatory communications and their importance for advocacy, democracy, capacity building and shared learning, in particular to strengthen voices from the South.

Next issue

Our next issue, *Participatory Learning and Action* 51, will be on civil society participation in the implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies, guest-edited by Alexandra Hughes and Nicholas Atampugre. See **News from IIED** on page 219 for information of the authors' writeshop held in July. This promises to be a very interesting issue and will be published in April 2005.

We are also in the process of putting together a new CD-ROM, containing a full set of articles from issues 1-50, in a more user-friendly format. There will be more details about the new CD-ROM on our website soon, and in the next issue!

We hope that this double issue has been worth the wait and look forward to your feedback. And as Robert Chambers says in his article, 'PLEASE WRITE TO US bears repeating!' Perhaps we can reinstate the correspondence corner!

Nicole Kenton and Holly Ashley

Corrections

PLA Notes 49:

Our apologies for including the wrong address for Khanya-managing change cc on pages 14 and 21. Khanya's address is 16A President Steyn, Westdene, Bloemfontein, 9301, South Africa. The telephone and fax numbers are correct.

Our apologies to Giacomo Rambaldi, who together with James Hardcastle, was one of the primary authors of article 11.

Our apologies to BM Oppong, Ansah Sampson Kwarteng and Francis Owusu, authors of article 5, for misprinting their names.

acronyms

and terms used in this issue

ABC	Attitude and behavioural change
AEA	Agroecosystem analysis
Appreciative enquiry	An organisational change methodology
AR	Anti-retroviral
AU	African Union
CAA	Community assessment and action
CAHW	Community-based animal health worker
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CAP	Community action plans
CBO	Community-based organisation
CCFC	Christian Children's Fund of Canada
CDS	Centre for Development Services (Egypt)
CEDAW	Convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women
CEF	Community Empowerment Fund
CIAT	Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical / International Centre for Tropical Agriculture
CIPM	Community integrated pest management
CIRAC	Circle of International Reflect Action and Communication
CLTS	Community-led total sanitation
CRC	Convention on the rights of the child
Danida	Danish Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer field schools
GAD	Gender and development
GAP	Gender and poverty
GIS	Geographic information system
GNTP	Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participacion (Bolivia)
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics, Hyderabad
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IDS	Institute for Development Studies, University of East Sussex, UK
IEC	Information, Education and Communication Unit
IFI	International Financial Institution
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development, UK
IFSP	Integrated Food Security Programme
IRR	Institute of Rural Reconstruction
IPID	Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (Sri Lanka)
IPM	Integrated pest management
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
IPRA	Investigación Participativa con Agricultores / Participatory Research with Farmers (CIAT)
JFM	Joint forest management
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCH	Maternal and child health
MPA	Methodology for participatory assessment
NEPAN	Nepal Participatory Action Network
NEWAH	Nepal Water for Health
NGO	Non-governmental organisation

Novib	One of the 12 organisations which are part of the alliance of Oxfam International, based in the Netherlands
NPA	NEWAH participatory assessment
NRM	Natural resource management
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	Participatory appraisal
PAMFORK	Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya
PAR	Participatory action research
PAVE	Participatory Approaches to Veterinary Epidemiology
PDS	Participatory disease searching
PE	Participatory epidemiology
PEPFAR	(US) President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PHRA	Participatory human rights assessment
PIP	People in power
PLA	Participatory learning and action
Planning for real	Community design tool effective in involving local communities in developing their own ideas and plans for regenerating their neighbourhoods
PM&E	Participatory monitoring and evaluation
PNA	Participatory needs assessment
PPA	Participatory poverty assessment
PPAZ	Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia
PPI	Participatory poverty index
PRRA	Participatory rapid rural appraisal
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
Praxis	Institute for Participatory Practices (India)
PRS	Poverty reduction strategy
PRSP	Poverty reduction strategy paper
RCPLA	Resource centres for participatory learning and action
REALISE	Reflective Experiences and Learning In Situ Encounters
Reflect	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowerment Community Techniques
RIPS	Rural integrated project support
RRA	Rapid rural appraisal
SAREC	Department for Research Cooperation, Sweden
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SPEECH	Society for People's Education and Economic Change (India)
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
SSI	Semi structured interviewing
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
TBA	Traditional birth attendant
TFD	Theatre for development
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPPAP	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project
VCT	Voluntary counselling and HIV testing
WHO	World Health Organization

theme section

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS

THEME SECTION

1 Foreword

by JENNIFER RIETBERGEN-McCRACKEN

Congratulations on your 50th issue, *Participatory Learning and Action*! I can still remember when you were just a twinkle in Robert Chamber's eye at an IDS-IIED workshop back in 1988, when the idea of sharing notes from the field was discussed. The question was – who would coordinate, edit and disseminate an informal 'RRA' journal? All it took was an expectant raising of Gordon Conway's eyebrows, a quick nod of my head, and the Sustainable Agriculture team at IIED had taken you on!

Since then of course you have grown in leaps and bounds, to incorporate PRA and PLA. And it's great to see that you haven't taken on any grandiose or glossy airs over the years. You have stayed true to the idea of sharing cutting edge experiences, straight from the field – a field that has expanded to include every imaginable sector, in both the North and South.

My own field for a few years was in the World Bank when participation was making its first real inroads into the organisational culture there. A group of highly committed staff came together as the Participatory Development Learning Group to develop policy recommendations and practical guidelines for promoting participation in the Bank. Implementing these policies and practices meant trying to remove or circumvent the barriers to participation that were operating in the Bank (that Robert Chambers describes very accurately in his book *Whose Reality Counts?*).

Through the very small role I played in this participatory work, I was struck by the delicate dilemma inherent in mainstreaming participation in such a complex institution. The initial strategy of developing special programmes to promote participation (including a Participation Fund to encourage participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation activities) was very effective in the early years, in kick-starting participatory activities across Bank operations. The downside though was that these special programmes tended to support a limited 'add on', 'optional extra' kind of participation and did little towards developing an overall corporate responsibility for participation.

Yet, without such programmes, project staff often got little or no support from their managers for spending the additional time and money necessary for participatory initiatives.

The challenge of moving from special support to real mainstreaming requires other measures, including strong supportive messages from the top, clear policies and effective incentives. Promoting a culture of participation also involves shared learning – from both positive and negative experiences. This may be the hardest part of all for performance-oriented staff of a high profile institution – to discuss any failures or shortcomings they have had in their participatory work. Maybe an in-house version of *Participatory Learning and Action* would help – in recognising the value of informal, experimental learning about the reality of participation. Perhaps we should start thinking of a *Participatory Learning and Action* franchise system…?

Jennifer Rietbergen-McCracken worked at IIED from 1986-1991 and is now an independent consultant researcher and writer on environment and development, based in France. Email: jennifer.rietbergen@wanadoo.fr

2

Critical reflections, future directions: an overview

by NICOLE KENTON and HOLLY ASHLEY

Sharing learning from personal experience

From natural resource management and animal health, to literacy and communications, the themed articles in this issue come from personal reflections and analysis. Each author speaks from her or his own field of experience. This overview does not seek to draw conclusions – the articles do that for themselves. But in all of the contributions to this special issue we find striking parallels in the lessons learnt and suggestions for ways forward. Each author has identified new frontiers, and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. And most themes overlap or have relevance and resonance in multiple spheres – and we can all think of more.

The articles challenge us to look ahead, to see how we can work more effectively together, to build on the successes of the past and to engage continuously in a process of reflection and action towards social justice and an equitable future – wherever and whoever we are.

The *Participatory Learning and Action* 50 writeshop

After welcoming everyone and thanking them for coming, we began the writeshop with a participatory exercise to create a timeline of the major development trends and innovations in participatory development over the last twenty years (see Box 1). The main themes identified then formed

Box 1: Creating a timeline of participatory development

One of the first exercises at the writeshop was a 30-minute session, where we made a timeline of participatory development. The purpose was for participants to pinpoint what **they** felt were significant 'landmarks' in participatory practice and approaches over the past 20 years and link them into broader development trends.

The result was a timeline that listed our participants' own experiences and recollections of many (though by no means all!) events and organisational activities, conceptual and policy developments, publications and other resources against major international trends which have helped to shape participatory development theory and practice over the last two decades.

We began by placing a row of cards on the floor marking each year, from pre-1985, up to and including post-2004. Under these we created columns of cards depicting the significant activities etc. At the bottom of each column we placed the issues of *Participatory Learning and Action* published in each year.

This helped to focus our later discussions, which formed many of the 'critical reflections' of this issue, and led to debate about 'future directions' based on the participants' joint experiences. A reconstruction of the timeline starts on page 13.

Please send us your own timelines of your experiences with participation, so that we can continue to enrich our understanding of our shared knowledge and learning.

• Timeline key
UPPER CASE: Major development trends
Highlighted boxes: influential publications and other resources
Bullet-pointed: workshops and events and organisational activities

***Participatory Learning and Action* 50 writeshop participants discuss the timeline. From left to right: Charlotte Flower; Vicky Johnson; Nicole Kenton; John Gaventa; Andrea Cornwall; David Archer; Sammy Musyoki; and Jane Stevens**

Photo: Holly Ashley

the basis for the articles in this special issue. These were also based on previous special issues of *Participatory Learning and Action* and other areas of participatory development that our participants had been involved with. These themes were:

- literacy, adult education and empowerment;
- participatory communications;
- sexual and reproductive health and well-being;
- gender and development;
- children's participation;
- agriculture, livestock, and fisheries;
- people-centred processes for natural resource management;
- urban participatory development;
- participation and well-being;
- monitoring and evaluation;
- advocacy, citizenship, and rights;
- participatory processes in the North;
- governance and democracy; and,
- critical reflections from practice.

Each author was given copies of relevant articles from previous issues of *Participatory Learning and Action*. We then discussed each theme and each author gave the group an update on developments in their own particular field of experience.

We identified several important crosscutting themes that emerged during our discussions. In each article, we wanted to reflect on:

- the shifting and evolution of participatory discourses over the last two decades;
- sharing learning and best practice between the South and the North;
- recognising the political significance of participation, democratisation and issues of power and powerful/powerless agendas within development;
- scaling-up and institutionalising participatory approaches,

The finished timeline with the corresponding *Participatory Learning and Action* issues for each year

Photo: Holly Ashley

TIMELINE OF PARTICIPATION & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Pre 1985

STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Cultural Action for Freedom Paulo Freire (1970)

Kevin Lynch's (ed) *Growing Up in Cities* (1977) – advocacy planning methods adapted for children

Participatory methods as a 'mode of transformation'

Methodological innovation, e.g. RRA and NRM – 1980

John Dewey – philosophy & practice of progressive education

Adult education empowerment WEA

Advocacy planning versus 'bulldoze it all down' urban development

The work of Ivan Illich

Basic needs/basic rights

Liberation theology

c.1980: Agroecosystem analysis evolved by Gordon Conway and others at the University of Chiang Mai, Thailand

1985

BAND AID APPROACH, ETHIOPIA

■ International Conference on RRA, University of Khon Kaen, Thailand

■ Farmer First workshop (Book later published 1987)

Indigenous Agricultural Revolution Paul Richards

1986

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

1987

Right to development

Structural Adjustment with a 'human face'. Participation as a way of defusing agitation

■ IIED RRA training with Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) with Gordon Conway, Jules Pretty, John Thompson and others

Our Common Future commonly known as the *Brundtland Report* World Commission on Environment and Development

Centre for Environmental Technology

Khon Kaen University Proceedings of the 1985 International Conference on Rapid Rural Appraisal

1988

TIED AID

RRA Notes 1: General issue June 1988

RRA Notes 2: General issue October 1988

RRA Notes 3: General issue December 1988

Scales from eyes – 'they can do it' 1988-89 in Ethiopia/Kenya/West Bengal

1989-91 Indian innovation and excitement

Developing community-based natural resource management from 1980s models to participatory methods in 1990s

■ Ethiopian Red Cross RRA training in Wollo

Community Action Plan, Machakos, Kenya

1989

FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL: END OF COLD WAR

RRA Notes 4: General issue February 1989

■ AKRSP Participatory RRA, Gujarat (McCracken in *RRA Notes* 4)

"…there are striking parallels in the lessons learnt and suggestions for ways forward. Each author has identified new frontiers, and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. And most themes overlap or have relevance and resonance in multiple spheres"

so that the ethos and best practice of participation continues to be embedded in all decision-making processes and development agendas, at all levels and in all sectors of development;
- the continuing importance of critical reflections and participatory monitoring and evaluation; and
- the links between working at the local, national and international levels.

The list of themes and issues that we identified are by no means exhaustive, but they indicate some the most important issues being faced in the arenas of participatory development today and have resonance in both the North and the South. Another significant area is that of strengthening the voices of the South.

The rest of the first day was spent working out how each of these challenges would be woven into the themed articles, by building on lessons learnt and critical reflections. At the end of the first day, the participants got together to give feedback of their progress to the group. On the second day, participants continued to develop the structures of their articles, making the most of this opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences.

David Archer explains to participants at the writeshop how Reflect processes have developed and converged

Photo: Nicole Kenton

Reflections and directions

The first of our theme articles is by co-guest editor **Robert Chambers**. Robert has been a regular contributor to the series since 1988. Most recently, Robert guest-edited a section in *PLA Notes* 47, on the development and growing use of participatory numbers. In this issue, Robert presents

TIMELINE OF PARTICIPATION & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

RRA Notes 5: General issue May 1989

RRA Notes 6: General issue June 1989

RRA Notes 7: Proceedings of second joint IDS/IIED RRA review workshop. September 1989

Farmer First: Farmer innovation and agricultural research

CIAT video: The IPRA Method (Ashby)

Technology assessment and evaluation

World Bank Participation learning group established (from December 1989 onwards)

Convention of the Rights of the Child – fundamental bench mark for children's participation

■ Jimmy Mascarenhas of Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA), first PRA process in India, four nights in Kalmandargi village, Karnataka, followed by others

■ December World Bank Participation Learning Group starts

1990

JOMTIEN Education for all

RRA Notes 8: General issue January 1990

RRA Notes 9: General issue August 1990

Community Action Planning Manual, Kenya

Literacy and Power, the Latin American battleground, David Archer; Patrick Costello. Earthscan

Gender/difference coming as an issue in participation work

1991

RRA Notes 10: General issue February 1991

RRA Notes 11: Proceedings of joint IIED and Development Administration Group (University of Birmingham), local level adaptive planning workshop, London May 1991

RRA Notes 12: General issue July 1991

RRA Notes 13: Proceedings of the February 1991 Bangalore PRA Trainers Workshop, August 1991

RRA Notes 14: General issue December 1991

International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) video: Participatory Research with Women Farmers (Pimbert/Kumar)

1992

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN RIO DE JANEIRO (THE EARTH SUMMIT)

DEMOCRATISATION

Participatory Poverty Assessments

RRA Notes 15: Applications of wealth ranking, May 1992

RRA Notes 16: Applications for health, July 1992

Agenda 21
– local participatory community processes relevant to global discussions on environment and poverty.
– children and youth identified as major groups

■ Beyond Farmer First workshop

World Bank Participation Statement

a personal reflection on the development of participatory processes and their subsequent spread across the globe and across sectors. Practitioners have expanded their use from the arenas of community planning, agriculture and natural resource use to include 'almost every major domain of social activity'. What lessons have been learnt in almost 20 years, of both good and bad practice? What new 'frontiers' are yet to be explored?

Using examples from previous issues of the series and elsewhere, Chambers identifies some of the major lessons learnt through practice, reflected throughout this issue, such as quality and scale, institutional change, and professionalism and power. He then presents his thoughts on where participation might be taken forward, to new and expanding areas of practice such as within schools, law enforcement agencies, trade unions and other large organisations. Where will an increased emphasis on governance and democratic systems take us? And how important are continuing personal and professional revolutions in thinking, behaviour and practice? The article concludes by asking each of us to think of a future where we can realise our visions and transformations – by showing what people can do and the **differences** people can make.

"Good communication requires learning from one another to set the agenda. Collaborative communication strategies are important to the success of participatory approaches and processes"

Participation, literacy and empowerment

Our next two articles focus on literacy and communication.

Literacy plays a central role in people's ability to learn and participate in development processes, through written, verbal, visual and performance communication. **David Archer** and **Nandago Maria Goreth** recount the evolution of the Reflect approach, charting its early stages, as seen in *PLA Notes* 32: *Participation, literacy and empowerment*, which **David Archer, Bimal Phnuyal** and **Sara Cottingham** guest-edited in June 1998. This article describes the growing network and achievements of Reflect practitioners throughout the world.

The Reflect approach seeks to empower people to make change, by equipping them with both the communication tools and the capacity to engage in developmental processes. The focus is on the practical use of skills, whether it be access to media such as radio, performance arts, computers or writing, and is combined with the practical outcomes of using those skills.

The article looks at some of the key challenges that lie ahead. These include scaling up, facilitating organisational change, and using Reflect to build coalitions to work more closely with other participatory practitioners. It concludes by emphasising the need for a constant process of reflection-action-reflection that seeks to challenge the complex practice of power in development.

Voices aloud: making communication and change together

Good communication is key to vocalising the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized in development. Many achievements have previously been shared, in *PLA Notes* 29: *Performance and participation* (June 1997) and *PLA*

TIMELINE OF PARTICIPATION & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

1992 onwards – formation of PRA/participation networks in India, Kenya (later became PAMFORK), Nepal (became NEPAN) and other countries.

■ Frequent IDS/IIED workshops held

■ First South –South Exchange Training in India hosted by MYRADA, ActionAid and AKRSP

PRA Resource Centre starts at IDS

1993

RRA Notes 17: General issue March 1993

RRA Notes 18: General issue June 1993

PA used in forestry sector in UK – early 90s

UK tenants' movements

Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care. Roger Hart

World Vision video: The PRA Report, Zambia

Conception of Reflect as PRA, literacy and empowerment

Freire & PRAREFLECT pilot projects – Uganda, Bangladesh and El Salvador

PPA process in Ghana, followed by Zambia, South Africa, Mozambique.

■ Gender and Participation Workshop, IDS

■ PRA training, Kunming, China

1994

CAIRO, EGYPT: THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Bilaterals getting into participation

RRA Notes 19: Training February 1994

RRA Notes 20: Livestock April 1994

RRA Notes 21: Participatory tools and methods in urban areas November 1994

Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an Environment of Change, Victoria Johnson, ActionAid, Joanna Hill, Edda Ivan-Smith. A landmark for process and product

Growing up in Cities UNESCO-MOST project revived

Children's participation develops, with general separation in

- Courts and child protection
- Healthcare
- Education
- Development work (labour, street children
- Planning

Fair trade movement

Cairo: Looking at how women and men need to participate in decisions affecting their own lives and decisions on children.

■ Stepping Stones training

■ International Meeting of PRA Networks, IIED

The World Bank and Participation report – Operations Policy Department, September

Beyond Farmer First: Rural People's Knowledge, Agricultural Research and Extension Practice. Ian Scoones and John Thompson (eds)

Jane Stevens takes a closer look at the timeline

Photo: Holly Ashley

Notes 39: *Popular communications* (October 2000). In his article, **Oga Steve Abah** presents his experiences of working with participatory communications, how they can create innovative solutions for engagement, and their importance in effecting change, by transforming understanding into action.

Good communication requires learning from one another to set the agenda. Collaborative communication strategies are important to the success of participatory approaches and processes. How are participatory tools and communication methods selected? How are they combined to have relevance and appeal to diverse groups working together? What are the differences in how issues are understood, and how do you negotiate to reach common ground?

From storytelling, songs and dance, through to the use of television, radio and videos, Abah describes how these performances can also help to reach a wider audience and frame broader debates that focus on rights, citizenship and development – and how learning together through participatory communications can also help to create new consciousness and empower people to make change.

Reflections on gender and participatory development

There are often tensions between gender and development (GAD) and participatory development and it is important to understand and address issues of gender inequality in participatory approaches at all levels. In her article, editorial board member and participatory researcher **Nazneen Kanji** gives us

an insight into some of the dilemmas facing practitioners, as well as some positive directions for future work.

How can participatory processes be designed so that both women's and men's views and needs are incorporated into processes and outcomes, so that the most vulnerable and marginalized are given a voice? What are the dangers of stereotyping women, men and communities? The article highlights key achievements in increasing awareness and the participation of women in development, notably in the arenas of sexual and reproductive health, literacy and adult learning, and in the increasing number of networks that support women in participatory development.

Yet challenges remain which must be addressed in order to create more equitable approaches to development. The article concludes that strengthening alliances amongst both advocates for gender and development and participatory development will help to create a strong basis for change.

"The growing phenomenon of urban poor federations is arguably a great example of 'good governance from the bottom up'. Over the last 20 years, these self-organised collectives have joined together to create wide networks and federations across cities, nations and continents"

Not for children only: lessons learnt from young people's participation

In February 1996, **Vicky Johnson** guest-edited *PLA Notes* 25, our first special issue dealing with children's participation. Later, in October 2001, **Louise Chawla** and **Sherry Bartlett** guest-edited a second children's issue, *PLA Notes* 42: *Children's participation – evaluating effectiveness.* For this issue, **Louise Chawla** and **Vicky Johnson** focus on children's participation and the growing recognition of the rights of children and young people in development. This article explores some of the realities that children and those working with them face.

Children may be a distinct social group identified by age, yet all too often their needs are either regarded as being in isolation from wider community or policy agendas – or their views are seen as irrelevant to participatory decision-making processes.

The authors discuss the importance of power relations, conflict resolution, the need for safety and ethical frameworks when working with children and the need for advocacy to vocalise their rights at all levels. Monitoring and evaluation are key to ensuring that the processes they are engaged in are empowering and do not increase vulnerability. Practitioners need to continue to make sure that good practice continues to be learnt, shared, and followed.

Children's participation is distinct from adult participation: it should provide both autonomy and care for the children involved, but also increase recognition of their rights, which should be more widely practiced in participatory development and with groups of all ages. The authors provide examples and conclusions that show how engaging and communicating with children, in ways that are embedded within wider development agendas and processes, are essential not only for children, but for everyone.

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1995

COPENHAGEN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

PLA Notes 22: General Issue February 1995

PLA Notes 23: Section on participatory approaches to HIV/AIDS programmes June 1995

PLA Notes 24: Critical reflections from practice October 1995

'Sharing our concerns': statement made by an informal group of practitioners (published in *PLA Notes* 22, 1995)

John Major's 'Citizen's charter' (UK)

Formation of PRA/PLA/Participation Networks e.g. NEPAN/PAMFORK

Participation and organisational change/learning

Institutionalising 'good practice' – spread/scaling up

Coherence – applying Reflect at all levels/in all spaces – especially to ourselves – subjectivity (esp. Latin America)

Community based NRM and conflict management (World Neighbors – SE Asia)

Participatory Learning and Action: a trainer's guide Pretty *et al*. (eds)

1996

CIVIL SOCIETY STRENGTHENING, BEIJING

PLA Notes 25: Special issue on children's participation February 1996

PLA Notes 26: General issue June 1996

PLA Notes 27: Participation, policy and institutionalisation October 1996

Self censorship? Lack of open critique from 'within'

IDS workshop on scaling up and policy

Institutionalisation of participation

Children's participation – acts of random excellence

In UK: Training in Hull (Andy Inglis) PA spread from here to Edinburgh/Walsall

Publication of *REFLECT Mother Manual*

DDA/DFID action research report

Istanbul: Children's participation written into Habitat Agenda – UNICEF's Children's Rights and Habitat

■ First South-South International Thematic PRA Training Workshop convened by Praxis in Ranchi, India

ABC of PRA: Report on the South South Workshop on PRA: attitudes and behaviour, Bangalore and Madurai – Somesh Kumar (ed). Also an article in *PLA Notes* 27

■ International PRA Networking meeting in Nepal

■ Attitude and Behaviour Change workshop, Bangalore and Madurai

1997

DEATH OF PAULO FREIRE

DEBT CAMPAIGNS

PLA Notes 28: Methodological complementarity February 1997

"…the way forward now lies with a new generation of practitioners, capturing again the 'excitement, energy and creativity' that first inspired people to use participatory approaches"

Sexual and reproductive well-being and rights

Participatory Learning and Action first published a special issue on health in July 1992 in *RRA Notes* 16, guest-edited by **Marc Lammerink** and **Dick de Jong**. Then in February 2000, *PLA Notes* 37: *Sexual and reproductive health* gave an update on developments in related approaches, methods, processes and policy.

Our next two articles give a further update. First, **Andrea Cornwall** and **Gill Gordon** reflect upon lessons learnt in the arena of sexual and reproductive well-being and rights.

The article highlights four key issues and looks at some of the advances in, and barriers to, participatory community-based HIV prevention and care work. They discuss how poverty, and the lack of funding and resources, can severely impact upon the ability of communities and programmes to deliver effective sexual healthcare and education. They explore how learning about sexuality and gender issues in a positive way enables people to learn about their own emotional and sexual well-being. They investigate how development agendas, driven by donor agencies or by communities, often fail to recognise the complexities within societies regarding sexual activity and rights. They can often do more to stigmatise sexuality and sexual health issues by advocating unrealistic policies.

The authors conclude that using participatory approaches to create 'quick fixes' is no solution. Instead they advocate approaches that enable people to **understand** their rights and foster a sense of entitlement – approaches which are transformative in nature, and which stem from 'locally owned and appropriate strategies to realise sexual and reproductive rights and well-being'.

Gender, participation, health and positive thinking

Living with HIV and AIDS has a serious impact on wider development issues that go beyond the individual's health, such as their ability to work, support families and prosper economically. **Alice Welbourn** discusses the global pandemic of HIV and AIDS and issues relating to gender, participation and positive thinking. What problems do people face, particularly women, living with the virus? How can communities work together to remove the stigma attached to those infected and address problems caused by poverty and lack of access to drugs? How much is effectively being achieved by the work of such institutions as the UN and the World Health Organization? And what are the barriers to the effective participation of people and networks in creating solutions to the pandemic?

Her article brings to the fore many of the issues faced by those working to tackle the spread of the virus, both globally and within families and communities. Despite the enormity of the challenges, Alice offers us a positive view of how participation **can** and **does** make a difference.

Participatory methods and the measurement of well-being

Participatory assessments of well-being are becoming more and more mainstream. Well-being ranking has partly

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PLA Notes 29: Performance and participation
June 1997

PLA Notes 30: Participation and fishing communities
October 1997

20-30 practitioners (incl. Oxfam) met three times to reflect on PA practice in the UK

Integration of reproductive health and NRM (World Neighbors)

Stepping Forward Flow on from *PLA Notes* 25 to look at key issues of children and young people's participation in development process

■ International workshop on PM & E, at IIRR in the Philippines

1998

UK GOVERNMENT SCHEMES THAT REQUIRE 'PARTICIPATION'

NGOS PILOTING CAPACITY BUILDING TO MAINSTREAM

PLA Notes 31: Participatory monitoring and evaluation
February 1998

PLA Notes 32: Participation, literacy and empowerment
June 1998

PLA Notes 33: Understanding market opportunities
October 1998

UK Ban on production and sale of landmines

PLA toolkit

Gender, power and stratification in Reflect – breaking myths of 'harmonious' communities

Reflect beyond literacy to governance, democratisation, rights, people's own spaces.

PLAN Indonesia two-year programme of capacity building in participatory approaches and children's participation

UK government funded schemes e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal, New Deal for Communities, Sure Start, Children's Fund, PCTs requiring participation of local communities

Changing Views on Change: Participatory Approaches to Monitoring the Environment Joanne Abbot and Irene Guijt

The Myth of Community: Gender issues in participatory development. Irene Guijt and Meera Kaul Shah (eds)

Whose Voice? Participatory research and policy change Jeremy Holland with James Blackburn (eds)

Who Changes? Institutionalizing participation in development James Blackburn with Jeremy Holland (eds)

Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process
Vicky Johnson *et al*. (eds)

1999

PLA Notes 34: Learning from analysis. February 1999

PLA Notes 35: Community water management
June 1999

PLA Notes 36: General issue
October 1999

Trend towards electronic resources

■ Popular communications workshop at IDS

Participatory budgeting

evolved from wealth ranking methods. In May 1992, we published *RRA Notes* 15: *Applications of wealth ranking*. In the next article, **Jethro Pettit** and **Sarah White** discuss some innovations which have begun to focus more on issues of well-being and the increasing awareness of its importance in development.

Well-being encompasses people's personal and social relationships, their values and their understanding. Methods can be used to reveal complex pictures of social and economic situations and their implications for participatory development. The authors discuss how we might define the terms 'well' and 'being', with their complex associations with the self and social and cultural relationships. They highlight some of the challenges that face practitioners of participatory approaches in adopting processes that seek to address issues of livelihoods and sustainability and, at the same time, well-being.

Measuring well-being is a complex process, and there is much debate about it. How do wealth ranking and well-being ranking differ? When do methods and techniques need to give way to issues of 'ethics, conduct and principles of research'? What are the trade-offs between going to scale and more intensive processes? How can participatory practitioners represent or distort the reality on the ground and enable 'genuinely different voices to heard'? And lastly, the authors ask us a tantalising question: 'does more development mean greater well-being?'

Rights, advocacy and participation – what's working?

A common theme that runs throughout the articles in this issue is that of participation and transformation. In February 2002, **Cindy Clark**, **Beth Harrison**, **Valerie Miller**, **Jethro Pettit** and **Lisa VeneKlasen** guest-edited *PLA Notes* 43: *Advocacy and citizen participation*. In our next article, **Jethro Pettit** and **Sammy Musyoki** give us an update and explore how participation and transformation are essential components when challenging the root causes of social exclusion, poverty and marginalization. The authors reflect upon the need to understand effective strategies for participatory advocacy and citizenship. Yet as ever, issues of power, even in rights-based development processes, remain.

The article addresses some of the dangers inherent in engaging in 'participatory' approaches that seek to advocate for people's rights without challenging inequalities of power, from both within and outside of communities. The authors emphasise the need for slow, deliberative approaches that do not seek to provide a 'quick fix', but instead understand the complex dynamics involved.

In an age of globalisation, rights need to be negotiated not just at the local and national level, but also at the international level. Using examples of successful approaches and processes from around the world, the authors conclude by emphasising the need to revolutionise the structures and systems of donor-led procedures to support rights and citizenship.

Completing the globe: tackling poverty and injustice in the North

We have published various articles over the years from authors about northern experiences, although so far we have only published one special issue – *PLA Notes* 38: *Participatory processes in the North*, guest edited by **Charlotte Flower**, **Paul Mincher** and **Susan Rimkus** in June 2000. As the early years saw an explosion of the use of PRA tools and methodologies in the South, **Charlotte Flower** and **Vicky**

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Community Pride Manchester

Work with Save the Children on Participatory M&E with young people and different stakeholders 'saying power'

Piloting of PA methods in UK with Sustain and Oxfam

Development Focus formulating approach in UK

From 'participatory development'/methods to 'participation in development' politics

■ Dakar World Education Forum – Civil Society Action on global and national level …building coalition and campaigns.

2000

POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPERS (PRSPs)

PLA Notes 37: Sexual and reproductive health February 2000

PLA Notes 38: Participatory processes in the North June 2000

PLA Notes 39: Participatory communication October 2000

Pathways to Participation project, Institute for Development Studies, UK and international partners

■ Workshop: Making Change Happen – IDS, ActionAid, Asia (in *PLA Notes* 43)

From the Roots Up: strengthening organizational capacity through guided self-assessment World Neighbors (Methodologies for community capacity building and self-assessment)

■ Dakar, Senegal, April 2004. West African *L' Echange Francophone*, hosted by IIED-Senegal and Fondation Rural de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (FRAO). Conference on participatory development

'Carpet bombing' PRA Africa, Indonesia

Reaching the Parts... Community mapping: working together to tackle social exclusion and food poverty Food Poverty Network

Creation of CIRAC "International Reflect Circle"

■ Deliberative democracy for political engagement: *Prajateerpu* – a citizen's jury on food and farming futures held in Andhra Pradesh, India

How to institutionalise children's participation

'Reaching the Hardest to Reach' consultation with 14-25 year-olds and subsequent report by the Prince's Trust – recognised as important in UK local community processes

Learning from Change; Issues and experience in participatory monitoring and evaluation Marisol Estrella *et al.* (eds)

2001

GROWING HEGEMONY OF THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE INSTITUTIONS (IFIs) AND AN INCREASINGLY WEAKER UN

CLIMATE CHANGE – KYOTO PROTOCOL

PLA Notes 40: Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment February 2001

PLA Notes 41: General Issue June 2001

Johnson discuss here the rise of PLA in the North, and in particular, the UK[1].

Participatory approaches are being used more and more widely in the UK, for example in urban regeneration and community health work and other forms of service delivery. However, while many development agendas and policies now require community participation, all too often the processes lack the necessary depth. Issues of social exclusion often remain unresolved. The concern is that without real depth and quality, these processes may in fact jeopardise a real potential for change.

Despite this, there are many examples of excellent work in the UK. There is much potential for long-term transformational learning to evolve attitudes, behaviour, and skills and to understand issues of power, democratisation and empowerment. A major difficulty is the issue of representation. Participatory approaches can be used to identify power differences within communities – and to effectively address them.

The authors discuss not only how local authorities can help to build a community's capacity to engage, but also how civil society can challenge those in power, and **create** spaces for participatory decision-making to occur. They conclude that with collective critical reflection, greater inclusion and the sharing of best practice and lessons learnt, real and effective change **can** occur.

Tools and methods for empowerment developed by slum and pavement dwellers' federations in India

In November 1994, we published *RRA Notes* 21 on *Participatory tools and methods in urban areas*, guest-edited by **Diana Mitlin** and **John Thompson**. Since then, articles relating to urban participatory development have also appeared in, for example, *PLA Notes* 38: *Participatory processes in the North*, *PLA Notes* 40: *Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment*; and *PLA Notes* 44: *Local government and participation.* In our next article, **Sheela Patel** discusses her experiences with urban poor federations in India and internationally.

The growing phenomenon of urban poor federations is arguably a great example of 'good governance from the bottom up'. Over the last 20 years, these self-organised collectives have joined together to create wide networks and federations across cities, nations and continents. These federations have succeeded in creating and sustaining their **own** poverty reduction strategies by using and building on their own experiences, capacities, resources and networks.

The article explores the routes by which alliances such as the National Slum Dwellers Federation, *Mahila Milan* and SPARC have successfully influenced policy and change. What are the challenges faced in creating solutions that work by urban poor federations? How do federations strengthen relationships with municipal authorities? And perhaps most importantly, what are the lessons learnt, and how are these shared throughout and across networks?

Patel provides examples from practice, highlights key change processes and demonstrates that poor communities can work together to negotiate and continue to create a more equitable and sustainable future.

Natural resources, people and participation

The early issues of *RRA Notes* and later *PLA Notes* began with a strong emphasis on agriculture and livelihoods. These were the arenas where the first innovations and approaches were

[1] The terms 'North' and 'South' are used here to distinguish between OECD countries – (member states of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) – usually richer or 'developed' countries and non-OECD countries, usually poorer or 'less developed' countries.

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PLA Notes 42: Children's participation evaluating effectiveness. October 2001

■ Participatory Methodology Forum – ActionAid Bangladesh power in institutions

'Participation' of 'civil society' in PRSPs

Gellideg work with CBOs to develop gendered needs assessment

Listen hear: the right to be heard. Summary of the report of the Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power. January 2001. Oxfam GB.

■ PLAN International holding international debates around children's participation and institutionalisation.

RCPLA coordination transfers from IIED to Praxis in India

Transforming Power: report of the Participatory Methodologies Forum, ActionAid, Dhaka, February 2001

Rights through Evaluation: Putting Child Rights into Practice in South Africa and Nepal. Executive summary of a report of the same name, December 2001. Produced by Development Focus International, Himalayan Community Development Forum, and ActionAid in Nepal, and the Early Learning Resource Unit and the National Working for Water Programme, in South Africa.

2002

THE THIRD WAY – WHAT SPACE FOR ALTERNATIVES TO NEO-LIBERALISM?

PLA Notes 43: Advocacy and citizen participation February 2002

PLA Notes 44: Local government and participation. June 2002

PLA Notes 45: Community based animal healthcare October 2002

'Linking rights and participation' project, Institute for Development Studies, UK

Working with teams around UK and having reference groups of service providers and policy makers to get local action happening

Salford, UK: New Deal for Communities evaluation of post 'PA' experience!

UK National Action Plan: Social Inclusion – influenced by grassroots – UK Department for Work and Pensions opening up to participation

Creation of PAMOJA, the Africa Reflect Network

Participation: The New Tyranny Bill. Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari (eds)

A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: the action guide for advocacy and citizen participation. Lisa VeneKlasen with Valerie Miller

Realizing Rights: transforming approaches to sexual reproductive well-being. Andrea Cornwall and Alice Welbourne (eds)

UK activists visit Uganda to learn from UPPAP

focused in. Since then, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of natural resource management, both as a means of sustaining local livelihoods and protecting biodiversity and wild habitats. Here, **Michel Pimbert** looks at lessons learnt, in both the North and the South, in people-centred approaches to natural resource management (NRM). How can participatory ways of knowing be used to acknowledge the role of people in a complex and dynamic ecological, social and economic environment? How do more powerful actors in NRM processes continue to exclude, marginalize and undermine the very people that depend on natural resources for their livelihoods? How important is individual, transformational learning in creating more socially and ecologically responsible practice?

The article explores the shift away from a focus on tools and methods at the local level, towards emphasising the importance of exploring longer-term processes. Understanding local realities within a process is vital to enable more democratic and equitable platforms for citizens to evolve and develop.

What levels of change and learning are required? What are the key conditions and drivers for this change? What role do the State and trans-global institutions play in inhibiting or encouraging such change? The article concludes with a set of key criteria for reversing structural constraints to create new dynamics for democratic, inclusive, equitable and empowering change in NRM.

Participatory approaches in animal healthcare

Keeping healthy livestock and checking the spread of livestock disease is crucial to many people's livelihoods and to rural economies. Building on the articles featured in the special issue *PLA Notes* 45 on *Community-based animal healthcare*, **Andy Catley** gives an account of the evolution of these approaches. The article documents important legislative and policy changes that enable community-based animal health workers (CAHWs) to operate. It shows how successes have helped change professional and academic attitudes towards participatory approaches, whilst presenting some of the barriers faced by advocates of community-level work.

Looking to the future, the article summarises key challenges and opportunities. How can CAHW approaches ensure that services are affordable to poor users, and who is currently excluded or does not have access to these services? What are the links between improving markets for livestock and improved animal healthcare? How important are networks of CAHWs and active community engagement in selecting and supporting CAHW services? How can governments continue to legislate for enabling policies which will monitor effectiveness and quality? The article concludes that increased face-to-face engagement between policy makers and communities will continue to play a key role in policy and institutional change.

Participatory development or participatory democracy? Policy and governance

Previous issues of the series have looked at issues of democracy and governance (e.g. *PLA Notes* 40: Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment; *PLA Notes* 44: Local government and participation). Linkages between participation and governance are becoming more and more important. Here, **John Gaventa** presents his insights into issues of citizen involvement in influencing policy and institutional change. Decentralisation has opened up new opportunities for democratic engagement. New ways of increasing public intervention and more rights-based

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2003

PARTICIPATION SHIFTS FROM 'CLIENT' TO 'CONSUMER' – RESPONDING TO MARKET INFLUENCE

PLA Notes 46: Participatory processes for policy change February 2003

PLA Notes 47: General issue August 2003

PLA Notes 48: Learning and teaching participation December 2003

Pathways to Participation: reflections on PRA. Andrea Cornwall and Gareth Pratt (eds)

Labelling 'empowerment' as local development rather than political action

Participation and policy processes – resistance to change

Publication of *Communication and Power* – new Reflect resource materials

Reflect and Stepping Stones 'STAR' – HIV/gender/power/learning and action

UN Literacy Prize to Reflect/CIRAC

'Have you been PA'd?' from evaluation of two Glasgow projects (health) using PA

Communities First project in Wales piloting use of PA

Reflect in schools/with children (Get Global)

Central government and local government more willing to fund longer more rigorous processes based on previous processes.

2004

PLA Notes 49: Decentralisation and community-based planning April 2004

Participatory Learning and Action 50: Past reflections, future directions

What Men and Women Want: a practical guide to gender and participation. Gender and Participation Toolkit, Oxfam UK Poverty Programme

Surveys show declining child and youth knowledge and interest in formal politics

Local evaluation of Children's Fund programmes and Working with Children and Young People in local development processes around the UK

Trained teams of residents and workers carrying on with community research and action and local participatory evaluation.

Tension between national UK targets and locally derived targets and indicators

Critical analysis of when institutionalised processes for children's participation work

PA being used as a consultation process not addressing empowerment/change

Possibility of North East England PPA

Participation and power in coalitions and alliances on education – Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF)

MA in Participation, Development and Social Change launched at IDS

Post 2004

Reflect Europe circle

MAP Social inclusion European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) and ATD Fourth World

The North other than UK

approaches are appearing to actively and directly involve citizens in full participation. These also seek to make institutions and policy makers more accountable to citizens.

There are valuable lessons to be learnt from past practice. Yet there are still challenges to be faced. How can participatory strategies around deliberation, local government and advocacy improve citizen engagement and deepen participatory governance? What forms could a deeper democratic process take, and whose versions of democracy are appropriate? And which issues are still 'off limits' to public debate?

There is a need to challenge deeply held political cultures and practice, deal with conflict, work with minority groups, build on gains made by community action and go to scale appropriately. The article concludes that documenting and sharing experience and learning that show how participatory governance actually makes a **difference** to people's lives is key to building on success and looking to the future.

Shifting perceptions, changing practices in PRA: from infinite innovation to the quest for quality

In February 1998, we published *PLA Notes* 31: Participatory monitoring and evaluation. In this current issue, **Andrea Cornwall** and **Irene Guijt** offer us some personal insights from their long experience as 'critical insiders' in participatory development. Their article traces the initial developments of RRA and PRA through to evolving and innovative practices – and also evolving concerns over quality and appropriateness – and how participatory methods have developed beyond merely fitting into 'development business as usual'.

From the initial focus on methods, to wider and deeper issues of governance, should participation now be inherently apolitical or more political in its approach? What do new discourses around the issues of rights, citizenship and governance mean for participatory development practices? How important is participatory learning in shaping the ways in which we attempt to 'do development'? How important will renewed thinking on monitoring and evaluation be?

In the last ten years, the community of practitioners has become increasingly diverse and the applications of PLA have evolved into new and challenging areas of work. Within this wealth of evolving practice, Cornwall and Guijt suggest that perhaps the way forward now lies with a new generation of practitioners, capturing again the 'excitement, energy and creativity' that first inspired people to use participatory approaches.

And finally…

Regina's *Participatory Learning and Action* illustration challenge

Even before they first appeared on the cover of *PLA Notes* 29 in June 1997, **Regina Faul-Doyle**'s distinctive cartoons have helped to really characterise the series. Has this been one of the greater challenges faced by those in participatory development? Regina's illustrations have always managed to be comical, appropriate and tell a whole story all at once, summing up the essence of each issue in one tiny square. This time, Regina has got her own back on us….

Future directions…

As all our authors have shown, sharing our experiences, learning and best practice is invaluable. Even after 16 years in print, authors who contributed to *Participatory Learning and Action* in its original incarnation as *RRA Notes* and later *PLA Notes* are still sharing their learning with us. We hope that you find the articles in this issue challenging, stimulating, and inspiring, and above all, that they offer an insight into how we can all make a difference.

We hope that you continue to send us your critical reflections and examples of innovations and best practice. Send us your letters, articles, training tips, networking information, photos, drawings, website links and songs. Send us your emails, videos, CD-ROMs, posters, books, pamphlets, and DVDs. Send us whatever you have that you want to share – your own experiences of participatory learning and action.

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3

Reflections and directions: a personal note

by ROBERT CHAMBERS

Perspective and limitations

Sixteen years ago, in April 1988, when a group of us met in IDS to review the state of play with RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal), and IIED agreed to start *RRA Notes*, something was in the air. RRA had evolved fast. The 1985 International Conference on RRA at Khon Kaen in Thailand had shown how much was coming together: agroecosystem analysis, evolved by Gordon Conway and his colleagues at Chiang Mai University, had contributed transects and observation, sketch mapping and diagramming; semi-structured interviewing had come into its own; and the complexity, diversity and dynamism of farming systems were better recognised, as were the value and validity of so much indigenous technical knowledge. The confluence of these streams was turbulent and exhilarating, a liberating edge of chaos of emergence and creativity. Though RRA was still in 1988 a minority activity looked down on by the mainstream as 'quick-and-dirty' and lacking rigour, we were more and more confident that we knew better. Much had happened, and more was on the way. But for all the sense of expectation, I do not think any of us had any idea just how imminent so many innovations were, nor how radical they would be, nor how widespread their impacts.

Any account of what has happened since, of what we have learnt, and of what the future may hold, is personal and fallible. I have been biased and wrong in the past and will surely be biased and wrong in some of what follows. I tend to criticise and undervalue what normal professionals embrace as rigour, to look for and overemphasise gaps between disciplines and professions, to see any glass as half full rather than half empty, to attribute too much to activities I have been involved in, and to underestimate or overlook what has been done by others and elsewhere.

This last shows up in a North-centric, and IDS/IIED-centric view of change. As the contributions to *RRA Notes* and *PLA Notes* show, much of the published analysis and writing about the innovations of the early days, and even now, has been by people from the North. My writing these reflections is yet another example. But most of the innovations of the past 16 years have been in the South. I think of the many in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean who have been such outstanding but unsung pioneers. They have often been too busy, too committed, too disempowered by English as a foreign medium, or too disinclined in other ways, to write up and share their experience. Many innovators, North or South, also do not recognise the significance of what they have done. Gordon Conway ended the editorial in *RRA Notes* 1:

The aim of the notes is to share a wide set of experiences and ideas – our success though depends on receiving contributions from practitioners. PLEASE WRITE TO US.

The intention was informality, allowing and including

Box 1: February 1988: Abicho, near Dessie in Wollo, Ethiopia.

Photo: Robert Chambers

Part of RRA training by IIED which Gordon Conway led. A scales-from-the-eyes moment (at least for me). On the basis of what the farmers had said in response to the semi-structured interview method we had evolved, the interviewers (left) drew a histogram of agricultural labour requirements by month. When asked to look at it, the farmers said, 'You have drawn what we said'.

Box 2: May 1991: First RRA training in Nepal, near Lumle.

A farmer points out a missing house on a 1:5,000 aerial photograph taken five years earlier. The house was more recent.

During the first PRA training in Nepal, with no trainers present, farmers showed days of rain by month with seeds, then volume with sticks, and then an unusual weather pattern they said occurred one year in five.

Photos: Robert Chambers

spelling mistakes. In the event, those who have written have done a good service but have not been truly representative. May the North-South imbalance continue to be corrected. Many will join in hoping that *PLA Notes* in its reincarnation as *Participatory Learning and Action* will draw contributors more evenly from all over the world. PLEASE WRITE TO US bears repeating.

What has happened?

Methodological innovation began to accelerate in 1988. The RRA training in Ethiopia in February-March 1988 (Ethiopian Red Cross Society 1998) and the field explorations of AKRSP [add full name] in India (McCracken in *RRA Notes* 4), in which Anil Shah, Jenny McCracken, Meera Shah, Parmesh Shah and others took part, gave tantalising hints of what was coming. There were the farmers in Ethiopia who showed they could understand an RRA histogram of seasonal workloads, saying 'You have drawn what we said'. There was the village head in Gujarat who turned the outsiders' sketch map 'upside down' to make it intelligible. Soon the term PRA began to be used– – in Kenya for a form of community action planning, and in India for a multiplicity of group-visual and other participatory processes.

An explosion of activity then took place. I may attribute too much to what happened in India because I had the brilliant good fortune to be there for two years in 1989-91 when many were innovating and I was free to travel, see what they were doing, learn from them, and write. The magnitude of the change can be seen by comparing where we were with *RRA Notes* 1 in June 1988 and where we had reached 20 months later with the bumper *RRA Notes* 13 based on the Bangalore workshop of February 1991. This brought together Indian innovations and experiences with PRA. The great revelations were the methods, and the notion that 'They Can Do It' – that local people, women and men, poor and rich, able

Box 3: MYRADA staff and participants in the first South-South Sharing Workshop.

Photo: Robert Chambers

January 1992: The first South-South Sharing Workshop.

Participants included friends from: Canada-Vietnam (Bardolf Paul), Tanzania (Emanuel and another), Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana (Selina Adjebeng-Asem), India (Jimmy Mascarenhas, Prem Kumar), Kenya (Elkanah Odembo), Nigeria (David Atte and one other), the Philippines (Tootsie Dilig and another), Senegal (Bara Guèye), Sudan (Omar Mohamed), the UK (Robert Chambers), Vietnam, and Zimbabwe (Saiti Makuku).

The Workshop was organised by MYRADA (Jimmy Mascarenhas and others, ActionAid (Sam Joseph and others), and AKRSP (India; Meera Kaul Shah, Parmesh Shah, Anil Shah and others), with villagers in Karnataka and Gujarat also as hosts.

or not able to read and write, were capable of complex mapping, diagramming and analysis to an extent that few if any of us 'professionals' had ever dreamt. To take an example, in May 1991 unschooled farmers in Nepal used seeds and sticks to show days and volumes of monthly rainfall. In 'But how does it compare with the REAL data?' (*RRA Notes* 14) Gerry Gill's meticulous analysis showed the farmer's data to be richer and more relevant for agriculture (for example, showing snowfall in unusual years) than the 20 years daily rainfall data from nearby Lumle Agricultural Research Station. Moreover, they also included a five-yearly abnormal year with snowfall, which the station did not record. Also in 1991 ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics) endorsed the radical video which Michel Pimbert and PV Satheesh had made: 'Participatory Research with Women Farmers'. This, like Jacqui Ashby's earlier CIAT (International Center for Tropical Agriculture) video 'The IPRA Method', was revolutionary, even shocking, for many agricultural scientists. Already in 1991 the main markers were there: the major participatory group-visual methods had emerged, and the crucial importance of behaviour and attitudes in facilitation was well recognised.

The timeline in the editorial gives an overview of the sequence of some significant events. *RRA Notes* 13 was a landmark. Many copies were printed, photocopied and distributed around the world to interested people and to nascent networks. The early 1990s were then a phase of training and dissemination, of networks starting up, and of demands for PRA to be used coming from national and international NGOs, aid agencies and Governments. The Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme in IIED (then, the Sustainable Agriculture Programme) played a big part in this, not only editing, publishing and disseminating *RRA Notes* but even more importantly, conducting training in over a dozen countries. IDS started a small resource centre, coordinated the abstracting of documents, and tried to encourage and support emergent networks.

Their funding and international access and contacts enabled IIED and IDS to play these roles in the early stages and simultaneously to support shifts from North to South and exchanges from South to South[1]. The first South-South sharing workshop, in India, in February 1992 was initiated by IDS but hosted, organised and facilitated in the field by Jimmy Mascarenhas and MYRADA (Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency) Sam Joseph and ActionAid, and Meera Kaul Shah and Parmesh Shah and AKRSP (Aga Khan Rural Support Programme). Later ones originated more and more in initiatives by NGOs in India and elsewhere. The seminal *Participatory Learning and Action: A trainer's guide* compiled by four key innovators and trainers in IIED – Jules Pretty, Irene Guijt, Ian Scoones and John Thomson – was published in 1995 and drew together much of the experience of the first half-dozen years. At the time, it was widely distributed for free and had, and continues to have, a huge circulation and influence, still selling around a thousand copies a year. The *ABC of PRA* (Kumar, 1996) that came out a year later was also widely distributed free and very influential, and came from an international South-South workshop on attitudes and behaviour. It was convened in India jointly by Somesh Kumar and ActionAid India, and by John Devavaram and SPEECH (Society of Peoples' Education and Economic Change) and 24 of the 27 participants were from the South.

Throughout the 1990s, meetings and networking continued to shift from North to South. Early PRA network initiatives in India, Nepal, Kenya, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh,

1 Funders (in alphabetical order) included the Aga Khan Foundation, Danida, ODA (now DFID), the Ford Foundation, Novib, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), SAREC, Sida and others.

Box 4: February 1992 The first South-South Workshop, with AKRSP in Kabripathar village, Gujarat.

Photo: Robert Chambers

Front row, left to right: Lê Minit Tuê (Vietnam), Rutcheli Dilig (Tootsie) (Philippines), Elcy Corrales (Colombia), Oluwayomi David Atte (Nigeria), Mohammed Omer Mukhier (Sudan), Emmanuel Youze (Tanzania), Selina Adjebeng-Asem (Ghana), Lorena Navallasca (Philippines), German Salazar (Ecuador). Back row left to right Lembulung ole Kosyando (Tanzania), Robert Chambers (UK), Bara Guèye (Senegal), Adejo Odoh (Nigeria), Elkanah Absalom (Kenya), Bardolf Paul (Canada/Vietnam), Saiti Makuku (Zimbabwe).

Box 5: South-South Workshop on PRA: Attitudes and Behaviour, Bangalore and Madurai, India 1-10 July 1996.

Photo: Robert Chambers

Left to Right :
1st row left to right: P.V.Satheesh, Deirdre Wright, Malini Venkatadri, Mallika Samaranayake, Sheelu Francis, Farhana Faruqi, Neela Mukherjee. 2nd row left to right: N. Narayanasamy, John Devavaram, Gemechu Gedenu, G.B. Adhikari, Haryo Habirono, Abu Hena Mallik. 3rd row left to right: Kamal Kar, Lars Johansson, Kamal Phuyal, Rashida Dohad, Somesh Kumar, Saiti Makuku, Robert Chambers. 4th row left to right: S. Rangasamy, Shen Maglinte, Shashigo Gerbu
Participants not in the photo: We missed you Arunodayam Erskine, Fiona Hinchcliffe, Sam Joseph, Ravi Jayakaran and Jimmy Mascarenhas.

and South Africa were followed by tens of others. The first meeting of PRA networks was hosted by IIED in London **in 1996**. The second, **the following year**, was hosted by NEPAN in Nepal. During this same period, the network of Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) was initiated and launched by IIED. Later, in 2001, the coordination of the RCPLA network moved to India and was taken up by PRAXIS. When practitioners from South and North met, the first time was at IDS Sussex, the second at Bangalore and Madurai, and the third in Calcutta. These workshops issued statements, heavy with concerns and warnings about quality, ethics, behaviour and attitudes, and the dangers of abuse when going to scale. The first – *Sharing Our Concerns* – was published in 1995 in the first issue of the renamed *PLA Notes*. The second – *Sharing Our Experience: an Appeal to Donors and Governments* – was published in *ABC of PRA* and widely circulated to aid agencies.

During these early years of PRA there were flows, counter-flows and exchanges in many directions, with a mutually reinforcing egalitarianism. A growing flow was from South to North, as trainers from the South (Meera Shah, Parmesh Shah, John Devavaram, Bimal Phnuyal and others), and Northerners like Andrea Cornwall, Carolyn Jones and Tilly Sellers returning with experience from the South, introduced PRA approaches and methods to the North (see Flower and Johnson, this issue).

The spirit of improvisation and innovation generated and continues to generate an astonishing range of methods and applications. The creativity, diversity and thrill of the visual methods was at first almost hypnotic. With time the centre of attention shifted to the extraordinary diversity of applications of not just the methods, but of participatory behaviours and approaches, by no means just those that carried the label PRA. What began with agriculture, natural resources and community planning fanned out inclusively and intermingled to include participation in almost every major domain of human social activity. Reflect for empowerment and literacy (see Archer and Goreth, this issue) and Stepping Stones for HIV/AIDS (Welbourn, 1995) stand out for their exceptional originality, spread and impact. Special issues of RRA/PLA Notes presented much of the rich diversity. An example is *PLA Notes* 29: *Performance and participation*. This had contributions on theatre for development, participatory monitoring and cultural feedback, role-play to transform attitudes and behaviour, forum and legislative theatre, dramatic behaviour in participatory training, using participatory group activities to understand psycho-social strategies for coping with conflict, and participatory video; and *PLA Notes* 39:

Box 6: March 1990: Seganahalli Village, Karnataka.

Photo: Robert Chambers

Jimmy Mascarenhas and the village water controller who is making a map of the fields (paper) and channels (string) below the village tank.

The water controller presenting his completed map to the community

August 1990: Gerebir Village, Ranchi District, Bihar. Social mapping with seed types representing castes

Photo: Robert Chambers

Popular communications added more. The tools and approaches for empowerment and communication now include community radio and others mentioned in other articles (see e.g. Abah, this issue) such as report cards, participatory budgeting, citizen's juries and many others amounting to 'a vast array' (Gaventa, this issue) of innovative forms of public participation and deliberation.

These illustrate how a creative proliferation of participatory methods, approaches and applications has accompanied the expanding frontier agendas of development. In older domains, these have deepened and diversified, as reflected in this issue – sexual and reproductive health and rights (Gordon and Cornwall), HIV/AIDS (Welbourn), gender (Kanji), children and youth (Chawla and Johnson), urban applications (Patel and Satterthwaite), participatory communications (Abah), Reflect (Archer and Goreth), poverty and ill-being (Pettit and White), applications in the North (Flower and Johnson) and natural resource management (Pimbert). In newer domains such as critical reflection (Cornwall and Guijt), rights and advocacy (Pettit and Musyoki) and citizen participation, policy and governance (Gaventa), so much is happening so fast that it is difficult for publications to keep up. And remarkably and crucially for the future, all of these, older and newer, are converging to focus more and more on power, relationships and the personal dimension (see below).

So now 16 years since the first issue of *RRA Notes*, there is much to digest, and much to learn. Each of us will have our own ideas about the main lessons. Here are some of mine.

What have we learnt?

On the negative side, much has been learnt about bad practice, especially through going to scale too fast and the contradictions between participation and top-down drives and demands. Much has been learnt about embedded obstacles to participation, notably in institutional cultures and practices and in individual mindsets, values, attitudes and behaviours. Seeing how these interlock these provokes realism and clarifies what needs to change. Unfortunately, large development organisations and most of those who work in them still only rarely recognise how radically they need to change their procedures, incentives and relationships if they are to practice and promote participation in more than just name.

On the positive side, there is much to celebrate and build on. For example, we have learnt that:

'They can do it'

It is not just the often dramatic learning (almost 'scales from the eyes' in some personal accounts) that poor and marginalized people can make complex and detailed maps and diagrams, and conduct their own analysis. It is a wider generic learning, resonating with work with children, people who are disabled, the mentally disturbed, sex workers, poor people, women, the marginalized… and others who are looked down upon, that people who are thus 'lowers' have far greater capabilities than 'uppers' usually believe. What they often lack is self-confidence, opportunity and encouragement. Given these, they can surprise not only others but themselves with what they are able to do.

Difference matters

The big problems and disincentives which prevent or deter participation by those who are poor, marginalized and discriminated against – women, girls, the destitute, the disabled, those of low caste, immigrants, refugees, members of minorities, and so on – are better recognised. Experience has been gained with the special, patient committed efforts needed for their empowerment and willing inclusion.

PRA approaches and methods can open up hidden and sensitive subjects

Contrary to much common belief, well facilitated group-visual approaches can enable people to share and analyse difficult subjects. Examples are sexual behaviour and reproductive health (Gordon and Cornwall, this issue), violence in various forms (Moser and Mcilwaine, 2004) and open defecation leading to community-led total sanitation (e.g. Patel; [insert the other water ones] this issue; and Kar, 2003).

Behaviour, attitudes and good facilitation matter more than methods

In the very early days of PRA, the methods were almost transfixing in their effect, as we watched with wonderment at the maps, matrices, models, systems diagrams and the like which people showed they could make. In the decade and a half since then, too much attention has continued to be given to the methods overlooking the greater importance of attitudes, behaviour, facilitation, power relations and process.

Methodological pluralism works best

Mixing methods and approaches – 'complementary methodologies' (e.g. Pimbert, this issue) – is the name of the game. If there is an appropriate fundamentalism it is that there is no fundamentalism, no one methodology, no one 'school' that is somehow 'right' and others wrong. So RRA, PRA, Reflect, Appreciative Inquiry, Planning for Real, and tens of other named approaches are all sources of ideas and learning, and all are evolving together. There can never be any definitive manual, but rather menus which ever grow and diversify, and processes and outcomes unique and transient each time. Methods and experiences provide ideas and ingredients and an invitation to mix, adapt, improvise, invent and create, again and again, each time new in each new context.

We run best on two legs – practice and critique

Practice without critique is slow to learn and improve (Cornwall and Guijt, this issue). Critique without practice lacks realism and risks irrelevance. To be grounded, learn and change, the two must iterate and spiral. The most penetrating and useful criticisms have come from practitioners who have walked in both worlds, the practical and the academic, and who have interrogated their own practice.

Scale with quality needs commitment, continuity and congruence

Most attempts to go to scale fast with participation have been abusive and disastrous. A culture and practice of participation has to be securely based on field practice, nurtured at all levels and supported from the top. Where quality with scale has been achieved, as with RIPS in Lindi and Mtwara in Tanzania and with the North West Mountain Programme in Vietnam, there has been continuity of committed staff who have stayed in place for years and years; long-term investment in relationships; and an evolving congruence in behaviour, attitudes and relationships between levels. (Sadly, even now in 2004, few lenders, donors or international NGOs behave as though they realise this).

Institutional change is a progression and an art

There is a spectrum of practice (Pimbert, this issue). There are no fixed formulae. Combinations of conditions and of actions differ: alliances, networking, seeing and seizing moments for action, devising and interpreting rules and procedures, finding and backing champions – these are among the means. We have learnt that institutional learning and change have to be continuous, and are vulnerable and ever in need of renewal.

Participatory professionalism challenges power

Much professionalism has been linear, standardised, top-

Box 7: November 1989. The second PRA in South India, in Kistagiri village, Mahbubnagar District, Andhra Pradesh, with Youth for Action and Sam Joseph.

Photo: Robert Chambers

Possibly the first participatory social map ever made. This photo is on the cover of *RRA Notes* 13.
Participants: Ranjit Ambastha, Cherry Leah Bagalanon, Girish Bharadwaj, Robert Chambers, Gordon Conway, S. Devaraj, John Devavaram, Aloysius Fernandez, Vidyadhara Gadgil, Mary Lou Higgins, Janardhan, Ravi Jayakaran, Sam Joseph, Thomas Joseph, Bernard J P, Rolf Lynton, Kamal Kar, Somesh Kumar, P Vijay Kumar, James Mascarenhas, A K Monnappa, Ravi Narayanan, Maricel C Piniero, Jules N Pretty, Radhakrishnan, K Rajendra Prasad, Vidya Ramachandran, B R Ravi Prakash, Eva Robinson, Anup Sarkar, Mr Satyamurthy, Parmesh Shah, Sheelu, Vani Shivaji, J Vimalnathan.

down and patriarchal. Participation challenges patriarchy and the power and security of many teachers. At the same time 'power over' frames and distorts realities, and all 'power over' deceives. The new participatory professionalism embraces self-critical reflection, and learning, unlearning and unceasing personal and professional change.

Where now? What next?

A recurring danger in development is giving up on ideas and approaches, which should instead be deepened and extended. So it is with participation. Like gender awareness, it has a permanent place in good practice as it evolves. But the distasteful vocabulary of the supermarket has infiltrated development-speak with 'flavour of the month', 'shelf life' and 'use-by date'. There is a sense that there must always be something new. Some might want to say 'Participation – been there, done that'. Or that if *Participatory Learning and Action* has been going for 16 years, its job must be done, or if it is not done, it has failed.

These would be profound errors. They would be to abandon a tree nursery when new seeds and species are being discovered and planted, the demand for saplings is

Anil C. Shah facilitating causal linkage diagramming by a farmer in Gujarat showing the impacts of irrigation which had come to his village a few years earlier. Anilbhai was at the time Chief Executive of AKRSP (India)

Photo: Robert Chambers

rising, and new land for planting is opening up. Participatory learning and action will always be nurseries for new approaches, methods, behaviours, attitudes and relationships, bringing with them new frontiers, understandings and priorities. Some words will be stable and stay but the realities they cover and what they mean will evolve. Some insights and practices will fade and be rediscovered. Others will be truly new. All will be ever transient and always taking new forms.

As *RRA* and *PLA Notes* have recorded, so much in the past decade and a half has been new, sometimes dramatically so. The current rapid rate and wide range of innovation seem likely to continue. There is a tantalising sense today, as there was in 1988, that much more is about to unfold. It has been a gift of participatory approaches and methods continually to enthral us with surprise, and continuously to point to new issues and potentials. Tackling and realising these is not a matter of a few years. There will never be closure. They are, rather, features of our human landscape, permanent but locally diverse, ever emergent and ever changing in form. The contributors to this issue have identified many and there are more. Thinking of issues and potentials, each of us can make our own list. You may wish to make yours before seeing mine. The question is: where should we be looking and what should we be exploring now?

One place is reviving good things that have slipped out of sight.

"The creativity, diversity and thrill of the visual methods was at first almost hypnotic. With time the centre of attention shifted to the extraordinary diversity of applications of not just the methods, but of participatory behaviours and approaches, by no means just those that carried the label PRA"

Renewing RRA[2]

So frenetic are fashions that the old clothes of development – the 'flared trousers' in David Mosse's memorable phrase – are quickly abandoned and despised. Few are those today who admit to doing RRA. One consequence is falling again into old errors which were once corrected: the biases of rural development tourism (what is that?); the failure to observe and ask about things; the rush into methods (once it was questionnaires, now it is participatory mapping and the like) without introducing oneself, relaxing, chatting, establishing rapport. The art of the semi-structured interview has got buried: in what training that any reader has conducted or experienced in the past ten years has semi-structured interviewing featured? Certainly none in which I have been involved. Yet SSI, as it was known, was at the core of RRA. Days (too long!) were spent on it in some training. SSI remains a vital art form and skill, and the RRA will always have a part to play in good development practice. If we need to repackage and relabel to give a veneer of novelty, what was Rapid and Rural could become Realistic and Reflective. But whatever the letters are taken to stand for, the better practices of RRA deserve digging out, dusting down and putting back into service.

Other places to explore look more to new things in the future. For me, looking forward, three themes for participation stand out:

- Power and relationships
- Professional revolutions
- Personal change

They crosscut and are complementary. Has the time for them come, and will it come more and more?

[2] I am grateful to Andrea Cornwall for drawing my attention to this.

Power and relationships

Only in the 2000s have power and relationships become a pervasive theme. A workshop in Dhaka (ActionAid, 2001) opened new ground in its exploration of power and how it can be transformed. Two guides rich in materials, methods and ideas have been published: *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics (*VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002) and *Reflect: Communication and Power* (Archer and Newman, 2003); and the book *Inclusive Aid: power and relationships in international development* (Groves and Hinton, 2004) present many relevant examples and insights. Transforming power, and empowerment of and self-empowerment by those who are weak, are being achieved in many ways in many contexts.

Some frontiers…

- confronting patriarchy, permeating and embedded as it is in societies, cultures and religions, as a near-universal challenge which needs to be named and transformed into gender equality with gains in wellbeing for men as well as women;
- givers becoming downwardly accountable to receivers;
- the assertion by lowers of non-negotiable principles as a means of reversing power relationships;
- processes through which groups of the weak come in from the margins, organise and act collectively to assert and claim their rights;
- life and relationships in total institutions like asylums, prisons, ships, boarding schools, hospitals, orphanages, old people's homes, nunneries and monasteries;
- drug probationers and psychotherapy; and
- adults and children (Chawla and Johnson this issue)

Large organisations

Another area where is this applies is large organisations, for example in government departments, political parties, the police, the private sector and trades unions. The literature on management is massive, but there has been little cross-fertilisation into such organisations and their relationships from the sort of experiences that have been reported in *RRA* and *PLA Notes*. Softening hierarchy and making relationships more congruent within and between top management, middle management, and the front line is an area where participatory approaches and methods have much to contribute.

Power from below

Power from below is taking new participatory forms and these are growing. More and more forms of participatory

Box 8: Community-led total sanitation: 'They Can Do It' and the power of reversals

The methodology of community-led total sanitation (CLTS) by rural communities was pioneered and evolved in 2000 by Kamal Kar and colleagues with Water Aid and the Bangladesh NGO VERC. By mid 2004 it had spread to probably over 2,000 communities in Bangladesh, and to India, Cambodia, Mongolia and other countries, and starts had been made in Indonesia, Nepal, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia. In the CLTS process community members are facilitated to do their own appraisal of open defecation. They map it, do transects and observe it, calculate the quantities produced, analyse pathways of contamination through dirt, flies and animals, and estimate how much each person ingests each day. Disgust, shame, religious precepts for cleanliness, and self-respect then commonly combine in a decision that open defecation must stop. People dig latrines and construct them according to local designs. Some are shared. Those who are better off often help the poorer and landless with space and materials. This generates social solidarity and enhances cooperation within the community. Once open defecation has ended, communities put up boards proudly proclaiming the fact. NGOs and governments support their own staff and also community catalysts and consultants to spread CLTS. And in Bangladesh imams preach in favour of it.

All in the community gain in wellbeing and health, especially women, children, and the poorer. Women in South Asia are liberated from the 'before dawn or after sunset' constraint of custom. Evidence to date is that medical expenses and days lost to sickness are sharply, even dramatically, reduced. Total sanitation is, it seems, maintained through social pressures and the common interests of all, poorer and less poor alike.

CLTS springs from and combines much of what has been learnt in recent years, not least about the capabilities of local people, that 'They Can Do It'. It replaces costlier hardware subsidy-driven programmes, which lead to the lower benefits of partial sanitation. The PRA local analysis and action is cheaper and brings the bigger gains of total sanitation, and brings them for all, richer and poorer alike. Social solidarity from CLTS has triggered other local initiatives, for example to achieve primary schooling for all children, or measures for flood proofing, led by the leaders who emerge in the CLTS process. CLTS is also being used as an entry point for wider livelihood programmes.

CLTS demands reversals of mindset and practice: professional, from standardised blueprint engineering designs and controls to diverse local designs and ownership; institutional, from top-down target-driven development judged by budgets spent and latrines constructed to bottom-up behaviour-led development judged by the end of open defecation; philanthropic, from the view that the poorest must be subsidised to recognising that they are best helped within their own communities. Above all, these combine as personal challenges to policy-makers and practitioners, whether in governments, aid agencies, or NGOs, to recognise that any programme of subsidies for hardware, or even any hint of one, inhibits, slows, stops and even prevents CLTS, as tragically it has done in some contexts.

CLTS is vulnerable. Sabotage can be inadvertent by those with 'normal' mindsets and beliefs. It can also be conscious by those with vested interests: by professionals who promote and gain from standardised and costly hardware; by bureaucrats, whether lenders, donors or Government, who seek the benefits and prestige of big budgets and rapid disbursement; and by organisations and by politicians for whom hardware subsidies provide patronage and rents.

CLTS could play a big part in achieving or overachieving the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of those without affordable access to sanitation by 2015. But to do this requires not just promotion, but also, and vitally, that professionals, bureaucrats and politicians reverse their mindsets, reflexes and behaviours. They need vision, guts, realism and above all self-restraint. Many other good participatory processes have been subverted and debased in going to scale. Could CLTS be an exception, or will 'normal' mindsets and motivations prove too strong? The challenge is personal for all who are involved, and as huge as the opportunity.
For CLTS see Kar (2003).

governance outside formal democratic systems have been evolved and are spreading (e.g. Gaventa; Patel; and Pettit and Musyoki, this issue). Social movements are becoming more prominent. Farmer Field Schools for Integrated Pest Management illustrate how a participatory intervention that meets a widespread need can coalesce into a popular campaign and movement with political clout (Pimbert, this issue). With increasing emphasis on citizenship, rights, advocacy and popular organisation, power from below seems set on an upward trajectory, at least in the commitment and inventiveness it deserves and receives.

Transforming power from above

In all these domains, the first common reflex is to focus on empowering the weak. The bigger frontier and opportunity is often the behaviour and attitudes of the strong: of the dominant males and their institutions; of the lenders and donors; of those with property and wealth; of those invested with pastoral, custodial, disciplinary, didactic, therapeutic or formative roles – priests, warders, police, teachers, therapists, parents. The challenge is to find ways in which they can transform their power over others and use it to empower those others, and come to experience that transformation as fine and fulfilling for themselves.

Professional revolutions

RRA Notes and *PLA Notes* have contributed much concerning methodology. Article after article has presented new ways

"Personal change underlies and is often a precondition for institutional, professional and policy change. Attitudes and behaviour have been constantly reaffirmed as central to good facilitation and participation. There will always be much here to explore, to learn and to celebrate"

of doing things. These have often challenged normal dominant professional points of view. Now in addition to methodology, we have the new focus on power and relationships provoking changes across and between organisations, institutions, disciplines and professions. In this ferment, we may be surprised by the range and radicalism of some of the revolutions in professional outlooks, methods and behaviours that will follow. Three potentials are:

Participatory numbers

The association of participatory approaches and methods with qualitative insights has sustained a failure to recognise the significance of the many ways participation can generate good quantitative data (see e.g. *PLA Notes* 47). Opportunities here are for more accurate numbers, calibrating and qualifying official statistics, like the evident undercount of some 35% in the Malawi census of rural population (Barahona and Levy, 2003: 4-7)); for aggregating poor people's priorities; for empowering people and communities through their own statistics and analysis; and for replacing many questionnaires with cheaper, more accurate, more insightful, less time-consuming and less purely extractive methods. Breakthroughs are coming thick and fast and the future is wide open. At a conference on poverty research in Toronto in April 2004, eight of the 14 papers reported on the use of wealth or wellbeing ranking. Unrecognised by many mainstream professionals the challenge and exhilaration of a methodological revolution are upon us (see also Pettit and White, this issue).

Approaches and curricula in training and education

Participatory approaches and methods of the sort reported and explored in *Participatory Learning and Action* are quite rare in secondary and tertiary education around the world (Archer and Goreth, this issue; *PLA Notes* 48). Skills with words (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and mathematics are prominent. The absence of analytical diagramming from school and university curricula is little short of bizarre when it is so pervasive in PRA and so superior for the presentation and analysis of many forms of diversity and complexity. Also much of the emphasis remains on teaching rather than learning. Too often it is true that 'by the time people have left university, the damage has been done'. The implications are radical: for curricula from primary onwards to include PRA-type analytical diagramming; and for teachers and lecturers to shift emphasis from didactic teaching to facilitating participatory and experiential learning.

Participation, poverty and human rights

Participatory Poverty Assessments initially seemed to promise revolutionary impact, putting first the realities and priorities of poor people. In practice, when they have been one-off exercises, their impact, though evident, has been quite limited. For their part, Participatory Human Rights Assessments are in their infancy. Enough is now known to suggest three measures to turn things more on their heads, and to sharpen impact:

- to make PPAs and PHRAs not one-offs but continuous, iterative processes as in UPPAP (the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process);
- to incorporate participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E), especially for human rights and gender relations, for example as pioneered by NESA (New Entity for Social Action) in South India where women keep visual diaries; and
- to involve policy-makers and decision-makers as researcher/facilitators in the fieldwork, with direct learning by officials, lenders and donors.

Just how powerful and transformative direct participatory engagement can be has been demonstrated in Tanzania, where SDC [insert full name] staff, after training as participatory researchers, spent whole days working with and helping very poor people, provoking remarks like 'I've worked in rural villages for more than 20 years, but I have never had an experience like this' (Jupp 2004: 5; also SDC 2003).

The personal

Personal change

Personal change underlies and is often a precondition for institutional, professional and policy change. Attitudes and behaviour have been constantly reaffirmed as central to good facilitation and participation. There will always be much here

to explore, to learn and to celebrate. Reflexivity – being self-critically aware and questioning one's behaviour, attitudes, mindsets, values, beliefs, predispositions and relationships – has been strikingly weak in development discourse and literature, and is not yet prominent in writings about participation (but see e.g. McGee, 2002). One sign that this is changing is the increasing attention given to codes of behaviour to overcome ethical blocks (e.g. Chawla and Johnson, this issue). Personal ethics may always be a last frontier.

Pedagogies for the non-oppressed

Using this phrase requires an apology to Paulo Freire, but I dare to hope that were he alive he might approve. Much, perhaps most, change for the better, will come from below, from social movements, democratic processes, popular pressures, protests and confrontations. But much change too can come from above. Rights-based approaches can be reinforced and complemented by obligations-based approaches. These apply most to the powerful and the rich, how they see things, what drives them, what they perceive as the good life, and what they do and do not do. The time has come to direct more attention to them. Immersions (Eyben, 2004; Irvine et al, 2004)) with direct experiential learning from and with poor people, have a part to play, and promise to be a wave of the future. We need, too, to find more ways in which the rich and powerful can come to welcome the redistribution of wealth and power, and to find forms of responsible wellbeing for themselves by behaving, relating and being in new ways.

Vision and transformation.

Taking a long perspective, we can ask what the 21st century project should be, and what part participation could and should have in it. So many concerns are vital: the future of the state; global governance; transnational corporations and the market; Northern subsidies and quotas which protect the rich and impoverish the poor; security, energy, the environment and climate change; the new imperialism and WMD of the United States and its acolytes; justice and peace for the Palestinians and other oppressed peoples; international migration; social exclusion and injustice; urban regeneration; the brutalisation of children and young people… and permeating these pathologies of power, perceptions and hypocrisies. We can all add to the list.

All these have one thing in common: the dimension of human agency. They are determined by what we do and do not do. By showing what people can do, and the difference people can make, past contributions to *RRA* and *PLA Notes* offer a beacon of hope. Inspiring examples, many of them mentioned in this issue, describe actions that have led to good change. Holly Ashley asked me: 'Is there a wider vision of the future where participatory ethics and practice become the bedrock for our sense of global citizenship and custodianship?' I like the idea of participatory ethics. They can have a bearing at all levels, between all levels, and in all domains. They point to what we can and should do individually and collectively, locally, nationally and globally: a great lesson of participation is our power to make a difference both through individual 'power to' and through collective 'power with'. And again and again, that action and that good change have been driven and inspired by imagination, commitment, critical awareness, courage, creativity and above all vision. Participatory methods, approaches, values and behaviours affirm these qualities, and express them. There is a primacy here of practice, and of experiential learning, which revitalises with new energy and enthusiasm and restores hope. Faith and action together expand the boundaries of the possible. Our vision can be of innumerable small personal actions and changes that build up and combine to transform our world. The future can be brilliant if we make it so. And we know where to start. It was Gandhi who gave us the challenge:

You must become the change you wish to see in the world.

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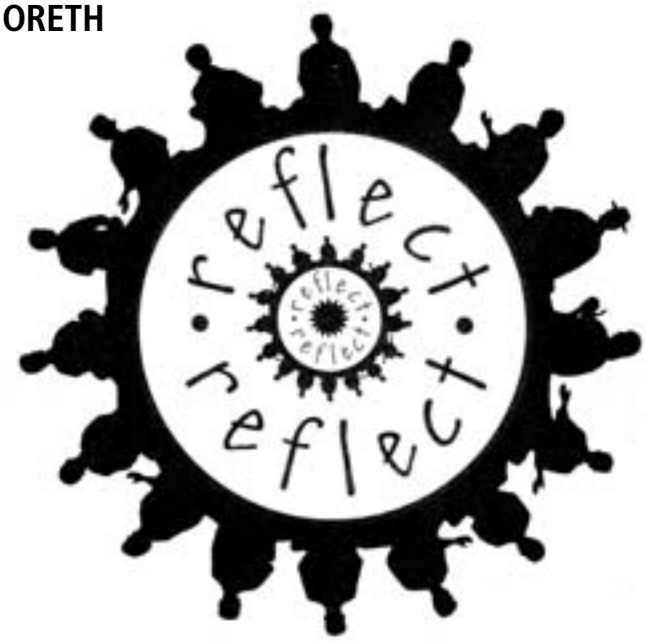
4

Participation, literacy and empowerment: the continuing evolution of Reflect

by DAVID ARCHER and NANDAGO MARIA GORETH



Cover of the Reflect Mother manual

In 1998 Bimal Phnuyal, Sara Cottingham and David Archer of ActionAid guest-edited an edition of *Participatory Learning and Action* (then *PLA Notes*) called *Participation, literacy and empowerment*. It focused specifically on experiences of the Reflect approach – which was developed through field practice in El Salvador, Uganda and Bangladesh between 1993 and 1995. There are other participatory approaches to adult learning, for example drawing on the use of learner generated materials or 'real' materials, but it is the Reflect approach that has uniquely drawn on PRA and which thus framed the original article (as well as this update).

Reflect was originally conceived as a fusion of Paulo Freire's theoretical framework on the politics of literacy and the participatory (particularly visualisation) methodologies developed by PRA practitioners. Articles in the 1998 edition of *PLA Notes* were written by 26 different authors – 18 from the South, 8 from the North; 13 women and 13 men. At the time everyone involved felt that there had already been a huge accumulation of experience with the Reflect approach. When we look back today we see that we were still very much in the early stages. The Reflect approach has now spread through the work of at least 350 different organisations (including NGOs, CBOs, governments and social movements) in more than 60 countries. In 2003 the International Reflect Circle was awarded the United Nations International Literacy Prize for the way in which Reflect has 'revolutionised' the field of literacy in the past 10 years. In this article we will try to capture the key moments in this continuing evolution of Reflect. The image below probably

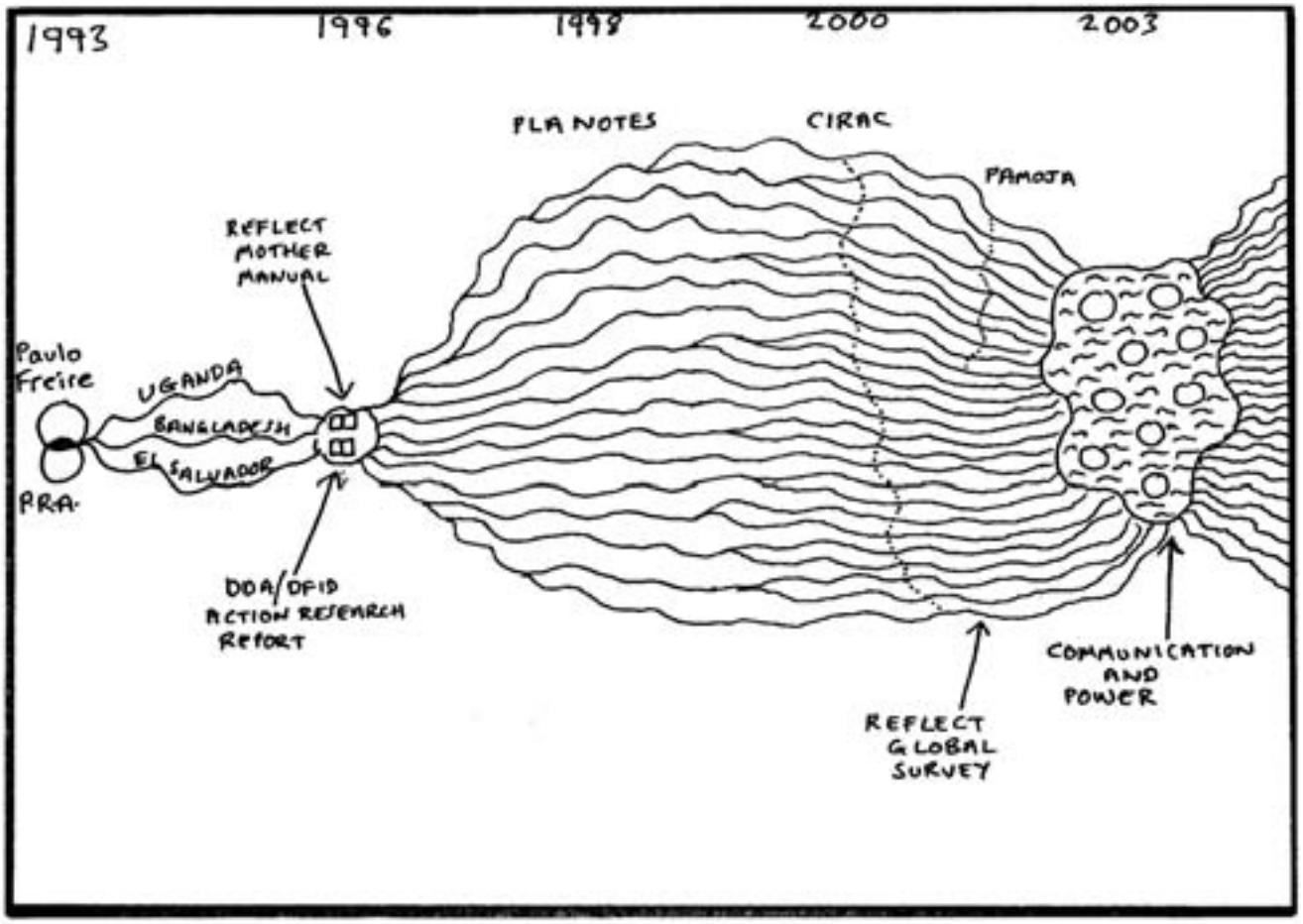


Diagram: David Archer

stretches the limits of how a river system flows, but it more or less illustrates the evolution of Reflect.

Reflect started through parallel action research projects in three locations. In Bundibugyo, Uganda the approach was developed in a remote multilingual area where three of the four local languages had never been written down (two were written down and popularised during the course of the project). In Bhola, Bangladesh, the Reflect pilot was in a conservative Islamic area with women organised into savings and credit groups. In El Salvador, the pilot was a partnership between a highly politicised national organisation (CIAZO) and a grassroots organisation (COMUS) led by ex-guerrillas, two years on from the end of the civil war. These three experiences were written up in an action research report published by ODA (now DFID) and the practical learning from them was fed into the Reflect Mother Manual for sharing with other practitioners.

Reflect then spread very rapidly. Trainers from each of the three pilots and from ActionAid's International Education Unit ran regional and national training workshops. People from different countries visited the original pilots sites and went back home to adapt the approach themselves. Some people just picked up the Reflect Mother Manual and used it to produce their own locally relevant manuals.

By 1998, when we were asked to guest-edit *PLA Notes*, there was an emerging international group of Reflect practitioners communicating with one another, many of whom met in London in March 1998. The publication touched on most of the key themes that were being raised at that time:

- the need to have a permanent evolution in Reflect;
- the contradictions inherent in manuals;
- the need to strengthen gender sensitivity in Reflect;
- the historical baggage of 'literacy' and changing conceptions towards 'communication';
- the need to change our understanding of numeracy;
- approaches to the training of facilitators and trainers;

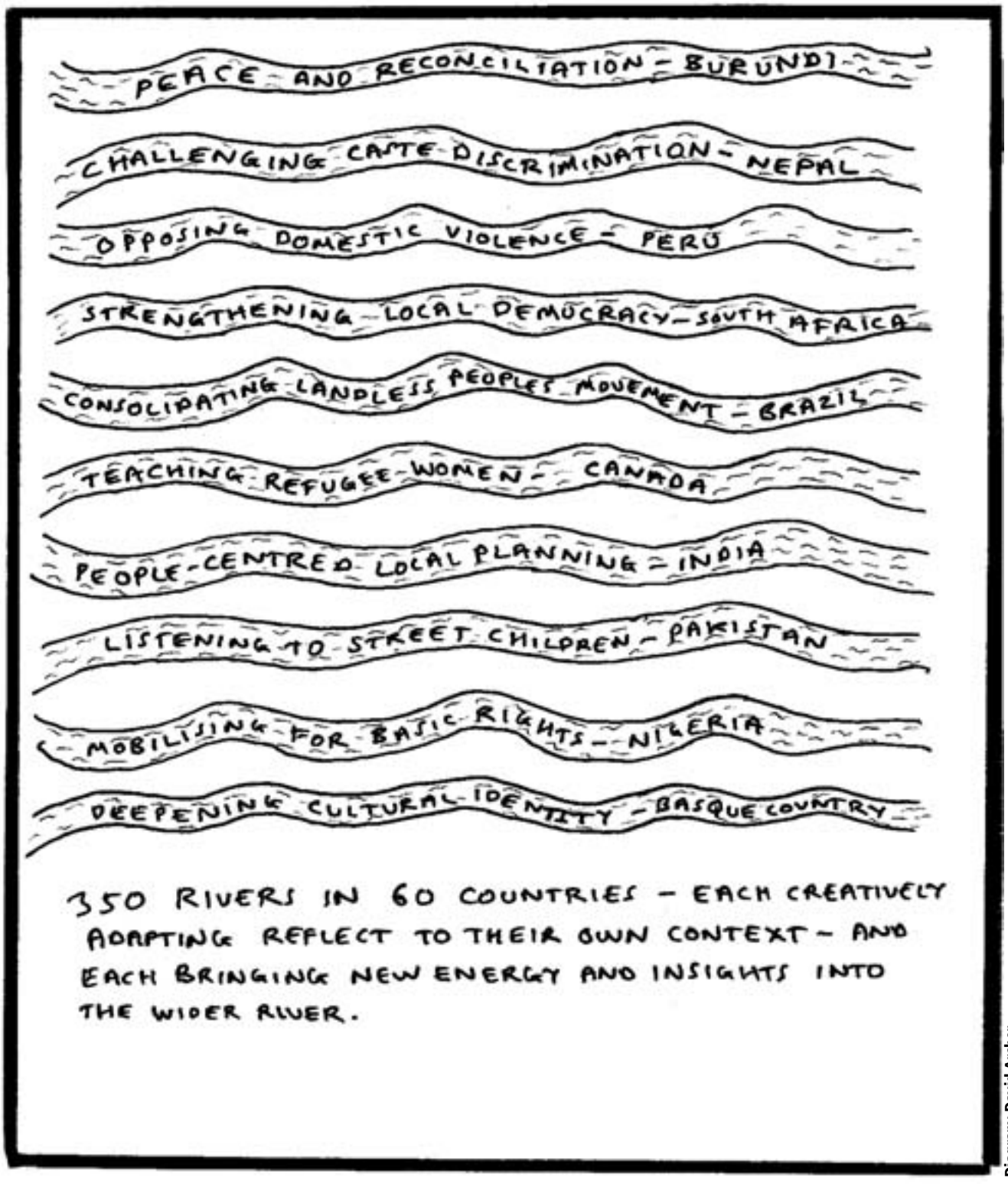


Diagram: David Archer

"The Reflect process aims to strengthen people's capacity to communicate by whatever means are most relevant or appropriate to them… the focus is on using these rather than technical learning. It is through focusing on the practical use that real learning takes place"

- institutional change in organisations using Reflect;
- Paulo Freire's legacy; and
- adapting the approach for urban areas, for children and for work on a large scale.

Experiences were documented from countries as diverse as Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Uganda, Ghana, El Salvador, Nicaragua and the UK. Of the 26 practitioners who wrote articles at that time, 22 are still actively linked to Reflect practitioner networks and continue to contribute to the evolution of Reflect.

If we move forward five years to 2003 and look at a cross section of the river, we can see some of the experiences that have proved particularly influential in this continuing evolution of Reflect. Whilst not wanting to overdo the image, each new experience by each new organisation adapting Reflect to its unique context, focus and priorities, brings new nutrients into the overall river system, enriching the approach as a whole.

Building peace and reconciliation in Burundi

ActionAid has seven years' experience of working with mixed Hutu and Tutsi circles, facilitated by two facilitators (one Hutu and one Tutsi). The focus is on overcoming the past conflict within communities – enabling people to find common ground and define common interests. Local traditions of song and dance are actively used within the process. One of the most dramatic impacts has been the return of refugees from camps in Tanzania following sustained communication with them by participants in the Reflect circles.

Challenging caste discrimination in Nepal

Reflect circles started with *dalits* (untouchables) in Saptari District in the late 1990s. Within a short time the circles developed an intense focus around shared experiences of caste-based discrimination. Moving beyond concerns about their economic condition, participants began to question their position in Nepali society and organised strategic actions of resistance, refusing to fulfil certain caste-based roles (such as disposal of animal carcasses). Within a short while a district-level *dalit* movement developed. There was a backlash from local elites but the Reflect circles linked to journalists in the national media to expose violations of their rights. Eventually the local *dalit* movement seeded a national movement, challenging parliament to act against caste-based discrimination, for example demanding the rights of *dalit* children to learn in mainstream schools and to be treated as equals.

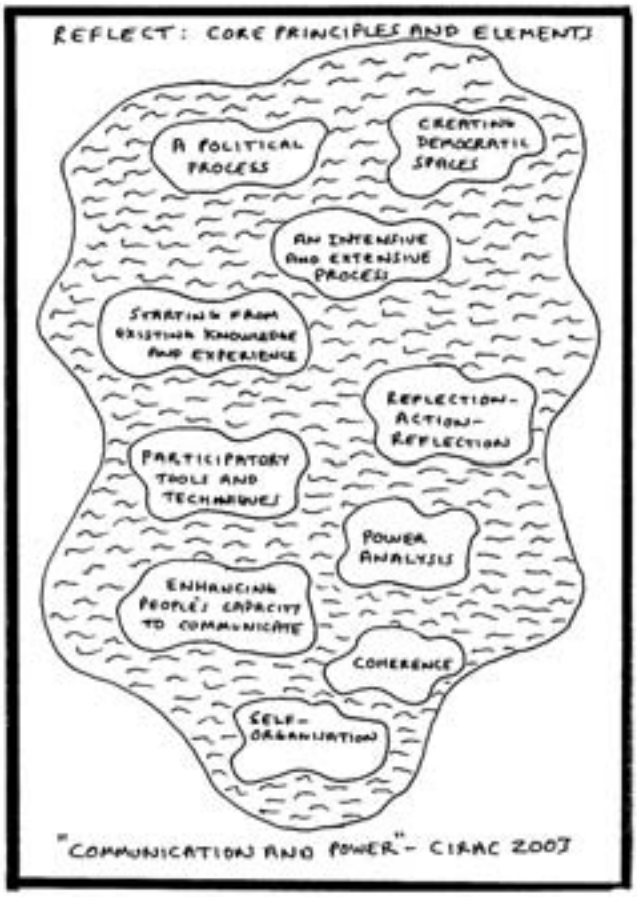
Opposing domestic violence in Peru

CADEP, a Cuzco-based organisation, adapted Reflect with Quechua men and women to break the silence on taboo issues

Box 1: Pamoja

Pamoja, the Africa Reflect network, was conceived in 2001, formally founded in 2002 and secured full legal status in 2003. Pamoja exists to facilitate learning, sharing and the continuing evolution of Reflect experiences in Africa, in order to build a critical mass of men, women, boys and girls empowered to realise their basic human rights. Pamoja has rapidly established an excellent reputation:

- National Pamoja forums have been formed in many countries including Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Malawi, The Gambia, Mozambique, Burundi, Rwanda and Ethiopia, Zambia, Sudan, South Africa, Mali, Senegal, Togo, Angola and Burkina Faso.
- Pamoja has published a widely respected regional review of progress on adult education for UNESCO's global review (Bangkok, 2003).
- Pamoja played a lead role in the development of STAR (the fusion of Stepping Stones and Reflect to empower communities in the face of HIV/AIDS) – and is coordinating a large Comic Relief and EC funded programme to develop the approach further.
- It ran an excellent capacity building workshop in Tanzania on using Reflect for school governance and grassroots budget tracking (to which 11 countries sent participants).
- It has co-published a paper on Reflect Rights and Governance in Nigeria and South Africa – helping to re-frame the understanding of Reflect in Africa.
- It has provided direct support to training workshops in countries like Zambia, Sudan, Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda and South Africa.
- It has compiled research proposals on links between women's literacy and girls' education from six countries.
- It has played a leading role in international networking around Reflect and in the Global Campaign for Education week of action, helping to build links between Reflect networks and national coalitions/alliances on basic education.
- It has strengthened communication across the region through an e-newsletter and through the Reflect website – as well as supporting linkages between countries to respond to the overwhelming demands for training.
- It has built up exciting programmes of work around Reflect with pastoralists and Reflect in conflict situations.



of sexuality and domestic violence. Using a range of participatory tools, participants developed their own analysis of the underlying causes of domestic violence and prepared powerful personal testimonies from men and women. They then linked up with a range of local media, producing posters, radio programmes and TV 'spots' to raise the profile of the issues they had discussed and called for an end to domestic violence

Strengthening local democracy in South Africa

The national NGO Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) has adapted Reflect to deepen the relationships between elected officials in local government and their constituents. In the highland communities of Mpumalanga Province there is little culture of democracy, no history of active citizenship or engagement with local government. The Reflect circles offer a bridge between local people and those who are supposed to serve them – helping to define democratic norms and develop good models of governance in the post-apartheid era.

Consolidating the landless people's movement in Brazil

MST, one of the world's largest social movements, has adapted Reflect in the northeast of Brazil to build democratic practice within the settlements where their members have seized abandoned land. The movement has a significant presence nationally but there have been concerns that it is difficult to maintain accountability to the grassroots. Reflect processes have helped to ensure that families involved in local land occupations have a say in decision-making.

Teaching English to refugees in Canada

A local NGO in Calgary has five years experience using Reflect to teach language skills to refugee women whilst also helping participants to address social and economic issues. The national parliament has recognised the Reflect approach as representing a positive practice.

People centred local planning in India

In Balangir, Orissa, a district-wide process has strengthened the voices of scheduled castes and tribes in local planning – exploiting the powers of the *Panchayati Raj* that usually only exist only on paper. A big emphasis is placed on participants overcoming the intimidation they feel in situations (e.g. in government offices) where literacy is required or expected. Enabling people to deal confidently with power dynamics in such situations can be more important than actually teaching people to read and write.

Giving children a voice in Pakistan

Save the Children Fund have built up an impressive programme of work adapting Reflect to work with street children – enabling them to present their perspective on issues that affect their lives to agencies who rarely listen.

Mobilising for basic rights in Nigeria

A wide range of organisations, from grassroots community organisations to the government's national adult literacy agency, has adapted Reflect within an explicit rights-based framework. Following years of military dictatorship people are nervous about speaking out and demanding their rights; and the bureaucratic structures of government do not make it easy for people to secure their rights. The process and impact of Reflect in Nigeria is captured in *Reflect, Rights and Governance: Insights from Nigeria and South Africa* (Newman, 2004).

Deepening cultural identity in the Basque Country

Reflect has been used to strengthen the use of the Basque

"More and more 'we' are asking ourselves to be clear who the 'we' is when 'we' write like this… The only way 'we' can construct a meaningful 'we' is to constantly deepen our own reflection on power and our own democratic practice"

language in public spaces and workplaces, as well as celebrating Basque culture and improving local government communication with citizens.

There are so many other rivers that could be mentioned, that it seems crudely selective to have mentioned only a few. What about the wonderful Reflect process with sex workers in Bangladesh? What about the work with Reflect in community schools in Mali? Or with pastoralists in Kenya? Or with the women's movement in Matagalpa, Nicaragua? Any attempt to highlight examples risks offending those not mentioned!

From publications to living networks

These diverse experiences would not be able to enrich the Reflect river system if it was not for the continuing communication between practitioners. In the early days of Reflect a big focus was placed on publications – including the twice-yearly production of *Education Action* magazine, which captured key stories and issues. Whilst these publications continue, there is much more emphasis placed now on human contact between practitioners. National inter-agency networks or forums have been formed in many countries, particularly bringing Reflect trainers together to share experiences. At a regional level networks have also emerged, including the Latin American Reflect Action network (with sub-networks in Central America, the Andes and Brazil) and Pamoja, the Africa Reflect Network (with sub-networks e.g. in francophone West Africa). CIRAC, the International Reflect Circle, was founded in 2000 at a meeting in Oxford (followed by meetings in South Africa 2001, Brazil 2002 and Bangladesh in 2004). There is growing belief that real learning and sharing takes place face to face and that only a limited amount can be achieved through publications and email. As well as meetings and workshops, exchange visits are also encouraged across countries and continents.

One of the most critical communication issues has been language. In most meetings, language emerges as the key factor in power relations (above gender and race) and so commitments have now been made to ensure that there is concurrent translation between four core working languages: English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Publications are likewise produced in these four languages (and sometimes then translated into national languages). It is the relative success in creating this multilingual space that has contributed to the continuing enrichment of Reflect.

Core principles

Despite the immense diversity of Reflect practice these living networks and the ongoing multilingual communication have meant that it has been possible to draw out some core principles and elements that underline all Reflect practice. In 2003, over 100 organisations actively contributed to producing new international resource materials for Reflect practitioners, called *Communication and Power*. This process, together with wider networking, has helped to bring all the diverse rivers back together within a single lake – from where they can flow onwards in new directions with renewed vigour. The introduction to this *Communication and Power* pack identifies ten key principles or elements that are the uniting elements in that lake:

Reflect is a political Process

Reflect is an approach premised on the recognition that achieving social change and greater social justice is fundamentally a political process. Reflect is not a neutral approach that seeks to promote a neutral vision of 'development' based only on improving people's immediate material conditions or providing short-term responses to their basic needs. Rather it is an approach that seeks to help people in the struggle to assert their rights, challenge injustice and change their position in society. It is action oriented, not passive or detached. It involves working with people rather than 'for' them.

Creating democratic spaces

Reflect involves creating a democratic space – one in which everyone's voice is given equal weight. This needs to be actively constructed as there is almost nowhere that people have an equal voice (people everywhere are stratified by gender, age, hierarchy, status, ability etc.). As such it is counter-cultural – always challenging local culture to the extent that power relationships and stratification have created inequality. It is never easy and may never be perfectly achieved but it should be a constant focus. The facilitator plays a critical role – exploring power dynamics within the group as a basis for deepening analysis of power in wider society. Conflict resolution becomes an increasingly important skill.

Intensive and extensive processes

Reflect is rarely a short or one-off process. A global survey in 2001 showed that usually groups meet for about two years – and sometimes they continue indefinitely. Often they meet from three up to six times a week – and rarely less than once a week. Each meeting may take about two hours. This ongoing intensity of contact is one of the fundamental ingredients for a process that seeks to achieve serious social or political change. Such a sustained timeframe is also essential in order to achieve changes in behaviour and attitude – which do not come about easily. Such an intensity of contact may be uniquely feasible for something broadly framed as being about 'education'.

Starting from existing experience

Reflect involves starting with respect for people's existing knowledge and experience. It is not about starting the learning process through importing or transferring knowledge. However, this does not mean accepting people's existing opinions or prejudices without challenge – especially where these contradict the principle of creating a democratic space. Moreover there will always be a part of the process in which participants are enabled to access new information and ideas from new sources so as to contextualise and extend their understanding. The key is to give people control over that process, and confidence in their own starting point – so that they can be critical and selective. We have to avoid locking people into purely local analysis – but also avoid imposing an external analysis. Finding the balance between these is critical.

Reflection/action/reflection

Reflect involves a continual cycle of reflection and action. It is not about reflection or learning only for the sake of it, but rather reflection is always for the purpose of eventual action. It is not about action isolated from reflection as pure activism rapidly loses directions. It is about the fusion between these elements and it can start with either. In this process 'action' may be in the 'public' or 'private' sphere; it may be 'collective' or 'individual'; it may be small scale or large scale – so long as it is linked to a continuing process or cycle. Some actions may be very local and precise; others may require linkages beyond the local level to national level mobilisation. The level at which action will be most effective, and the extent to which solidarity with others is needed, is a key area for reflection.

Participatory tools

A wide range of participatory tools is used within a Reflect process to help create an open or democratic environment in which everyone is able to contribute. Visualisation approaches are of particular importance (maps, calendars, diagrams, matrices and other graphic forms developed by practitioners of PRA) – and they often provide a base structure for the process. However, many other participatory methods and processes are also used: theatre, role-play, songs, dance, video, and photography etc. The basket of tools is limitless: practitioners are encouraged to use any tools that they have found to be effective in other contexts – anything that works to bring out people's knowledge and opinions, or stimulate discussion and analysis. There are no unique 'Reflect' tools.

Power analysis

All participatory tools can be distorted, manipulated or used in exploitative ways if they are used without sensitivity to power relationships. Reflect is a political process in which the multiple dimensions of power and stratification are always the focus of reflection and actions are oriented towards changing inequitable power relationships – whether that inequity is a result of gender, class, caste, race, physical or intellectual ability, hierarchy, status, language, appearance etc. A structural analysis is needed to ensure that issues are not dealt with just at a superficial level. Only through such analysis can effective strategic actions be determined.

Enhancing people's capacity to communicate

The Reflect process aims to strengthen people's capacity to communicate by whatever means are most relevant or appropriate to them. Although part of the process may be about learning new communication skills, the focus is on using these rather than technical learning. It is through focusing on the practical use that real learning takes place. So, the process may involve enabling people to deal with the power of literacy or access a second/dominant language. It may involve giving people meaningful access to new media such as video, radio or computers, or it may involve simply helping them to assert their own voice in places or on subjects where they have previously been silent. The focus may be on communication in the public sphere or in the private sphere. *Communication and Power* has resources on the spoken word and images as well as the written word and numbers.

Coherence

Reflect is an approach that needs to be used systematically. It is not just for use with others but also for use with ourselves and within our own institutions. The same prin-

ciples and processes need to be used whether working with a group of homeless people or with supposedly 'expert' facilitators, trainers, managers or national coordinators. Our starting point should be with ourselves and our own institutions though we should not become self-absorbed. The International Reflect Circle and regional networks like Pamoja need to apply all the principles outlined here in any space or piece of work if we are not to fall into contradiction.

Self-organisation

The focus of the process should always be towards self-organisation – so that groups are self-managed where possible rather than being facilitated by (or dependent on) an outside individual or organisation. In many contexts the starting point will be a process initiated from outside, but over time Reflect practitioners seek to construct spaces for people to organise for themselves based on their own analysis and their own agenda.

Future Directions

Some very exciting new directions that different organisations are taking with Reflect will doubtlessly inform future papers of this type (perhaps the 100th edition of *Participatory Learning and Action*!). A small selection of these initiatives or areas of work include:

STAR: Linking Reflect with the Stepping Stones methodology

STAR is a systematic approach relevant to working in a world where HIV affects almost every aspect of people's lives. Stepping Stones has proved remarkably effective in getting people to address sensitive issues such as sex and death – and has proved the effectiveness of working in peer groups (by age/sex etc.). It has emerged gradually over the past three years and is now being piloted systematically in Uganda, Mozambique and Nigeria, though practice is already spreading to other countries and continents.

Linking Reflect to governance and accountability

A recent paper by Kate Newman draws powerful insights from experiences in Nigeria and South Africa. Increasingly there is a recognition that Reflect is positioned as an approach to 'creating spaces' in contrast to the ever more prevalent (but limited) 'invited spaces'. There are strong links emerging with building grassroots capacity around budget analysis and tracking – as well as generating and using local statistics.

Box 2: International Reflect Circle coordination team contacts

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Critiquing the evaluation of empowerment

Earlier this year DFID published *Literacy, gender and social agency* by Anne Jellema and Marc Fiedrich which provides a radical critique of early Reflect practice and powerful insights into the problems with most approaches to evaluation of participatory projects. The book is critical as much of participatory monitoring and evaluation as it is of external evaluation processes – showing how the power dynamics around evaluation are much more complex than many of us previously assumed. This poses significant challenges for the future directions of evaluation work in Reflect.

Increasing the use of Reflect in the UK

ActionAid, other organisations, and independent practitioners are adapting Reflect to the UK context, with different initiatives emerging in London, Oxford, Sheffield, Wales and other UK cities. Experiences are being developed in the fields of community work, urban regeneration, anti-racist education, and refugee empowerment.

Reflect and information communication technologies

A DFID funded action research initiative in Uganda, India and Burundi is exploring how to ensure that poor and excluded people can both choose and sustainably access appropriate information and communication technologies (ICTs). The process starts from participants in Reflect circles doing their own analysis of existing information systems and communication needs and then linking the introduction of technology to the development of relevant basic communication skills. This initiative has already attracted global interest from those grappling with the ethics and practices of ICT for development.

Adapting Reflect to work in schools

There has been a tendency to assume that using Reflect with children needs to happen outside the formal environment of a school. Increasingly this is being challenged. Get Global is an approach developed by Oxfam, SCF, ActionAid, CAFOD, Christian Aid and DFID, adapting Reflect for UK secondary schools, for the citizenship curriculum. Rather than focus on content, the premise of this was that children choose their own issues, map these issues out for themselves, make local to global links, define actions within the microcosm of the school or their community, take those actions, reflect on them and evaluate their own learning. It was piloted in 30 schools where many teachers initially said it was impossible – but they later became the strongest advocates for the approach. This is now spreading nationally and in adapted forms even internationally.

Reflect for strengthening school governance

Many countries have started to adapt the Reflect approach to capacity building for school governance (whether for school management committees or parent-teacher associations). The aim is to enable local people to expand their present role and voice whilst reinforcing government responsibility for education. In this context, numeracy work focuses on monitoring and analysing school budgets, demystifying education statistics etc. There are many other examples also emerging of Reflect being used as an approach for pre-existing community groups to strengthen or deepen their process.

Using Reflect on a large scale

Many people assume that a participatory approach like Reflect cannot work on a large scale. Yet after the fall of the dictator Fujimori, the Women's Ministry in Peru's transitional government launched a national Reflect programme reaching 180,000 people across the country. We expect more large-scale experiences to emerge in the coming years.

Reflect within institutions

There is a growing body of work looking at how Reflect adapts to organisational change processes. A notable experience in this was the Participatory Methodologies Forum in Bangladesh 2001, where senior management from across ActionAid were immersed in reflections on their own power, and commitments were made to 'Transforming Power'.

Applying Reflect to ourselves: subjectivity

In much of Latin America, influenced particularly by feminist theory, Reflect practice is now centrally defined by a strong focus on personal behaviour – and ensuring consistency between work and home life. Known as Reflect-Action processes, they focus on the recognition of power relationships within our own immediate experience and work towards personal transformation as the essential foundation for building solidarity and sustained action. Such processes are based on an intense critique of the 'development industry' – of how poverty has become privatised so that it is now big business that serves mainly as a source of profit for the middle classes.

Reflect within coalition building and campaigning

ActionAid has an increasing focus on coalition and alliance building around education at national and international levels – bringing together diverse NGOs, parents associations, teachers unions, the women's movement, child labour or debt campaigners etc. – into broad-based platforms to place education higher up the political agenda and provoke public debate around the role of education. We find that precisely the same principles and elements need to be applied in facilitating the emergence of these alliances as we use within Reflect practice at the grassroots. We need to apply all ten of the principles outlined above – from building democratic space to using participatory tools and power analysis within our own process. This is equally true in national campaigns/coalitions as it is in regional campaigns and in the work we do with the Global Campaign for Education.

Final Reflections

There are other participatory approaches being used in the field of literacy and adult learning – and increasingly we have come to see the name 'Reflect' as double-edged. It helps bring practitioners together from across different institutions and contexts and makes people open to learning from others who otherwise seem very different (as everyone is united by sharing 'Reflect'). But, at the same time it acts as a barrier for others – who are doing participatory work but not using Reflect – who feel excluded. We need to build bridges with others rather than set up barriers. Yet we are also at a point of no return. If we tried to abolish Reflect and just say we are using participatory approaches for adult learning we should not be in any doubt that within a few months lots of people would also pledge themselves to this new and latest '*PAfAL*' approach.

More and more 'we' are asking ourselves to be clear who the 'we' is when 'we' write like this. Can anyone write an article of this nature that truly captures the breadth of Reflect practice and the diversity of voices? Some practitioners will read this and feel that something essential is missing. The only way 'we' can construct a meaningful 'we' is to constantly deepen our own reflection on power and our own democratic practice. The International Reflect Circle now has a core coordination team (two people chosen each year by practitioners in each region – Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe). There is no formal or legal power but this team determines priorities and frames the work-plan of a part-time CIRAC Coordinator. This person is presently based in the International Education Unit of ActionAid, but this role will rotate in future so that there is no 'centre'. But the practice of power is complex and cannot be resolved simply through structures. Perhaps the most crucial thing is to be always open to a process of critical analysis – to ensure that at any moment we are within our own reflection-action-reflection process.

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KEY RESOURCES
Communication and Power: CIRAC 2003
Reflect Global Survey: CIRAC Working Paper 2001.
Reflect Rights and Governance: Insights from South Africa and Nigeria, 2004 by Kate Newman.
Education Action magazine (twice a year in 4 languages).
Transforming Power: Participatory Methodologies workshop 2001
Website: www.reflect-action.org

5

THEME SECTION

Voices aloud: making communication and change together

by OGA STEVE ABAH

Illustration from cover of *PLA Notes* 39. Popular communications

Cartoon: Regina Faul-Doyle

Introduction

People are always talking; talking about many different things (work, joy, pain, freedom, etc.). But it is also a common observation that people's voices are always ignored and not heard when they are crying against injustice, against oppression and suppression of freedom. Authorities would normally prefer to ignore voices when they are calling for change. And, based on our experience of working on issues of development failures and on issues of disenchantment with political practice, we have come to understand the difficulty of communication, especially when the aim is change. The manner and structure of popular communication for change must therefore respond to the context in which the work is taking place; for it is determined by the nature of the society, community and target groups in which one is working.

The context of communication and change in Nigeria

One of the reasons why making communication in Nigeria is a difficult enterprise is that we probably live where the tower of Babel broke! There are about 474 officially categorised languages in a country of approximately 140 million people. It is believed that unofficially there may be over 500 languages. In official circles we speak English, which was bequeathed to us by the British people who colonised us. But once outside of such official environments, and especially in the villages, it is a different story. Secondly, the very multiplicity of languages tells of different nationalities and cultures that have been aggregated to form the country Nigeria. In this common plate where beans, maize and rice, etc. are mixed, each one still remains its own self. The colo-

"Perhaps the first level of communication in this exercise is between community members and facilitators who have come from the outside. The first step is learning from each other to set the agenda"

nial legacy of amalgamating different parts and peoples of the region into one country called Nigeria has also created a legacy of difference that nationhood has not yet been able to obliterate. There is one more factor that makes communication in Nigeria difficult. This is the fact that the majority of Nigerians, about 60%, is still non-literate. So, citizenship, language and education remain points to negotiate in the choice of tools and methods to employ in discussing development, participation and rights.

Very often we go for a methodology that has roots and resonance among the group we are working with. This means that the communication forms, which may include different performative modes, are employed. We also deal with issues that are of concern to them. Although very often these issues may be of national importance, they must have relevance and significance at the local level. Democracy, governance and citizenship have been some of the areas of concern. These have relevance to every Nigerian in broad terms. But when we pull them down to what they mean in the lives of the ordinary men and women in rural communities and urban slums, we are talking about the lack of basic amenities and infrastructures such as drinking water, roads, electricity and blown roofs in village primary schools. In talking about all these, moving from the abstract to the concrete, we have employed a combination of participatory approaches such as Theatre for Development (TFD), Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and the traditional survey method of questionnaires (or checklists, as we prefer to call it) to make communication with people on issues of development and change in their lives. So how does one really do communication for change?

Making communication and change together

The work that we have done with communities, both from within the academic environment and as members of non-governmental organisations in the Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance/Theatre for Development Centre, has been characterised by collaboration, negotiation and talking aloud through the performance arts. Increasingly also we have been asking the different methodologies to converse with each other. One critical feature is collaborative development and use of accessible communication strategies. However, as outsiders we are not offering a ready-made package for 'low intelligence people' to use. We take from what already exists, adopt and adapt them collectively. Perhaps the first level of communication in this exercise is between community members and facilitators who have come from the outside. The first step is learning from each other to set the agenda. The first line of educators that this learning consists of are the community members, and the learners are the animators from outside. One of the thrills of this learning for me has always been the collapse of intellectual and knowledge arrogance when we go into the communities as 'experts' with all our baggage of preconceived notions of the nature of rural people and their problems. This arrogance is best exemplified by the objective and indeed a declaration of superiority when the students say '*We are going to conscientise the villagers. We will educate them on their problems and teach them how to solve them!*' And of course, many of us who teach the theory of engagement and change have conditioned as well as premised the students' understanding in prejudice and lack of experiential knowledge by some of these same scholars! So, Freire's concept of dialogics, out of which emerges conscientisation (knowledge/consciousness and action) is taken only to mean information and alas we fall victim to the banking system!

The joy of this conscientisation crusade is that it works in reverse in the field! The students are the ones who end up being educated. For one, they do not understand the community issues and must learn from the people what these are. Secondly, they are hardly able to answer the questions which the community members raise concerning their neglect by government. So, they have to learn more about the relationship between government, the people and development. However, what the students know and are able to do is to improvise drama on the basis of existing information about the community joys and problems. Even with this skill the students and TFD animateurs have to acknowledge that the dynamics of theatre in rural and urban squatter communities is a different one from that in academic campuses.

Such learnings have shaped our practice of TFD; so the practice now follows a process of research, of negotiation and of performing in communities in which power play that shapes community life is understood. Over the many years

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that we have done this, we know that in broad terms there may be a common agenda between animateurs and communities. However, there may be differences in the way the issues are perceived and understood. There may be variations in opinions on how best to talk about the issues, and there may also be differences in how to reach the people in power who should hear the voices. To make communication for purposes of change it is therefore imperative to arrive at a common understanding. This demands negotiation. The strategic direction is how the common agenda developed by facilitators and communities would lead to communication with people in power (PIP). So, we need to first agree with each other.

Stage one: what are the issues?

The first step in understanding the community concerns is to generate information from community members. Our approach is to first identify community-based organisations (CBOs) that have respect within the community. Such CBOs would then be our guides as well as the core group of people who will constitute the resource team to undertake follow-through actions. The approach that we have evolved, and which has worked quite well, is the combination of approaches which I have called methodological conversations. All of these approaches engaging in the conversations may be put under the homestead label. The array of instruments/approaches has included focused group discussion, participant observation and interviews, transect walks, mapping and storytelling. I have always enjoyed this combination because of the many layers of conversation that goes on and the amount of information it is capable of generating. The next step is for the community, with the input of the animateurs, to prioritise the issues that have emerged. The issues that they consider to be the most critical are the ones that the drama will focus on.

We have passed one level of conversations. The conversations here have been between community and animateurs. It has also been between and amongst animateurs debating some matters that are not quite right, and arguing over what to do next. One such debate that I have always witnessed and contributed to is the confrontation between textbook prescription of the number of people with whom to conduct focused group discussions and the reality of the village, in which passers by would stop and join in the discussion through the duration of the exercise or move on after one or two interjections. The textbook says not to allow such interjections or uninvited members. But the community experience tells you that exclusion may alienate and jeopardise your project. I never cease to marvel as well as enjoy myself at the many contradictions that normally emerge and the discomfort of the 'experts' that they got it wrong!

Stage two: TFD, PLA, *et al.*

The drama creation is the next stage in the process. However, we see it as a continuation of the first section. It is also another level of the conversation in which drama and performance will serve several purposes (research, analysis, community engagement and entertainment).

After my parents had taught me how to talk, to communicate, respond to instructions and run errands, I think the other milestone in my knowledge of communi-

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cation was as a young boy sitting at sessions of folk tale performances in the village. The story sessions allowed communication between the story performer and the 'audience' on the one hand and between the characters in the fictional world of the story and every one at the event on the other. Both the performer and the audience knew the characters, corroborated their knowledge and existence by declaring at different points in the performance that they were present at the events the storyteller was describing! But they also challenged the performer when his performance of the story they all knew threatened to abort the harmony of the cosmos that the story had been devised to uphold. This threat was very often perceived by the 'audience' when the narrative plot and the content that support the message began to deviate from the norm. The difference between this old age moral position and TFD is that the one affirms while the other problematises. Nonetheless, what interests me, and what I believe TFD has learnt from storytelling performances, is the provision of a site for tapping community wisdom and information. The other lesson is the democratisation of participation by allowing others to enter into the performance to engage in a critical change of course and, the collective ownership of the story and the performance. I believe that TFD and PLA have used these lessons well.

Take an example: it is 2000 in Birnin Kebbi and the Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance is conducting a capacity-building workshop for about six community-based organisations on their capacity needs to engage in governance, as promised by the new democratic dispensation after the withdrawal of the military from politics in 1999. It was a desire to enter the political as well as the development spaces that had opened up. We began by asking what sort of capacity the groups needed and for what purpose. The list ranged from 'We want to talk to government, we want to claim our rights, we are not getting the promises and development that the politicians promised us at elections'. The catalogue that came out was a combination of problems and intentions. So we needed to unpack these to actually know what capacity the CBOs were looking for. We broke into small groups to discuss some of the issues generated above. When we discussed and clustered the many issues that emerged, we arrived at five key concerns as follows:

- forced marriage and gender discrimination;
- the culture of silence and the attendant lack of self-esteem among ordinary members of various communities and CBOs;
- lack of freedom of choice, and of association and action;
- poor education; and
- absence of accountability and transparency in governance.

As the group discussions continued, the stories were about the non-performance of government. It also emerged quite strongly that the community-based organisations, and the many ordinary persons they represented, had no voice in the decision-making process in the state. Furthermore, after a session of brainstorming around these core issues, the consensus was that there was a serious implication of denial of rights. Therefore, the capacity the CBOs wanted was the ability to mobilise and to advocate. It was also about the skills to do a critical analysis and to be able to package an argument that would help their case.

There was enough information coming from the participants on the poverty of the ordinary people in Birnin Kebbi town and the state in general. So we said, let us see how some of these issues manifest around town. We did a transect walk. We came back and downloaded what we saw onto a map. In the process of interrogating the map the participants were engaged in analysing the issues they had earlier enumerated. They also mapped out relationships, studied locations of different groups and classes in the city and the significance of such spatial difference in relationship to the question of where development was taking place and where was left out. The drawing of the map was itself eventful. Everyone was on their feet arguing, debating in order to reach agreement on the location of features and the sizes of objects to represent them. One of the reasons for the eventfulness of the mapping exercise was the realisation by the CBOs that they were all from in or around Birnin Kebbi and yet did

not interact much with each other, and so they did not know what different groups were doing. The map made the CBOs see each other's locations and the spread of activities.

Stage three: interrogating the map and dynamising the issues

There were two points of interest for me from the exercise. One was the dynamisation of the issues (rather than the dynamisation of sculpted stories) from inside the map. Participants were asked to locate on the map of Birnin Kebbi the different sites where each of the core issues predominated. Forced marriage was located in the spaces inhabited by the non-literates who were also mostly not enlightened on the issues of rights and choices. Although this phenomenon also took place in the elite locations among the rich and highly educated people, it was euphemistically referred to as matchmaking. When the parallel was drawn between forced marriages and match-making, some of the women at the workshop who lived in the DG quarters where the practice of match-making was prevalent, vehemently objected to the comparison arguing that match-making was different and far more preferable to forced marriage because, in the former, the girl's consent is at least respected. The women also argued that parents know what is good for their children. When reminded that part of the rights which we just discussed had to do with freedom of choice, the women insisted that doing what is right for the child was not a negation of that freedom.

The spaces where the ordinary men and women lived their daily lives and where the very grassroots CBOs engaged in their activities were indicated as notable sites for 'shrunken' personalities. The participants said that this was the case because people in such spaces were constantly downgraded, their knowledges rejected, and their needs ignored. As a consequence they no longer have confidence in what they know and what they are capable of doing. This sense of low worth is further aggravated by the lack of freedom of choice, which authority structures impose on their subjects. Such authority structures were named as the palaces of traditional rulers, government and the elite in the society. One participant observed that, 'They downgrade us so that we do not have the mouth to challenge what they are doing wrong'.

The discussions and analyses coalesced in various drama pieces that focused on the issue of accountability and transparency. They argued that the focus on accountability and transparency was important because they were features of good governance. Secondly, they also said that at the centre of their marginalization and poverty is corruption which is the antithesis of good governance. The participants worked in small groups to tell stories of their experiences as marginalized citizens. They also performed corruption and from within the dramas outlined their ideals of a good government and how that would promote development. A significant point about the dramas was that they performed good governance from two levels. The first level was an internal examination of the operations and administrative strategies of the CBOs themselves. The central question in the drama was, 'To what extent do the CBOs themselves practise a transparent system of governance?' The question demanded that the CBOs tell the truth about themselves. This was difficult as it was too close to home. The members adopted a creative escape of making their dramas about 'other' organisations that did not practice good governance. It was clear that these 'other' organisations were similar to, if not the same ones present at the workshop. But it was safe and comfortable to talk about their organisations from a fictive and third person remove. Then at the second level they brought government down for shredding, based on their knowledge of being either civil servants or unemployed youths with frustrated aspirations.

As part of the examination of participants' organisational and administrative practice, the facilitator asked everyone to turn the searchlight on themselves and to ask whether we are accountable and transparent in our homes, to examine how we relate with our wives and family, etc. Then it dawned on people that the oppressions and problems they complain about may not only be about those in government, but that they could be about each and every one of us. It therefore became clear that we could not separate ourselves, our attitudes and behaviours from the issues we identified. Thus when participants were asked to indicate what was gained from the drama-making exercise and what happened to them in the process of doing the map, they gave the following responses:

- It helped an understanding of the issues.
- It made us to think deeply – something you must do with your brain.
- We had to concentrate.
- The thinking together and making the drama in groups encouraged group participation.
- As we talked and worked together it revealed patterns of cultural values and behaviour.

"... the voices that are heard are not necessarily that of TFDC. It is the voices of the ordinary people who ordinarily do not enter the spaces where development and policy matters are discussed"

- The map provided good knowledge of the area.
- It made it possible to locate sister organisations and key features in the town.
- The social map enacted the story of Birnin Kebbi in terms of issues of democracy and development.
- Holding the chalk and making the map on the floor made me feel like a good designer; I had a feeling of satisfaction.

This process of communicating and making change as reflected here has two parts to it. One is the process of understanding the issues and the second is building capacity for action.

In this process TFD and PLA were both engaged in enacting communication for change. What was also being heard were the voices of the CBO members drawn from different parts of the state. They were speaking to each other, first as a group with a common predicament. They were also interested in speaking to government about their concerns as citizens of the State. In the dramatisations that critiqued both government and CBO practices, drama was telling the story of development and its failures. The map was an outline of the geography of poverty in Birnin Kebbi. The interrogation of both the map and the dramas was interested in pointing out directions that might be useful for the CBOs in both their desire and attempt to talk to government about participatory governance and development.

It is in this regard of wanting to hold conversations with government that other means of communication are added to TFD and PLA. In our work with CBOs in different urban and rural communities we are always told, 'The government does not talk to poor people like us'. In contrast, they see us as 'people who can talk to government'. We know the truth that not even we are able to talk to government as easily as community members imagine. But we do know the media that government wants to see itself reflected in. These are television and radio. They are also happy to be packaged in videos. So, with 'Encountering Citizens' (an ongoing research by the Theatre for Development Centre (TFDC) into citizenship in Nigeria) we have used these forms of media to disseminate research results to people in power and to other development activists. Information about what others are doing in an environment where face-to-face sharing is difficult, the voices that are heard are not necessarily that of TFDC. It is the voices of the ordinary people who ordinarily do not enter the spaces where development and policy matters are discussed. In serving as media through which the government is prepared to hear voices of such people, those same people have managed to enter reserved spaces; it is also an act of transgressing the spaces that are usually closed. For example, when on December 4, 2003 the TFDC showed its video, 'Nigeria: In Search of Citizens?' at the Commonwealth People's Forum event as part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), the people sitting in the main auditorium of the Yar'Adua Centre in Abuja, Nigeria were a combination of law makers drawn from the Nigerian National Assembly, representatives from international development agencies engaged in giving different kinds of development assistance to Nigeria. Also present were civil society activists from all parts of Nigeria and the Commonwealth countries. The video they were watching was a documentation of realities of development problems from Bayelsa, Benue and Kaduna States. The voices they heard in the video were those of the peoples of these different regions talking about ethnicity, religion, gender, their needs and their frustrations. I am not sure that Kande Patrick from Kurmin Jatau in Jaba Local Government Area from Kaduna State would otherwise go beyond the gate of the Yar'Adua Centre without being harassed, insulted and sent away! But the world listened to her that day! When the oil spillage and the flames of burning gas in the Niger Delta filled the screen, the realities of the calamity were beyond denial. The images and the drama that the audience watched that day were of young and old people from Bayelsa in the Niger Delta. The TFDC offered incisive captioning and problematised the three related issues of citizenship, rights and development. In addition, the discussions that followed proved that video can be a useful tool for communicating development. They also showed that such media could bring home issues and generate a lot of discussion. This media dissemination also went beyond the Yar'Adua Centre to the national arena. The Nigerian Television Authority in its annual review of major events showed interviews with key players in the citizenship research from Nigeria, UK, Brazil and India, three different times. Watched by over 40 million people across the nation the issues had engaged national consciousness.

In a related manner, when the ginger drama and the Commonwealth civil society visit to Sab-Zuro in Jaba Local Government Area of Kaduna was shown on the Kaduna State Television station in its prime time news slot, 'Panorama', on the 18 December 2003, the politics of ginger was being heard all over the State and brought the debate to public view.

But beyond mass audiences on television or at major events as happened at the Yar'Adua Centre, such videos may be watched by people in power in the privacy of their offices or homes. They may also be put to use in workshops and conferences to frame discussions and debates on related issues.

Stage four: community action plans: building capacity and planning development

One last step in our making development together with the people is to discuss the catalogue of issues that have emerged, prioritise them and engage in the discussion of actions. There are several rationales around community action plans (CAP): that development does not have to be something that someone or some authorities out there give to communities. Communities can develop their own societies. We however acknowledge that such development may need the support of others outside their immediate environment. So, when the community action plan starts from identifying priority issues, it explores who the stakeholders are in the project. It is then that we begin to talk about responsibilities and who would take charge of what activity. Then we analyse capacities and capabilities. By the time we have explored budgetary implications and time frames and what outcomes the community is looking for there is a whole picture, as well as the challenges, laid out in front of everyone. In outlining a range of activities, in identifying actors/stakeholders and in allocating roles and responsibilities to members of their organisations, the CBOs are accepting that they are change agents. The journey to this point is a long exercise of challenging attitudes, perceptions and preconceived notions. This journey is a capacity trip.

Conclusion

The communication that takes place in Theatre for Development happens in different arenas, corresponding to the various stakeholders in the agenda defined by any one set of objectives and goals. In general however, there is always a development issue at the centre of all TFD work in Nigeria. We have also found that sometimes the issues are not necessarily physical infrastructure. It may be located in what Boal has called the 'cop in the head', i.e. internalisation of belief or philosophies that may act against critical thinking and change. Development communication in this instance would be about reaching the cranial recess where such internalisations have taken refuge in order to develop a new consciousness that challenges the 'cop'. It is also about developing collective understanding and meanings of the phenomena that underpin our lives. Following these therefore, the group can put out 'messages' to places where they believe there would be positive effect. The media that have made the voices and voices loud have, in our experience, ranged from the indigenous performance arts of storytelling, songs and dance. Others are drama, PLA, radio through to television and video.

Communities plan their own development intervention making and interrogating the map of Birnin Kebbi

Photo: Oga S. Abah

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6

Reflections on gender and participatory development

by NAZNEEN KANJI

Introduction

Feminists and advocates of women's rights, mainly women, have tried to promote gender equality in development while a different set of academics and practitioners, mainly from backgrounds in rural development policy and practice, have worked to promote participatory development. While there have been overlaps in the methods used (Moser, 1993; Levy, 1996), gender advocates have sometimes ignored the importance of participation. Similarly, critiques of early work promoting participatory methods highlighted shortcomings in terms of gender. More recently, there have been important discussions of how to combine approaches and promote both gender equality and participation in policy and planning processes, as well as in development programmes and projects (Guijt and Kaul Shah, 1998; Cornwall, 2000).

Participatory Learning and Action includes examples of participatory development initiatives which take a gender perspective and seek to empower both women and men. It also includes critiques of participation which exclude women. The themes where gender has been a central focus, dating back to 1991, include:

- Integrating gender analysis in the use of participatory methods and tools – these include both positive examples and critiques pointing to the exclusion of women or the misleading aggregation of results;
- Sexual and reproductive health including HIV/AIDS. The Stepping Stones approach stands out as a particular innovation;
- Literacy and adult learning with experiences in the use of the Reflect methodology;
- Agriculture, forestry, livestock and fisheries – again there are positive examples as well as constructive critiques of projects from a gender perspective;
- Water and sanitation projects;
- Community needs assessments and planning.

These papers provide a wealth of experience of practitioners and researchers grappling with difficult and sensitive issues on the ground. This short article does not attempt to provide a comprehensive assessment of achievements and challenges which have been faced in different sectors and different parts of the world. That would be impossible. Instead, it provides a more general reflection on participatory development from a gender perspective and looks to future challenges.

This article begins by laying out the case for a focus on gender issues, and then discusses the tensions between gender perspectives and participation. It highlights, from a personal perspective, some achievements and lessons and discusses the common challenges ahead in the current global context, for both advocates of participatory development and of gender equality.

Women processing wheat, Tajikstan

Photo: Nazneen Kanji

Why focus on gender issues in participatory development?

Feminist research in the 1970s and gender and development work in the 1980s identified the family or household as a primary site of inequality in the division of labour and intra-household distribution of resources. Extensive conceptual and empirical work has been done to show that the household should not be treated as an undifferentiated unit and that inequalities in power and welfare among household members cannot be ignored. Feminist economists have argued that economics focuses on the monetarised commodity or productive economy, but fails to analyse the non-monetarised reproductive economy. Productive activity involves the production of goods and services that enter the market at a price. Reproductive activities are usually undertaken at the level of the household, and involve domestic work (water and fuel collection (especially developing countries), food preparation, cooking, cleaning), care of children, the elderly and sick, and (importantly for developing countries) household production that is for direct subsistence and not the market. Economic analysis prioritises the former, largely ignoring the latter. From a gender perspective, neither the productive nor the reproductive sphere is 'gender neutral'. They are both socially constructed on the basis of a gender division of labour, which assigns primacy to men in productive and women in reproductive activities.

More recently, gender analysts have examined how the strategic behaviour of individuals within households is linked to wider social processes, institutions and power structures. Community organisations, public services and markets are not neutral but operate according to rules and norms, which afford different access to women and men. As Goetz (1997) points out, men have occupied public office and dominated decision-making and decision-enforcing for a long time and their views and interests are embedded in these institutions. This means that women's participation and direct access to a range of resources outside the household may be limited, with negative implications for their own and household well-being.

Men processing wheat, Tajikstan

Photo: Nazneen Kanji

The use of the term 'gender issues' or 'gender perspective' to refer primarily to women as a homogenous group, or to women and men as single interest groups, seriously oversimplifies complex realities. As Cornwall (2000a) points out, women and men can too easily be thought of as single categories, in stereotyped ways: women as sharing and caring and men as selfish and individualistic. Men are seen as the powerful and oppositional figures. Yet, to take just one example, in many African contexts, young men have less power in relation to older men, and sometimes in relation to older women.

Gender is not always the difference or identity which affects people's choices and options and there are numerous examples of how women have prioritised their common identity or interests with men, for example, in anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles. Gender-based inequalities are affected by class, race, ethnicity, age, location and other particularities in a given context. We can all think of examples where women have participated in decision-making forums as a result of their relationship with men (chief's wives on local committees, women political leaders by virtue of their sons or husbands). In addition, over people's life cycles, the constraints and opportunities of being a man or a woman vary.

Gender analysis, in practice, has often not extended to analysing men's views, reactions and problems as men. There is now more attention to historical and contextually specific assumptions about men and masculinities – and awareness of the danger of applying them to other contexts in which they are less relevant. However, there is little doubt that gender analysis in most contexts, disaggregated by class, ethnicity and age, tends to show that women's interests are subordinated in social relations and institutions. Understanding the differences between women should therefore not mask gross inequities that the majority of women face in development-related interventions and access to key resources such as credit, land, information and extension services. If development is understood as promoting the rights and well-being of the majority of people, then addressing gender inequalities is of fundamental importance.

"Women and men can too easily be thought of as single categories, in stereotyped ways: women as sharing and caring and men as selfish and individualistic. Men are seen as the powerful and oppositional figures. Yet, to take just one example, in many African contexts, young men have less power in relation to older men, and sometimes in relation to older women"

What are the tensions between gender and participation perspectives?

The myth of community

The broad aim of participatory development is to increase the involvement of socially, economically and often politically marginalized people in decision-making about their own lives. However, questions have been raised about the extent to which participatory development initiatives have actually addressed differences and inequalities based on age, wealth, religion, caste, race, ethnicity and gender. As early as 1992, an article in *PLA Notes* 16 documented well-being ranking exercises with different groups in a village in Sierra Leone (Welbourn, 1992). The results of the exercises showed how talking to better-off men, the practice of most development project staff, was entirely inadequate as a way of gauging the complexity of a community's needs. Another example comes from community forestry management in India, where Sarin (1998) shows how better-off village men tend to define the priorities and make the decisions, while the women who depend much more on forests are pressurised to follow men's rules. Too often, assumptions of community cohesion and harmony still underpin participatory development initiatives.

A landmark publication which summarises the critique from a gender perspective is Guijt and Shah's (1998) edited book *The Myth of Community: Gender issues in participatory development*. It is worth quoting from the editors' eloquent overview:

Looking back, it is apparent that 'community' has often been viewed naively, or in practice dealt with, as an harmonious and internally equitable collective. Too often there has been an inadequate understanding of the internal dynamics and differences that are so crucial to positive outcomes. The mythical notion of community cohesion continues to permeate much participatory work, hiding a bias that favours the opinions and priorities of those with more power and the ability to voice their views publicly. In particular, there is a minimal consideration of gender issues and inadequate involvement of women. While a handful of women may sometimes be consulted, rarely does a thorough understanding of the complexity of gender relations help structure the process, the analysis and any resulting community plans. Some view a gender-neutral participatory approach, at times with pride, as non-intrusive and culturally sensitive. However …the language and practice of 'participation' often obscures women's worlds, needs and contributions to development, making equitable participatory development an elusive goal.

Even when there is a recognition of different interests in communities, there is a tendency to underestimate the complexities of conflict and negotiation at this level. Participatory development can mean the equal inclusion of all sections of a typical, stratified community: women, men, older, younger, better-off and worse-off. Yet equal inclusion is difficult to define and understanding how specific contexts affect different people's motivations to be involved in externally initiated participatory development processes has not been given enough attention. Words like participation and community often provide a smokescreen for professionals to avoid intra-community struggles, notably the micro-politics of gender relations (Guijt and Kaul Shah:11).

Despite the difficulties, a review of six projects supported by DFID (Kanji and Salway, 2000:26), to analyse the extent to which they address issues of gender equality, comes to the following conclusion:

Projects which take a participatory approach with deliberate consultation of women and men (in different stakeholder groups), at the beginning and through the project cycle are more likely to identify gender-specific interests and to promote gender equality. This is not to say that participatory approaches will necessarily promote a discussion of unequal social relations nor are less powerful groups always involved, but the approach allows for more context-specific gender equality strategies than past top-down approaches.

Space and time for women's participation

One key challenge for gender-aware practice at community level is to extend the 'space' and time in which participation can take place, to everyday fora and not to consultations and one-off public events, where men may dominate. Understanding the practical conditions which enable women to

Astan Traore uses a scooter in her work with AMAPROS (Association Malienne pour la Promotion du Sahel). The group works to promote public health, education, environmental conservation and economic sustainability in sub-Saharan Mali

Photo: © 1994 Bridget Fahrland/Lutheran World Relief, Courtesy of Photoshare

participate in specific cultures and contexts can make all the difference. An article in *PLA Notes* 22 (Euler, 1995) entitled 'Women prefer lunchtime' is a simple example of how preference ranking with women and men in rural Bangladesh increased the chances of project supervisors being able to meet with women. However, low-income women's heavy workload is a problematic issue in many parts of the world, and participation takes time! Sarin's (1998) example of community forest management is unusually honest about how half the women involved in preparing seasonal calendars of firewood and fodder availability had to leave before the end of the exercise to attend to multiple chores.

The use of participatory time-use exercises can be an important tool to sensitise men and mobilise for action, for example, to invest in labour-saving devices. Bilgi (1998) describes the way in which men's understanding of women's work was increased by asking them to describe a women's day in villages in Gujarat, India. This work was done as part of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, as part of efforts to help men develop a better understanding of women's strengths and capabilities to participate in community development. Similar exercises to map the daily activities of women and men have been used as part of gender training programmes, for example, with both villagers and project staff in East Africa in the mid-1990s (Kanji, 1995). Follow-up activities in areas where NGOs had been active showed that some men had changed their behaviour over time. For example, some were more willing to help with domestic tasks while others feared that 'people would think they were controlled by their wives' (SNV Tanzania, 1996).

Gender and policy processes

Current approaches to policy development and implementation now pay much more attention to the need for the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, including those who will be directly affected by policy measures. This is exemplified by the expansion of Participatory Poverty Assessments, which are meant to feed into Poverty Reduction Strategies at country level. They are expected to provide dynamic and differentiated accounts of processes of impoverishment

Spinning cotton in Tajikstan

Photo: Nazneen Kanji

which should increase the understanding of policy makers and provide the basis for more comprehensive and effective strategies for action.

Gendered analysis of participatory poverty assessments indicate that even when poor groups are consulted, women's voices continue to be under-represented or their concerns are not reflected in the resulting recommendations (Whitehead and Lockwood, 1999). Their analysis shows how gender issues become increasingly marginalized in the process of producing the overall Poverty Assessment.

When participation is expected to function at policy level, the challenges are even greater than at community and project level, where there is already much room for exclusion and misinterpretation. When 'people's' views are expected to feed into policy processes, the potential for misinterpretation, selection and the chances that more powerful groups simply ignore inconvenient or oppositional views, increases. Sometimes, a gender perspective is reduced to counting the number of women and men consulted! We have to be much more careful to examine whether participation in policy processes actually offers opportunities for real change for women and men. The next issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* will allow NGOs to share their experiences in participating in Poverty Reduction Strategy processes over the last decade and discuss the potentials and limitations.

Women's participation and the role of the facilitator or change agent

Cornwall (2000) highlights another tension between GAD and participatory development. She raises the issue of how participatory development practitioners address situations where women choose not to participate in mainstream projects, preferring interventions which seem to reinforce what outsiders regard as their subordination. She uses a case study of an OXFAM project in Sudan on promoting livelihoods to illustrate this point. Female women's coordinators worked with village women to identify their priorities and they requested support for handicrafts, food processing and poultry raising, activities which were separate from the main thrust of the project. The reluctance of the project coordinator to fund such activities reflects, Cornwall argues, the dilemma of inviting 'the community' to design their own interventions, but then running the risk of reinforcing the *status quo*.

However, it can be argued that what may be more important than the actual choices made by the women is the question of whether the project was able to help create spaces and opportunities for more marginalized or less powerful women to negotiate with other groups and to exercise choice. As Cornwall then points out, the core of the 'problem' is not that of participatory methods per se but rather the use of the methods and the assumptions of project workers themselves. Whether and how gender issues are raised depends on who is facilitating the exercise and what they think gender means. There are usually different views in communities (and nations) about gender – what activities and behaviour are appropriate for women and men, what assets they should have and how they participate in society. The values of individual facilitators will influence participatory processes and the extent to which women's rights are supported.

What are some of the achievements?

Over the last ten years, awareness has grown for the need for gender analysis in development. Expertise in using participatory methods and tools in a gender responsive way has increased. The articles in *Participatory Learning and Action* are a reflection of this growing awareness and expertise and contain a mix of good practice and constructive criticism. All that it is possible to do here is give some brief examples of a few positive approaches and methods.

Indian women in slums and villages attend a workshop on AIDS

Photo: © 2001 Nrityanjali Academy. Courtesy of Photoshare

Sexual and reproductive health

As Gordon and Cornwall's article in this issue points out, working with participation in addressing sexuality and gender is not the same as working with natural resources or water supplies and the like. It is much more challenging in that talking about sex, gender and HIV remain a taboo in many cultural contexts. The *Stepping Stones* manual (Welbourn, 1995) describes a series of participatory exercises designed to facilitate HIV prevention by encouraging a gender analysis of sex and its context. It includes assertiveness training, encouraging participants to be assertive about their feelings and dialogue with their partners. The role and skills of the facilitator are critical in providing a safe environment to discuss such personal and sensitive issues.

PLA Notes 37 (2000) contains a range of articles which show how participatory methods have increased women and men's awareness of sexual and reproductive health issues and contributed to an analysis of the factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Shaw and Jawo (2000) provide a useful discussion of how they used and innovated with the Stepping Stones approach in the Gambian context. Issue 37 also discusses why and how sexual and reproductive health is a development issue and the enormous threat that the spread of HIV presents for livelihood security and for the safety and survival of those most vulnerable to infection[1].

Literacy and adult learning

Reflect (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowerment Community Techniques) is a structured participatory learning process which facilitates people's critical analysis of their environment, placing empowerment at the heart of sustainable and equitable development. The methodology was developed by ActionAid as a new approach to adult literacy, between 1993 and 1995. A manual was produced in 1996 and in 1998, there was a special *PLA Notes* issue on Participation, Literacy and Empowerment. The Reflect approach has now spread through the work of at least 350 different organisations (including NGOs, CBOs, governments and social movements) in more than 60 countries (see Archer's article in this issue).

[1] You can read all the articles from this issue online here: www.iied.org/sarl/pla_notes/pla_backissues/37.html

Women at a market in Nigeria mobilise support for women's participation in local government

Photo: © CCP, Courtesy of Photoshare

In 2003, core elements of the Reflect approach were described including one on creating democratic space which provides a statement on gender equality:

Reflect involves creating a democratic space – one in which everyone's voice is given equal weight. This needs to be actively constructed as there is almost nowhere in which people have an equal voice (people everywhere are stratified by gender, age, hierarchy, status, ability etc). As such it is counter-cultural – always challenging local culture to the extent that power relationships and stratification have created inequality. It is never easy and may never be perfectly achieved but it should be a constant focus.

Archer's article in this issue gives some examples of how the approach has been used to address gender inequalities and women's empowerment; for example, opposing domestic violence in Peru by adapting Reflect for work with Quechua men and women to break the silence on taboo issues of sexuality and domestic violence, with participants producing posters, radio programmes, TV adverts etc. to raise the wider profile of the issues they discussed.

Linking the local to the national

The involvement of women's groups representing women's interests is critical in participation at local level and in policy processes. However, the key point here is 'representation' and there has to be an analysis of the particular historical and political context to understand which organisations are best placed to represent which constituencies. Representative groups can assist in opening up the debate on women's interests, in the short and longer-term, and lobbying to keep these on the agenda.

One of the best examples of such a successful organisation which has maintained its strong grassroots base over a long period is the Self Employed Women's Association in India. This organisation has at the same time been active in networking and promoting women's interests at the national level.

What are the challenges?

If participatory development is to be equitable, it has to deal with gender-based oppression. As Guijt and Kaul Shah argue, this is only possible if attention is paid to conceptual

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Ahmedabad, India

SEWA was founded in 1971 and registered in 1972 as a trade union movement for women in the informal sector. A few thousand women subsequently established the SEWA bank as a co-operative to provide poor, self-employed women with access to credit and financial services and to reduce their dependence on exploitative moneylenders.

SEWA has strategically used the collective bargaining tools which have characterised many trade union movements. However, in areas where there are few prospects for employment, traditional unionising techniques do not work. In such situations, SEWA has worked at the grassroots level to form village organisations. SEWA helps women to run their own organisations, form cooperatives and bargain collectively in the market place.

More important than only access to credit, SEWA has concentrated on empowering women to use their own resources more effectively. In the villages of Gujarat, and in the city markets of Ahmedabad (where SEWA has its headquarters), women are speaking out more, taking leadership roles, and realising how far they can go when they have collective bargaining power for wages, better working conditions, combatting domestic violence, or improving education and family health.

Source: Adapted from SEWA Homepage: www.gdrc.org/icm/sewa.html

clarity, appropriate methodologies and organisational support. Rather than repeating their useful and specific recommendations, I will focus on some of the challenges which, in my view, confront advocates of gender equality and participatory development.

The impact of liberalisation and privatisation has made it more difficult for women in many contexts to participate in the public sphere

Research on the effects of liberalisation and privatisation, particularly structural adjustment policies, has shown an increase in income and gender inequalities (Afshar, 1992; Grown et al, 2001). Groups with greater assets, both material and social, have been better able to take advantage of neo-liberal, market-based development. The reduction in the role of the state in providing basic and social services has particularly affected women, who have gender-ascribed roles in caring for households. At the same time, there has been a rapid and substantial increase in the proportions of women in paid work over the last two decades. What this means is that women tend to face increasing workloads. A small study on women's livelihoods carried out for the Aga Khan Foundation in Tajikistan illustrated the way in which women's increasing workloads, in the post-Soviet era, have made it even more difficult for women to participate in the public sphere, even at the local level (Kanji, 2002). Increasing workloads combined with gender biases in the structures and processes of governance make it more difficult to increase women's participation in public life.

Participatory development is a political project

The political project can be viewed as working towards a functioning participatory democracy – which requires a strong and articulate civil society, including organisations which represent women's interests, a network of participatory institutions at all levels through which different social groups can defend their interests, and vertical mechanisms of consultation which allow the local level to defend its interests at higher levels.

Working to increase the participation of excluded groups, both men and women, is a political rather than technical project. I first experimented with participatory methods within gender and development work. The methods were productive and exciting; role play, the use of video, gender-differentiated mapping exercises and calendars were just some of the tools which increased levels of involvement and generated animated discussions and insights. However, methods are a means to an end – which in this case, was to discuss and work towards changing unequal gender divisions of labour, access to resources and power relations. Participatory methods help to effectively use spaces to strengthen the voices and perspectives of disadvantaged groups. However, the critical issue is to analyse the nature of the spaces for participation and whether they offer opportunities to increase control over resources and decision-making institutions for marginalized groups. The questions of whose participation, in what and for which ends remain critical.

Individual values are important but so is institutional change

There is no doubt that individuals can have essential positive and catalytic roles – urban, middle-class activists, teachers, priests, political party activists, trade unionists, government officials and NGO staff. However, the importance of the beliefs and values of these various facilitators and change agents cannot be underestimated, in the ways both participation and gender are interpreted and promoted. My own work on gender mainstreaming, in different organisational contexts, show the positive gains made when there are particular individuals, with strong values of gender equity and social justice, in positions which allow them to promote approaches and action in support of these values. However, the challenge remains to institutionalise the kinds of incen-

tives and accountability structures which allow such action to continue and develop, irrespective of the individuals in place at particular moments in time.

The wider context of globalisation provides opportunities as well as constraints

While the dominance of current global neo-liberal economic paradigms works against participatory, gender-aware and more equitable development processes, information technology has opened up spaces for organisation and alliances at a global level (although access to IT is also gendered). The significance is growing of NGOs, citizen groups and networks that work towards changing the policy agenda and rules set by some, more powerful parts of the development establishment. Transnational movements are growing – to promote human rights (and women's rights are human rights); to protect the environment, to challenge the oppression of women, of indigenous groups, to name only a few.

Critiques from gender and development advocates have been useful in showing how approaches to participatory development have homogenised communities and ignored a range of differences between people. However, gender advocates have also been prone to homogenising women and stereotyping men, and much can be learnt by listening to the voices of different groups of women and men. While we have come some way in raising the importance of gender issues in participatory development, there is still a long way to go. It is important that advocates for gender and for participation share their insights and learning and jointly develop innovative approaches and methods. Alliances between different groups and movements, including those which specifically focus on women's empowerment and gender equality, are required to prevent the cooption of visions and weakening of values which underpin efforts to promote both gender perspectives and participatory approaches to development and social change.

Key Resources:

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7

Not for children only: lessons learnt from young people's participation

THEME SECTION

by LOUISE CHAWLA and VICKY JOHNSON

Spaces for common ground

Around the world now, one hears rhetoric about children's participation and finds many examples of young people's creativity and capability, yet the practice of children's participation has not been mainstreamed into development policy. Children's interests are often assumed to be covered by extending support to women as mothers. However, this does not adequately address children's rights and needs. When young people are excluded from participatory processes, or processes including them are kept separate from broader initiatives for community development, it can be detrimental to both young people and development goals. This paper highlights some of the learning that has been gained from discourse and practice relating to young people's participation and how it might be integrated into the broader development field. It starts by reviewing the background to work in this field and goes on to draw out practical learning.

In addition to two special issues relating to children, *Participatory Learning and Action* has carried a stream of articles showing best practice in working in more participatory ways with children and young people (see Box 1). Since early editions, it has shown the importance of working with different groups by age as well as gender. Among policy makers and organisations that work on development agendas,

Box 1: Young people's participation in *Participatory Learning and Action*

Two special issues have carried a range of articles on creative methods, ethical considerations, working with special populations, and other aspects of good practice with young people: *PLA Notes* 25: *Children's Participation* and *PLA Notes* 42: *Children's Participation – evaluating effectiveness*.

Articles in other issues have covered the areas of young people and HIV/Aids, (a series of articles in *PLA Notes* 37), drug and substance misuse (Darren Garratt and Caroline Stokes in *PLA Notes* 38), unemployment and health (Teresa Cresswell in *RRA Notes* 16), literacy (Sara Cottingham in *PLA Notes* 32), and environmental education (Sonia Gomez Garcia and Joze Pizzarro Neyra in *PLA Notes* 40, and Ian Baird *et al*. in *PLA Notes* 30). There are also important examples of different issues of facilitation and a range of approaches such as street theatre in Brazil (Barbara Santos, *PLA Notes* 39), educational theatre in Kenya (Roger Chamberlain *et al*. in *PLA Notes* 23), child health calendars (Eleanor McGee in *PLA Notes* 27), Venn diagrams (Carin and Duke Duchscherer, *PLA Notes* 27), photography (Joanna Howard and Anna Blackmun in *PLA Notes* 39), modelling (E. Jonfa *et al*. in *RRA Notes* 14), and a range of methodologies in Uganda (Joanita Sewagudde *et al.* in *PLA Notes* 28). There are also examples of looking at institutionalisation (articles by Louisa Gosling and by Vicky Johnson in *PLA Notes* 24) and urban youth as community leaders (Laurie Ross and Mardi Coleman in *PLA Notes* 38).

All articles from issues 1-40 can be downloaded in PDF format from www.planotes.org

"When young people are excluded from participatory processes, or processes including them are kept separate from broader initiatives for community development, it can be detrimental to both young people and development goals"

however, children are usually seen as a separate sector, often solely represented in projects focused on education and the formation of children's clubs. When it comes to processes addressing natural resources, water and irrigation, or income generation, children are often considered irrelevant. They may sometimes be consulted, but they are rarely seen as key stakeholders in action planning, implementation and ongoing monitoring and evaluation, even when decisions impact on their lives. Yet children are critical to the broader move to rights-based approaches, and those who work on children's rights have considerable experience to share.

For children's participation, the watershed event was the United Nations adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. It has now been ratified by all but two member nations, making it the most rapidly and widely accepted human rights document in history[1]. This is true despite its radical implications, because it contains a series of 'participation clauses' that extend the basic civil rights of freedom of assembly, speech, and information to children. Article 12 states that children have a right to express their views in all matters that affect them; and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which reviews the reports that ratifying nations must submit to document implementation, has designated this idea as one of the four fundamental principles that all other provisions of the Convention must consider[2]. Most current initiatives by governments, international agencies and child-focused organisations fostering children's participation are explicitly based on these claims.

As a consequence, most current participatory projects with children have been grounded in a rights-based approach from the beginning, whereas efforts to broaden adult participation in community development are moving in this direction. In addition, efforts to include young people have had to give careful attention to issues of ethics and power in practice. Here, too, the broader development field has much to learn. This article emphasises the implications of participatory work with children and young people for all age groups, drawing on practical experience with 'children' (defined by the CRC as all people under the age of 18), as well as young adults in their early 20s. This age group accounts for about half of the world's population, yet despite its size and its importance as societies' 'living bridge' to the future, programmes for children and young people have been generally relegated to the sidelines of the development field. Placing young people's participation at the centre of development policy has the potential to introduce fresh and much needed perspectives, improve practice, and create more effective partnerships.

Illustration from cover of *PLA Notes* 42, *Children's participation – evaluating effectiveness*

As authors, we write from experience in both urban and rural development in the North and South (see our biographies at the end of this article). Together, we consider issues that the field currently faces, and look ahead to benefits that could be achieved for all ages if young people were moved from the sidelines to the centre of the development agenda.

Formal initiatives to include young people in community development go back to the era of advocacy planning for grassroots urban renewal in Britain and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. Efforts to include young adolescents in these processes are exemplified by the book *Growing Up in Cities* edited by Kevin Lynch in 1977 (Box 3). In the 1980s and 1990s, innovative methods were created to understand the lives of street and working children (for one example, see Boyden and Ennew in Box 3.) The report *Listening to Smaller Voices,* published in 1995, showed how PRA

[1] The United States and Somalia are the only nations that have not formally ratified the CRC.
[2] The other fundamental principles are non-discrimination, the right to survival and development, and consideration of the best interests of the child as the first priority in all actions affecting children.

Children from a Johannesburg squatter camp, who have been elected by their peers to present their group's ideas, rehearse for a mayor's workshop on improving conditions for squatter children. Passing the toy microphone ensures that each child gets a fair chance to talk, girls as well as boys

Photo: Melinda Swift

methods could be adapted to young people in rural communities. More radically, youth revolts like the 'generation of '68' in Europe, anti-war protests in the United States, the Soweto uprising, and the Palestinian Intifada demonstrated adolescents' and young adults' potential for political action. Currently, a rich collection of participatory techniques has accumulated and many successful examples of practice demonstrate how young people's competence, creativity and sense of fairness can be channelled in constructive ways if they are given roles in shaping their communities. The great challenge that this field now faces is institutionalising participation by bringing young people on board from the beginning to help set goals and strategies and to evaluate outcomes that affect them. Until this happens, successful examples will remain 'random acts of excellence'.

All marginalized groups face barriers against partnership and shared power. This is true for the poor as a class, ethnic minorities, and women, so it should not be surprising that advocates for young people's participation should find themselves at the same impasse. On this front, those who facilitate children's participation have much to learn from older traditions of community organising with adults in terms of strategies to not only provide a voice for the excluded, but also ensure that their voices get heard and generate action.

Although children and young people share the status of other marginalized groups in some ways, in other ways they remain distinctive, and this distinctiveness has led to certain emphases in philosophy and practice from which the field of development at large can benefit. Children are a marginalized group, representing a universal aspect of human experience. When working with children, adults encounter what they have been as well as the generation to whom they must entrust the future. Therefore children embody both memory and hope. At the same time, they are especially vulnerable. Their marginality is compounded by the fact that if they are poor, or female, or an ethnic minority, they are in addition *young* and therefore least likely to be heard. Because they have less experience of the world, they can be easily manipulated, and they lack basic elements of political power such as a chance to vote or hold office. Therefore the

Feedback given by children at a Child Rights meeting in Plan Indonesia

Photo: Development Focus

concept of *partnership* lies at the core of work with young people. Partnerships require spaces for all ages to come together in dialogue, if community processes are to be fair, inclusive, and build alliances for sustained change.

Young people are not the only ones who can gain from these coalitions. The inclusion of children has the potential to change political processes in profound ways. It places the concept of care as well as autonomy at the heart of democratic theory. Children's dependency puts adults under a special obligation to protect them from harm and to provide for their needs, yet the basic needs that children express are conditions for well-being for all ages in society – such as safety, secure homes, adequate food and clean water, attractive environments, the protection of the natural world, education, fair livelihoods, friendly acceptance, and a hopeful future. Attention to children's needs also requires a timeframe that considers the consequences of decisions far into the future. Nobody can make these points more movingly than children themselves in a participatory forum. Therefore development programmes that put children at the centre are well positioned to unify diverse groups and to build a strong foundation for broad alliances for progressive change.

Good practices for all

In addition to the potential to unify diverse groups, participatory projects with young people have much to offer in terms of the day-to-day operations of a project. Given their grounding in the CRC, the clear differentials of power between children and adults, and the twin mandates of autonomy and care, the best projects with children and young people have shown a concern for human rights, ethics, clear communication, and capacity building that can provide models for good practice with all ages. The following sections suggest different facets of this rights-based approach that can be extended to broader development processes.

Rights-based approaches

The field of children's participation has much to share about how the language of rights translates into processes on the ground. The 3 'Ps' of the CRC – **protection**, **provision** and **participation** – can be helpful for all groups to consider in terms of how they work together in practice. At the same time, there is a challenge to understand child rights in the context of human rights and to work through processes with different stakeholders, including girls and boys, to determine

A timeline carried out by Rachel Bray and a streetchild in Kathmandu to discuss his work and life

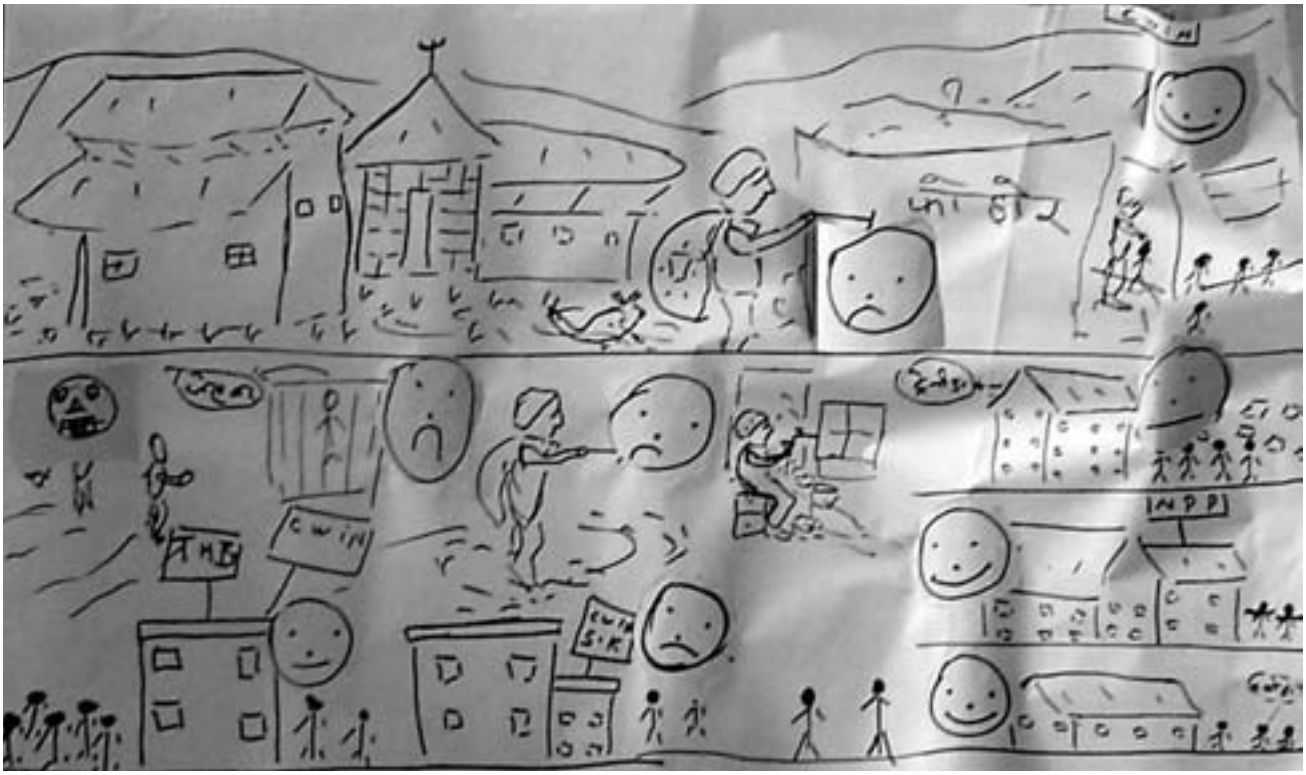

Photo: Development Focus

what this means for practice. There is a tendency for Child Rights Training to rely on simply teaching the articles of the CRC and encouraging programmes to spread this knowledge among children and adults; but the best models also embed children's rights in a larger human rights framework, focus on how to apply rights in day-to-day activities, and demonstrate how work with children connects to broader development agenda.

A series of Save the Children Norway sites in Africa have shown one way that these goals can be achieved (see, for example, Irene Guijt's report in Box 3). Separate workshops are carried out with children, young women, young men, older women, and older men at a village level, and then the community identifies common priorities that can be merged into a Community Action Plan on which everyone can work. Additionally, Save the Children commits itself to move forward with the priorities that are special to children. Sometimes the children's groups are divided into younger and older ages or those who attend school and non-schoolgoers. Priorities at the village level can be coordinated into a District Plan of Action for Children, with an understanding of how some goals can serve and mobilise other age groups as well. For example, all ages may determine that there is a need for quickly maturing crops that can generate income, and in addition, with the children's suggestion that a community group should form to maintain local school buildings. In addition, more participatory work using visual forms of communication can feed into children's participation in decision-making processes in schools (see, for example, Cox and Robinson-Pant 2003, *Empowering Children through Visual Communication* in Box 3).

Understand starting points and who you are including

More and more, people in the development profession recognise the importance of reaching the poorest of the poor, the socially excluded, those from minority religious and ethnic groups, and people with differences in dis/ability. This recognition of the need to involve all stakeholders does not, however, always extend to children. Even when children have been consulted by researchers or project staff, their perspectives are not always integrated into processes of community planning, and even less so into participatory monitoring and evaluation systems that are developed locally. Thus there are examples of projects installing water taps which are too high for children to reach, introducing income-earning activities that lead to children being taken out of school to assist their

"Young people often say that the most valuable part of a project is the chance to do things that are fun and meaningful with friends. Many processes with adults also take into account the way in which people interact and whether participants are enjoying themselves, but sometimes we are all so time pressured and focused on action and research that we forget to have fun!"

parents, and resettling families in land reform programmes that weaken children's safety networks (see *Rights Through Evaluation*, Box 3).

Work that has regarded children as stakeholders in development processes has benefited from their insights. Work carried out with Action Aid in Nepal for *Listening to Smaller Voices* helped us understand the contribution of children in rural households alongside adults and issues of child labour. It dispelled some myths about children working in carpet factories and brought the harsh realities of living in mountain areas to light, especially for girls. The book *Stepping Forward* contains examples of other workers who have listened to children, understood new realities, and responded to their concerns through changed programming.

Some of the most innovative and exciting work has been with street children and children in the sex trade. The manual *Children in Focus* by Jo Boyden and Judith Ennew (Box 3) documents insights on techniques and ethical frameworks that have evolved in working with these and other marginalized groups of young people. This work has helped to focus on children as active participants rather than just recipients of aid, and it has led to advocacy work in vocalising rights in local, national and international arenas.

One way in which participatory processes have been continually improved, as documented in past issues of *Participatory Learning and Action*, is to disaggregate information by age as well as gender, ethnicity, and relative well-being. Development processes in the UK now require rigorous statutory monitoring of who has been consulted, where priorities in the community lie, and how to evaluate impacts for different groups within society. In Regeneration through Community Assessment and Action[3], a training programme offered by Development Focus, coding systems give a disaggregated and scaled up picture of information that includes age as one of many variables (see Johnson and Nurick, *PLA Notes* 47). In this process, it is important to remember that children and youth, like adults, cannot be seen as homogenous groups.

[3] Regeneration through Community Assessment and Action is a trademark of Development Focus Trust.

Box 2: Integrating Children's Participation into Development Processes

The following points arise from work that Development Focus has carried out in South Africa, Nepal and Indonesia, drawing on the experience of more than 50 different types of projects and organisations. They suggest how to integrate children's rights into broader development processes:

- Understand the starting points of different children and adults in communities and make sure that people who are not usually consulted can participate.
- Make sure that processes are flexible and use language, tools and approaches that reach different groups of children and adults in a way that they can relate to.
- Make processes transparent and action oriented, and make it clear when there are areas of agreement and disagreement between the perspectives of different children and adults.
- Allow separate spaces for girls, boys, men and women to articulate their views, and form strategies for how to deal with conflicts of opinion.
- Have clear systems of monitoring and evaluation that engage children and adults regarding their different perspectives on success.
- Have clear ethical and safety frameworks to protect both children and marginalized adults in their participation.
- Encourage training and ongoing support in participatory processes, including looking at how child rights can be seen in the context of human rights, and how rights can be applied in practical programming.

For more background, see the article by Vicky Johnson and Robert Nurick in *PLA Notes* 47 and the report *Rights Through Evaluation* (Box 3 and www.devfocus.org.uk).

Processes that are fun and engaging

It is important to use language, tools and approaches that reach different groups of children and adults in ways that they can relate to, to make processes intrinsically engaging, and to remember that what is culturally appropriate may vary due to location, ethnicity and social situation. There are many examples of using a range of visual tools with children including diagrams and drawing, video and photographs, role-plays and drama, singing and poetry. In addition, children and youth often have their own ways of communicating that are different from adults. Involving young people as team members and researchers can help practitioners be flexible and sensitive in this respect.

Young people often say that the most valuable part of a project is the chance to do things that are fun and mean-

Girls at a school in the Salford area, UK, evaluating a policing project

Photo: Development Focus

ingful with friends. Many processes with adults also take into account the way in which people interact and whether participants are enjoying themselves, but sometimes we are all so time pressured and focused on action and research that we forget to have fun! Again, young people can help monitor these aspects of a project.

Transparency and action-oriented processes

Processes should always be as transparent as possible and repeated checks need to be made throughout the process in order to ensure that ideas are communicated as intended. The guiding rule is to take time to listen – to allow children to raise questions and concerns and to verify that understanding is shared.

Processes need to be action-oriented, as we have a responsibility not just to listen to children and allow them to be heard, but to also act on their concerns. It is important to clarify potential limits to how much may be achieved and not appear to promise too much, but at the same time, opportunities for young people to experience competence should be programmed into every stage to ensure that the participatory experience as a whole will be empowering. For example, if young people have an opportunity to design a youth space over which they are given control, they are less likely to feel dispirited if their local council fails to follow through with their suggestions for other public areas.

Create safe spaces and manage conflict

Safe spaces need to be created where young people can feel free to express themselves, where powerful feelings can be managed, and where issues of power can be honestly explored. Time needs to be allowed for trust building. To achieve these ends, separate spaces are often needed where different groups of children and adults can articulate their views.

It is important not to go into a situation looking for consensus, for if all people are allowed to make their opinions heard, there will be differences. Strategies need to be planned to deal with disagreements, especially between children and adults. Sometimes people just need to understand the perspectives of others, but at other times it is necessary to apply processes of conflict negotiation and

"Girls and boys are key stakeholders in the development process. They need support to have their voices heard, but also recognition that their voices are worth acting on and that they can positively influence goals to achieve communities characterised by less poverty, social exclusion and abuse. This means integrating children into real partnerships"

peace building. Consensus on some issues may need to be built through the often slow process of working from people's starting points and building on indigenous processes of conflict resolution. People coming into a community to get involved in participatory processes need to remember that they are not observers of a static culture, but there are many different cultures within a community, and the most vulnerable members need to be supported to change the status quo in the direction of human rights and children's rights.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation

Projects in broader development processes typically fail to have monitoring and evaluation processes that include children as stakeholders, even when they introduce changes that affect children's lives. Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) needs to be seen as an integral part of a rights based approach, with clear guidelines to engage children and adults regarding their different perspectives of success. Processes need to be monitored to ensure that they do not actually put children and vulnerable adults at risk rather than improving their quality of life. Project staff need to regularly ask themselves: *Are we further empowering the already powerful, rather than changing harsh realities for girls and boys in households and communities already divided by difference? Are we supporting a process of change that is truly leading to improved realities?*

There are good examples of inclusive monitoring processes. Save the Children UK, for example, devoted funding for PM&E during the full three years of an initiative called *Saying Power* that supported young people in running their own project with their peers. The television series *Soul City* in South Africa, which provides 'edutainment', involves children in reviewing programmes made by children for children. In her book *Involving Young Researchers,* Perpetua Kirby has shown a number of ways that young people can contribute (Box 3).

Ethical and safety frameworks

All of the issues covered above have ethical dimensions. Formal ethical frameworks need to be developed in the context of local institutional cultures, protocols and legislation. Organisations need to not just develop and discuss these frameworks, but also work through the practicalities of putting ethical procedures into place. In work with children, it should be standard procedure to obtain informed consent, maintain clear rules of confidentiality, and protect children from risks. For example, Development Focus, in its work on Community Assessment and Action in the UK, has local safety and ethical frameworks for every process, both to protect children and more marginalized adults in their participation, and to ensure team members' own safety in their work on the streets and in different urban settings.

There need to be clear lines of responsibility to respond to risks to individual children. In some countries, such as the UK, there are legal procedures for disclosure if children reveal issues of abuse, and all researchers need to know these laws. In the UK, researchers working with children in particular settings also get police clearance. For fuller reference to research ethics of working with children in the UK, see Barnado's publication (Box 3). In countries where these types of procedures are lacking, organisations need to draft their own protective rules.

Practitioners also need to be sensitive to the potential risks that participation can bring. As a rule, sensitive information should be shared anonymously. There has tended to be a journalistic approach to raise awareness of children's issues and advocate change. Individual girls and boys may be quoted, with pictures to engender sympathy, or they may be encouraged to stand up and state their case. These processes need to be approached carefully, as there may be unforeseen risks for the children involved. An example of good practice comes from India, where an organisation called Butterflies represented the views of street children to the Delhi Police through project workers in order to protect the children's identities.

Special ethical considerations apply in conflict zones, where participation can put children at serious risk of harm. This is evident in accounts of conflict situations in Sri Lanka, the former Yugoslavia, and parts of Africa, in the book *Stepping Forward*, as well as in Jo Boyden's discussion of children in refugee situations in *PLA Notes* 42. These cases

Box 3: Important resources for young people's participation

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2004). 'Ethics, social research and consulting with children and young people', Barnado's, London.
Boyden, J. & Ennew, J. (1997). *Children in Focus: A manual for participatory research with children*. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden.
Chawla, L. (ed.) (2002). *Growing Up in an Urbanising World.* London/Paris: Earthscan Publications/UNESCO.
Cox, S. and Robinson-Pant, A. (2003) *Empowering Children through Visual Communication*, University of East Anglia: UK
Development Focus International (2001). *Rights Through Evaluation: Putting child rights into practice in South Africa and Nepal*. Development Focus website, www.devfocus.org.uk
Driskell, D. (2002). *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth*. London/Paris: Earthscan Publications/UNESCO.
Edwards, M. (ed.) (1996). Special issue on 'Policy arena: Children in developing countries', *Journal of International Development,* vol. 8.
Guijt, I. (1996). *Moving Slowly and Reaching Far*. London: Redd Barna Uganda/International Institute for Environment and Development.
Hart, J., Newman, N., Ackermann L. (2003). 'Children changing their world: Understanding and evaluating children's participation in development', Plan UK/ Plan International, London and Woking. Also 'Understanding and Evaluating Children's Participation: A review of contemporary literature, Plan UK/ Plan International, London and Woking.
Hart, R. (1992). 'Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship'. *Innocenti Essays* 4. Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.
Hart, R. (1997). *Children's Participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care.* London/New York: Earthscan Publications/UNICEF.
International Save the Children Alliance, (2003). 'So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of best practice', International Save the Children Alliance, London.
James, A. & Prout, A. (1997). *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood,* 2nd ed. London: Falmer Press.
Johnson, V., Hill, J. & Ivan-Smith, E. (1995). *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an environment of change*. Chard, Somerset: ActionAid.
Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P. & Scott, P. (1998). *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process.* London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
Kirby, P. (2000). *Involving Young Researchers*. London: Save the Children.
Lynch, K. (ed.) (1977). *Growing Up in Cities*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
UNICEF (2002). *The State of the World's Children 2003* (on the theme of participation). New York: UNICEF.

also confirm that even in extreme situations, children need to be treated as social actors rather than passive victims.

The way forward

Children's participation has become much better documented over recent years, and there are many resources to draw upon. There is now a well-established body of practice and training in the 'children's sector' of development agencies, but the issue is how to build capacity more broadly and how to integrate it into development policy and processes. Doing this is pivotal for moving practice in this field forward.

One of the best ways to achieve this goal is to include child and age sensitivity in mainstream training programmes related to rights-based approaches, participatory processes, gender, poverty and social exclusion, project management processes, and monitoring and evaluation. Special ethical considerations relating to the protection of children need to be included, with procedures that are worked out within the context of different organisations and national cultures. Donors can begin by providing support to integrate issues of age and child rights into their own staff training, as well as supporting capacity building and evaluative processes in this area in the projects that they fund.

One of the most critical arenas that governments and donor agencies can influence is schools. In many countries, the education system is rigidly hierarchical, bound to a national curriculum, and based on rote memorisation rather than creative problem solving. Yet this model can be changed to support cooperative group work, student councils, and the development of basic skills through investigations of the local environment and initiatives for community care. In as well as out of school, participatory processes can build skills of literacy, numeracy, practical life, social life, and civic and environmental awareness. Inspiring examples are found in the system of *Escuelas Nuevas*, or New Schools, in Latin America[4]. These changes require support from the top down, beginning with more democratic relationships between ministries of education, systems of school inspection and evaluation, teacher training colleges, and the teachers and students they are supposed to serve.

We need to continue to learn how to work together. *Participatory Learning and Action* has been an important forum where practitioners in the field of children's participation have been able to share ideas and good practice. This sharing has advanced the debate and filtered into child-focused programmes, but the current challenge is to mainstream these ideas into broader development processes and to reach larger audiences. Girls and boys are key stakeholders in the development process. They need support to have their voices heard, but also recognition that their voices are worth acting on and that they can positively

[4] This model is described in *The State of the World's Children 2003* by UNICEF, pp. 28-29, and *Children's Participation* by Roger Hart, pp. 46, 129-131 – see Box 3.

influence goals to achieve communities characterised by less poverty, social exclusion and abuse. This means integrating children into real partnerships.

Every organisation working on the ground in community development needs to take the lead and review processes of involvement. How are girls and boys, as well as men and women, influencing project cycles through ongoing processes of participatory inquiry, action implementation, monitoring and evaluation? How do children influence decisions within organisations and the formation of development policy? Some good examples of self-reflection and learning can be found from Scandinavian and Canadian bilateral development programmes, the Save the Children Alliance, and PLAN International. See the Save the Children toolkit and work that PLAN has been carrying out on evaluation (Box 3). We can also reflect on work related to children in the policy arena, as in a special issue of the *Journal of International Development* (Box 3).

We need to continue to share best practices in terms of what works to improve participatory processes with children and young people, and ultimately their lives. By learning to listen in this way, development agencies stand to learn when their assumptions are out of touch with the realities of young people's lives, and to reorient policy so that it can more effectively build partnerships among all ages to achieve a better future.

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Louise Chawla brings experience as International Coordinator of Growing Up in Cities, a UNESCO project that involves low-income children and youth in cities around the world in documenting their lives and planning ways to improve their living conditions. Methods and case studies from this project are presented in the books *Growing Up in an Urbanising World* and *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth. PLA Notes* 42, which she guest edited, focused on issues surrounding the evaluation of participatory projects, both in terms of personal outcomes for participants and institutional change.

Vicky Johnson has worked in rural areas of Nepal and in different parts of Africa and Asia to understand children's roles and work in the household, leading to an ActionAid publication called *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an environment of change*. Her work with her colleagues in Development Focus Trust extends participatory work with children and youth to urban and rural contexts in the UK and internationally. Her networking and sharing with other international practitioners led to *PLA Notes* 25, which focuses on ethical and institutional issues, and then to a book called *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process*.

8

Participation in sexual and reproductive well-being and rights

by GILL GORDON and ANDREA CORNWALL

One of the most fundamental values in participatory work is that of supporting people to gain the confidence and capacity to recognise, analyse and act to change their realities. Reading through back copies of *Participatory Learning and Action,* we were struck by the continuing relevance of the editorials and lessons learnt from work on sexual and reproductive well-being and rights. If the programmes described in them continue to be developed and spread; if they actively involve those most affected and are integrated with services; and if the creation of enabling environments allows people to enjoy sexual intimacy without fear of pregnancy or disease and be supported in their reproductive and sexual choices, much would change. Much has been gained with the use of participatory approaches in sexual and reproductive well-being and rights work. But an enormous amount still needs to be done.

In this piece, we pick up a series of key issues in participation in sexual and reproductive well-being and rights, looking at lessons learnt and exploring ways in which practitioners are addressing the new challenges thrown up by the changing environment. The key issues we will focus on are:

- participatory HIV prevention and care work in a time of crisis;
- sexuality, poverty and development;
- participation, sexuality and gender; and
- whose agenda counts in participatory planning?

Participatory community-based HIV prevention and care work

Since *RRA Notes* 16 on health (July, 1992), *PLA Notes* 23 (June, 1995) on participatory approaches to HIV/AIDS programmes and *PLA Notes* 37 (February, 2000) on sexual and reproductive well-being were published, we have seen the scale of the HIV epidemic increase beyond our worse fears with devastating impact (see Welbourn, section 9, this issue). In some countries, this has shifted the focus from long-term sustainable development to crisis interventions. Donors, development organisations and communities are more impatient with lengthy participatory mobilisation and planning processes and want to see interventions and results rolled out to achieve maximum coverage as rapidly as possible.

In *PLA Notes* 37, Edstrom, Cristobal, de Soyza and Sellers (2000) point out that

…scaling up capacity-building and participatory processes may be more important than scaling up 'intervention packages'. It is a common mistake to assume that it is the resulting strategies which need scaling up to achieve an impact,

Illustration from cover of *PLA Notes* 37: *Sexual and reproductive health*

Cartoon: adapted by Paul Mincher with acknowledgement to Regina Faul-Doyle

Box 1: Schools as risky spaces

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia (PPAZ) and the Ministry of Education are working with teachers and pupils in basic schools in Zambia to analyse why schools are high-risk places for HIV transmission and unwanted pregnancy and what they can do to prevent it. The teachers are engaged in a participatory process to explore their own HIV, reproductive, gender and sexuality issues and role in sexual risk and prevention in the school. They used mapping to show risky places, drama and role-play to explore how teachers contribute to HIV transmission and pregnancy, hot-seating to understand their motivations and the Margolis wheel to find ways to address the causes. Teachers acknowledged the problem of sexual abuse and made plans to address it. They then facilitated a participatory assessment with pupils, using many of the same tools to analyse the situation with them and get their ideas on how to respond. For example, they expressed their hopes and fears about sexuality and life-skill lessons and gave suggestions on how it could be taught safely. Pupils wrote anonymous questions, stories and problem letters and put them in a box in the classroom. This produced a wealth of questions and stories, which showed high levels of sexual activity and sexual abuse and fed into the development of an initial set of lessons aimed at creating a safe environment for teaching sexuality.

when successful strategies usually derive their success from the process adopted.

Rolling out participatory community assessments in a cascade training model using a fixed set of PLA tools can easily lead to token participation and planning based on the opinions of the powerful. Vulnerable people may be pressured to speak courageously in public about contested issues and left to face the consequences without follow-up support.

What's needed is an approach in which insiders and outsiders share their different knowledge, with the outsider bringing to the table new ideas and perspectives from other sites and cultures. Participation then becomes working with local people to select interventions known to work and creatively find the best approach to implementing them. Part of this is understanding better how particular environments – schools are one example, see Box 1 – might be seen as risky spaces, and working with people to explore ways to reduce risk that take account of the complexity of factors that only those who know these spaces well are able to identify.

Poverty, sexual and reproductive health and development

The Primary Health Care Declaration of Alma Ata in 1978 named structural, economic and political inequalities as determinants of poverty and health status. Poverty and inequality have deepened since 1995 in most African countries. But poverty limits the impact of interventions that ignore the very real effects that a lack of economic and personal power might have on women's and men's abilities to exercise control over their lives. All too often interventions proposed by communities to address poverty are ignored by agencies working on sexual and reproductive health.

Even where communities call for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) interventions, poverty continues to be a major barrier to access. In the Eastern province of Zambia, for example, communities demand condoms, sex education, voluntary counselling and HIV testing (VCT) and sexually transmitted infection (STI) treatment as key interventions. But free condoms are often not available and rural farming communities do not have the cash to buy them every time they have sex. The health services are severely weakened by structural adjustment policies. The community workers and peer educators who are trained to teach skills-based safer sex, distribute condoms and refer to health services do not have the bicycles and incentives to reach the remote villages in their districts. They are poor and need money to pay others to weed their maize.

Poverty affects opportunities for using participatory approaches, which require long-term adequate levels of funding for community-level work. The most vulnerable people need some material assistance to attend PLA sessions or skills-based learning activities or they stay away to survive. Young people are at risk of HIV because of their poverty. Many have to consider using their sexual assets to meet their

Box 2: Responding to poverty

In 1998 Care Zambia conducted a participatory study with young people in peri-urban Lusaka to explore issues around their sexual and reproductive health and generate a community response, which was reported in *PLA Notes* 37. The range of participatory methods used, and the richness of the learning they generated inspired others working with young people. Local adults reading the report were shocked at, for instance, the extent to which girls bartered their bodies to meet their most basic needs. Young people were trained to counsel and sell condoms to their peers. In a participatory evaluation, some years later, peer counsellors reported on their distress when poorer young people did not have cash to buy condoms and they were obliged to send them away empty-handed, or when they could not afford effective STI treatment. The evaluation resulted in peer educators exploring the nature of commercial sexual activity in the compounds and condom and STI treatment accessibility further, and developing proposals to continue the project further in their own compounds. (Source: Flyer on Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research (PEER), Options and CDS, Swansea.)

Box 3: Mapping bodies

Body maps, described in *PLA Notes* 16, have been used in a wide range of creative ways by people working in sexual and reproductive health to explore bodily processes, risks and pleasures. Annie George (personal communication) used them with women in Bombay to open up discussions about sex and sexuality. Kim Batchelor describes in *PLA Notes* 37 how HIV prevention workers at a workshop in Dallas and New Mexico mapped erogenous zones, organs associated with the birth process, and those affected by sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and used them to discuss the effects of body image on vulnerability to STIs. In a powerful example of how body maps can be used to enable people to reclaim their own knowledge about their bodies, Jonathan Morgan worked with South African HIV positive women using body maps to explore and share their experiences of using anti-retrovirals (see http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/cssr/body_maps.html). Ann Sturley (2000) shares her experiences of using body mapping with men to explore their anxieties about vasectomy, in *PLA Notes* 37.

most basic needs. Jill Lewis, whose contribution to *PLA Notes* 37 showed an inspiring example of work with young people that is sensitive to issues of identity and difference, argues,

The limitations of the living conditions of people inhibit ongoing, sustained outreach. I dream of work that, with blocks of five years' funding, resources the local trained people to initiate and mount in turn their direct work with people...

Barriers to addressing poverty effectively include:

- funding focused on short-term HIV interventions;
- lack of expertise in economic intervention and credit;
- difficulties in achieving multi-sector collaboration;
- small projects that generate too little income to make a difference; and
- no linking up of local issues to advocacy for national and global level changes.

As well as action at a local level, those involved in sexual and reproductive well-being need to ally with movements for social and economic justice. They need to advocate for action at the national and macro level to release the wealth needed by poor people to be capable of meeting their basic needs and planning their own action to manage their sexual lives safely.

Participation, sexuality and gender

Globalisation and the commoditisation of sexuality in advertising and media have contributed to a culture which pressures young people to achieve the norm of attractiveness through buying clothes, shoes, cosmetics, mobile phones and the like: 'I shop, therefore I am'. Sexual activity has come to be de-linked from relationships, caring and compassion. In rich countries, this contributes to low self-esteem and self-harming behaviour. In poor countries, some have sex to acquire the material goods that identify them as attractive, modern and successful. Take, for example, the advertisements for a hair product that are to be seen in rural districts in various African countries. They show an African woman with straight shiny hair, and the slogan is along the lines of 'be yourself'.

Think, though, of the other ways this slogan could be used to give young women (and men) a stronger sense of their potential and capacities. 'Be yourself' is a good way of thinking about what empowering sexual and reproductive well-being and rights work can do. Rather than tell people what they ought to do – whether encouraging them to do what others do and follow norms, or set themselves apart from the crowd by doing things that others don't do – 'be yourself' could be about enabling people to become more fully the person they are. It is about the freedom to be, the freedom to have the kind of relationships that bring happiness and the kind of sex that brings pleasure.

Working with participation in addressing sexuality and gender is not the same as participation in work with natural resources or water supplies and the like. Sexuality and gender are intimate, private and emotionally loaded. They link into deeply held beliefs and feelings. For many societies, talking about sexuality is restricted to very specific and private situations and going outside these boundaries willy-nilly can lead to harm in ways that outsiders may be unable to anticipate. Public participation in discussions on intimate aspects of sexu-

ality may be dangerous for participants and the facilitator if it is not carefully planned with the groups concerned and safe ways found to talk.

Sexuality, gender and HIV affect all of us very directly in a way that other areas of life may not. Our values around these areas are very strongly held and that makes it difficult to listen and respond in a respectful and enabling way. Time, trust and caring are needed for continuing conversations in which people's stories and discourses change over time as they feel able to speak about their reality. Processes which do not rely too much on diagramming and public groups are needed. Participatory narrative and performing arts activities may be more helpful for reflection than linear diagramming tools which may bring out stereotypes and norms. A small group relaxed conversation with a facilitator who is committed to helping people reflect and find ways to protect themselves from HIV might create a more intimate space for sharing than the use of diagramming tools. These can serve to open up tricky issues but can result in the tyranny of consensus, leaving little space for individuals to express their difference and explore their own personal feelings.

Discussions of sexuality in public groups often generate normative pictures rather than the reality and complexity of desire, sexual preference, relationships and practice. Some things are unmentionable and deeply stigmatised. This means that there is a limit to the value of democracy and consensus in community discussions even if groups are carefully set up for safety. Men who are attracted to other men, for example, will keep quiet when homosexuality is vilified in a group of men. In such settings, the facilitator has a key role in enabling people to get through layers of normative assumptions that we may not ever question or challenge, to reflect and begin to challenge each other, 'peeling the onion' until they reach a more nuanced, complex and authentic picture of how sexuality and gender influence sexual safety. He or she needs to provide new knowledge, challenge harmful beliefs and talk about what has been done elsewhere and succeeded.

What we're taught to think about sexuality and gender and what we hear from society, the church, our parents, the media and popular culture, create a set of stereotypes and norms. If we're asked what a 'typical man' thinks or does, it is easy enough to find a stereotype to fit. But when we're asked about the men in our own lives and whether they fit that picture, we soon realise that it doesn't really capture our own experience. Information provided by trainers or found in guides on participatory approaches to gender and sexuality may offer information which limits the discussion to stereotypes or known categories outside the stereotype, rather than giving us a sense of the complexity of gender and sexuality. For example, the widespread messages that men in Africa are promiscuous, rough and indifferent to female pleasure, and that women are submissive victims and do not expect pleasure, drives the epidemic and are as disempowering and didactic as any lecture. Also, these messages are

Box 4: Innovative methods to explore sexuality

Participatory tools are often used to explore the reasons why people don't use condoms. Groups of men often agree that condoms feel cold, sex is less enjoyable, women want to feel their ejaculation and so on. Many of these men have not personally used a condom, they are expressing group norms. In such a discussion with men in Rwanda, Jill Lewis asked 'Has anyone ever spoken with you about how condoms enhanced their sexual pleasure?' The men were amazed at this idea and engaged in quite a different way about the possibility of using condoms (personal communication). In Porto Alegre in Brazil, de Nazareth, Hassen and colleagues worked with groups of young women to find out what kind of information they thought would be most interesting and useful to their peers, and the medium that they thought would make it most appealing and accessible. One group produced a photo novella, which they scripted and featured in themselves, another created a rap song, others still chose other ways of communicating that had a better chance of reaching people than conventional leaflets or posters (Hassen, 2002).

Box 5: The importance of sexual pleasure

Participatory work with rural communities and in schools in Zambia shows that women and girls are interested in sexual pleasure and able to ask for it in their own ways. Local puberty teachers traditionally teach girls how to masturbate in rural Zambia. Girls go to 'blue movies' as much as boys and five middle-aged women laughed that they had all reached orgasm through just watching a blue movie. Safer sex erotic movies could do more than all the leaflets being distributed. Many men and women are keen to talk about how to be a good lover and how to satisfy their partners. The right to pleasure and the opening up of new possibilities for pleasure with freedom to experiment are important areas for participation.

Men and women teachers in Zambia thought about all the questions that they had always wanted to ask the opposite sex about sexuality. They exchanged questions and discussed their answers alone and then formed a 'fishbowl' (see Tips for Trainers). Women sat in the middle and answered the men's questions whilst the men sat around the outside and listened to the answers without speaking and visa-versa. This method combined with body-mapping resulted in detailed talk about sexual pleasure and intimacy and raised issues for further exploration. In an evaluation six months later, people reported a more enjoyable and safer sexual life; one participant reported on 'embarking on a new life of pleasure with my wife – I am now able to satisfy her, which I never did before'.

Spirits lift when pleasure, intimacy and love are part of the discussion of sexual safety and people become really engaged at an effective level.

A health worker demonstrates how to use a condom for a small crowd of men on a village road in India

Photo: © 2001 Nrityanjali Academy, Courtesy of Photoshare

based on possibly racist, feminist, elitist assumptions that blame and deny people their complexity, diversity and humanity. Women don't always want to be assertive, and men can feel very vulnerable.

Gender inequality does result in norms that give men power over women's sexuality and entitle them to satisfy their sexual desires at whatever cost to women, who are expected to be submissive. These norms make both men and women vulnerable to sexual ill-being and they need to be addressed. But this should not be the only discourse. Imagine a sex-positive culture with sexual intimacy and satisfaction seen as essential to the well-being of men and women. This culture can be seen in group discussions in Zambia and Ghana when men and women feel comfortable to talk outside – often Christian – norms, about their search for sexual pleasure with a partner or alone. Participatory workshops on how to be a better lover have a very different ring to them than those teaching people how to prevent disease – but may serve the purpose just as well, if not better. Using techniques such as body mapping to explore turn-ons and turn-offs – as Lucy Shillingi taught us some years ago – and to allow women and men to learn about their own, and others', erogenous zones and about forms of pleasuring that they may never have tried. This is an approach to the epidemic that places intimacy, pleasure and respect for the rights and needs of sexual partners at the heart of HIV prevention at the same time as respecting women's and men's right to pleasure – rather than treating them as the owners of bodies that must be better controlled.

Whose agenda counts?

All community mobilisation and participatory planning involves sharing of ideas and negotiation between different groups. The group initiating the planning process might be an insider group of activists or an outside organisation or a mixture of both. Whoever initiates the process will have an agenda and boundaries in mind, based on needs, resources and values. The agenda might be focused as in preparing the community for the introduction of a new STI treatment package or a broader package of interventions as described above. At times, the mobilisation and participation is similar to social marketing research, where the organisation wishes to understand people's knowledge, attitudes and practices around an intervention in order to make a persuasive marketing campaign.

All those initiating and facilitating community-based planning will place boundaries on which interventions favoured by community members are acceptable, partly related to their values. Many outsiders would not accept the two community strategies outlined below. Many older people in communities favour the use of disciplinary measures to promote good behaviour in young people. A chief in Ghana, for example, explained how when she realised that her daughter had a boyfriend, she sent her to the teacher to be beaten severely. The girl stopped her relationship and is now nearly qualified to be a teacher and the chief was proud of her successful action. She goes around the village at dusk with a stick to chastise boys and girls who are out and about. In Zambia, some elders think it best that boys and girls who can't control their sexual feelings in their early teens marry in order to stop AIDS, as they are too small to fit condoms. But then, how many donors and governments are willing to supply smaller condoms?

The rights of transgendered people to live their lives without discrimination, molestation or sexual violence may never appear on a PRA 'community action plan', nor is it likely to find communities calling for measures that enable sex workers to have safer working conditions or that give adolescents better access to condoms. Work in sexual and reproductive rights makes a powerful case for the importance of a rights basis to participatory work if it is to address the vulnerability of particular groups. Simply 'asking the community' what they would like is not enough, and may be positively harmful.

Donor funding for sexual and reproductive health is increasingly subject to conditionalities related to agendas which resonate with those of conservative leaders in some countries, with an impact that extends even to the most progressive of governments. The US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), for example, has earmarked one third of prevention funding for 'abstinence only' programmes, and is heavily promoting fidelity in marriage and reserving condoms for 'high risk' groups such as those involved in the buying and selling of sex. Delaying the start of sexual activity and reducing numbers of sexual partners have both been important in reducing HIV transmission in Africa, but in the context of choices which include condoms. The PEPFAR position makes it easier for leaders and local people who disapprove of young people being sexually active to deny them information and access to condoms, and increasingly difficult for those who believe in choice to enable this to happen.

To apply such an approach in countries with an HIV prevalence of 20-35% in which most sexual encounters are risky – let alone in northern countries, with their problems of high rates of teenage pregnancy, soaring adolescent STIs and insistently rising HIV rates – is highly problematic. There is no evidence that abstinence only programmes have an effect on sexual debut or its consequences, one way or the other (Kirby, 2002:6). And evidence shows that sexuality education, including information on contraception and safe sex, does not result in earlier sexual activity and when people do become sexually active, they are more likely to use protection (Grunseit *et al.*, 1997).

It is distressing to talk with young people in Africa who are aware of the risks and try hard to abstain, but don't succeed. It is just as distressing to talk to those who would rather be able to use condoms than have unprotected and risky sex, but simply cannot afford to buy them. Abstinence promotion doesn't take into account the reality of sexual desire, the need for young people to learn about safe sex for future activity or the widespread exchange of sex for basic needs. The impact of such programmes on provision for those who do have sex makes them more problematic still. National leaders are denouncing condoms and fidelity is promoted as

Box 5: Realising rights and ensuring justice...

A key aspect of rights-based work is ensuring that people have access to information about their rights. In Zambia, PPAZ and the Alliance are holding workshops with policy-makers, government and traditional service providers, community and religious leaders, civil society organisations and young people to discuss existing policies and rights, assess their implementation and barriers to this, identify channels of communication and make an action plan to promote their implementation. Useful tools included a values clarification on contentious issues where people are asked to agree or disagree with statements related to the rights and then explain to each other their points of view. This is an opportunity to share knowledge and values and resulted in change in the participants, for example of whether young people should have information on and access to condoms. Participants who thought that young people were being 'spoilt' by rights education were challenged by the young people present through a drama showing the consequences of denying them their rights, for example to bodily integrity and life-saving information.

Another key dimension goes beyond enhancing access to justice to ensuring the accountability of judicial systems – especially to poor women. Ann Sutherland and Felicia Sakala (2002), working with the YWCA of Zambia, used participatory diagramming tools with women to explore their experience of gender violence. The diagrams were so powerful that they moved the women to develop a strategy for enabling women to have better access to justice, and to be treated more fairly by the courts. Women pressing for their rights to be respected by the law were supported in the courts by a large group of fellow women, who sat to observe the conduct of the judge and monitor the proceedings to ensure justice was done.

A community in Kapata, Zambia identifies the HIV-affected households – those with widows, orphans, or chronically ill patients

Photo: © 2002 Elizabeth Serlemitsos/CCP, Courtesy of Photoshare

safe, in countries where sexual culture, sexualised media and relational norms show the frequency of sexual circulation – with serial monogamy, multiple and parallel partners, high divorce rates, and a not insignificant number of men buying sex. Condoms are being re-stigmatised, supplies are being cut and advocacy to make them widely available in large numbers is facing challenges of a different order.

Rights-based approaches: new directions, new possibilities?

Despite the retrogressive moves that threaten much that has been gained in the last decade or so, the last decade has seen an explosion of interest in human rights and in what is being called a 'rights-based approach' to development (Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall, forthcoming). Many countries have signed up to CEDAW (Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) and CRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child), which provide the basis for rights to full and comprehensive information about sexuality and reproduction, and to reproductive and sexual health services, freedom from punishment and abuse, early marriage etc. These documents have been drafted and promoted by outside donors and signed by urban elites. More work is needed to educate the people who might make the most use of them on their content and benefits, promote their implementation and demand that they be upheld.

For some, a rights-based approach goes beyond currently existing legal rights to embrace a way of doing development that focuses on enabling people to recognise and claim their entitlements, including from those closest to them – not just from the state (Petchesky, 1998; Cornwall and Welbourn, 2002). By reframing the way in which we think of participatory work on issues like sexuality and having children, rights-based approaches make us think about the importance of enabling everyone to enjoy the right to make their own sexual and reproductive choices, the right to safe and satisfying sexual relationships and the right to choose when and whether to have children. Rights-based work also has an important role to play in enabling people to have different relationships with providers and with the judiciary, regarding them less as those who give favours than those who are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil everyone's human rights.

As the examples in Box 5 illustrate, participatory methods can be used to explore people's perceptions of the rights they have, to help people to gain greater awareness of the rights they might claim – turning a sense of unfairness into a more active sense of entitlement, and from there into a demand for rights – and to enable people to organise collectively to demand

what is rightfully theirs. The challenge for those working with participation in SRH in the future is to use these new applications of participatory methodologies to bring about the transformations in practice that can really begin to enable women and men to realise their sexual and reproductive rights.

Conclusions

Used with sensitivity and with the appropriate follow-through and support to break the silence on issues of sexuality and pleasure, to build solidarity through shared experience or to devise locally owned and appropriate strategies to realise sexual and reproductive rights and well-being, participatory approaches are a powerful weapon in the struggle for rights. As in other areas of development work, participatory methods can easily become a quick fix and be used to generate a shopping list of solutions or rubber stamp already-intended projects. The tokenistic use of participatory processes can end up reinforcing existing power structures and shoring up the very values and norms that put women's and men's well-being – and, in some contexts, their very lives – in jeopardy. And in something as personal and highly charged as sexuality and reproduction, great care is needed to use these approaches with respect and feeling. But when used sensitively and well, these approaches really can make a life-affirming difference.

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9

Gender, participation, health and positive thinking: a personal perspective

THEME SECTION

by ALICE WELBOURN

Introduction

This year, I have personally witnessed the following three incidents:

- A senior World Bank staff member, based in Washington, stated that it is not possible for the World Bank to liaise with HIV positive women's networks in different countries, because the latter didn't have the capacity to consult with the Bank properly.
- A senior Geneva-based World Health Organization (WHO) staff member 'reminded' me that when WHO is hosting a meeting with 'partners', it is WHO's prerogative to set the meeting date without any outside consultation.
- Another senior Geneva-based WHO staff member, stated that it is WHO's policy to ensure that all HIV positive women will have access to anti-retroviral therapy by making them available through ante-natal clinics.

I find these three statements very disheartening since they are made by people who are in power, by people who are relatively highly paid and highly trained, and who are meant to be experts in their fields.

This article is a personal account of some of my experiences of approaches to sexual and reproductive health that promote gender, generation, representation and participation over the past 15 years or so. Although it is a highly personalised account, I hope that it will echo the experiences of many of those reading it.

Waking up to reality

Sexual and reproductive health has come a long way in the last 15 years in relation to the international development scene (see Gordon and Cornwall, this issue). Twenty years ago, it wasn't on the agenda of any major international development agencies, other than through support for maternal and child health (MCH) clinics and through traditional birth attendant (TBA) training, which both focused on women's roles as birth-givers and child carers. Both are important roles for a woman, but far from being her only tasks or roles in life. In those days, agencies considered that anything to do with sex, relationships, gender, commercial sex work, or drug use was way off-limits and had nothing whatsoever to do with 'development'.

How the world has changed. A Panos report, written in 1991, stated that:

> *…with the WHO projecting a cumulative total of 4 million adult AIDS cases worldwide by the mid-1990s, the epidemic is beginning to affect the economies of a number of countries.*

Indeed, by December 2002, UNAIDS reported that the total number of people with HIV/AIDS in the world was 42 million (of whom over 50% are women). Newly infected people alone in the year 2002 numbered 5 million and 3.1 million people died in 2002 alone. (UNAIDS, 2002).

With these figures now a reality rather than 'just' a projection, the 'international development' world has been forced to wake up to the harsh truth that many countries'

ICW staff and trustees held a workshop to review their International Strategic Plan 2003-2007 to measure progress against its objectives and to identify new areas that need more work

Photo: ICW

gains of recent decades, in terms of life expectancy rates and gross national income, have fallen back to levels previously recorded in the sixties.

HIV and AIDS has cut swathes through Africa's people of reproductive age especially, and is set to do the same soon in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

The increasing impact of HIV and AIDS

In reading others' contributions to this 50th edition, I was struck hugely by the continued similarity of the issues that face us all in this 'participation' movement, no matter what issues we address. For instance, you could substitute 'HIV positive people's rights issues' for 'children's rights issues' in many aspects of Chawla and Johnston's chapter (section 7); Archer and Goreth's summary of principles of literacy education (section 4) and Pimbert's Table 1 on institutionalising participation and people-centred approaches (section 14), speak equally to issues facing workers and activists in the sexual and reproductive rights movement. The discourse on globalisation and participatory resource management in Pimbert's article (Box 3) echoes closely the challenges facing those of us campaigning for global access to anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs, given the stances of the Bush Administration, the transnational pharmaceutical companies, and other key global financiers.

It also struck me that the other contributors have hardly mentioned HIV in their articles. Perhaps they feel that this is because it will be 'covered' by this one. However, all the hard work in their own fields will come to nothing if the people they have worked with around the world have died. Instead of repeating their clearly articulated reflections, I offer here therefore a more personalised viewpoint.

Here are some extracts from the UNAIDS epi-update 2002 report:

The epidemic is also sapping the government's capacity to support small-scale farmers. Despite increasing mortality among extension workers, the training and recruitment of replacement workers all but halted in 1995.

According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), seven million agricultural workers in 25 severely affected African countries have died from AIDS since 1985. It warns that 16 million more could die in the next 20 years if massive and effective programmes are not mounted.

As the impact of the epidemic grows more severe, it strips households and communities of valuable labour power. Adults become ill and less able to attend to agricultural and other work, including wage labour. Some 60% of commercial and smallholder farmers in Namibia told researchers in 2001 that they had suffered labour losses due to HIV/AIDS. Others—typically women and children—are also drafted in to care for the ill, thereby reducing the time and energy they can devote to paid labour or farming tasks. In badly affected areas, regular funeral duties can have similar effects.

The agricultural output of family-based farmers and their supplementary incomes from wage and other paid labour—so vital to food security in many low- and middle-income countries—cannot be sustained in such circumstances. Fields are more likely to be left fallow and smaller areas kept under cultivation, weeding is neglected, infrastructure (such as fences and irrigation ditches) falls into disrepair, and pest-control becomes too expensive.

Almost 1 million people in Asia and the Pacific acquired HIV in 2002, bringing to an estimated 7.2 million the number of people now living with the virus—a 10% increase since 2001. A further 490,000 people are estimated to have died of AIDS in the past year. About 2.1 million young people (aged 15–24) are living with HIV.
The early death of farming parents disrupts the transfer of knowledge and skills from generation to generation. Children growing up as orphans have fewer opportunities to learn how to use and sustain land and to prepare nutritious food for family members. The widespread loss of this intangible, but essential, good could have severe and long-lasting consequences for food security in the region. At the moment, very few steps are being taken to counter this growing reality.

Two participants of the Young Women's Dialogue held in South Africa, this year. The dialogue brought together young African women living with HIV and AIDS in a safe space for young women to share experiences about the challenges of HIV/AIDS and to develop advocacy campaigns for highlighting the gender and human rights-based challenges faced by participants in each of their countries

Photo: ICW

In 1992, I myself learnt the hard way about the impact that HIV can have on ordinary people's lives by discovering that I too, am HIV positive. Despite all my years of good education, good health and close network of friends, my access to information about routes of HIV transmission and my concern to inform others with whom I worked, I too had acquired this virus. It's taken me 11 years to 'go public' with this information, fearing what the neighbours might say, wanting to protect my children from taunts at school, fearing in the early days that I would be dead within months. Luckily I am still here, thanks to the advent of ARVs, and, thanks to the wonderful support of my family, friends and close colleagues.

So, as a way of trying to make sense of what had happened to me, in the same way that many activists are born, I decided to start to work specifically on gender, HIV and AIDS, to try to alert others to the enormity and complexity of the issues involved, in order to try to make life less dreadful for others who received this diagnosis and to try to help others *not* to get infected in the first place. This was my fundamental coping strategy, as much to do with helping to keep myself sane and alive, as it was to do with helping anyone else. When organisations and individuals work with and support HIV positive people around them, in truly respectful, equitable and meaningful ways, they are doing much to help to keep us alive, active and well, as well as learning from our many personal insights of living with this virus.

Luckily I am fit and well and have responded well to the ARV drugs. Although many friends have had unpleasant side effects, the drugs have made a huge difference, actually keeping us alive for a start and easing the relentless stress of the many funerals that many of us went to in the earlier 1990s. I exercise regularly and lead a normal life. I work a nine-hour day and I look just like the next person. No one would guess that I have this virus in my body and that I have had it for over 14 years.

Tackling the issues

The issues which I, as an HIV-positive activist, and my colleagues are having to tackle on a daily basis, are the issues highlighted in the opening quotes of this article. These issues are summarised below.

Learning how to learn from others

Many international financiers and policy-makers consider

"We need to challenge attitudes that stereotype women as reproducers, which are reflected in the views of WHO and other institutions, which assume that if HIV drugs are made available at ante-natal clinics, then enough women will receive access to treatment without them having to think much further about us"

that others have to learn to engage on **their** terms, rather than recognising any need for themselves to learn how to learn from others in more open, interactive, participatory ways. The work that the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and others have done to ensure that young people are now represented on all its regional boards – and that the methods used for the meetings of those boards are interactive, participatory and **fun** – have much to teach us all about how barriers of communication and representation between 'us' and 'them' can be broken down effectively and how the skills and insights of those who previously had no voice **can** be heard effectively. (Faulkner and Nott, 2002)

Working in partnership

Many in the UN, donor agencies, governments, NGOs and other institutions believe that 'partnership' means that those who hold the purse-strings control the agenda, the invitation list, and the time and the place for their meetings. Many of the articles in *Participatory Learning and Action* over the years have highlighted how critical it is to develop codes of courtesy, respect and equity with those with whom we seek to work. It would be good for such articles to become required UN reading.

Changing attitudes towards women

We need to challenge attitudes that stereotype women as reproducers, which are reflected in the views of WHO and other institutions, which assume that if HIV drugs are made available at ante-natal clinics, then enough women will receive access to treatment without them having to think much further about us. What about girls below the locally accepted reproductive stage, what about women who are barren or who may wish to have a break from having children, or those who wish to have no children – or women who are past child-bearing age? All of us may need HIV treatment too – yet at present there is *no* provision within the WHO 3x5 strategy for any of us[1].

Sharing the platform

There is a need to challenge the views of similar bodies – as well as the views of many activists – especially men – around the way in which men and male institutions lead the world, without even any awareness of their exclusion of others from meaningful engagement and debate. This is, perhaps, the hardest nut to crack. One man recently told me, 'Oh well, you women just need to stand up and speak out', yet he would not accept that he too had a responsibility to ensure that he was sharing the platform from which he spoke with **women** as well as men.

These are all views with which we find ourselves taking issue on a daily basis and which cause us huge stress. Other issues, which we also regularly witness, also need addressing.

Thinking beyond the individual

The dominance of Western ways of thinking, promoted by Descartes, in his words: 'I think, therefore I am', assumes that the individual is central to their world. This thinking is also central to the belief that HIV happens only to 'people out there' and isn't something which affects **all** of humanity. Descartes' thinking has been clearly and comprehensively challenged and thrown out by Satish Kumar, in his excellent book 'You are, therefore I am: a declaration of dependence' (Kumar, 2002). Even Satish Kumar, alas, overlooks issues of gender inequality in this analysis – but his works should be required textbook reading for all those who aspire to work in international development.

Listen to the evidence

There is a dominance of Western lines of thought amongst donors, which promote the need for theory first, before practice, rather than realising that these two are constantly intertwined in a give-and-take relationship. Thus many donors dismiss as 'anecdotal' repeated stories from many HIV positive women in many different parts of the world, which relate the same tales of human rights violations (such as lack of confidentiality, forced abortions and sterilisations, being thrown out of their homes, or off their land, being separated from their children, and so on) at the hands of their health workers, their in-laws, their communities and policy makers. Since these women are often sick, penniless, ostracised by

[1] The WHO '3x5 strategy' is to ensure access to anti-retroviral therapy for three million people by the end of 2005. This is estimated to be half the number of HIV positive people who will actually need it by then. While most welcome in principle, it demonstrates no awareness of issues of access relating to gender.

The Voces Positivas project in Central America and the Caribbean. HIV positive women from 12 countries in the region participated in an innovative and inspiring process of empowerment and training which they are now replicating in their home countries

Photo: ICW

their neighbours, they have to have iron wills to organise themselves, set up self-help support groups, share their stories, and start to document them, speak out for their rights and make calls to policy makers to change local practices to support those rights. Many thousands of such groups exist around the world – yet the world still dismisses their calls, because they haven't yet been 'properly' documented by 'official' researchers and aren't based on 'evidence'. And yet we find it highly difficult to find any donors who are prepared to fund multi-country studies on **our** terms, which will enable such groups to consolidate their experiences and recommendations. Where is the justice in that?

Who owns the knowledge?

Time and again we see the violation of intellectual property rights. Just as with the plans of Western scientists to patent indigenous seed species and even human DNA, there is widespread plagiarism practised by some NGOs, especially some international NGOs. Although there is much good work created and carried out by many NGOs, others adopt – and call their own – ideas and projects that are often based on and created out of these self-help groups' lived experiences.

This practice is becoming increasingly widespread and should give us grave cause for concern. Recent examples include a practical, hands-on nutritional guide for HIV positive people, written by Lynde Francis, Director of the Centre in Harare, which provides nutritional advice, counselling and complementary therapy for HIV positive people in Zimbabwe. Herself HIV positive, Lynde has developed the Centre with colleagues out of their own collective experiences and this book builds on that rich personal experience. Recently, an international NGO has told others that **they** have produced the book, as if it is their own work. At the Barcelona AIDS Conference in 2002, a West African activist asked me: 'What is it with (Organisation X)? The new director used to be great, but if anyone joins that organisation, they start to act as if they invented everything: they steal our ideas and call them their own'. International NGOs can do this because those whose ideas they have stolen have little recourse to expensive lawyers – nor do they actually **want** anything more than fair and just acknowledgement for the

"When organisations and individuals work with and support HIV positive people around them, in truly respectful, equitable and meaningful ways, they are doing much to help to keep us alive, active and well, as well as learning from our many personal insights of living with this virus"

huge amount of personal insights, energy and passion which they have put into these ideas. Yet many international NGO staff have not often had those personal insights themselves and use others' ideas to promote their own organisations, with little regard for the rights of those whom they call their partners.

Thankfully, the *Participatory Learning and Action* series editors from the outset have made it clear that articles should, wherever possible, be multi-authored, in order to respect the diverse wealth of experience which has created a new idea, rather than leaving authorship – and thus ownership – of new ideas in the hands of the elite.

Evaluating effectiveness

Another major cause for concern which is just emerging relates to the roll out of access to treatment, which is currently being planned by WHO (the '3x5' strategy). There is a **huge** need for monitoring and evaluation of this process, at grassroots community level as well as at country-wide level, and it is imperative that this monitoring should be conducted in a truly participatory and disaggregated way, in order to ensure that there is equitable access for women and girls as well as for men and boys. Practitioners such as those of you reading this article could offer your services to HIV positive networks in your own countries, to work together **with** them to monitor this access and ensure that it is equitable.

Ethical frameworks

Just as crucial is guaranteeing the ethical involvement of HIV positive people in research. Much research carried out on HIV positive people, especially women, is extractive, disempowering, elitist, and ignores gender or generational issues. In response to these problems, the International Community of Women with AIDS/HIV (ICW), the activist network with which I am involved, has produced guidelines for ethical research that seek to promote more equitable processes (see www.icw.org).

Recommendations for good practice

You *Participatory Learning and Action* readers could make a huge difference to this pandemic. No doubt many of you are possibly HIV positive or have close friends or family who are, and are therefore yourselves only too aware of the issues raised here. For those of you not yet directly working on or touched by these issues, in addition to the observations above, I offer some further suggestions for action:

- Familiarise yourself with routes of HIV infection and consider the implications for you and your family and friends. HIV isn't about innocence or guilt: **no one** deserves to have HIV. It is a viral infection and until we remove the morality debate from the issue, and recognise that it is poverty, global power imbalances, and gender issues which fuel and fan the pandemic, HIV will continue to thrive and people with HIV will continue to die. (See, for example, Cornwall and Welbourn (eds) *Realizing Rights*).
- Promote solidarity with and support for HIV positive people around you: train, retain and employ HIV positive people, including women, at all levels of your organisation. An excellent document, 'Working positively' describes how you can do this together with local HIV positive peoples' networks (see 'Working Positively', UK Consortium, 2003).
- Promote solidarity with and support for HIV positive people in your own community. Talk with your neighbours about practical as well as strategic ways in which people with HIV and their carers amongst you can be supported by you all. Create enabling environments where positive people can feel safe to be open about their status with their own neighbours. (See the IDS Bridge Cutting Edge Pack, and ICW publications, for examples of good projects).
- Join forces with networks of positive people in your country to lobby for free and equitable access to antiretroviral drugs for **everyone** with HIV; for food in their stomachs and also for drugs to combat 'opportunistic' infections. Generic drugs now cost as little as US$140 a year, but global power politics is hampering their production and distribution. Ensure that these drugs are available not just for those who can afford to pay for them in towns, but also distributed by trained lay people, if necessary, in rural areas.

Only once people know that drugs are available and that their friends won't reject them will many dare to risk being tested.

- Explore and challenge the laws or practices in your own community, which deny women the right to choose to stay in their homes or on their land, or to keep their chil-

dren once their husband has died. If families spilt up once the husband has gone, poverty will drive the widow and her children towards further vulnerability to infection, and all chances of children inheriting generations of knowledge and skills from their parents will be gone.

- Ensure that girls, as well as boys in your community continue with their education. Many girls are taken out of school to help their mothers tend for the sick. Consider flexible timetables, to enable their schooling to continue. Make sure that both children and adults around you all read or have read to them 'Choices' by Gill Gordon.
- Write to heads of western governments to challenge their international recruitment policies, which leave other parts of the world empty of teachers and medical staff, without considering the consequences.
- Form a group with others in your own community, including religious leaders, politicians, health workers, teachers, CBOs, youth workers – and groups of HIV positive men and women – to question and challenge the social, economic, political and moral injustices, which have caused the pandemic to flourish in **your** community.

Together, we **can** all make a difference.

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THEME SECTION

10

Participatory methods and the measurement of well-being

by SARAH WHITE and JETHRO PETTIT

Introduction

Wealth ranking and related methods marked a breakthrough in participatory appraisal. Levels and characteristics of wealth and poverty could be defined in ways that actually meant something to the people being 'measured'. Development workers and poverty researchers were liberated from time-consuming household surveys, and could quickly cluster and rank households so that they could better understand the realities of different groups. They could focus efforts where the need was greatest and prevent better-off families from 'capturing' resources. But beyond these practical benefits, wealth ranking contributed to a larger awakening to the multiple and complex dimensions of poverty and vulnerability. Practitioners and researchers, some of them inspired by the methods documented in *Participatory Learning and Action*, became more aware of the complexity of people's livelihoods. They saw the need to distinguish between different dimensions, such as poverty, insecurity and vulnerability. This led into growing recognition of the importance not only of the material bases of people's lives and livelihoods, but also their personal and social relationships, values and ways of understanding the world. As limitations in conventional understandings of development became clearer, some began to suggest that improvements in 'well-being' (rather than simply income or wealth) could be a key development objective.

Moving from the familiar concept of 'development' to the more people-centred notion of 'well-being' is not, however, as simple as it seems. We need to ask hard questions about the difference between the two, rather than assuming we can simply substitute the one for the other. Participatory approaches have an important contribution to make in **defining** well-being, and ensuring that we do so in ways that genuinely reflect people's own perspectives. As PLA methods were scaled up beyond projects to be used in assessments for policy purposes in the 1990s, for example in the World Bank sponsored Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs), being able to use indicators that would work across contexts, and which could be used for **measurement** that could be recognised by bureaucratic agencies, became a real issue. This paper reflects on these two questions: the **definition** of well-being and its **measurement**. On the one hand, how can participatory methods contribute to the meaning and measurement of well-being? On the other hand, what challenges does the new focus on well-being bring to the PLA tradition?

Understanding well-being

Well-being is a complex notion with many different dimensions. The 'well' shows that it is concerned with values and assessment. 'Being' suggests the importance not only of

economic security and physical health, but also of subjective states of mind and social relationships. But to understand what these mean to people, and the dynamics which result in well-being for some and suffering for others, we need to go beyond 'snapshot' views of where people are at present, to explore the social and cultural processes which lie behind these (McGregor, 2004). This means asking three sets of questions, relating to having, doing and thinking:

- having: what do different kinds of people have or not have? (including material and human resources, and social relationships);
- doing: what do (or can) people do with these resources and why? What can or do they not do, and why?); and
- thinking: how do people judge, assess, and feel about these things? How do they make sense of what happens? What meaning does it have for them?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of participatory approaches in exploring these three dimensions?[1]

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Having

Participation has much to offer in showing what goods and relationships are most important for people to **have** in particular contexts, and what **not having** such key assets means in terms of poverty and vulnerability. The Pathways to Participation research on PRA experiences in eight countries found that the methods were useful in identifying 'improved quality of life according to local standards' (Cornwall and Pratt, 2002, 2003). In Mexico, locally defined indicators for 'improved quality of life' ranged from jobs, income, health and housing to gender relations, self-esteem and reaffirmation of cultural identities (Garcia and Way, 2003: 30).

Karen Brock's (1999) review of participatory appraisals done by NGOs and research institutes during the 1990s reveals the diverse views of poor people. Drawing on qualitative data from 58 sources in 12 countries, she notes how often different indicators were mentioned. Where objective endowments of material resources and social relationships are concerned certain broad indicators emerged time and again, with marked differences for men and women and for people living in rural and urban areas:

Respondents in rural areas placed a strong emphasis on food security in their definitions of poverty, ill-being and vulnerability, as well as lack of work, money and assets. They also emphasised the vulnerability of particular groups within the community: the old, the disabled, female-headed households and those living alone, isolated from social networks. The definitions of those in an urban setting place far more emphasis on the immediate living environment: crowded and unsanitary housing, lack of access to water, dirty and dangerous streets and violence both within and outside the household (Brock, 1999: 9).

Similar patterns emerged in the PPAs (Brock and McGee, 2002: 3). Echoing earlier livelihoods analyses, these show the importance of time and seasonality, gender differences, the value of 'safety nets' to tide over bad times, and how poor people value multiple sources of food and income (IDS, 1996: 3, summarised in McGee with Norton, 2000: 28).

From having to doing

Wealth and well-being ranking are sometimes thought of as the same, but there are differences. Wealth ranking involves generating a range of local criteria for wealth, (see *PLA Notes* 15). Participants sort cards representing households into piles reflecting wealth-based categories, according to these criteria (Pretty *et al.*, 1995: 253-259). Alternatively, participants generate the criteria during the process of sorting households into levels. Although the criteria are not just related to income, in most cases they are limited to ownership or access to tangible assets or resources. They do not touch upon intangible, social and other subjective or culturally constructed experiences of well-being.

The shift from wealth ranking to well-being ranking can help us to gain a fuller sense of social processes and interactions. Well-being can show how social factors 'shape people's experiences of poverty and determine their priorities'; how poor people themselves explain the causes; and how there are 'dynamics of deprivation at levels other than the household' (Robb, 1999: 22-24, cited in McGee with Norton, 2000: 28-32). Connections can emerge between social relations and people's subjective experiences, particularly

[1] This conceptual framework is taken from the approach to well-being developed by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Group on Well-being in Developing Countries (WeD) at the University of Bath (www.welldev.org).

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concerning their sense of power or powerlessness:

The disaggregated findings clearly demonstrate that different kinds of poor people experience their lives in very different ways, and that relationships of power are often a crucial component in understanding the dynamics of poverty and ill-being (Brock, 1999: 1).

The mix of the three dimensions of what people have, do, and think or feel, is also reflected in the World Bank's Voices of the Poor research, which found many inter-related dimensions of powerlessness. Some relate to livelihoods, food, income and assets, but others are grounded in experiences of social isolation and exclusion, unequal gender relations, physical isolation and vulnerability, and abusive behaviour. They also include the political dimensions of being excluded from or disempowered by institutions, or of being only weakly organised as poor people (Narayan *et al.*, 2000: 248-250).

These findings were made largely by combining the results of diverse focus group discussions. In general, however, there seems to be a trade-off between the scale of research methods and their power to reveal these more subtle connections. Larger-scale PPAs can miss the 'intangible' dynamics of poverty, particularly relations of power, gender and exclusion. Even when these do surface, evidence of a more complex, dynamic social picture can be a problem for policy-makers (McGee with Norton, 2000: 33). So while the Voices of the Poor project identified as one if its more important conclusions an 'inter-connected web' of the 'dimensions of powerlessness and ill-being' (Narayan, 2000: 249, Figure 11.1), this finding hardly appeared in the resulting World Development Report 2000/01 (Chambers, 2001: 302).

Thinking, meaning and feeling

Gaining an insight into people's own worldviews has long been a concern of social anthropology and PLA. Other research traditions also have recognised the importance of understanding people's perspectives at an individual level, and in making this case to policy makers, have brought the issue of measurement to the fore. The most robust example of this is the Quality of Life research which aims to give a numerical value to people's subjective perceptions, which can then be compared across different contexts. The origins of this research lie on the one hand with the Social Indicators movement, and on the other in the area of medicine and health, where the information has been sought as a means of assessing the benefits of different drugs or treatments. While all of the Quality of Life approaches involve some elements of participation, they differ considerably in the form and level at which participation occurs.

The World Health Organisation Quality of Life project (WHOQOL) represents one pole, with a highly structured, relatively bureaucratic approach, backed up by extensive psychometric testing. Focus groups made up of people with a range of professional experiences, scientific knowledge and cultural backgrounds participated in defining 25 key 'facets' of the six areas or 'domains' (physical, psychological, level of independence, social relationships, environment, and spirituality) identified by the WHO. The measures for overall quality of life and general health perceptions were all developed at the same time in 15 centres, and the core instrument was then translated into different languages and cultural contexts (Camfield and Skevington, 2003). The result is a formidable instrument of 200 questions in the full version or 52 in the summary version (WHOQOL BREF) which respondents answer using a five-point scale[2]. This is now being using in more than 50 countries. Views differ as to whether the scores from these six 'domains' should be combined into a single Quality of Life indicator, which would suggest that each domain carries equal importance, or if there should be a weighting between the different domains. In either case, the data can be compared across contexts, and used for complex statistical analysis.

An alternative example, from near the opposite pole of maximum flexibility and participation at the individual level, is the Person Generated Index or PGI (Ruta *et al.*, 1994)[3]. In this case the individuals can specify the areas (or domains) of life that are important to them. They then evaluate their perform-

[2] The WHOQOL also makes available specific modules for countries, people living with HIV/AIDS, older people and on spirituality and personal beliefs.
[3] This was originally entitled the Patient Generated Index.

ance with respect to these. Individual measures are becoming increasingly influential within medicine because they have high 'face' and 'content' validity and directly address the changes that are important to patients. For well-being research, this approach is attractive, in that it is designed to identify the values of individuals and works with them to gauge their quality of life. It is sensitive to local culture, conditions, and the social identities of participants, and it also gives scope for comparing results and analysis. Part of this is how often different areas are identified, and the range of scores that they attract. The PGI can also be used to give a single, overall view of the subjective quality of life, defined as 'the extent to which our hopes and ambitions are matched by experience' (Calman, 1984). But to be meaningful, this figure showing the gap between what people have and what they desire would probably need to be matched by another, externally defined measure (Camfield, pers. comm). For measuring well-being, there is clearly scope to broaden this out from its current focus on health, and this is already being developed (Ruta, 1998). There is also potential to use it in the pre-appraisal or evaluation of development programmes, by identifying the critical areas of people's lives that require intervention, or showing the perceived impact of an intervention, according to a range of locally or personally defined criteria. An exploratory study is looking at the scope for developing a broader 'development-related quality of life' profile from the PGI approach. In Ethiopia, the participants 'visibly enjoyed' allocating coins to indicate their priorities and were 'amused and pleased' by the outcome (Bevan *et al.*, 2003).

A caution is perhaps important, however. There is also the question of **how** people experience well-being – the subjective, socially and culturally constructed experience of well-being as a whole (vs. its components) – which is often overlooked. These questions do not fit easily within policy perspectives, but they are vital if participatory approaches are to genuinely reflect people's own values and orientations. For example, you could get people to participate in generating numerical values to represent their assessments of the relative importance of different aspects of their quality of life. But does this rather abstract exercise reflect the ways that people live their lives? Does it capture the underlying rhythms within which they take action and understand the meaning of their experience overall?

Perhaps the major challenge of any well-being research is how it can generate genuinely new and surprising information about the ways in which people see the world. These are what mark the limits of 'what is possible', the values that lie so deep they are 'forgotten': the unconscious sense of where the limits lie (Bourdieu, 1977, Mitchell, 1990). What is at stake here is not only the words used and references made, but also the 'tacit understandings' (Giddens, 1977:169), which form the 'common-sense' that shapes people's life-worlds. These are made up of assumptions and ways of seeing which people have so profoundly internalised that they cannot be asked about directly, but are grasped intuitively, as they emerge 'crab-wise' through the stories that are told (White, 1992:8).

"The shift from wealth ranking to well-being ranking can help us to gain a fuller sense of social processes and interactions. Well-being can show how social factors 'shape people's experiences of poverty and determine their priorities'; how poor people themselves explain the causes; and how there are 'dynamics of deprivation at levels other than the household'"

Well-being ranking, for example, asks for local perceptions of 'the good life', and may clearly generate unexpected information in terms of what factors people identify and how they prioritise them. However, perhaps what people see as 'the good life' does not adequately capture the deepest values of what people consider well-being to be. For example, maybe there is a critically moral dimension to this, better explained by the notion of '**living** a good life', which lies outside the frame which the 'well-being ranking' unconsciously imposes. An example of what we mean is offered by Veena Das (2000:224). In a footnote to her discussion of a woman's responses over her lifetime to the disasters that the Partition of India and Pakistan wrought in her family, she writes:

I must emphasize that the moral stakes for Asha can only be understood if we can enter a lifeworld in which she felt that her eternity was in jeopardy.

There is a danger that all forms of research, especially when undertaken cross-culturally, will be tone deaf to such subtle harmonies. For well-being researchers, this may mean missing the underlying melody which makes sense of the themes and variations sung through the more tangible data. This is not primarily an issue about methods and techniques, but about ethics, conduct and principles of research.

Box 1: The 'Internal Learning System'

The 'Internal Learning System' of the Bangalore-based NGO New Entity for Social Action (NESA) is using participatory methods to monitor human rights abuses with Dalit, Adivasi and other vulnerable communities. In 2000 villages, literate and non-literate men and women make entries every six months to score degrees of abuse, on a scale of one to five. Aspects of life monitored include husbands drinking, domestic violence, Dalits having to drink out of separate glasses, Dalits being made to carry dead bodies or dead animals, whether a girl can select her life partner (personal communication. Vimalathan S Nagasundari and H Noponen). The diaries are aggregated to give an indication of social change (Chambers personal communication, 2004).

Box 2: The County Poverty Alleviation Method

The County Poverty Alleviation Method in China uses eight indicators representing livelihoods, infrastructure and human resources. These can be modified and weighted according to local context and to participatory input from residents; 'since the weightings given will be used in the econometric formula used to calculate the final 'Participatory Poverty Index' (PPI), this means that the villagers' own priorities will be reflected quite strongly' (Welden 2002: 3) The overall process, which draws on a range of PRA techniques, is backed by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and bilateral donors. Thanks to Robert Chambers for calling this example to our attention.

However, the danger of misrepresentation is particularly acute with participatory methodologies. When their findings re-confirm rather than challenge the powerful and accepted worldviews, it seems a more grievous failure than when other research approaches do the same, simply because they claim to be able to genuinely represent 'other' voices.

Participatory methods and the measurement of well-being

As Laderchi (2001:11) notes, since wealth and well-being rankings typically result in information being presented in a numbered sequence, few people dispute these numbers. Many studies find that wealth rankings result in similar patterns as economic surveys (Scoones, 1995 in *ibid*). However, these similarities differ depending on who is responding. Women's responses differ most significantly from the survey data. This suggests that gender is an important key variable in both knowledge (e.g. of differing income sources) and values (*ibid*). This echoes the findings of the Voices of the Poor research and other detailed micro studies of household budgeting and markets in other contexts (see e.g. Johnson, 2004).

Other studies, however, raise questions. How reliable is quantitative data gathered through PRA compared with that gained through surveys or key informant interviews? (e.g. Davies *et al*., 1999, in Laderchi, 2001). Direct comparisons between different pieces of research are often difficult to draw. Differences between findings from PRA and other forms of data collection may also help us to understand better the conditions in which both are produced, and what is actually being measured.

There are certainly some interesting innovations emerging in larger-scale, participatory monitoring of poverty and ill-being. In more than 2,000 villages in South India, people have used visual diaries to monitor their experiences of discrimination and abuse (see Box 1). Another is a 'participatory poverty index' created for use in poverty alleviation planning in rural China. Developed by Prof. Li Xiaoyun, Joe Remenyi and others, this has recently been adopted by the Chinese government (see Box 2). It will be used in nearly 600 of the country's poorest counties as an alternative to the national poverty line assessments (Weldon 2002). Table 1 shows the eight 'village-friendly poverty indicators' which were found to have almost universal results.

There are clearly trade-offs in terms of process and quality in larger-scale approaches which add up results 'across the board'. But there is also potential for mixing participatory and conventional approaches. In particular, participatory methods can bring added value and insight to more complex and context-specific issues. Holland and Abeyesekera (forthcoming) are developing a synthesis of experiences with 'participatory numbers', including a recommended 'code of good practice'.

Ultimately, however, it is not so much the techniques used as how the research is conducted and the relationships established between researchers and research participants that determine the quality of research. Questions of ethics and behaviour have a direct bearing on how valid the findings are. The Pathways project, a major review of PRA experience in eight countries, identified the quality of practice as a key issue. This was partly due to the rapid mainstreaming of PRA methods and the sheer volume of people claiming that they were now 'experts' in using methods[4]. Unfortunately, as Laderchi (2001) points out, while the quality of the research practice is clearly a critical factor in assessing how valid the research results are, it is very difficult to assess this quality afterwards. In some ways the active involvement of research

[4] The Pathways to Participation Project, hosted by the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex, was a collaborative, critical review of practitioner experiences using PRA methods in Kenya, the Gambia, Mexico, Nepal, India, Vietnam, China and Pakistan. Findings can be found in Cornwall and Pratt (2002, 2003) and in a series of papers available at www.ids.ac.uk/particip/research/pathways/

Table 1: Indicators used in participatory poverty index, China	
Livelihood poverty	Cash flow through the household Food insecurity Poverty of personal environment, especially shelter
Infrastructure poverty	Drinkable water Isolation/access/all-weather road Energy poverty, e.g. no reliable electricity
Human resources poverty	Women's health (e.g. unable to work) Education (drop outs as indicator)
Source: Weldon (2002)	

subjects makes ethical issues a particular concern in participatory research. But it would be a mistake to over-emphasise participatory research in this regard. There is an increasing interest in ethics across the research community. Participatory researchers may have much to offer other, more conventional researchers because of the strength of their self-critical reflections on practice. The 'social life' of any research project – its principles, conduct and relationships involved – is in fact central not only to its morality, but also to the quality of information it can yield.

A particular concern in participatory research is the quality of **dialogue** generated with participants through the research, and of being faithful to this when representing results. For example, with PRA/PLA, there has been much discussion about our notions of 'community' and its 'mythic' quality (e.g. Gujit and Shah, 1998). An important part of the ancestry of PRA methods is how they have been useful for raising awareness, for community mobilisation and for collective action. This means that dialogue is used to **forge** community, to create common interests and a shared version of reality, which can be used in a collective project. Differences between individuals within communities do not cease to exist, but they are **set aside for the present** in the pursuit of a common, shared goal. The facilitators – or 'facipulators', as some have perhaps more honestly termed themselves (White and Tiongco, 1997) are not simply allowing an existing consensus to emerge, but are actively involved in **creating** a shared interpretation of reality which animates a community. 'Community' is indeed a myth, in a positive sense, a myth that motivates and energises, a myth to live by. It is when this shared consensus is divorced from a shared project for action, or when important internal differences are so hidden by 'consensus' that some groups are in fact further marginalized by the project, that problems arise. Then the representation of community becomes something flat, not born of a shared vision of where people wish to go, but from a false representation of an identity of where people are coming from[5]. If you separate participatory research from people's own analysis and action and then present it to external policy makers, there is the moral hazard that this could be extractive and even exploitative (Laderchi, 2001). It may also produce poor quality information, representing a false consensus and a shared interest where none in fact exists.

Participatory researchers often use 'triangulation' – using multiple methods or sources – to explore the same issue from different angles. But this also illustrates the tension and difference between an emphasis on unity or diversity. For those concerned with using participatory research to produce measurements, triangulation can check a variety of sources to establish the reliability of particular results. Others, however, use it with 'the intention of highlighting different viewpoints' and to ensure that these 'are not buried under singular versions' (Cornwall *et al.*, 2001: 32). This reflects a broader tension between those who use PRA methods to seek outcomes unbiased by the researchers, and those for whom 'producing knowledge is always an inter-subjective process' (*ibid*) and cannot be 'hands-free'[6].

The related issues of 'facipulation' and how people influence each others' knowledge and ways of knowing raise questions about the critical claims of participatory approaches. Can they really represent reality simply as people themselves see it? As Laderchi (2001) comments, where a report must be written, or where the research forms part of a policy process, there will always be questions. Has the analysis come simply from the respondents themselves? Has it been influenced by the researcher's own concerns? As participatory approaches become more and more 'scaled up' and 'mainstreamed', they are being used increasingly by unreconstructed, dominant development institutions. This means that the analysis is **less** likely to be a straightforward representation of poor people's realities. It is ironic that this myth of 'hands-free' research, which comes from a 'hard-science' point of view, is central to the legitimacy of participatory approaches. In fact, many people engaged in participatory research disagree with this view. It is now widely accepted that researchers are **always** actors,

[5] This is a development of Jordan's (1989) analysis that significant dimensions of identity derive not from abstract structural characteristics such as gender and class, but rather where we want to go and what we can offer one another.

[6] Inter-subjective: how researchers and research subjects influence the ways in which they each think and perceive things, and how this affects results and knowledge.

"Ultimately, however, it is not so much the techniques used as how the research is conducted and the relationships established between researchers and research participants that determine the quality of research. Questions of ethics and behaviour have a direct bearing on how valid the findings are"

crafting a representation of other people's reality (see e.g. Geertz, 1988). The promise of PRA to deliver 'the people's' views perhaps owes more to the politics of development than it does to its connections with the wider intellectual community.

Conclusion: trajectories and challenges

Participatory methods have contributed a great deal to understanding how people experience well-being, and to its measurement. They are also being combined with conventional methods, for example to identify appropriate criteria and to design better surveys. There is a growing interest in using participatory methods to generate numerical data (see e.g. *PLA Notes* 47). These innovations are likely to lead to a greater use of participatory methods to define well-being, and to monitor and measure it on a larger scale.

But barriers remain to putting these findings to good use. Brock (1999) notes the huge amount of data being collected by NGOs and research institutes, but finds that 'such information is usually marginalized in planning top-down poverty alleviation strategies'. Despite progress made in integrating qualitative and quantitative poverty data, she found that 'this does not often include making the full use of the micro-level qualitative data which already exists', due in part perhaps to 'the absence of relationships between micro and macro institutions in the policy process' (*ibid*). Generating and integrating appropriate data is not enough: we need to strengthen relationships among key actors within processes of research, policy and practice.

This means that 'the people' should not be the only participants in the research process. Participatory research should also involve key officials as stakeholders within the design and process, helping them to own the findings. They can then influence knowledge and action at the levels of policy making and implementation, rather than simply relying on the research report to achieve results. Officials and middle managers are often those who could best benefit from a better understanding of poverty and well-being. There are many innovative examples of this approach to participatory poverty research (see for example McGee and Brock, 2002, and Jupp, 2002).

But we should not forget the politics and dangers of co-option which have beset participation from its earliest adoption in development agencies (Selznick, 1949/53). Many of the scaled-up and mainstreamed practices of participatory research have not been particularly effective at (or even interested in) measuring or analysing things like exclusion or power. There has been a tendency to over-stress technical issues and under-recognise political dimensions of poverty and well-being.

Three major conditions need to be met if participatory methods are to be used effectively to enable genuinely alternative understandings of well-being to emerge. First, while the question of measurement lends itself to debates regarding technical validity, it is important to locate these within discussion of wider issues. These concern on the one hand the **meaning** and **interpretation** of numerical data when removed from the contexts in which they are generated, and on the other hand broader questions regarding the purposes of measurement: what kinds of data are required for what and by whom?

Second, and following on from this, greater sophistication is needed in appreciating the relations between local and universal models of reality, and what characteristics are proper to each. There may indeed be some universal differences between the worldviews of 'policymakers' and 'the poor', especially in light of the complex nature of the problems that poor people face. It is without doubt important that these be recognised. But micro-studies cannot simply be 'scaled up' to provide macro level data. Universal models of reality are not simply local models 'writ large'. Data does not remain 'the same' when it is abstracted from its context. These are not simple issues, but they are critical if we are to make a genuine commitment to seeing people's lives as more than 'cases' of poverty or deprivation (Wood, 1985), and to pursue interventions that are appropriate to the real contexts in which people live.

Finally, there is the risk that 'well-being' will simply replace 'development', or the focus on poverty, with little real change in the way these are understood. This danger is very evident in the slippage between 'wealth-ranking' and 'well-being ranking', where the second can easily be simply a more inclusive – or invasive – version of the first. While

"The promise of both participatory research and the focus on well-being is that they will enable us to hear genuinely different voices, voices that speak from and about realities other than those configured by development discourse and institutions"

'well-being' as presented, for example, in the Voices of the Poor study, undoubtedly wears a more human face than economic growth models of development, there is still a worrying familiarity about the shape of many 'new' findings and their resonance with 'old' development rhetoric and priorities. This familiarity intensifies the closer in and higher up you get in the development policy nexus, with the clear danger that well-being (like 'rights-based approaches' – see Pettit and Musyoki, this issue) may simply be a new euphemism for old agendas.

The promise of both participatory research and the focus on well-being is that they will enable us to hear genuinely different voices, voices that speak from and about realities other than those configured by development discourse and institutions. If this is the case, it should be possible to ask the question, 'Does more development mean greater well-being?'[7] Only when such a question can be asked, and answered, will the critical criteria for both the definition and measurement of well-being be met.

[7] A WeD research statement.

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NOTES
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11

Rights, advocacy and participation – what's working?

THEME SECTION

by JETHRO PETTIT and SAMMY MUSYOKI

Introduction

All of the authors in this edition have touched, in one way or another, upon the potential of participatory methods for transforming both individuals and society. Cutting across our global experiences with diverse actors and issues, we all share a fundamental concern with the use of participatory methods, not only to deliver better programmes, but also to transform the root causes of poverty and social exclusion. Our common ground is therefore in two distinct but potentially interconnected areas: **participation** and **transformation**. How can these processes be brought together to shift the deeply embedded forces of power and exclusion in our societies? What can the language and practices of **rights** and **advocacy** contribute to this effort? How can practitioners best engage with rights-based approaches to development?

This article explores the idea of participatory approaches to rights and advocacy, and the challenge of bringing rights and advocacy perspectives into participatory work. We look at the ways in which these elements converge or diverge in practice, sharing lessons from recent action research. Since 2001, the Participation Group at IDS has worked closely on these concerns with ActionAid, Just Associates and a number of innovative NGOs and activists in Africa, Asia and the Americas. Our collective aim has been to understand strategies for participatory advocacy and citizenship, and for enabling people to realise their rights. *PLA Notes* 43 on *Advocacy and citizen participation* (February 2002) was inspired by an exploratory workshop involving activists and researchers from around the world. Here we draw upon lessons and examples from this and more recent action research with Just Associates, ActionAid and others to explore the links between rights and participation, and the role of participatory methods in rights and empowerment processes[1].

We begin with a brief background note on the emergence of rights, advocacy and citizen participation as official development strategies, and the ways in which these concepts support or diverge from traditions of participatory learning and action. What are the underlying assumptions and interests behind these trends? Do they lend themselves to processes of change that are participatory and transformative? What risks and opportunities are inherent in these discourses? We then turn to lessons learnt from participatory advocacy and rights initiatives and methodologies, illustrated by quotes and examples from around the world; and

[1] We would like to acknowledge the following people whose work and ideas have contributed greatly to our understanding of participatory advocacy and rights: ActionAid India (Bolangir Team), Patricia Ardon, Jennifer Chapman, Cindy Clark, Andrea Cornwall, Rashida Dohad, John Gaventa, Celestine Nyamu-Musembi, Valerie Miller, Luis Moraga, Mwambi Mwasaru, Irfan Mufti, Dharitri Patnaik, Jorge Romano, John Samuel, Rajesh Singh, Nkoyo Toyo, Lisa VeneKlasen, Everjoice Win, Nani Zulminarni and others. Our thanks to Charlotte Flower for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

we conclude by offering some key challenges we all face for future work in this area. A selection of key sources and resources, to which we are indebted, is included below.

Why rights and advocacy?

We now know, all too well, that many well-intended efforts to bring about change have not been very participatory, even where so labelled, and have fallen short. We also know that many participatory efforts have not led to fundamental change, even where so intended. Following decades of donor discourses, policies, trainings and mainstreamings, the two core principles we noted above – **participation** and **transformation** – have often failed to converge. Participatory development has often been limited to the community or project levels, or has been treated rather too instrumentally or technically, to effect deeper social change. In response, there have been vigorous efforts to bring participation to scale, elevating it to arenas of policy-making, governance and institutional change. In practice, however, such spaces have proven resilient to change, and participatory processes have often been overcome by the systems and power relations they were expected to transform.

Yet, on the positive side, we also know from experience that there are examples of real instances in which participation and transformation have been 'interconnected' and have helped to bring about empowering changes in individuals and society. *Participatory Learning and Action* has documented many such examples in diverse areas of practice over the years, including this issue. What can we learn about the effective use of participatory approaches for enabling genuine and lasting change? What can we learn about the risks of cooption? What strategies will help us to increase the chances of success? What might be learnt from the emerging interest in rights and advocacy, and what can we offer to these approaches?

The language of rights and rights-based approaches has entered the mainstream of development, taking on various meanings within the policies of development agencies. Because there is so much variation, we prefer to use the plural form of 'rights-based approaches' (Eyben, 2003; Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall, 2004; Veneklasen *et al.*, 2004). In essence, rights-based approaches can be understood as both a means and an end: if development is ultimately about making sure that everyone's basic human rights are met, development can also best be achieved by enabling people to better secure and fulfil their rights:

> *A rights-based approach to development is both a vision and a set of tools; human rights can be the means, the ends, the mechanism of evaluation, and the central focus of sustainable human development* (Symington, 2002).

Having said this, however, there are many interpretations and starting points for pursuing rights-based approaches in practice. On the one hand, the framing of development goals in terms of universal human rights, as defined in international conventions and in constitutions and laws, has been a powerful tool for leveraging changes in favour of poor people, women, children, indigenous people and others whose dignity and rights are denied in many contexts. There is no denying that the emphasis on legal rights opens up opportunities for advocacy, education and legislative action that can potentially be transformative.

On the other hand, the domain of rights can be dominated by professional knowledge and top-down notions of delivery, which can easily overlook important contextual and historical expressions of rights and priorities. It can also miss the embedded cultural and power relations, which often **prevent** legally enshrined rights from being realised. We do not suggest venturing onto the thin ice of 'cultural relativism' here – rather, we want to suggest that power-sensitive, participatory approaches can allow people to develop their own awareness and knowledge as a basis for their empowered action to name and claim rights. This may not always coincide with mainstreamed rights priorities or methods, or for that matter, mainstream ideas of participation.

We've learnt from the encounter of indigenous and expert knowledge in areas such as health, agriculture and natural resource management, that if power and knowledge differences are addressed, there can be scope for empowerment, negotiation and choice from below. Without being sensitive to the underlying dimensions of power and values, however, participatory methods to elevate 'local' knowledge

Participants prepare a timeline or historical profile of the estates and the tenants struggle, Mzizima

Photo: Sammy Musyoki

Box 1: Advocacy and citizen participation for what?

Advocacy and citizen participation are now widely accepted by civil society, donor and government institutions as means of ensuring greater transparency and accountability. Yet in practice, much of what is done in the name of both advocacy and participation is quite shallow. Advocacy is often seen as a systematic and technical exercise that assumes an open and pluralist environment relatively devoid of conflict, risk and power abuses. Citizen participation, likewise, is regularly woven into existing procedures and policy making as a limited form of public consultation. In both cases, there has been a tendency to reinforce, rather than change, the models of development and governance advanced by the International Financial Institutions, donor agencies or unresponsive state elite. (Clark *et al*., 2002).

may also stand in the way of change – an important lesson learnt from gender analysis and women's empowerment efforts. Official approaches to rights can miss important opportunities to hear real voices, but participatory approaches can evade the more universal dimensions of rights. Hence, there are lessons to learn from examples of power-sensitive, participatory approaches to realising rights. While some are rooted in human rights concepts and language, others do not necessarily use the language of rights and precede the official advent of 'the rights-based approach'.

In a similar way, mainstreamed ideas about advocacy and citizen participation have been a mixed blessing. They have invited new spaces for citizen engagement in policy processes and governance, but with the risk that such spaces and processes will be confining – that prevailing relations of power and exclusion will limit the potential for real participation and change, even while participation is claimed to be present (Box 2).

Our position therefore, with both rights-based approaches and with advocacy and citizen participation, is that we need to explore the lessons that can be learnt from practice. Are there examples of the ways in which in these approaches have, or have not, helped to shift deeper relations of power and exclusion? How have participatory methods and approaches contributed to these change strategies? And what can participatory practices learn from other traditions, including approaches to rights and advocacy that may fall outside the 'participation' universe?

Lessons from participatory rights and advocacy work

This is a summary of some key insights emerging from the collective efforts of many people and organisations, as noted above. These lessons may be helpful for those working at various levels, from grassroots leaders to front-line activists and project workers, to members of intermediary, donor and research organisations.

Box 2: Inquiring into power, participation and rights

As part of the *Linking Rights and Participation* project, ActionAid Brazil did questionnaires, interviews and workshops with local and national NGOs and social movements. Their aim was to inquire into the meanings of participation, rights and power in Brazilian society and in their social change work. They used various methods to explore each of these terms, and to look at how they connect in practice. Table 1 shows the way in which participants said that they put these concepts into practice, and when analysed, there was a striking convergence of methods and practices under each concept:

It is interesting to see how, in general, the concrete actions are extremely similar, principally in reference to participation and power. For the majority of the organisations that participated in the research, these three concepts must be worked in an articulated form because they are already part of a process of 'promoting citizenship'. What might vary, depending on the context, is the weight given to each of these dimensions, but it was stressed that we must not dissociate them. The interviews clearly show the difficulty participants had in isolating experiences of rights, participation and power. They often used the term 'fight for rights' in giving examples that were used interchangeably for rights or transforming power relations. It was easier for some actors to give isolated examples of participation. (Júnior, Atune and Romano, 2004).

Understanding power, exclusion and social change

Perhaps the most important lesson to emerge is the value of taking time to analyse and understand the way power and exclusion operate within each particular context, and to develop appropriate strategies to address these realities. This also requires a clear conception of what social change means in a given situation, and of the meanings of terms and practices such as participation, advocacy, rights and citizenship. As these words are mainstreamed in such different ways it is all the more important to be clear about their purpose within a vision of social change. This process requires time for reflection and learning, and the use of conceptual tools, which can help sharpen analysis and improve action. Yet time for reflection is notoriously difficult to find for busy activists and organisations; it is not always valued by donors; and the tools for conceptual thinking are often lacking. So we fall into the culture of 'doing' and miss chances to really focus our efforts. A key lesson here is that critical reflection and analysis is time well spent! There is wisdom in the old management slogan: 'work smarter, not harder'. And tools and methods are available that can help to facilitate and deepen critical thinking at all levels. Very good examples can be found in the chapters of *PLA Notes* 43 by Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller, taken

Table 1: Putting rights, participation and power into practice (Brazil)

How does your entity put these concepts into practice?		
Rights	**Participation**	**Power**
• constructing collective identities • campaigns (local, regional, national) • participating in civil society networks and forums • pressure/lobby to create laws and public policies • conducting alternative actions of public politics • participating in councils • legal advisement • democratising information about already existing rights • capacitation and formation (workshops, seminars, courses, etc.) • community educator • income-generating projects • community radio Source: Júnior, Atune and Romano, 2004	• motivating protagonism in the community • mobilising new leaders • capacitation and formation (workshops, seminars, courses, etc.) • capacitation in practice (meetings, actions, councils, etc.) • community educator • joint effort groups • participatory management of the entity and its projects • participatory methodologies of evaluation and projects • participating in civil society networks and forums • participating in councils and other organs of social control • participating in participatory budgeting • presenting their actions	• participating in civil society networks and forums • mobilising new leaders • motivating protagonism in the community • democratising information • participating in councils and other organs of social control • participatory methodologies such as reflect-action • participatory methodologies of evaluation and projects • participatory management of the entity and its projects • community educator • capacitation and formation (workshops, seminars, courses, etc.) • income generating projects • rotating fund for community development

from their action guide: *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics* (2001).

Think strategy and vision before methods and tools

Successful rights and advocacy initiatives use participatory methods and tools within the context of longer-term strategies for change. The fascination with participatory tools and methods can sometimes distract from the larger process: we think that there is some magic inherent in the methods – and that strategy will take care of itself (see also Cornwall and Guijt, section 17, this issue). It is true that participatory approaches should be flexible and emergent, building upon the knowledge and priorities that are generated. But there is also a need for inclusive processes for developing longer-term visions of change, and to locate the use of tools and methods within strategies that are sensitive to the context of power. Time and again, we have heard practitioners caution that there is no such thing as a 'rights-based method': it is the particular use of a method for realising rights within a change-oriented strategy and vision that is important. The central point here is that tools and methods are not sufficient in the absence of a clear vision and strategy.

Drawing from diverse traditions

Participatory appraisal methods from the PRA/PLA tradition are strong for needs assessment and planning, and for recog-

Box 3: Guatemala: participation for whom?

In Guatemala, a 'Popular Consultation' was held in 1999 to consider reforms to the constitution, in order to provide a legal basis for implementing the recent Peace Accords that had brought a formal end to decades of civil conflict. Surprisingly for many, and despite intensive campaigning, the reforms were rejected by voters, including the country's majority of indigenous and poor people. This raises questions about the nature of citizen participation in national-scale processes when there are deep divisions in society, in this case along lines of wealth, race and culture.

In a country with a long history of conflict, with sharp economic, social, cultural and linguistic differences, and low levels of literacy, it is perhaps not surprising that 'participation' was flawed… From the most localised efforts of political involvement to processes of participation in negotiations before and after the war, it is therefore vital to have a long-term vision of collaboration in creating a different society, and a shorter-term vision of the concrete changes that the people want to achieve. (Ardon, 2002, in *PLA Notes* 43).

Box 4: Brazil: participation and empowerment

Participation is seen as the soul of organised civil society. It is considered fundamental to the process of empowerment. In the Brazilian case, the need to distinguish and qualify participation is emphasised. That is, to distinguish a participation seen as a mere legitimisation of programs, projects and public policies – frequently including various instrumental forms that assume participatory methodologies – from a participation that is a process of constructing collective citizenship, renovating leadership and empowerment. (Júnior, Atune and Romano, 2004).

Box 5: 'Rooting rights' in Kenya

The Kenya Human Rights Commission is undergoing a self-transformation from professional advocacy of civil and political rights to recognition of social and economic rights, through a focus on 'rooting rights' in community priorities. This has entailed many changes in organisational vision, structure and methodology. One strategy has been the training of community-based 'Human Rights Defenders' and the setting up of 'Friends of KHRC' as rights educators and animators within communities. The methodology of KHRC's training has undergone major changes as a result:

The Programme Officer went on a course on management of community development programmes. He has introduced a more flexible approach to planning, to allow for meaningful community input into the shape of the training... the focus is on 'experiential learning' rather than top-down transmission of knowledge – for example, the use of role-plays is emphasised. The KHRC has gone through a lot of 'growing pains' in internalising this new approach, and they admit that there was a lot of frustration at first. (Musyoki, Nyamu-Musembi, Mwasaru and Mtsami, 2004).

nising local and indigenous knowledge, but they do not always address the full range of activities arising in advocacy and rights processes. Methods and strategies derived from diverse traditions may be needed at various stages of a social and political change process, and much has been gained where lessons and tactics have been woven from the traditions of community organising, participatory action research, popular education, adult and non-formal education, legal rights education, women's rights advocacy, community organising, and popular communication, in addition to PRA/PLA (VeneKlasen *et al*, 2004). Many of these traditions are rooted in emancipatory learning and social movement experiences, and are more explicit about analysing and addressing power relations. The Reflect approaches (see Archer, this issue) have gone to great lengths to test the potential of interweaving transformative and participatory approaches. Much human rights and advocacy work has been over-professional and top-down in nature, and can learn from reflective and process-oriented community work that seeks to identify and build upon local priorities, knowledge and leadership.

Integrating work on human rights and development needs

Many organisations, NGOs in particular, struggle with the tension between their long-term development, capacity building and service delivery work, and the realisation that they need to be addressing rights and empowerment issues as a basis for change. This is more than a question of drawing methods from diverse traditions – it is a question of strategies

Box 6: Needs, rights and citizenship in Brazil

I believe that in the Brazilian context it is not possible to have an exclusive vision in the sense of going to work only with a focus on rights or only a focus on emergency assistance. You must work in two forms. It is a very hard reality, very cruel, and you must also give immediate responses to the people. But you are only going to guarantee real structural changes if along with these immediate responses you engage in a work that is strictly focused on the question of rights and that is going to construct a base for a more solid change in the future. Without the field of rights you cannot form citizenship. Without forming citizenship you cannot have transformative action. (Taciana Gouveia, SOS Corpo, Brazil, in Júnior, Atunes and Romano, 2004).

Box 7: Convergence of rights and needs in Kenya

The Kenya Women Workers' Organisation (KEWO) is a membership organisation with 12,000 women members in 36 local branches in urban and rural areas. KEWO's rights advocacy agenda originates from the branches and therefore is informed by and reflects the diverse concerns of its members.

In response to a rural-based branch in Yatta (an arid area) KEWO got involved in helping to fundraise for equipment for a water project. KEWO's role quickly turned into one of supporting the community to challenge the corrupt practices that accompany the granting of Water Extraction Permits from the Ministry of Water, which in itself presented an opportunity to build the community's awareness of their entitlements and their power to hold officials accountable.

...There is an emerging convergence in views, between perception of rights being about meeting basic needs and rights as being about long-term transformation of governance structures. This convergence reflects a closing up of the gap between the position ascribed to groups in community development on the one hand (who are largely perceived as being concerned only with basic needs and being pre-occupied with the micro level context of projects) and human rights and advocacy groups on the other hand (who are perceived as engaging only at the macro political level without any touch with concrete needs).

that recognise and build upon the links between immediate needs and longer-term social change. While every context is unique (and there are certainly cases where change is long overdue in the style of development assistance), rights and development can be seen as continuous and complementary, rather than as distinct approaches requiring radically different activities. Again, it is a question of strategy, linkages and intentions, and how one dimension builds upon the other. This realisation is coming both from the human rights sector, as it recognises the need to root rights in needs, and from the participatory development sector, as it recognises the need to confront the political and power dimensions of poverty.

Box 8: Awareness for change in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the women's NGO PPSW has carried out a campaign that links women's empowerment with broader community-based advocacy. Building on entry-level work around literacy, health and economic activities, which includes gender analysis and awareness, the campaign moves to a visioning process at the community level:

Through intensive discussion during formal and informal meetings with the community, field workers facilitate a critical analysis of their social, political and cultural condition, and help them to see their position and status in the system. This process has helped communities understand the power that influences their lives directly and indirectly. Based on this analysis, the facilitators help them to develop their own vision and mission to develop a better society (Zulminarni, 2002).

The campaign builds from there to include training, education and capacity-building; local organisational development; leadership development; networking and alliances; and hearings and policy dialogues with decision-makers and members of parliament.

Box 9: Networking and alliance

Networking widens the outreach and helps to build up a multiplier effect in terms of impact and public discourse. Advocacy seeks to integrate the power of knowledge and the power of networking. Advocacy is also a process of negotiating with various institutions, including institutions of governance. Such a process requires a long-term commitment and optimal institutional and financial resources. Networking is an important means to synergise the strengths of both institutions and individuals that identify with the advocacy cause (Samuel, 2002).

Building knowledge and awareness

The denial of rights and the exclusion of people from decision-making and access to resources are usually reinforced by deeply embedded social and cultural relations of power. Changing such power relations is a long-term, many-staged process, and often begins with processes of transformative learning with the less powerful in order to build awareness, legitimise alternative sources of knowledge and values, and strengthen self-confidence. Traditions of women's empowerment have demonstrated the importance of investing in this process before moving into active campaigning. For facilitators there can be a fine line between imposing an ideological agenda and enabling people to define their own reality and priorities. Popular education and action research methods such as PAR and Reflect, sensitively used, can do this. A key lesson from the work in both Brazil and Indonesia is that awareness-raising is both an individual and a collective process. Yet the individual level, whether with community members or field workers, is often not given enough attention.

Box 10: Social audits for government accountability in India

Poor and highly marginalized villages in Bolangir district in the state of Orissa, India, carried out a participatory social audit of their less-than-transparent local government (*panchayat*) with support from the Indian grassroots organisation MKSS and from ActionAid. The process involved a progression of activities, from awareness-raising and street plays to information collection, demanding of government records on public works, analysis of the information, verification in the villages, and preparatory meetings with local officials. The day of the social audit brought 2,500 people together for hearings and questions about the findings, in which many irregularities in the use of public funds were identified.

A social audit is a process in which details of the resources, both financial and non-financial, used by public agencies for development initiatives are shared with the people, often through a public forum. Social audits allow people to enforce accountability and transparency, providing the ultimate users of services to scrutinise development initiatives. It is a form of citizen advocacy based on the power of knowledge and grounded in the right to information (ActionAid India, Bolangir Team, 2002).

A subsequent social audit process in Juba *Panchayat* of Bepada block, also in Bolangir district, sparked controversy when the *panchayat* secretary committed suicide when pressured to deliver government records. Local civil society activists were recently (March 2004) arrested and charged with abetting the suicide.

Working with multiple actors

By its very nature, advocacy and rights campaigning are multi-stakeholder processes in which alliances must be actively forged and cultivated, and collaborative ways of working developed among diverse actors who may have varying interests. In all of the examples we learnt about, networking played a key role in achieving results. In the Bolangir social audit, a network of 19 NGOs and CBOs from all over the district lent support to the villagers involved (ActionAid India, Bolangir Team, 2002). In Kenya, human rights groups and development organisations are trying to build on one another's strengths and areas of expertise, and to build broader, more representative advocacy campaigns with a strong grassroots base (Musyoki *et al.,* 2004). This is not always easy as the interests of different groups and sectors do not always coincide, and there can be high transaction costs and risks, as well as benefits.

State obligations and accountability

One of the key dimensions of rights and advocacy work is recognition of the central role of the state both as a development actor and as a guarantor of rights. This can be seen as a shift from the relatively isolated work of many NGOs,

Box 11: State responsibility

The state's political and moral responsibility is to guarantee all human rights to all human beings; particularly the right to live with dignity. Hence people have the right to demand that the state ensures equitable social change and distributive justice. Citizens are the owners of the state. Hence, the state should be transparent and accountable to citizens and defend human rights. (Samuel, 2002)

often carried out in parallel to (or even in competition with) weak state services. Rights approaches seek to make the state's roles and responsibilities more explicit, to raise public awareness of these obligations, and to demand responsiveness, accountability and transparency. Participatory approaches, from diverse traditions, have been effective in amplifying unheard voices and engaging the state at different levels, through participatory advocacy, policy processes, and systems of democracy and governance.

Many such examples of state-society engagement have been documented in *Participatory Learning and Action*.

Box 12: Process vs. donor expectations

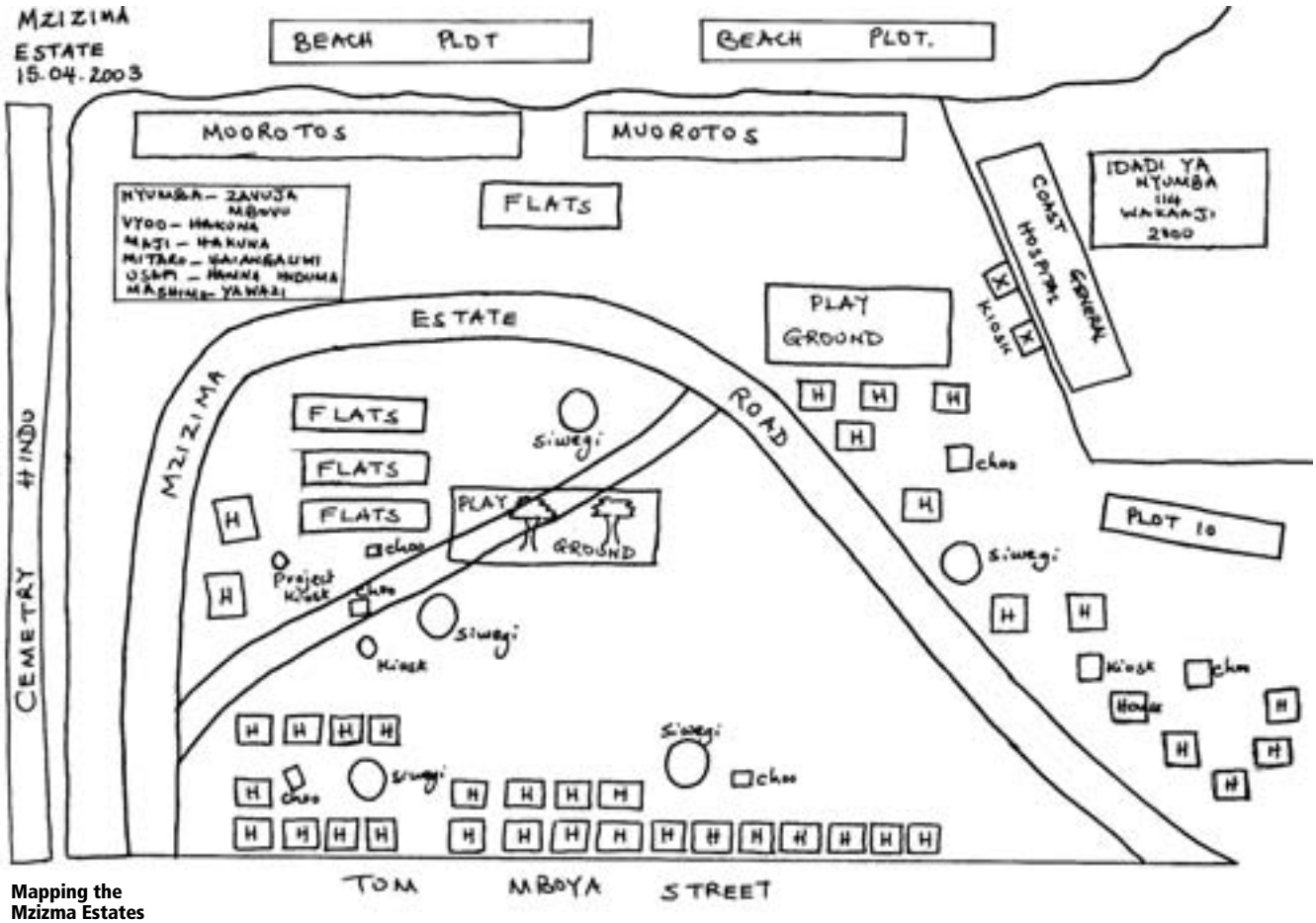
in Brazil…

When we work with rights, participation and power we are dealing with complex political processes, which are very often slow, that don't always quickly arrive at the resulting objectives. This can create tension in the process, as much as in the community/beneficiaries, as in the donors who don't want to wait to see the results (Júnior, Atunes and Romano, 2004).

… and Kenya

There is a need to take an approach which is more long-term and open-ended, as opposed to a fixed-term project approach. This has implications for planning and fund-raising, since the focus shifts to supporting processes, as opposed to carrying out a defined project to its pre-designed conclusion. When it comes to supporting a process, the 'completion schedule' is not clear, indicators are difficult to set, though the goals must be clear… and there is a need to find donors who are willing to be flexible in their funding (Musyoki, Nyamu-Musembi, Mwasaru and Mtsami, 2004).

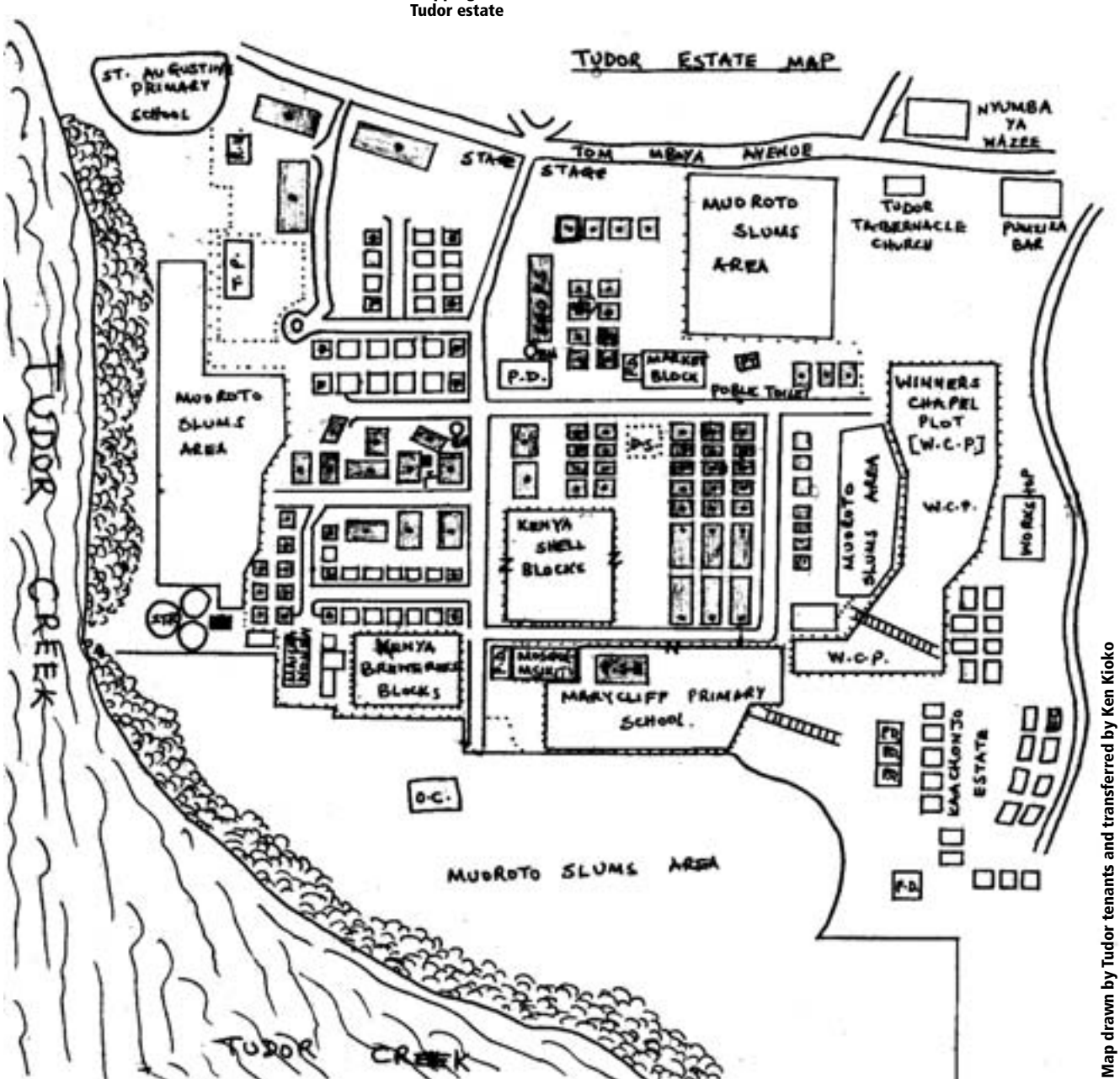
Issue 40 on *Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment* captures a range of experiences with active citizen-



Mapping the Mzizma Estates

Map drawn by Mzizma tenants and transferred by Ken Kioko

Mapping the Tudor estate



Map drawn by Tudor tenants and transferred by Ken Kioko

ship; issue 46, *Participatory processes for policy change*, documents the methods and controversy surrounding a Citizens' Jury in Andhra Pradesh, India; issue 49 documents experiences of *Decentralisation and community-based planning* in Africa and elsewhere. It would be impossible to summarise the lessons from these many examples, but a core theme is the idea of a 'two way street', requiring both active citizenship and government capacity in shaping a new society. Issue 43, on *Advocacy and citizen participation* sums up this challenge as follows: 'The challenge of the politics of the new century is to build strong, responsive states combined with strong, responsive civil societies.'

It all takes time and patience

All of the examples point to the slow and complex processes at work, and the difficulty of fitting these into conventional project frameworks, timelines, means of measurement, or donor expectations. One lesson from this is that donors who

are committed to rights-based approaches and active citizenship will need to reconsider their funding guidelines, procedures and evaluation systems. A good summary of the monitoring and evaluation challenges for rights and advocacy work is provided in *PLA Notes* 43 by Chapman (2002).

The challenges ahead

The growing size and sophistication of civil society, combined with the rethinking of key institutions of the state and governance, and (too rarely discussed) the increasing power of the private sector, all combine to produce a very dynamic backdrop to the linking of participatory approaches with rights-based approaches and advocacy. On the one hand, the learning and innovation has only just begun. On the other hand, we need to be careful about putting new labels on old wine. Power and exclusion have been around for a very long time, and so have creative and courageous efforts to transform societies, going back to ancient and mythical times in human history.

It has been said that 'there is nothing new under the sun', and so we need to see what we can learn from archetypal and historical efforts to challenge power and secure rights. Many of the most important lessons have been learnt and relearnt over the years, but are cleverly hidden by trendy new language and buzzwords. We think we need the very latest concepts, methods or tools to do the job, when the age-old wisdom we really need may be right before our eyes. Much wisdom can be found in the diverse traditions and movements for liberation and rights of the 19th and 20th centuries (for a good survey of these, see VeneKlasen *et al.*, 2004). Nor should we always look abroad for green pastures; every society has its own traditions, histories and experiences of liberation from which to draw inspiration.

In drawing on this wisdom and experience, we do see a few key challenges for participatory rights and advocacy work to reflect upon:

Instrumental and non-reflective uses of participatory methods

Always a challenge, with any methodology, but already a well-documented weakness with PRA/PLA methods when it comes to analysing and addressing power. There is a challenge to develop further concepts and methods for addressing power and rights in all of their dimensions.

Professional dominance and legitimacy

The role and power of genuine membership organisations is still weak in many regions, and intermediaries tend to act on behalf of others without genuine representation. Professional and intermediary groups need to know when to stand back, be inclusive and play a responsive and supporting role rather than taking the lead.

"In essence, rights-based approaches can be understood as both a means and an end: if development is ultimately about making sure that everyone's basic human rights are met, development can also best be achieved by enabling people to better secure and fulfil their rights"

Strengthening of community-based organisations and leadership

Related to the above, this is a vital priority even if it means that things may move more slowly and intermediary organisations get less of the credit or funding. Efforts should respect the organic and emergent nature of CBOs and resist imposing models of professionalism from the development-donor nexus.

Beyond the local and beyond the public sector

Globalisation means that many rights must be negotiated at super super-national levels and with private sector actors, and the global governance structures to do this are still very weak. A major challenge for both civil society and governments is to forge effective micro-macro linkages, and new systems of global corporate accountability, while remaining legitimate and representative.

Donor dependency and outdated project cycles

Donors have an urgent responsibility to redesign their procedures and accountability systems if they are serious about supporting rights and advocacy. New forms of relationship, partnership, solidarity and learning are needed which can meet the complex needs of multiple actors and directions of accountability.

The dimension of individual learning and change

We are easily caught up in trying to change structures and institutions, without reflecting on our own personal values, behaviour and attitudes. We need to make the time and explore the most effective methods for deeper reflection and learning, going beyond the conceptual and verbal levels and tapping into our experiential and lived knowledge, our sense of values and purpose.

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12

THEME SECTION

Completing the globe: tackling poverty and injustice in the North

by CHARLOTTE FLOWER and VICKY JOHNSON

The circulation of *Participatory Learning and Action* is predominantly in the South and for many is seen as only having relevance for those working there[1]. *Participatory Learning and Action* 38: *Participation in the North* (then known as *PLA Notes*) describes experience from several Northern countries, while issue 47 includes an article of UK focused work (Johnson and Nurick, 2003). A historical scan of the series shows the first Northern-focused article included in 1989 (Ampt and Ison, 1989). Since then, the journal has seen a steady trickle of articles from USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Poland and especially the UK (see Box 1). Participatory learning and action (PLA) (which we will use as an umbrella term to refer to the wide range of participatory methods and approaches in this article) has taken an inspiring journey, from its birth in remote villages of India and Kenya to its now truly global profile. In this special issue, we will reflect on the experience of PLA's development in the UK, drawing on the articles that have appeared in the *Participatory Learning and Action* series as well as our own and others' experience. Time restraints have kept us focused on the UK but a future issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* will include other countries.

Whilst UK-based PLA drew on Southern experiences, many current UK practitioners only know its UK applications,

Box 1: Participatory Learning and Action articles about the UK

Gibson, T (1994). 'Showing what you mean (not just talking about it)'. In (eds) D. Mitlin and Thompson, J. *RRA Notes* **21**, pp. 41-47

Inglis, A. and Lussignea, A. (1995). 'Participation in Scotland: The Rural Development Forestry Programme'. In (ed.) A. Welbourn, *PLA Notes* **23**, pp. 31-36

Sellers, T. and Westerby, M. (1996). 'Teenage Facilitators: Barriers to improving adolescent sexual health', In (ed.) V. Johnson, *PLA Notes* **25**, pp. 77-80

Cornwall, A. (1999). 'Making sense of community well-being: processes of analysis in participatory well-being assessments in South London'. In (eds) I. Guijt and Braden, S. *PLA Notes* **34**, pp. 63-67 and

Connold, A. and Rowley, J. (1999). 'Learning from using PRA in the UK: examples from Berkshire'. In (eds) M. Lammerinck and de Jong, D. *PLA Notes* **35**, pp. 85-91

Inglis, A. and Hesse, C. (2002). 'Overview: Local Governments – potentially the most important day to day real-world users of innovative participatory approaches'. In (eds) A. Inglis and Hesse, C. *PLA Notes* **44**, pp. 4-7

Johnson, V. and Nurick, R. (2003). 'Developing coding systems to analyse difference'. In *PLA Notes* **47,** pp. 25-32

[1] Although not perfect, the terms 'North' and 'South' have been widely adopted within development language as alternative expressions for describing the more and less economically developed worlds. As we did in Issue 38, we use the definition of Northern countries being those within the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) group.

Street work on barriers to employment in a Manor Gardens Project in North London

Photo: Development Focus

although they may be aware of its Southern pedigree. With an accumulation of rich experiences in the North, the time has come to share this with the colleagues in the South who were so inspiring in the early days. Critical to conveying our lessons is an understanding of the context and history of participating in the North.

At an event in April 2004, PLA practitioners met to reflect on the development of participatory processes in the UK (see www.oxfamgb.org/ukpp for report). Their discussions greatly informed this article, as did a review of over 20 participatory processes carried out by Development Focus in partnership with voluntary and statutory organisations throughout the UK. The issues raised were strikingly similar to those emerging from the IDS Pathways to Participation project that focused on participatory approaches in the South (see Cornwall and Pratt, 2003). While frustrating in some ways to see this replication of learning, it only confirms what we know only too well – learning by doing is far more powerful than by hearing!

Development of participatory approaches in the UK

Although an apparent newcomer to the participatory development debate, there is strong history of community development work and social movements in the North from 19th century to late 20th – around unions, poverty, and women's rights. Community development work in the 60s was based on activist principles, akin to Freirian, around building individual and community capacities, using their own resources to affect change in their lives. The UK 'Thatcher years' of the 70s and 80s had a huge detrimental impact on this; the privatisation of services saw the voluntary and community sectors shift into service provision 'partnership' functions,

Box 2: Community mapping

In 1998-2000, a non-governmental organisation called Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, successfully piloted PLA tools and approaches in the UK to look at issues of food poverty. This was supported by Oxfam's UKPP, and the training and piloting was carried out by Development Focus (Johnson and Webster, 2000). This piloting developed a model of longer training processes with ongoing support for teams over a period of several months that has been further developed in other work.

Box 3: Gendered needs assessment in South Wales

In 2000, the Gellideg Foundation Group, a community-based organisation in a small housing estate in South Wales, wanted to work with its community to identify effective ways to tackle some of the social issues there. They undertook a gendered needs assessment, using PLA, with the support of Oxfam UKPP. This process enabled them to successfully draw in funds to support their work, and become more engaged with the community in terms of the running of their programmes and focusing on addressing diverse needs within the community. In addition, a report of the needs assessment has served to raise awareness of gender issues in regeneration (Gellideg Foundation Group and Oxfam, 2003).

and thus de-politicised. This period did see the beginnings of area-based initiatives developed to address inner city problems – such as poor housing and crime – and some have generated good models of citizen empowerment, in particular around tenant management of housing. Community development as a profession has changed over time and now is more about delivering a service, than facilitating community empowerment.

A change of government in the late 90s has given social issues a higher profile, in particular child poverty, with particular emphasis on community led processes and reconnecting citizens with the state. Devolution in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland has been significant in attempts to move government closer to people and a number of central and devolved government initiatives now require public participation in the development of action plans and target delivery.

So, new spaces have been created for participation, in urban regeneration, and all types of service delivery. Community representatives are encouraged, if not required, to be part of the accountability structures – e.g. in user groups and reviewing local service delivery. Much remains to be learnt to ensure that these initiatives are well managed and inclusive, but also to address the tension between nationally determined targets against which funding is given and spending reviewed, and the locally determined targets that arise from participatory processes.

In the early 90s, people were returning from the South with PRA tools to work in the UK. This was fragmented – but people found the tools useful in facilitating community level activities. A wealth of different small groups and university academics ran short PLA training courses under different names and hats. There is now recognition that training may need to be more specific or longer and that teams need support throughout a process, identifying needs, action planning, and monitoring and evaluation. A number of supported pilots have led to useful learning and generated the first publications that really focus in detail on the use of PLA in the UK (see boxes 2, 3 and 4).

Since 2000 there has been an explosion of activity. Participatory Appraisal (PA) – as it tends to be called in the UK – has received a lot of attention. It is used widely in community health work, patient user groups, regeneration, youth work and environmental work – both urban and rural. Participatory processes have flourished and there are many examples of action from a personal to a local community level arising as a direct result.

PA in the UK uses fewer symbols and pictures than in the South and is often based more around the written word. It is also much less easy to get groups together in a 'community meeting', so the tools have been adapted for smaller groups and with a lighter engagement, or to use out in the streets and public areas where people may have less time to stop. It is also often cold! There is recognition that some of the rigours of the process have been missing, such as capturing only broad opinion rather than facilitating deeper debate, the need to use multidisciplinary teams, facilitator/scribe/ observer team structures, 'passing the stick', triangulation and verification. However, many of these alterations are used in urban settings in the South too, and are doubtless not unique to the UK.

Impact Anno 2004?

At a recent UK practitioners' workshop, concerns were voiced about the absence of empowerment amidst the flurry of activity. This eerily echoes the development of PRA and similar applications in the South (see Cornwall and Guijt, this issue). Frequently, the purpose of 'participation' appears to be to enable decision makers to 'tick the box' and demonstrate that they have involved communities. This leaves people in the communities frustrated and issues of social exclusion unaddressed. Local authorities, and regional and central tiers of government, are also not reaching their own floor targets of change – a reduction in poverty indicators.

Box 4: The Walsall PA Network

Participatory Appraisal (PA) was introduced into Walsall, England in 1997 through a teenage sexual health project. Others became interested and now over 160 people in the area have been trained in PA through the Walsall PA Network, and support each other in learning and ensuring good practice. With so many practitioners in the area, PA has locally become mainstreamed into significant areas of service provision and decision-making (See articles 7, 9 and 10 in *PLA Notes* 38 and *Making Waves in Walsall* from www.oxfamgb.org/ukpp).

Many involved in community development are concerned that, as the government brings in a new raft of regeneration policies which claim to be 'participatory', participation and participatory approaches may become discredited, unless they can be demonstrated to be empowering in the long term – that 'the baby' may get thrown out with the 'bath water'.

Key lessons and next steps

What follows is a summary of some of the issues, those that we hope have most interest to a predominantly Southern audience. In addition, we have summarised some of the main strategies that have been developed to attempt to tackle these issues – some tried and tested, others more aspirational.

How do we ensure a focus on attitudes as well as skills in training?

When facilitating a process of change, there needs to be due emphasis on addressing the attitudes and behaviour of different stakeholders as well as developing skills. Short-term and unsupported training is very often the norm in the UK and is insufficient to create long-term sustainable change. Through our experience over the last few years we wish to offer the following observations:

- An extended period of training, providing ongoing support whilst implementing a process within a community, allows people to develop confidence and skills and challenge themselves and their colleagues on issues of attitudes and behaviour.
- This model is difficult for all to implement – a small project might not be able to afford training over an extended period of time. An alternative is using 'off the peg' training – doing an organised course away from your workplace. Many people find it difficult to use their new skills afterwards, but it is possible to arrange support mechanisms that help to avoid this or by tailoring training for different situations and requirements.
- Those paying for training need to understand the benefits of good training to make the necessary shift from short-term to long-term cost benefits.
- Designing more specific courses for different needs – rather than assuming all need PA training – recognises that some (especially more senior) members of an organisation might need to focus on certain aspects, such as strategic planning, ethical procedures, support for ongoing analysis and reporting, and how to take reports and actions forwards.

How do we help decision makers, managers and practitioners to understand PA and why it is being done?

In common with experience in the South, good participatory practice in the UK tends to happen at the local level. For regeneration and social exclusion agendas to have real impact in the UK, there needs to be institutional transformation as described by Pimbert, in this issue. Experience in the UK is mostly at the first and third level of his Table 1. The new invited spaces in the UK feel very small within the wider and multi-layered structures of local authorities. Each layer needs to understand what **real** participation is, what their roles and responsibilities are to make it happen, what impact and outcomes it will have on their work, and what sharing power means at their level.

In our experience, we would agree with Pimbert's conclusions on the enabling conditions that are important for successful PLA processes, and some of these include:

- Inspired individuals within these layers play a major role in ensuring that PLA is used more creatively, and for community engagement to move beyond 'quick and dirty' consultation. (See also Nicholls and Watson, and Gant *PLA Notes* 38).
- National government has to recognise that for policies and schemes requiring participation to have impact, support needs to be given for organisations and individuals to have more horizontal networking so that there can be more reflection and learning.
- Elected representatives need to embrace participative democracy and trust that it will enhance their representative status. This is particularly important given the current cynicism directed at politics and elected representatives in both local and national governments. PLA needs to be developed beyond the consultation stage, and into project cycle management. Participatory monitoring and evaluation would play a key role in this, and there are some creative examples around the UK of using drama, video and art to achieve this.
- Participatory and quantitative processes must work together to develop evidence that decision makers feel better able to trust. One such example in the UK is an

Mobility map for a child in Manchester in a Friends of the Earth project on transport

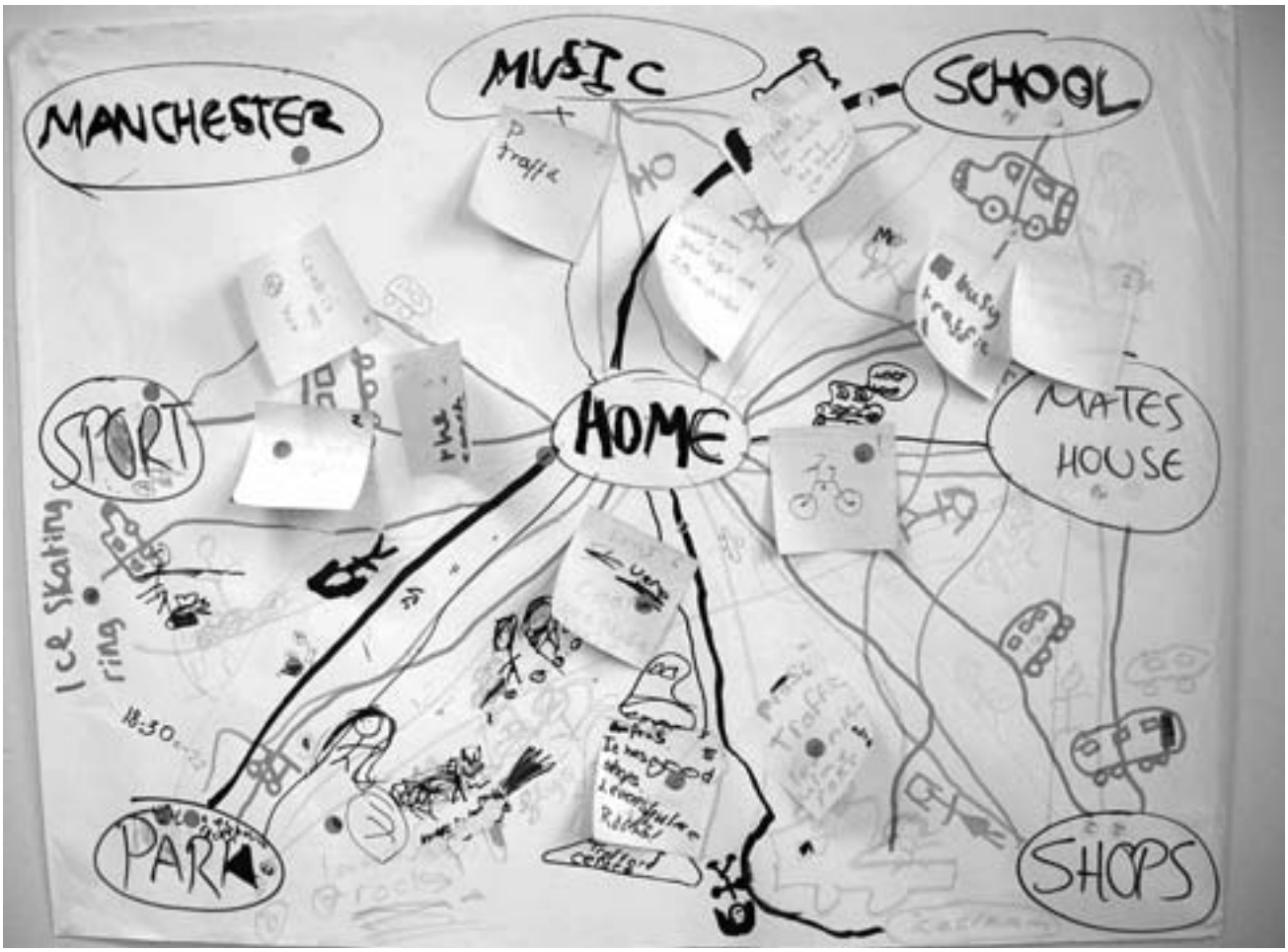

Photo: Development Focus

approach called Community Assessment and Action, which uses coding combined with visual techniques[2]. Others run focus groups using PLA alongside more traditional questionnaire surveys.

How do we ensure that this is carried out within an ethical framework?

At the heart of achieving good quality PLA is the respect for ethical standards, and these operate at a number of levels:

- Respect for people's time, expectations, personal credibility and energy. However enjoyable or uplifting a process might have been, it is deeply unethical to bring people into a process that has little chance of effecting change.
- Participating members of the public need assurances that their views are to remain confidential and that some of the negative aspects that can arise out of participatory processes are avoided. PLA uses strong, visual tools, which can draw out sensitive issues such as violence within families (see also Cornwall and Gordon, this issue). It has to be clear what will be taken further and disclosed to authorities and how information is going to be used.
- Members of the public, as well as team members, need to follow processes in safe environments or have strategies to deal with distress, heightened emotion and violence. Some of the accredited courses require all team members to be police checked and have specific ethical and safety frameworks[3].
- It is absolutely vital that as practitioners, we challenge bad practice and support others to do the same.

[2] Regeneration through Community Assessment and Action is an accredited course designed to train local people as community researchers during action planning processes, and is a trademark of Development Focus Trust.

[3] For example in the course mentioned in footnote 2.

Action 4 Living team member analysing information for a rural community project run by Voluntary Action Lincoln

Photo: Development Focus

How do we make processes more inclusive?

Much participatory work in the UK has been blind to any aspect of difference. Kanji's observations on gender and participatory development (this issue) apply to the UK completely, despite over 30 years of Equal Opportunities legislation! There is a blanket assumption that the few people engaged in a process represent the entire community and their wide range of needs. Very little analysis of who they are and whether they are representative of a community is carried out – they assume and are assumed to be representative. For example, in one English city there are a number of mechanisms for local people in managing local authority spending of regeneration money at ward level – however only three local people are actually involved in these committees and focus groups. There is often little or no support to ensure that those people can represent their communities more effectively.

Some argue that it is divisive to highlight particular groups' needs and so the work deliberately does not note whether issues raised are those of any particular sector of the community. This difference-blindness happens at both process and content levels. The process, in that it does not recognise that different people will respond to the process in different ways; and the content, in that the drive for consensus often means that any issue or solution that gets the 'most votes' (sticky dots, ticks, spoken about) must be the community's priority, and any other issues are dropped.

There are however, good examples of work in the UK where gender and diversity are taken into consideration (see Boxes 3 and 5 for examples).

Gender aspects of participation vary considerably, and in many communities men are very absent from community level activities, just as women are absent from the formal decision-making structures. However, although dominant in community organisations, women often need considerable support to move those organisations beyond service provision to lobbying for change. There are a number of excellent initiatives in the UK that work on empowering women as

Box 5: Community Assessment and Action[4]

CAA has developed a mixed qualitative and quantitative monitoring system. This has a number of benefits:

- the process has enough rigour to satisfy managers and funding bodies in a UK context, whilst maintaining the essential essence and ethos of PLA;
- continual monitoring shows whether the process is reaching the people that it needs to, and in particular those not usually included in decisions that affect their lives;
- analysis incorporates difference as the coding system helps to keep track of who in the community has said what so that issues of agreement, disagreement and priorities for different people can be tracked and acted on; and
- action can be identified to support minority and marginalized groups, rather than taking only the most popular actions. Coding can therefore include people's gender, age and ethnicity, as well as their different situations with regard to, for example, wealth, family status and size, and access to services.

See *PLA Notes* 47 for more details.

leaders (see www.engender.org). In addition there is a growing body of work that addresses the marginalization of men in service provision – in particular in health, childcare and housing.

How do we make sure that this is about Power?

An upshot of ignoring power differences within a community is that exploring issues will almost certainly raise conflicting opinions. In believing that consensus is the democratic way forward, we either avoid raising such conflict, or ignore it, or blame it on something else. PLA has huge potential to assist and facilitate dialogue around such issues, but the skills of UK practitioners in this area are still quite weak. There is an issue of mandate and permission to facilitate such complex issues within a community – which many practitioners lack. As discussed by Pettit and Musyoki (this issue) mainstreaming citizen participation can be a mixed blessing. Despite new invited spaces, the arenas of policy-making, governance and institutional change can prove resilient and local participatory processes can be overcome by the existing power relations. New ways of working with service providers and policy makers needs to be part of the solution otherwise much of the work in the community will fall on closed minds and systems. Many efforts to 'engage communities' often create a new hierarchy of power at community level (this is eloquently described by Chase *et al.* (1999)). There needs to be facilitated, multi-level work throughout the whole spectrum of actors in a process in order to negotiate positive transformation – as opposed to what Pettit and Musyoki refer to as instrumental and non-reflective use of participatory methods.

Box 6: Popular education and participatory budgeting in Canada

Canada has a long history of popular education work, which has been largely inspired by the struggles, and practices of peoples of the global South – notably the work of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal. More recently, there has been a rapidly growing interest in a new model of citizen participation developed in the South – especially participatory budgeting, first developed in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This developed in response to growing criticism in Canada about democratic practice (shrinking voter turnouts, loss of trust in public institutions, increasing cynicism and pessimism in the political process).

Since the late 80s Porto Alegre has been conducting annual participatory budget processes in which thousands of citizens discuss, deliberate and decide how to spend a portion of the municipal budget. This model challenges the many so-called 'participatory' efforts in local governance, development and urban planning that are underway around the world, as it hands power to citizens, rather than just 'listening' to them.

In Canada there is a rapidly growing interest in participatory budgeting. The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (the largest non-profit landlord in North America with over 58,000 units and 164,000 residents) allocated $18 million in Capital funds through a participatory process! Guelph city, Canada has a neighbourhood development project that uses participatory budgeting to allocate some of the city's funds. The municipalities of Toronto and Vancouver are looking at how participatory budgeting might become a part of the budget process. A national, academic-community collaboration is underway to research all aspects of participatory budgeting including the role of popular education in developing citizen capacities to better understand the economy and how it relates to democratic citizen participation.

And around the world interest grows steadily with projects underway in St. Denis, France; Manchester, England; dozens of South America municipalities and more.

Source: Chris Cavanagh[5], Catalyst Centre (www.catalystcentre.ca)

Despite the rhetoric in government policy about community-led processes and empowerment, there is very little trust in letting the community take the lead. Budgets are not devolved to community level, but are tied up with accountability mechanisms that usually mean the power to allocate and spend is still with government – local and national. Different strategies are being adopted to tackle this, such as participatory budgeting (see Box 6), and others focus on developing popular movements to vocalise frustration and push for change. Participatory processes that focus on issues of power and developing a more critical and political

[4] see footnote 2.

[5] Thanks to Chris Cavanagh for his update on the original article in *PLA Notes* 38.

"The experiences from North and South need to be brought together as there are many similarities of issues. When tackling power, participation and poverty the North/South distinction is a false divide"

approach – such as Training for Transformation and Reflect – are gathering interest in the UK. However, in the present funding climate and context in the UK – where the focus is more on 'consultation' rather than empowerment – it is difficult to persuade commissioners of training to adopt more political approaches, and often they have to be promoted in an apolitical way.

Which approach to use?

Within a culture that sees citizen participation as a 'statutory requirement', but often without any real influence on decision-making processes, a large and varied participation 'industry' has developed – particularly since 2000. There is a huge range of different processes, which in many ways suits our choice-driven culture[6]. However, this culture also presents 'participatory products' as being in competition with each other, rather than as complementary, which shifts the focus away from long-term change and involving more people in a process, to a more short-term 'fix-it' approach. Unless there is a commitment to change and to the overall process of allowing the agenda to shift through participation, then all of these approaches will be ineffective.

There are increasing numbers of deliberative spaces in the UK, often seen as more credible than 'less rigorous' participatory processes. In a culture used to TV debates, it is not surprising that these more formal opportunities for debate are popular. This area has seen a rapid transfer of learning between North and South – and has been well documented in *Participatory Learning and Action*, in particular issue 40, Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment and in other articles (e.g. in issues 46 and 49).

How can we create new spaces for participation?

Most of the new invited and participatory spaces have been created at local authority level; very few if any have been created at national level. Even devolved administrations struggle to bring grassroots voices into policy making. There are a few national level voluntary sector organisations that are focused on facilitating the voice of people with experience of poverty at national policy-making level, but they are poorly resourced.

Oxfam UKPP arranged for some of these organisations to visit the Participatory Poverty Assessment Programme in Uganda, to explore what a national participatory process might look like – the UK could learn much from experiences of civil society engagement in these and other poverty reduction processes from around the world.

Civil society is now slowly negotiating spaces for involvement at national level in the UK, either by creating completely new spaces e.g. citizens' juries (see *PLA Notes* 40), the Commission on Power, Poverty and Participation (e.g. *Listen Hear*) or by engaging with particular pieces of policy.

However, there is little capacity to create new spaces that engender true participation inclusive of a wide range of different stakeholders in the community, especially those people who are more excluded and 'harder to reach'. The few that are created are often in response to a threat of some kind – a planning application, a decision to shut down a particular service, a particular incidence that shocks a community (for example a riot). These spaces are often very powerful, and might encourage individuals to make better use of the invited spaces that exist – but often they do not overlap.

Illustration from cover of *PLA Notes* 38, Participatory processes in the north

Cartoon: Regina Faul-Doyle

[6] See NEF, 1998.

The way forward

At present much of the participatory work in the UK is focused on needs, hence the emphasis on consultation, and not about people achieving their rights or engaging in a process of changing accountability. There are exciting community-level processes and inspired individuals making moves in the right direction, and it is therefore essential that for positive change to happen, all those involved in participation need to push for the right conditions and build on this experience. Collective critical reflection is needed that will inform good practice through peer review and learning, as is developing a dialogue with decision-makers, challenging their practice and supporting them in developing their role more effectively. This debate must include grassroots organisations, and ensure that it is rooted in the reality of our marginalized communities. Some of the key issues that we need to address are:

- The issue of quality control and long-term engagement in transformational learning – as opposed to 'training' – to nurture attitudes and behaviours, ethics, diversity and power sharing. Practitioners and organisations trying to deliver these longer processes will need to engage with educational institutions and/or other partners who can support and help fund this approach.
- New ways need to be found to bring civil society together to challenge decision makers, which may involve creating new spaces for dialogue about participation and poverty.
- Developing a rights-based agenda in this work. The UK is in the early stages of bringing rights into anti-poverty work, and we have much to learn from international development in how to achieve impact in this way.
- Ensuring that different people, including the most marginalized, participate in processes and that we understand differences within the community.
- That work is carried out in an ethical way that protects both participants and team members.
- We need to raise and explore issues around participation and what it means to empower people in communities. The government uses these terms in their policy documents, but there must be more clarity in their vision and how achievable is it within the local authorities and statutory agencies that deliver policy.

The experiences from North and South need to be brought together as there are many similarities of issues. When tackling power, participation and poverty the North/South distinction is a false divide. We have not touched on issues around the private sector in this article, but as we know, globalisation impacts on us all, and the issues that drive local decision-makers are heavily influenced by the same forces. Through developing good practice, sharing learning and experience, and increasing our understanding of tackling power issues in the North and South, we can work towards a global understanding of the barriers to change.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Charlotte Flower's own journey with PLA has been influenced very heavily by working in the developing world – but its initial seed in her natural science mindset was placed there by the Workers Education Association in the UK in the early 80s; Freirean principles strongly influence their approach to adult education. Working in community-based forestry work in Nepal, Cameroon and Namibia introduced her to PLA more formally. In late 1999 Charlotte returned to the UK and now works as Participatory Methods Advisor with the Oxfam UK Poverty Programme. The Oxfam programme has been supporting the development of participatory work in the UK, with particular focus on international development approaches – such as PLA and gender.

Vicky Johnson started her journey working on the environment and energy in the UK and internationally. She was Environmental Policy Analyst for ActionAid for six years, working with programmes in Africa, Asia and Latin America to bring messages from marginalized men and women into the policy arena, for example to the Earth Summit (1992) and to Cairo (1994). She also carried out detailed research into children's participation and their roles within households. Vicky used participatory approaches to feed into the local Agenda 21 voluntary processes in Brighton in 1993 and later, in 1998, started to pilot PLA in the North more systematically with Sustain: the Alliance for Better Food and Farming and Oxfam's UK Poverty Unit. Since then, together with Robert Nurick, she has set up a non-profit organisation in Brighton, UK called Development Focus Trust. They have further developed an approach called Community Assessment and Action (CAA), working with over 25 teams of residents and workers around the UK to formulate local action plans and carry out participatory monitoring and evaluation.

REFERENCES/KEY RESOURCES

In addition to key *Participatory Learning and Action* articles, for example in issues 47 and 38:
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www.oxfamgb.org/ukpp
Oxfam's reports can be downloaded from this website. A new online Social Inclusion Database is now available, which includes information on participation, gender and livelihoods in the UK.

www.devfocus.org.uk
Development Focus – soon reports from Community Assessment and Action processes will be available through this website

www.jrf.org.uk
Joseph Rowntree Foundation researches a range of issues relating to poverty and social exclusion in the UK. Of particular interest is their *Findings* series, which are short summaries of their main reports.

www.renewal.net
An online resource established by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit that covers a range of issues relevant to regeneration in the UK.

13

Tools and methods for empowerment developed by slum and pavement dwellers' federations in India

by SHEELA PATEL

Introduction

This paper describes the 'slum' enumerations, settlement mapping, community-to-community exchanges, house modelling, precedent-setting and other tools and methods developed and used by organisations and federations of slum, squatter and pavement dwellers over the last 20 years[1]. It focuses mainly on the use of these tools by an alliance of three organisations in India – the National Slum Dwellers' Federation (NSDF) (and its many member federations), *Mahila Milan* (savings cooperatives formed by women slum and pavement dwellers) and the Indian NGO, SPARC[2]. This alliance is active in over 50 cities in India and engaged in a variety of initiatives to reduce urban poverty involving millions of urban dwellers. These tools and methods were developed by the 'slum' and pavement dwellers and their own organisations to ensure that they remained at the centre of planning and managing initiatives (including conceiving how participation should be done) and of the negotiations with all external agencies (including local governments). The paper describes the use of these tools and methods in community-managed resettlement programmes and in community-designed, built and managed toilet blocks – although they are also widely used in the alliance's other programmes such as 'slum' upgrading and new house development.

These tools and methods are also central to the work of urban poor/homeless organisations in many nations other than India. In 11 nations, federations formed by urban poor and homeless groups have developed their own poverty reduction programmes, drawing on their own resources and capacities and negotiating with local and national government and international agencies for support – in India, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and the Philippines; in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda and Swaziland. As in India, in virtually all these nations, there are also support NGOs that work in very close partnership with the federations. In many other nations, comparable organisations and federations are developing and also using a comparable set of tools and methods, although adapted to local circum-

[1] This article draws on documentation developed by the Indian NGO SPARC. For more details, see SPARC's web-site www.sparcindia.org; see also Patel, Sheela, Sundar Burra and Celine D'Cruz (2001), 'Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI); foundations to treetops', *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 13 No 2, pages 45-59; Patel, Sheela, Celine D'Cruz and Sundar Burra (2002), 'Beyond evictions in a global city; people-managed resettlement in Mumbai', *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pages 159-172; Burra, Sundar, Sheela Patel and Tom Kerr (2003), 'Community-designed, built and managed toilet blocks in Indian cities', *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pages 11-32 and Patel, Sheela and Diana Mitlin (2004), 'The work of SPARC, the National Slum Dwellers' Federation and Mahila Milan' in (eds) Diana Mitlin and David Satterthwaite, *Empowering Squatter Citizen; The Roles of Local Governments and Civil Society in Reducing Urban Poverty*, Earthscan Publications: London.

[2] Sheela Patel is the founder–director of SPARC (The Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres), which is the Mumbai-based NGO within the Alliance of SPARC, *Mahila Milan* and the National Slum Dwellers' Federation.

Part of a poster painting prepared by the National Slum Dwellers' Federation for their Yearly Convention

Photo: Homeless International

stances and practices. This use of a common set of tools is in part because of the constant interchange between the federations, so they have learnt the utility of these tools from each other and also learnt how to apply them. This interchange has been supported by an umbrella organisation, Slum/Shack Dwellers International, to which all the federations belong. But these tools are also widely used in different nations because, despite very different contexts, the federations face comparable difficulties in their engagement with governments and international agencies.

All these federations are engaged in projects to build or improve housing and infrastructure, provide services and create new income-earning opportunities. They are also demonstrating approaches to reducing urban poverty that are usually more cost-effective and sustainable than those developed by governments and international agencies. They also succeed in including the poorest individuals and households in their programmes. Women have central roles in all of them. Most of these urban poor federations are now working at a considerable scale – reaching tens of thousands, while some are reaching hundreds of thousands or millions of people. Most have also succeeded in changing laws and official rules and regulations to make these more pro-poor (or at least less anti-poor). Most federations now manage their own 'urban poor fund'.

These tools and methods developed by the urban poor or homeless federations are participatory in two senses. First, in the sense of encouraging and supporting widespread involvement of urban poor groups and the community organisations and the federations which they form in designing and implementing initiatives. Second, in ensuring that the organisations of the urban poor and homeless retain the central role in what

is designed and implemented, and how it is managed and evaluated, when working with local governments, national agencies or international donors. The tools described below are to contribute to more equal relations between urban poor groups and the other (usually more powerful) groups with whom they have to work and negotiate.

Background

In India, the development of these tools and methods drew on the same questioning of conventional 'development' and of the role of external professionals that fuelled *Participatory Learning and Action* and its predecessors. The growing acceptance of participatory tools and methods by many professionals working in development in Europe and North America and by some governments and international agencies, helped legitimate the tools and methods used by the urban poor federations. The recognition by international agencies of the importance of civil society and within this of community organisations and local NGOs also contributed to this legitimation. But from the mid and late 1980s as the alliance of SPARC, *Mahila Milan* and the National Slum Dwellers' Federation in India developed, the tools and methods they used had certain characteristics that made them different from most of the early experiences with participatory tools that were documented in *RRA/PLA Notes*:

- The main focuses from the outset were strengthening community organisations formed by the (urban) poor (also ensuring that these were democratic and accountable to their members) and supporting these groups, changing their relationship with local governments (and where relevant with other official bodies, including international agencies).
- The tools and methods were designed, implemented and refined by the homeless and the 'slum-dwellers.' They were done for particular purposes or projects but always within a broader concern to create a more equal and productive relationship with local government agencies. So they were very political from the outset and concerned with 'governance' but as this paper describes, generally not a politics of confrontation but of negotiation and of showing alternatives.
- The tools and methods were rooted in addressing problems that low-income groups face in urban (mostly large city) contexts. One reason why the innovations in tools and methods described in this paper were in urban areas was because of a prior history of strong community organisations formed around getting shelter (usually through illegal land occupation) or to counter the threat to the urban poor's shelters from 'bad government', especially forced eviction from their settlements (see Box 1). Poor groups in the larger or more successful cities within each nation may face more problems from 'bad' government than most rural groups, especially over where they can find or build their own shelters and set up informal enterprises. The main route out of poverty in many rural contexts is access to productive land and the means to make better use of it; the main route out of poverty in most urban contexts is better paid and less exploitative employment opportunities. Urban contexts also mean greater numbers of poorer groups concentrated together which can make it easier for them to organise, make demands and work together.[3]
- The demands made centred on access to secure housing (or land on which housing could be built) and the services associated with it – provision for water, sanitation, drainage etc. This is a different focus to most early experiences with participatory tools and methods in rural areas. In part, this is because in urban areas, local governments can help provide these or at least allow community-developed solutions; higher wages or better employment opportunities were obviously high priorities for all low-income urban

Box 1: Innovation in urban areas

There was considerable innovation in urban areas in many Latin American and some Asian and African nations during the 1970s and 1980s in the ways that professionals (mostly from local NGOs) worked with low income households and their community organisations that have parallels with the changes promoted by RRA-PRA-PLA. These were often underpinned by strong community organisations and social movements among the urban poor, often fighting for land or against eviction, and also part of civil society struggles against dictatorships and for democracy. These are documented in many case studies and these set many precedents for new ways of working by professionals and professional development organisations (see for instance Turner, 1988). But the body of international professionals promoting and supporting these was much smaller (although with important exceptions as in the central role of Selavip News, a newsletter with details of community struggles and projects that linked urban community activists all round the world). There was also little response from international agencies, most of whom did not support measures to reduce urban poverty reduction or were reluctant to do so. There were also some interesting North-South interchanges as many professionals working in urban programmes in high-income nations had supported more participatory engagements with citizens and community organisations from the 1960s onwards – see *RRA Notes* 21, especially Gibson 1994 and Wratten 1994.

[3]Since urban and rural contexts are diverse, there are probably few valid generalisations about the differences in rural and urban contexts. But perhaps too little attention has been given to understanding these differences. In addition, apart from a special issue of *RRA Notes* in 1994 (No 21) on urban areas, the early editions of *RRA/PLA Notes* paid little attention to urban areas.

"In India, community-managed savings and credit groups in which each member saves each day is the foundation of the slum dwellers federations and of the cooperatives formed by women slum and pavement dwellers. They are 'the glue' that holds the Federation together"

dwellers but local government agencies usually have little influence on these. Housing also has characteristics in most urban contexts that are central to livelihoods, especially the importance of location within any urban area in relation to income-earning opportunities and, for households able to develop their own home, the value of the house itself as an asset. This focus on housing and services usually meant more opportunity for women to become central to this movement in circumstances where women face many barriers to equal participation.

- The change in tactics, adopted by community leaders. In the mid 1980s, many leaders within the slum dwellers' federations in India recognised that they had to move from making demands of government (with changes in government policy towards 'slum' dwellers seen as the solution) to demonstrating their own solutions, working with governments.
- The innovators and teachers of these new tools and methods were the urban poor, both within and between nations (with teaching and training done mainly through community-to-community exchanges).
- The role of (local) NGOs was to avoid doing anything that the representative organisations of the urban poor could do themselves.

Savings and credit

In India, community-managed savings and credit groups in which each member saves each day is the foundation of the slum dwellers federations and of the cooperatives formed by women slum and pavement dwellers. They are 'the glue' that holds the Federation together. There is no minimum amount that savers have to contribute each day. Women are particularly attracted to these savings groups because they provide crisis credit and can develop into savings accounts that help fund housing improvement or new housing and loan facilities for income generation. Women also find that their participation in savings groups transforms their relationships with each other, their family and community. The daily contact between each saver and the community representative who collects the savings also acts as a constant source of information on what people's difficulties are and how they can be addressed. When people want access to credit, the savings collector has personal knowledge of family circumstances and can vouch for them. The savings are usually managed at local 'area resource centres', which serve also as a place for community discussion, and for planning and managing community initiatives. Savings groups often work together to develop their plans for new housing or other initiatives.

These savings groups are managed by community organisations, not professional staff. They serve not only to provide members with credit for their needs but also to develop decentralised mechanisms for large federations to manage finance. Savings and credit groups build community organisations' capacity to manage finance collectively, which also helps develop their capacity to plan and implement projects within the learning cycle outlined below.

The external image of these savings groups is usually that of efficiently generated and managed savings. But for the federations, the most important function of savings and credit is that it mobilises large numbers of people who manage money together. This collective management of money and the trust it builds also increases community organisations' capacity to work together, to address problems and to manage or resolve conflicts. It also creates a larger federation that is able to negotiate with external agencies on behalf of all its members. In effect, it is building good governance from the bottom up.

The capacity to innovate and the learning cycle

Poor people know what their problems are and generally have good ideas regarding what solutions they want. But they lack the resources or capacities to demonstrate that they can produce a solution. So the federations support their members to try out solutions in what can be termed a 'learning cycle'. Some solutions work so well that they are adopted and adapted by many others. Some set precedents that allow more external support to be negotiated from governments or international agencies and also allow changes in rules and procedures to be negotiated (as explained in more detail below). Some fail – but even here, the learning from the failures is widely shared.

Among the tools and methods described below are

'slum' enumerations/surveys, mapping, pilot projects, house modelling, community exchanges and precedent setting. These take place within a learning cycle that includes several stages:

- identifying priority concerns;
- trying out solutions;
- learning from each other as these solutions develop;
- refining solutions and supporting more groups to try them; and
- using solutions as precedents to encourage change in government policies, programmes or regulations.

Low-income communities identify their priority concerns – for instance for sanitation, upgrading or new housing. A debate then takes place within the Alliance, generally leading to the formulation of a strategy for seeking a solution. One or more community organisations come forward with a scheme to address the problems. The Alliance assists these groups financially and organisationally because they offer a living 'laboratory' of how change can occur, and they help the Federation to develop a solution from which all can learn. For instance, women pavement dwellers in Mumbai have succeeded in obtaining a land site where they can build their own houses and they are currently building housing to accommodate 530 of them. The pavement dwellers had put pressure on the local government to provide them with land; when the local government claimed that there was no land available, the pavement dwellers organised a survey around the city, cataloguing just how much vacant land was available. When they obtained this site, they designed the housing units and the common spaces within them and they are now supervising its construction. This project encourages negotiations for land and government support for other such schemes for pavement dwellers.

Once a crude solution has been developed in a settlement, many groups within the federation visit it to see what has been achieved and to learn how it was organised and how much it cost. This leads to the next generation of volunteers who want to try out similar actions. Refinements to the solution emerge as other communities go through the process. Progress is always made although many delays take place when external factors prevent communities from achieving change. Once a refined solution has been established, it is explored with officials from local governments who also come to visit it. Pilot projects help set precedents that can be used to promote changes in official policies, practices or standards (as described in more detail below). The learning is shared with other federation groups and other city officials through exchange visits (see below for more details).

"Poor people know what their problems are and generally have good ideas regarding what solutions they want. But they lack the resources or capacities to demonstrate that they can produce a solution. So the federations support their members to try out solutions in what can be termed a 'learning cycle'"

The Federation then creates a core team from people in the first settlement that experimented with the solution and they visit other cities to demonstrate the solution that has been developed. This process may have a long gestation period because large numbers of people need to participate to create the confidence in a local people's movement to believe that it can transform their situation. More and more communities are exposed to the innovation and they put pressure on local officials and politicians for change and support. Depending on the external situation, there may be many possibilities for scaling up through participation in major government projects.

The Alliance's training process involves several critical principles:

- there are never resident trainers, always visiting ones;
- major training events (including house modelling – see below) are done by community leaders;
- training encourages women to participate in the processes;
- training teaches by doing rather than by telling;
- the trainers learn through training, acknowledge this and never consider themselves experts; and
- the process helps people to develop a working relationship with professionals and other stakeholders, and helps to ensure they are not treated as 'beneficiaries'.

This process helps more and more communities align with the Federation, learn new skills and begin to reconsider their interaction with local government and other external agencies.

Surveys

Community-directed household, settlement and city surveys or enumerations are important in helping communities to look at their own situation, consider their priorities, strengthen their organisation and create a capacity to articulate their knowledge of their members and their communities to government agencies and other external organisations. The Alliance helps

Box 2: Surveys and people-managed resettlement programmes in Mumbai

Mumbai relies on its extensive suburban railway system to get its workforce in and out of the central city. On average, over seven million passenger-trips are made each day on its five main railway corridors. But the capacity of the railway system is kept down by illegal settlements that crowd each side of the tracks. By 1999, more than 20,000 households lived in shacks next to the tracks, including many living within less than a metre of passing trains. The households lived there because they had no better option they could afford, because they needed the central location to get to and from work. Yet they had to face not only the constant risk of injury or death from the trains but also high noise levels, insecurity, overcrowding, poor quality shelters and no provision for water and sanitation. Indian Railways, which owned the land, would not allow the municipal corporation to provide basic amenities for fear that this would legitimate the land occupation and encourage the inhabitants to consolidate their dwellings. So the inhabitants had to spend long hours fetching and carrying water – a task that generally fell to women. Most people had no toilet facility and had to defecate in the open. Discussions within the Railway Slum Dwellers Federation (to which the majority of households along the railway tracks belonged) made clear that most wanted to move if they could get a home with secure tenure in an appropriate location.

A relocation programme was developed as part of the larger scheme to improve the quality, speed and frequency of the trains. This was unusual on three counts. First, it did not impoverish those who moved (as is generally the case when poor groups are moved to make way for infrastructure development). Secondly, the actual move involving some 60,000 people was voluntary and needed neither police not municipal force to enforce it. And third, the resettled people were involved in designing, planning and implementing the resettlement programme and in managing the settlements to which they moved. The process was not entirely problem free – for instance the Indian Railways started demolishing huts along one railway line and 2,000 huts were destroyed before the Alliance managed to get the state government to decree that the demolitions must stop. Land sites were identified to accommodate the evicted households and the Federation was given the responsibility for managing the resettlement programme.

Perhaps the most important feature of this resettlement programme was the extent to which those who were to be resettled were organised and involved before the move. First, all huts along the railway tracks and their inhabitants were counted by teams of Federation leaders, community residents and NGO staff – and done in such a way that the inhabitants' questions about what was being done and how the move would be organised could be answered. Then maps were prepared with residents where each hut was identified with a number. Draft registers of all inhabitants were prepared with the results returned to communities for checking. Households were then grouped into units of 50 and these house groupings were used to recheck that all details about their members were correct and to provide the basis for allowing households to move to the new site together. Identify cards were prepared for all those to be moved. And visits were made to the resettlement sites. Then the move took place with some households moving to apartments and others moving to transit camps while better quality accommodation was being prepared.

Interviews with the relocatees in 2002 highlighted the support that the inhabitants gave to the resettlement and their pleasure in having secure, safe housing with basic amenities. No process involving so many people moving so quickly is problem free – for instance the schools in the area to which they moved could not expand enough to cope with the number of children, many households had difficulties getting ration cards (which allow them access to cheap food staples and kerosene) and the electricity company overcharged them. The resettlement would have been better if there had been more lead-time, with sites identified by those to be relocated and prepared prior to the resettlement. But this programme worked much better than other large resettlement programmes and has set precedents in how to fully involved those to be relocated in the whole process – and it is hoped that other public agencies in India will follow.

low-income communities to undertake surveys at various levels, including city-wide or area-wide 'slum' surveys that provide documentation of all 'slums', informal settlements or pavement dwellings. It also undertakes very detailed household enumerations and intra-household surveys. These surveys proved particularly important in allowing community organisations to manage a large resettlement programme for those who lived beside the railway tracks in Mumbai, and this in turn developed precedents that are being used in other resettlement programmes (see Box 2).

The information-gathering process for a 'slum' enumeration often begins with a hut count when a community is visited for the first time, and many men and women from the Federation and *Mahila Milan* meet with residents and talk about their work and why they have come. Questionnaires and other survey methodologies are discussed with communities and modified as necessary. All data collected is fed back to community organisations (especially the savings groups) to be checked and, where needed, modified. The repeated interaction with a community through hut counts, household surveys and settlement profiles establishes a rapport with them and creates a knowledge base that the community own and control. These 'slum' enumerations also provide the organisational base from which to plan upgrading and new-house development.

Mapping

As part of household enumerations and hut counts, the Alliance works with communities to build their skills in developing detailed maps of houses, infrastructure, services, resources, problems etc, so that they can get a visual representation of their present physical situation. These maps are

particularly useful in developing plans for improvements with external agencies.

House modelling

As communities secure land, they are eager to build. Federation members need to develop many related skills such as house construction, materials costing and how to manage the architects and planners who seek to influence their hopes and ambitions. There are also other options to be explored, such as the production of building materials and the installation of infrastructure. Designs and costings for houses are explored by designs developed by community members. Life-size models are developed collectively – usually using a wooden frame covered by cotton cloth to show the walls – and discussed, with many people and groups coming to visit the models and discussing possible changes in the design and their implications for internal space and for total costs.

Community exchanges

Exchange visits between community organisations have been continually developed because they serve many ends. They:

- are a means of drawing large numbers of people into a process of change, supporting local reflection and analysis, enabling the urban poor themselves to own the process of knowledge creation and change;
- enable the poor to reach out and federate, thereby developing a collective vision and collective strength; and
- help create strong, personal bonds between communities who share common problems, both presenting them with a range of options to choose from and negotiate for, and assuring them that they are not alone in their struggles.

Since 1988, there has been a constant process of exchanges between slum and pavement communities in India (the federations and women's cooperatives have members in over 50 cities). Representatives from savings groups formed by women pavement dwellers in Mumbai were the first to travel to other settlements in their own city and later to other cities in India to visit other communities. They shared their knowledge about the savings and credit groups they had developed and managed themselves and found many people who were interested in acquiring their skills. Although most exchanges are within cities or between cities, there have also been many international exchanges, with community organisers from India visiting many other countries (including South Africa, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Kenya), and community organisers from these and from many other countries visiting slum and pavement communities in India.

Rehmat, a member of *Mahila Milan* and a pavement dweller in Mumbai, participating in a Putting up a House Model in Uganda. She now manages a good share of the toilet constructions in Mumbai

Photo: Homeless International

These exchanges build upon the logic of 'doing is knowing'. Exchanges lead to a good sharing of experience. In the exchange process, communities and their leadership have the potential to learn new skills and share teaching. The exchanges maintain a rapid learning and teaching curve, within which the Alliance's core team supports new learning and helps more people to teach and to learn from each other. From the first community exchanges between the pavement dwellers on the streets of Mumbai, there has now developed Shack/Slum Dwellers International, an umbrella organisation to support all the federations. This links the urban poor organisations in different countries through community exchanges (including many visits to nations where federations have not yet developed or are only in early stages of development) and supports them in their negotiations with international agencies.[4]

Precedent setting

The Alliance in India has always been conscious of the need to work at a scale beyond conventional NGO projects and

[4] One particularly significant international exchange was the visit of senior officials from Kenyan Railways and senior planners from Nairobi to Mumbai in April 2004, to see how the resettlement of the people from beside the railway tracks was organised there. Thousands of low-income households living in informal settlements close to the railway tracks in Nairobi have been threatened with eviction – and this visit showed the Kenyans the possibilities of community-managed resettlement which benefits those who are resettled, as well as clearing the tracks to allow faster and more frequent train services.

"A toilet project is small enough to be planned and built within a small budget and time frame but large enough to start many things happening, including involving women, allowing people to work together, tapping skills in the community to manage money and, finally, allowing people to enjoy defecating in private"

therefore to work with government. It also recognised the need to change the way that government agencies operated, including their working relationships with urban poor groups. But the conventional way in which NGOs seek to change governments is through policy advocacy. They generally base this on consultations with communities and draw from these consultations to suggest alternative policies to government, which they campaign to have accepted. Often, the policies suggested are good and much needed, but these rarely influence government policy. Even when they do, most communities lack the training, exposure or capacity to take advantage of them.

The Alliance decided to follow another route – that of setting precedents and using these precedents to negotiate for changes in policies and practices. Precedent setting begins by recognising that the strategies used by the poor are probably the most effective starting point although they may need to be improved. Precedents are set as the Alliance supports community organisations to try out pilot projects and then to refine and develop them within the learning cycle described above. Because they emerge from the poor's existing practices, they make sense to other grassroots organisations, become widely supported, and can easily be scaled up. But these precedents often contravene official rules and standards. For instance, the Alliance promoted the use of a mezzanine floor in the design of houses developed by the Federation because this provides households with more room and more flexibility in their homes but costs much less than a two-storey unit. Government designs did not allow this. So the Federation demonstrated what could be done (and how well it worked) before negotiating its approval. Now this design is being built in a new housing development for pavement dwellers and in housing being built within one of Mumbai's densest and largest 'slums' (Dharavi) to allow all the inhabitants to get better quality accommodation. The community-directed house modelling described earlier has also produced precedents showing how particular designs better serve low-income households' needs; so too have the community-designed and managed toilets that are described below.

Precedent setting with community toilets

One of the Alliance's largest initiatives is the design, construction and management of community toilets. This followed the 'learning cycle' and precedent setting noted above. Many 'slums' in Mumbai and other Indian cities had government designed, contractor-built public toilets that did not work well because of poor designs, poor quality construction and lack of maintenance. To have any chance of negotiating with governments for better provision, the Federation knew that it had to demonstrate to government that better design and management was possible. New designs for community toilets were developed and built in various cities and used as learning experiences both for those who built them and for those who visited them (through community exchanges). They set precedents in the ways that toilet blocks were designed, built and managed that could be demonstrated to government officials. They incorporated many innovative features that made them work better, including:

- separate toilets and queues for men and women (in standard government designs with only one queue, men often jump the queue);
- measures to ensure water was always available (for instance having large reservoir tanks to draw on when mains supplies were interrupted); and
- special toilets for children (because children were not using the conventional toilets because they were frightened of falling into the hole and of dark smelly rooms and they also were often pushed out of the queues).

The new toilet block designs also included accommodation for a caretaker and often space for community-meeting places (if communities meet regularly within the toilet complex, it also brings pressure to ensure it is kept clean). These new toilet blocks also cost the government less than the poor-quality contractor-built toilets that they had previously supported. This led to government support for hundreds of community toilet blocks in Mumbai and Pune that now serve hundreds of thousands of households. The federation is also advising various other city authorities in India on implementing large-scale community toilet programmes.

Why did the Federation begin work on community toilets?

To bring communities together

…because everyone uses them and has opinions about them. A toilet project is small enough to be planned and built within a small budget and time frame but large enough to start many things happening, including involving women, allowing people to work together, tapping skills in the community to manage money and, finally, allowing people to enjoy defecating in private. If you have squatted along an open drain all your life, it is hard to imagine toilets being clean places. If they are clean and well-cared for, they become points of congregation. The next step is the realisation that slums do not have to be dirty places, but can be beautiful communities in which to live.

To test new pro-poor policies

Given the lack of provision for sanitation in cities, this was an important chance to advocate for and test new pro-poor policies.

To expand livelihood options

Developing a toilet block was the first time that many poor communities were involved in working together on this scale. Although the poor are constantly involved in informal small-scale construction, there is never space and resources for their more formal participation. The construction and management of toilet blocks expanded their livelihood options and developed their skills.

To expand the Federation

Most of the 'slums' in which community toilets were built were non-federated. Working in these areas greatly expanded the Federation's base and trained them to work in different settings.

To strengthen the relationship with municipal authorities

Municipal authorities have learnt much about developing minimum sanitation from the community toilet blocks. The large-scale programmes in Pune and Mumbai encouraged staff and politicians from other municipalities to learn how to initiate and manage such a process. These programmes also encouraged federations in other cities to negotiate with municipal authorities to work on this issue.

In Mumbai and Pune, the subject of sanitation for the slums entered the public domain, as municipal commissioners and other dignitaries were invited to inaugurate the new community-built toilet blocks. Opening each community toilet block is a celebration to which local government staff and politicians can be invited. This also creates a chance for dialogue over other issues such as water supply, electricity, paved roads and secure tenure. The traditional relationship of politicians as patrons and voters as clients underwent a transformation. Whereas previously, a toilet block was the 'gift' of a local councillor, member of the legislative assembly or Member of Parliament, now citizens saw toilet blocks as their right. Their involvement in designing, building and maintaining each toilet block built their strength and confidence to negotiate with local municipal officials on other issues. As pressures build from below, administrative and political processes are compelled to respond. The culture of silence and subservience begins to give way to a more substantively democratic process.

"Opening each community toilet block is a celebration to which local government staff and politicians can be invited. This also creates a chance for dialogue over other issues such as water supply, electricity, paved roads and secure tenure"

Changing national policies

The Alliance also seeks to change attitudes and policies at national level. It worked with the UN Human Settlements Programme to launch a good governance campaign in India in 2000, and the National Slum Dwellers' Federation demanded that sanitation be seen as an indicator of good governance, especially women and children's access to it. The Indian government has introduced a new programme where a 50% subsidy for the construction of community toilets is available to local bodies and public authorities – and this was influenced by the community toilets built in Pune and Mumbai.

Adding to the repertoire of the poor

The community toilet-building programme encouraged hundreds of communities to undertake projects and to create an environment that makes room for experimentation. Externally supported interventions like this do not set new standards, but alter and influence the circumstances that allow communities to develop standards of their own.

"The demands for sanitation by urban poor organisations are less threatening than any demand for land or for land tenure. Of all the basic services that the poor have begun to demand, sanitation has begun to be less contested than others"

Making room for communities to learn by experimenting and by making mistakes

Solutions to complicated problems do not happen quickly, and generally come from trial and error. Learning for any individual generally means having to do something more than once and making mistakes before finally getting it right. This is also true for poor communities, but solutions are far more complicated. To those professionals or government officials mistrustful of community involvement in urban improvement, mistakes only confirm entrenched attitudes towards the poor as being ignorant or lazy. Built into many community participation programmes is 'only one chance' which does not allow the learning and training capital produced by mistakes to be reinvested in new processes. It stops participation at the first sign of error. Poor communities are unable to experiment because they have no margin within their limited resources to absorb mistakes. This is one of the crises of poverty, and this is why these toilet projects make room for, and even encourage, mistakes.

The toilets are not theoretical ideas on paper, but real buildings, built in real slums. They are visited, discussed and analysed within the Federation/*Mahila Milan* network, and outside it. Their mistakes and successes are widely discussed and considered, and they catalyse the projects that follow. The people who build them take their experiences to other settlements, other cities, and become trainers themselves. In this way, the evolution and refinement of ideas occur in practice, in different situations.

People on the move: training others and breaking isolation

People in communities that have built their own toilets are the best teachers for others interested in doing the same. Whether or not their project was successful, their experience can give a head start to other communities who do not have to start from scratch. For skills to be refined and spread around, it is important that as many people as possible visit the toilets, participate in their building, and return to their own settlements filled with new ideas. In this way, the learning potential of these experiences is maximised, and their successes and failures are discussed and digested by many others.

Each new toilet that is built is better than the last one

With the widespread dissemination of experiences, each time it gets easier, the 'circle of preparation' shrinks and the number of people able and willing to get things done grows considerably. Each time a toilet block is built, it is also cause for a festival to celebrate its opening, and each festival draws a larger crowd. **It is the ability of the Federation/*Mahila Milan* network to link people and help them take control of toilet construction and management that makes this whole process possible.**

These toilet constructions did not emerge entirely and spontaneously from the communities in which they were built. The lack of toilets is one of the most frequent and urgently articulated problems of slum dwellers, but all these projects involved an external intervention – somebody coming in from the outside, shaking things up, asking questions, posing challenges, and intentionally pushing forward what is required for communities to plan and carry out solutions to their own sanitation problems. In this case, the outside group is the NSDF/*Mahila Milan*/SPARC Alliance.

No two toilet blocks are alike

The toilet projects all work along the lines of some of the Federation's fundamental ideas about building the capacities of communities, but all toilet blocks are different as they represent tailor-made responses to particular local needs and realities, reflecting different political climates, different negotiating strategies, different degrees of official support, different materials markets, different skill levels, different site realities, different access to sewer and water mains, and different community dynamics.

Don't wait for ideal conditions

None of these toilet blocks are perfect. Most were built under circumstances that could be considered impossible. But every toilet block represents a vital investment in learning and human capacity. These are the building blocks of large-scale change, much more than perfect designs or innovative engineering. One of the Federation's principles is that you should never allow your work to be held up while waiting for something else to be ready or some other condition to be in place. You have to get going, since circumstances will never be perfect, no matter how long you wait.

Start with sanitation rather than land tenure

The Alliance originally developed to fight the insecurity into which most poor communities are locked because they occupy land illegally. Local governments will not allocate land to allow the poor to get secure housing, so their houses and neighbourhoods encroach on lands publicly or privately owned and designated for other uses, such as parks, railway lines or airport perimeters. Communities living on land to which they have no acknowledged right become perpetual supplicants and have to comply with the demands of the landowners. The informality of their settlements means that they cannot demand the same rights as legal landowners and homeowners from city administrations – including provision for water, sanitation and electricity. Instead, they have to resort to informal feudal linkages for 'protection', and often pay more for services such as water than 'formal' citizens. They also face the indirect costs from the health problems that arise from poor quality, overcrowded housing and a lack of a safe water supply and inadequate sanitation. For organisations of the poor, the demand for sanitation is strategic: city government and civil society can easily see the relationship between the sanitation needs of the poor and their own health and well-being. The demands for sanitation by urban poor organisations are less threatening than any demand for land or for land tenure. Of all the basic services that the poor have begun to demand, sanitation has begun to be less contested than others. This is especially so when the sensibilities of middle-class citizens are affected by seeing people defecate in the open. It takes longer to make the connection between housing and the sense of security that the urban poor need for their well-being and quality of life.

Why the poor make good sanitation partners

In the toilet projects, there was a fundamental change in roles, as urban poor communities in different cities took part in designing, building and managing their own toilets and then invited the city to come and inspect what they had built. The poor no longer have to beg the city administration for basic services. They own the process, and tell the city how they would like it to progress. Behind this transformation are some clear ideas. Providing basic services to any large city is always a vast field of shared responsibility and involves many people: officials setting priorities, engineers drafting plans, contractors doing civil work, water and sewage departments overseeing maintenance, and special interests seeking some advantage within the process.

"Using a federation structure, possibilities for communities to conceptualise, design and manage vital assets become visible and this, in turn, raises the possibility of the poor, and women in particular, being able to participate in an exploration of new roles with their communities"

At the edge of this field of decisions are all the people who need water taps and toilets. It has been assumed that these people, particularly the poor, cannot be involved in infrastructure decisions because they lack the necessary technical expertise. But the technicalities of toilets, water supply and sewerage are not beyond them. Poor people can analyse their own sanitation needs, and plan, construct and maintain their own toilets.

Developing standards that are realistic for and work for poor communities

When city governments build toilet blocks, they use the same old standard designs – expensive, difficult to maintain and mostly doomed to deteriorate rapidly and become unusable. Yet the standard models are still duplicated, partly because nobody has a better idea. Fresh, workable standards for community improvement are badly needed but they can only emerge from a reality which poor people understand better than bureaucrats, and can only be developed through practice. The toilet projects were a search for better standards – for financing, designing, constructing and maintaining toilets that are replicable and that work within the realities of poor communities. Some ideas they test catch on, others do not. It is from this fertile process of experimentation that new standards emerge.

The distinction between public toilets and community toilets

This distinction is important because building a toilet, like any amenity, changes people's perceptions of their own settlement. Public toilets serve the needs of whoever happens to be passing, whether a local or a stranger. A community toilet belongs to and is controlled by a community – not the city or the government or a passing stranger. To build a community toilet is to acknowledge that a community exists, and that

"Starting with small initiatives can show both government and communities that change is possible. Convince officials that they can use their limited powers to make a little change. First, they might only give limited consent, but later, when they see things change even in small ways, consent might become support. Support is the first step in the creation of a genuine partnership"

inside that community live women, men and children who have legitimate needs. Within the murky politics of land and land tenure in Indian cities, the construction of a community toilet can be a powerful manoeuvre, especially if it is built by the community itself.

Why community toilets rather than individual toilets?

Because they can provide everyone, even the poorest, with sanitation. And the costs of provision for everyone can be afforded. Those who are better off can, and will, gradually build individual facilities for themselves in their homes. In this way, the pressure on community toilets will probably diminish over time, but everyone will continue to have access.

Why community-managed and controlled?

Because the toilet blocks produce a possibility of change that helps develop new leaders, new relationships within communities and new relationships with external agencies. Community organisations usually emerge to address negative issues: to fight eviction and demolition, to cope with extortion. This produces leadership that brokers relationships with those with power, including 'patrons' and those who informally need to be bribed or given favours. Many community leaders have similar relationships with the community – their linkages to the political and administrative wings of government are often negative and exploitative of themselves and their communities. For real change to occur, different leadership and different relationships within the community and with the outside world are needed. Yet unless there is some need, and the possibility for change exists, it is extremely difficult to motivate the poor and their nascent leadership to explore this path. Using a federation structure, possibilities for communities to conceptualise, design and manage vital assets become visible and this, in turn, raises the possibility of the poor, and women in particular, being able to participate in an exploration of new roles with their communities.

Why community construction?

Because the construction of toilet blocks is something that with some assistance, anyone can do. Community involvement in design and construction provides insights into maintenance needs. When the criteria of quality are explained to community leaders (such as the basic mixing of concrete, materials for plumbing etc.), they will supervise the construction, leading to a better quality toilet block. But the most important aspect is to do with linking livelihoods and producing entrepreneurial behaviour among the poor. Most slum people face barriers to getting better-paid jobs. By taking the opportunity to become contractors for toilet blocks (sometimes as individuals and sometimes as collectives), they develop new skills and enhance the possibilities of better jobs in the future. The upgrading of slums will continue into the future, so it is vital to invest in the capacity and skills of the poor to be the builders **and** the managers of such projects.

Notes on the art of gentle negotiation

A necessary step in working with government agencies is convincing reluctant and often suspicious government staff to stop seeing poor communities as problems and start seeing them as contributors to good solutions for city-wide problems. That means negotiation. Below are some of the Alliance's negotiating strategies.

Start small and keep pressing

Community organisations start small – for instance negotiating for local government to provide hand pumps and water taps in slums. Through those negotiations, they gradually gain the confidence, persistence and visibility to press for the next level – for instance community toilets. Starting with small initiatives can show both government and communities that change is possible. Convince officials that they can use their limited powers to make a little change. First, they might only give limited consent, but later, when they see things change even in small ways, consent might become support. Support is the first step in the creation of a genuine partnership.

Paint beautiful pictures

Sometimes, grassroots activism involves a great deal of scolding and finger-pointing: 'Isn't this awful!' This has limited use if you are seeking new ways to bring the poor and the state

The National Slum Dwellers' Federation Convention

Photo: Homeless International

together to solve city problems. People in power are more likely to retreat into their bureaucratic shells when pelted with 'awfuls' and 'shamefuls'. A better approach is to kindle their imaginations by describing possibilities in ways that make clear how they can contribute.

Know more than they do

When community organisations enter into negotiations with governments or other external agencies well-prepared with enumeration reports that have data on all households in the settlement, with toilet construction or upgrading or new house costs worked out and tested, with knowledge of city infrastructure grids, and with examples of community-state partnerships in other cities, it becomes harder for government or aid agency officials to argue against their proposals.

Unpicking the change processes

The Alliance's experience has shown the importance of three distinct but linked change processes.

Organisation for empowerment – creating organisational capability within low-income settlements and linkages between the community and their peers

This is realised primarily through the Federation network and through savings and loan activities. Community groups need to develop democratic internal organisational capabilities. They need to explore relationships based on equity, which ensure inclusiveness. These are essential for sustaining the participation of the poor in demanding change, both within their communities and with external organisations. An investment in strengthening democratic organisation within low-income communities has many long-term implications, and if undertaken with care and patience, is the most powerful legacy of any developmental intervention. It also becomes crucial in ensuring the long-term sustainability of any process that is introduced. The philosophy and practice of this approach can be contrasted with the more conventional development approach to housing development and urban poverty reduction to highlight some distinctive differences in the Federation's way of working. Whilst the change

processes discussed above including the tools and methods used focus on the delivery of tangibles, these tangibles are actually entry points for mobilisation rather than organisational goals in themselves. This is an important distinction – and one that many development organisations (especially government agencies) fail to understand.

Community-based problem solving – building skills and locating and building resources within and outside communities to solve problems

The Federation's experience has shown that the problems low-income communities face often require them to reflect collectively on deconstructing problems and identifying solutions. Communities need time and space to explore all possible choices. They need to examine the feasibility and implications of each available option, and to understand the degree of control, which they, as communities, can have over different 'solutions'. It is therefore important for communities to examine the internal resources they can use when they design alternatives at the initial phase of the problem-solving process.

Learning to negotiate

Arriving at long-term solutions requires communities to negotiate with city and state governments and other groups. Often, municipalities, state institutions, and even developmental organisations do not know how to work with poor communities to arrive at solutions. The usual approach is for external agencies to get communities to 'do something' which they believe poor people need to do. All the tools and methods described in this paper are in effect to change this, to create a more equal relationship between poor communities and external agencies in identifying problems and developing solutions. Also to support poor communities in demonstrating to these external agencies the competence, capacity and resources they can bring to this. Also to constantly remind the staff of external agencies that they should be supporting local processes that communities need to own. These communities are the ones who are going to stay there and be affected by what is done (or not done). For most international agencies, this implies that they have to modify their conventional project cycles so they support the kinds of long-term processes described above. This also means not imposing unrealistic demands for the achievement of short-term goals that so often undermine the long-term processes that can produce **real** poverty reduction.

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14

Natural resources, people and participation

by MICHEL PIMBERT

Taken as a whole, three broad themes run through the examples and lessons on livelihoods and natural resources presented so far in *Participatory Learning and Action*:

- An emphasis on participatory learning and action for local adaptive management of natural resources that is rooted in indigenous and local knowledge, skills and institutions, and in local indicators to track and respond to environmental and social changes.
- Natural resource management bureaucracies and organisations ought to challenge themselves: they have to become learning-oriented at their core. Learning-oriented organisations encourage experimentation, questioning and the abandonment of stereotypes. They develop skills in recording, applying and disseminating lessons, build relationships based on mutual respect and foster a non-threatening environment where people learn from one another.
- Facilitating and encouraging individual and collective learning for inclusive and equitable participation in natural resource management requires action at various levels, including not only local, but also national and international contexts. In fact, this is where the real constraints on the spread, scaling-up and mainstreaming of the participatory process very often lie.

After highlighting some key lessons from experiences presented in past issues of *Participatory Learning and Action*, this paper offers critical reflections on each of these three themes. I offer an analysis rather than a description of trends, emphasising instead future challenges and opportunities. At the risk of being prescriptive, I encourage readers to focus on future visions, ways of working and longer term strategies for change.

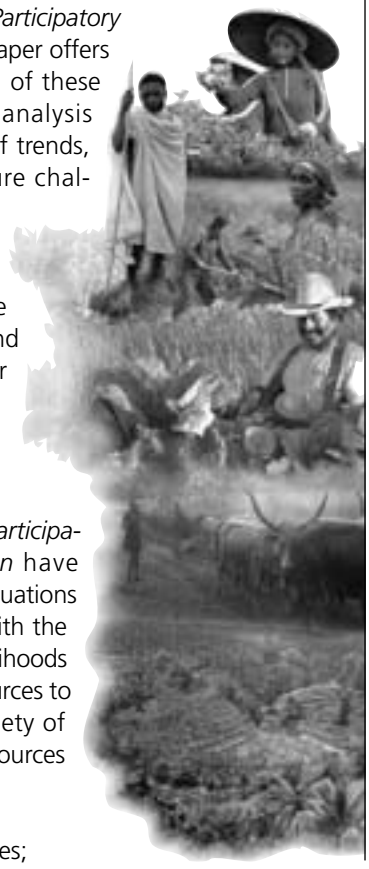

Photo: Oroon Das from www.diversefoodsystems.org

A legacy of experience and insights

Previous contributions to *Participatory Learning and Action* have covered a wide range of situations in which people interact with the environment, with local livelihoods dependent on natural resources to different degrees. The variety of ecosystems and natural resources considered is remarkable:

- Forests and woodlands;
- Mangroves, rivers and lakes;

Box 1: Natural resources in Participatory Learning and Action: some examples

This list illustrates the breadth of articles published in the series over the years:
Customary marine tenure in the South Pacific: the uses and challenges of mapping. Philip Townsley *et al*., *PLA Notes* 30: October 1997
Addressing the challenges of fisheries development. Marie-Thérèse Sarch; *PLA Notes* 30: October 1997
Monitoring and evaluating in the Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project. Raj Kumar Rai, *PLA Notes* 31: February 1998
A participatory GIS for community forestry user groups in Nepal. Gavin Jordan and Bhuban Shrestha, *PLA Notes* 39: October 2000
Farmer participation in on-farm varietal trials: multilocation testing under resource-poor conditions. Michel Pimbert, *RRA Notes* 10: February 1991
Farmer foresight: an experiment in South India. D. Satya Murty and Tom Wakeford, *PLA Notes* 40: February 2001
Farmers' on-farm participatory research: experiences in Ethiopia. Ejigu Jonfa, *PLA Notes* 27: October 19961
Walking a tightrope: using PRA in a conflict situation around Waza National Park, Cameroon. Paul Scholte *et al*., *PLA Notes* 35: June 1999
Participatory research and ecological economics for biodiversity conservation in Vanuatu, Luca Tacconi, *PLA Notes* 28: February 1997
Participatory facilitation inputs into land management in the City of Ottawa. Anna V Herc, *PLA Notes* 44: June 2002
Focus groups and public involvement in the new genetics. Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Anne Kerr and Steve Pavis, *PLA Notes* 40: February 2001

- Coastal areas and marine ecosystems;
- Rangelands and farming landscapes;
- Desert ecosystems;
- National Parks and biodiversity rich areas;
- Bodies of natural resources in urban areas; and
- Waste products of human activity and newly engineered life forms (e.g. genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Just about all areas of human needs have been considered through structured processes of group learning and action in these diverse settings: food and water, health, energy, shelter and culture. External actors involved in these processes either worked for government departments or non-governmental organisations. Local actors have been women, men and children from diverse backgrounds, engaging from different positions of strength in usually unequal power relations. Whilst the majority of contributions to *Participatory Learning and Action* on 'natural resources, people and participation' have been from the South, a significant number of experiences from the North have also enriched our collective learning.

For many natural resource professionals who have shared their experiences in this journal, participatory learning and action seemed to offer new possibilities to offset two dominant biases in particular:

Illustration from cover of *PLA Notes* 35: Community water management

Cartoon: Regina Faul-Doyle

Ecologically blind science and neglect of dynamic complexity

The science of parts (reductionism) – **as opposed to knowledge and ways of knowing that integrate the parts** – has largely failed to guide ecosystem and natural resource management. Narrow lens, universal and reductionist explanatory models have generated crisis in natural resource management through their inability to come to terms with the dynamic complexity and variation within and among ecosystems (Gunderson *et al*., 1995). Daily, seasonal and longer-term changes in the spatial structure of ecosystems are apparent at the broad landscape level right down to small plots of cultivated land. Environmental dynamics and effects are usually long-term and their emergent complexity calls for more holistic and transdisciplinary ways of knowing. Moreover, new ecological knowledge systems need to work with the complexity of ecosystems in a constructivist approach to science so that innovation and learning becomes embedded in management. This emphasises the need for flexible individual and collective responses in which local resource users are central actors in analysis, planning, negotiations and action. Participatory learning and action was thus seen as key for the local adaptive management of ecosystems and natural resources (Holling *et al*., 1998).

Social marginalization and exclusion

This manifests itself through the neglect of local people, their knowledge, priorities, management systems, institutions and social organisation, and the value to them of local

assets (natural, social, cultural). Within this dynamic of 'denying and undermining the other', powerful actors seek to control natural resource management through discourse, law and coercion. Soil erosion, degradation of rangelands, desertification, loss of forests, the destruction of wildlife and fisheries – all of these problems appear to require intervention to prevent further deterioration, and local misuse of resources is consistently defined as the principal cause of destruction. Policies and practice, therefore, aim to exclude people and so discourage all forms of local participation. Such top-down, imposed natural resource management all too often results in huge social and ecological costs in areas where rural people directly depend on natural resources for their livelihoods. In contrast, methods and approaches for participatory learning and action offered an alternative to create spaces for 'voices from below', and **potentially** reconnect citizens – and poor people first of all – with the natural resources that sustain their livelihoods and culture.

These two biases endure today, and have formidable sticking power. But important shifts have occurred too:

Learning by doing

Much of the experiential learning reported in *Participatory Learning and Action* has had (and still has) an impact on the cultural imagination and work of some professionals. After initially working in the South, many practitioners introduced and adapted participatory methods and approaches in the North. Yesterday and today, small or big personal 'mind flips' often lead to a commitment to socially and ecologically responsible practice, one that resonates with an ethics of democracy and accountability.

From diagnosis to process

Several early practitioners moved on from an initial emphasis on diagnosis and appraisals to exploring longer-term participatory processes that could benefit both local communities and the environment. Participatory planning, decision-making, monitoring and evaluation in natural resource management established itself as an important way of rebuilding local assets (natural, social, human, physical and financial) and regenerating ecologies. A variety of participatory or co-management initiatives led to negotiated agreements on the use of natural resources (forests, fisheries, common property, land, water bodies). More generally, collective action, based on social learning and negotiated agreements among relevant actors in an ecosystem, was increasingly viewed as a condition for sustainable use and regeneration of that ecosystem (Borrini *et al*., 2004). **Platforms** that brought relevant actors together are seen as key in mobilising capacity for social learning, negotiation and collective action for natural resource management and sustaining critical ecological services. Platforms ranged from Joint Forest Management (JFM) committees, Farmer Field Schools (FFS), local fishing associations (Box 2), user groups and so on.

Box 2: Fishing associations and the co-management of freshwater ecosystems in Sweden

Local fishing associations are common in Sweden. These associations, which in many respects resemble common-property systems, manage many of Sweden's vast number of lakes, rivers and streams. National laws introduced over the last 20 years make it possible for freshwater associations not only to manage lakes and rivers but also watersheds. Fishing associations also have the right to make decisions concerning fishing and fish conservation. The national government, however, is still in charge of some decisions such as instituting bans on certain fishing methods and granting permission for stocking and transfer of fish and shellfish.

A detailed study of the management of the Lake Racken watershed has highlighted the key role of local fishing associations in sustaining crayfish populations and the larger ecosystem. The institutional framework for the management of crayfish populations is made up of a nested set of institutions at different organisational levels. Rules for the management of crayfish are both informal and formal, and are embedded in local fishing associations and government. But much of the learning by doing for the adaptive co-management of fisheries is carried out by the local fishing association, whose members actively develop site-specific ecological knowledge as well as flexible institutions and adaptive organisations.

Adapted from Olsson and Folke, 2001

Putting methods into context

The use of complementary methodologies became increasingly necessary to facilitate collective learning and action in the different phases of a participatory management process: preparing for partnerships, developing management plans, negotiating agreements, monitoring and evaluation. It is worth noting that innovations around methodological complementarity brought together actors from different disciplines (e.g. local economic valuation tools combined with methods for participatory learning and action; methods for stakeholder analysis with conflict resolution tools; citizen panels and future

Photo: Oroon Das from www.diversefoodsystems.org

Box 3: Community Integrated Pest Management in Indonesia

Integrated pest management (IPM) emerged in Indonesia in the late 1980s as a reaction to the environmental and social consequences of the Green Revolution model of agriculture. A cooperative programme between the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Indonesian Government centred on Farmer Field Schools (FFS), which are schools without walls. The FFS aimed to make farmers experts in their own fields, enabling them to replace their reliance on external inputs, such as pesticides, with endogenous skills, knowledge and resources. Over one million rice paddy farmers and local resource users are now involved in this national programme in Indonesia.

Over time, the emphasis of the programme shifted towards community organisation, community planning and management of IPM, and became known as Community IPM (CIPM). Agroecosystem analysis and methods for group dynamics were initially used to enhance farmers' ecological literacy as it related to plant-insect ecology. Farmer IPM trainers and researcher/scientists learnt facilitation and presentation skills and how to make basic experimental designs to analyse and quantify ecological phenomena. The principles of FFS have now been extended from rice to the management of natural resources, from IPM to plant breeding and participatory water management, and from technical domains to broader engagement with policy issues, advocacy, and local governance.

Learning to analyse policy, deal with high-level decision makers in government, and produce a newspaper with a print run of 10,000 are all key in enabling farmers and other natural resource users to become organisers, planners, advocates and activists seeking to influence policy processes. This empowering dynamic has led to a variety of campaign strategies, including a national IPM farmers' congress and the development of a charter for peasants' rights. These activities, together with the strengthened voice of farmers brought about by the Community IPM process, have built a groundswell of support for a national peasants' movement in Indonesia.

See www.communityipm.org; Fakih *et al*., (2003).

search conferences). However, with the growing focus on issues of access, benefit sharing and control over natural resources, the place of methods in participatory learning and action was gradually reassessed. Whilst still important, methodological issues are now increasingly seen in the context of a more relational understanding of participation in which power and knowledge are centre stage. For example, by specifying the roles, rights, responsibilities and benefits of the different actors, co-management bodies and other platforms for collective action bring into sharp focus governance issues. Federations of FFS have thus moved on from using discovery learning methods to solve natural resource management problems to engage in national policy processes and political change in Indonesia (Box 3).

Creating inclusive platforms

Over time, reflections on participatory practice have led to more critical views on the nature of platforms (user groups, co-management bodies, FFS) for local adaptive management. Platforms are not always welcoming spaces for women, nor inclusive of the weak and marginalized, nor free from manipulation and co-option by more powerful insiders and/or outsiders (Box 4). More generally, important differences have surfaced between two radically different types of spaces for participation in the governance of natural resources: **invited spaces from above** and **popular or citizen spaces**. Governments and donor-led efforts to set up co-management committees and resource user groups are examples of invited spaces from above. In contrast, citizen or popular spaces are created by people who come together to create arenas over which they have more control, e.g. indigenous peoples platforms for negotiation and collective action; do-it-yourself Citizens Juries that frame alternative policies. Whilst there are notable exceptions, popular spaces are arenas within which, and from which, ordinary citizens can gain the confidence to use their voice, analyse, deliberate, frame alternatives and action, mobilise, build alliances and act. But it is worth noting that such popular spaces may also reproduce subtle forms of exclusion in the absence of a **conscious** social commitment to a politics of freedom, equity and gender inclusion (see Box 4).

From participation to transformation

'Participation' has sometimes been seen as a panacea or a 'technical fix' for natural resource management. But all too often large-scale participatory approaches have failed because of inequitable rights of access, use and control over natural resources, macroeconomic policy or corporate interests. Many practitioners have increasingly learnt to see 'participation' as part of, and dependent on, a wider structural change towards more equitable people-centred processes and democracy. In this vision of the future, 'participation' and 'transformation' are organically linked – in theory and practice (see Pettit and Musyoki, this issue).

The challenge of social learning for local adaptive management

Transforming knowledge and ways of knowing

Eliciting and making visible diverse **local** realities, priorities, categories and indicators through participatory learning is still very much needed today to challenge top down, 'one size fits all' science, policy and practice in natural resource management. However, claims that one tradition of knowl-

edge and practice (local, vernacular systems **versus** external science-based systems) is always better than the other may ultimately restrict possibilities. Instead, a key challenge for participatory learning and action lies in creating **safe** spaces where plural traditions of knowledge can be purposefully combined for the local adaptive management of natural resources and their equitable use.

At heart, local adaptive management of natural resources (forests, fisheries, biodiversity) depends on platforms of local resource users and other citizens having safe spaces to deliberate, arbitrate, act on feedbacks from the environment and **produce new knowledge for action**. This implies a greater commitment to democratic pluralism and cross-cultural dialogue in the production and validation of knowledge. And in future, the framing and boundary conditions for participatory learning need to be kept as open and flexible as possible, with facilitators comfortable with diversity, surprise and the 'unusual'. For example, combining at least four types of indicators in a single process may be desirable to deal with increasingly uncertain change in both social and ecological processes.

- Indigenous or experiential indicators used by rural people and reflecting **experience-based** changes in environmental or socio-economic conditions. These are site specific and reflect the different needs and expectations of community members.
- Technical or scientific indicators that are universal, disciplinary and quantitative enough to allow for **comparisons** between locations and across time.
- Indicators that can help **relate** scientific knowledge and methods to local people's experiences.
- Indicators that can help **relate** local people's knowledge to scientific methods and knowledge.

This is all about bridging the local and global to generate context specific knowledge (social and ecological) that is needed to sustain livelihoods in the face of dynamic complexity and diversity. The kind of knowledge that emerges from this decentralised process of social learning has been well described by James Scott in his book *Seeing like a state* (1998). He speaks of 'forms of knowledge embedded in local experience' (mêtis) and sharply contrasts them with 'the more general, abstract knowledge displayed by the state and technical agencies'. 'Mêtis', says Scott, is 'plastic, local and divergent… It is, in fact, the idiosyncrasies of mêtis, its contextualities, and its fragmentation that make it so permeable, so open to new ideas.' This kind of participatory, experiential understanding takes involvement with our surroundings seriously. Its criteria of validation and quality are much broader than those of the positivist social and natural sciences that still inform much of natural resource management today. Future participatory learning and action could actively explore these new frontiers by opening up new communicative spaces in which democratic inquiry can take place.

But more immediately, there is a renewed urgency to debunk crisis narratives and neo-malthusian claims that largely blame the poor for environmental harm and degradation of natural resources. These policy (or crisis) narratives are usually robust, hard to challenge and slow to change. They play a key role in policy and

Box 4: The type of resource management agreement depends on who has the right to speak! An example from the Solomon Islands.

Resource management agreements must be located in their cultural context. In the Solomon Islands, customary law has a profound influence on the capacity to participate in decision-making. Land and marine tenure systems define the rights and entitlements to speak about and for resources. Individual legal titles to specific marine or land areas do not exist. It is membership in corporate, kinship-based clans or *butubutus* that defines a person's relationship to resources. Although resources are claimed and controlled by the *butubutu* as a collective, there are clear distinctions between the power to speak about resources (and frame the resource management agreements) and the rights to merely use them. Rights and entitlements are unevenly distributed within and between communities, and are coming under increasing pressure from new commercial forces.

Women have inherently weak negotiating positions in traditional community institutions and decision-making processes in the Solomons. They are often uninformed about resource management issues and do not participate in public debate and in the framing of resource management agreements. By custom it is male relatives who speak on behalf of a woman landholder. However, customary law does not oblige them to consult with the women. 'In decision-making processes, a male relation's vote is seen as equivalent to her choice'. Where women do find the confidence to talk as a group against the decisions made by men, it is likely they will be ignored. When the Tobakokorapa Association took the decision to designate an area used by women as protected, Michi women expressed their dissatisfaction at a general meeting. They were overruled by the elder men and told they would get 'used to' the idea.

Gender bias is thus expressed not just in community structures but, more fundamentally, in intra-community power relationships and the type of resource management agreements negotiated between members of the community.

Adapted from Adams, (1996) cited in Borrini *et al.*, (in press).

Photo: Oroon Das from www.diversefoodsystems.org

Box 5: Debunking myths on people-environment interactions

Recent research has fundamentally questioned many of the environmental crisis narratives and received wisdoms on the supposed destructiveness of rural people on the environment. A combination of historical analysis, social anthropology, participatory methods to understand local resource users' knowledge and perspectives, and insights from non-equilibrium ecology has challenged some of the environmental knowledge taken for granted by government bureaucracies and donors. For example, historical research in West Africa has shown dominant deforestation estimates to be vastly exaggerated. Many of the vegetation forms that ecologists and policy makers have used to indicate forest loss, such as forest patches in savanna are, according to the knowledge of local resource users and historical evidence, the results of landscape enrichment by people.

See Leach and Mearns, (1996); Pimbert (in press).

project level decision-making. They structure options, define relevant data and exclude other views within bureaucracies and professional circles. And yet, recent research has debunked several orthodox views on people-environment interactions (Box 5). A future challenge lies in bringing together such plural forms of knowledge within a more comprehensive, **power equalising** dynamic of participatory learning and action. One in which final objective answers will matter less than a concern with processes of emerging democratic engagement and equitable outcomes.

Analysis of difference as a basis for 'ground truthing'

Throughout the world, the community based and co-management experience highlights the recurring need to purposefully 'give voice' to local resource users in evaluating and reviewing the means and ends of natural resource management regimes. The analysis of difference is a key future challenge here. It is also a much needed antidote against possible self deception on a grand scale. Different social actors may have different views of what constitutes a positive impact as well as different criteria of evaluation. It is important to include such plural views, indicative of how natural resource management contributes to:

- community empowerment in planning, implementing, and assessing results;
- resolving conflicts;
- fostering cooperation with government and/or outside organisations;
- regenerating or maintaining the health of natural resources and ecosystems; and
- sustaining local livelihoods and equity.

Different indicators are likely to be utilised by women and men, the poor and rich, the young and old, and between residents and migrants. For instance, indicators used to evaluate the performance and impacts of co-management are likely to differ according to the individual's degree of dependence on the natural resources. Thus, decision makers at different levels, e.g. a woman head of household and a national policy-maker, use different kinds of information to guide their decisions. The monitoring and evaluation phase in natural resource management needs to sensitively explore and build upon such different perspectives of what is relevant and important.

Box 6: Institutionalising participatory approaches and people-centred processes

The term 'institutionalisation' describes the process whereby social practices such as participation become regular and continuous enough to be described as institutions. The dynamics of 'institutionalising participation and people-centred approaches' imply long-term and sustained change, which in turn recognises the conflict between different sets of interests, values, agendas and coalitions of power. In practice, this process of institutionalising participatory approaches emphasises several interrelated levels of change:

- spreading and scaling up change from the micro (e.g. project/local) to the macro (e.g. policy/national) level;
- scaling out from a single line department or sector or initiative, to catalyse wider changes in organisations (e.g. government and donor agencies, non-governmental organisations, civil society groups and federations, private corporations), and in policy processes;
- changes in attitudes, behaviour, norms, skills, procedures, management systems, organisational culture and structure as well as policy change; and
- the inclusion of more people and places through lateral spread, from village to village, municipality to municipality, district to district and so on.

The challenge of institutional transformation

With few exceptions, participatory learning and action for natural resource management has been limited to the local level for many years. More recently, the focus on the micro has given way to attempts to adopt and apply these participatory approaches on a large scale. For example, many large, public and private agencies, including government departments, development agencies, non-governmental and civil society organisations and research institutes, now seek to spread, scale up and mainstream participation in natural resource management. Embedding and situating 'peoples' participation' at the heart of policy decisions, organisational procedures and resource allocation has thus become a fundamental challenge. Such institutional transformation involves several interrelated levels of change (see Box 6).

Evidence presented in *Participatory Learning and Action*

Table 1: Institutionalising participation and people-centred approaches: the spectrum of current practice in natural resource management

Institutionalisation as mere labelling.	'Participation' used only as a label while continuing to use methods and the discourse in an extractive manner to make proposals and rhetoric attractive to donors.
Institutionalisation as use of participatory methods and approaches for staff training.	Participatory methods primarily used for one-shot training of staff members. No commitment is demonstrated to use methods for field action and policymaking, no effective skills are available. Lack of commitment and resources prevent the continuation of the approach for programme management and organisational development.
Institutionalisation as the use of participatory methods and approaches for project management and policy consultations.	Participatory methods are used at the appraisal stage and to develop more effective policies and programmes but are not linked with institution development aspects. The use of methods and participation discourses are sustained as long as funding is available but tapers off on withdrawal of resources in absence of effective local organisations.
Institutionalisation in which participatory approaches are used for local institutional and organisational development.	Participatory approaches and methods are used effectively for policy processes, programme management and local institutional development, which shows short and long-term impact. The process, however, may not be accompanied by corresponding changes in policies and support organisations at larger scales (e.g. in policy reforms, learning environment, structures, funding and evaluation mechanisms).
Institutionalisation of participation as transformation for organisational change, lateral learning and inclusive governance.	Participatory processes, approaches and methods used as part of a strategy of policy and organisational transformation as well as local institutional development. This dynamic of transformation involves deliberations, appraisal, planning, negotiation, bargaining and conflict resolution together with lateral expansion of local organisations through resource user to resource user, village to village mechanisms. Safe citizen spaces and federated networks (national and international) are key for decentralising governance and for re-localising/democratising 'power'.

Adapted from Pimbert (forthcoming)

and elsewhere point to a continuum of practice in which issues of power, knowledge and learning for change are key (Table 1)[1]. Simply put, the dynamics of institutionalising participation are **substantially** different depending on whether they are primarily used to justify external decisions and control by powerful actors or aim instead at devolving power and decision-making away from external agencies, (re)building local assets and people's sovereignty.

Change and learning

Change and learning are central issues for the individuals and organisations involved in this spectrum of practices. At its simplest level (e.g. towards the top of Table 1), learning is a process through which new knowledge, values and skills are acquired. At a deeper level (e.g. towards the bottom of Table 1), learning involves 'a movement of the mind' (Senge, 1990). Different orders of change or learning are involved here.

- No change – no learning. Denial, tokenism or ignorance. This is still widespread today, both in the South and the North. More often than not the rhetoric of participation is institutionalised, without corresponding changes in organisations, policies and practice.
- Accommodation – first order learning, adaptation and maintenance of the *status quo*. How can we deal with the problem we face? How can we avoid the mistakes we are making? Much of the focus of first order change is on making adjustments to the existing system – doing more of the same, but doing it better (emphasis on efficiency) or by reorganising components, procedures and responsibilities (emphasis on effectiveness).
- Reformation – second order learning, critically reflective adaptation. The organisational culture and facilitation continuously encourages the questioning of existing practices, rules, procedures and regulations. It seeks to expand collective knowledge and understanding by learning about the assumptions and goals behind existing routines, practices, theories and policies.
- Transformation – third order learning, creative re-visioning and re-design of the whole system. This involves 'seeing

[1] For example see the IIED and IDS action research on *Institutionalising participatory approaches and people-centered processes in natural resource management* (www.iied.org/sarl/research/projects/t1proj01.html)

Box 7: Globalisation and participatory natural resource management: emerging constraints

- With globalisation, natural resources such as water, forests, biodiversity and land are of particular interest to the State because, unlike money and the corporate sector, they are not 'mobile' and cannot re-locate. At the same time, the State is challenged both from above, for example by transnational corporations, and from below, by citizens and communities. In this emerging context, the State seeks to keep control over at least one of three stages of decision-making for natural resource management, be it policy-making, operations, or ownership of the resource. Under pressure from above and below, the State uses a very particular strategy of separating policy-making over the use of resources from both the operational activities and the ownership of these resources. As in the past, the State thus continues to strengthen its own development interests today by removing decisions over the management of natural resources from local users and communities.

- Decentralisation policies are also a reaction to the pressure to redistribute responsibilities because of the diminishing financial capacity of the State. Diminishing State subsidies and relatively weak local capacities lead to situations in which private sector involvement is increasingly seen as necessary for the provision of what were originally public services and free ecosystem services. This trend is reinforced by higher environmental standards, whose compliance requires investments and technologies that overwhelm local government capacities and resources.

- In the context of globalisation and increasing competition, public administrations everywhere tend to see citizens as clients or consumers, and consequently ask for their financial participation as well. For example, both OECD and World Bank recommendations basically aim to progressively reduce the citizen's rights to have a say in management to those consumers who can pay. A water management system in which drinking and sewage services are contracted out to transnational corporations is, according to The World Bank, the model for developing countries. Under new trade agreements, the secular right to participate in saving, multiplying and selecting seeds on farm is being denied as farmers have to pay for seeds and other genetic resources over which corporations hold exclusive patent rights.

See Finger-Stich and Finger, (2002).

things differently', 'doing better things' and re-thinking whole systems on a participative basis. As such, it is a shift in consciousness and is a transformative level of learning. Individuals and organisations 'see' the need to **transform in order to be transformative**.

Most readers of *Participatory Learning and Action* would agree that institutional reform and transformation are key challenges for the future. Experience to date suggests that the following enabling conditions and drivers for change are key.

- Actors with emancipatory values, attitudes and behaviours. The history of participatory natural resource management shows that innovative, charismatic and dynamic people have championed changes in policies, field practices, training and organisations. Field observations also highlight the central importance of attitudes and behaviour in enabling or inhibiting the scaling up of people-centred innovations.
- People-centred learning and critical education which promotes ecological knowledge for sustainability, both among natural resource users and those who work with them.
- Enabling organisations which emphasise resource users' abilities, promote organisational learning and which are flexible in their structure and procedures.
- Existence of safe spaces where natural resource users and other citizens can get together, share problems and decide on action. Linking together these safe spaces and local groups into broader federations has helped resource users capture power back from centralised, top down agencies and corporations.
- Policy spaces from above and below. Enabling national policy decisions by the State are complemented by resource user led attempts to contest and shape policies from below.
- A context in which resource users have some control over funding decisions and allocations made by local, national or international funding bodies.

Globalisation, natural resources and participation: emerging challenges

The effectiveness of changes for participation at any given level is usually limited when there is no corresponding change in other levels and in the processes that influence or govern them. In this regard, newly emerging global trends are deeply problematic (see Box 7). If unchecked, these trends could largely inhibit direct participation in civic affairs and freedom outside the market and commodity relations.

Reversing such structural constraints to participation in natural resource management will require a strong commitment to non State-led forms of deliberative democracy and making

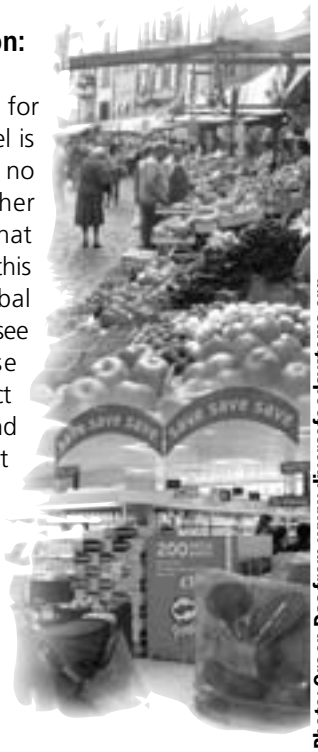

Photo: Oroon Das from www.diversefoodsystems.org

global institutions accountable to citizens, particularly those most excluded from decision-making (see Rahman, 2004). Bold innovations will be needed to simultaneously.

- Strengthen the voices of the weak in setting research agendas and framing policies and regulatory frameworks for natural resource management, at local, national and global levels. To reverse the current democratic deficit, participatory processes will need to stress relevance, social change and validity tested in action by the most at-risk stakeholders or actors.
- Create safe spaces and participatory processes in which corporations and expert knowledge are put under public scrutiny through appropriate methods for deliberation and social inclusion (e.g. citizen juries, scenario workshops, citizen panels, multi-criteria mapping).
- Link formal decision-making bodies and processes with spaces in which corporations and expert knowledge are put under public scrutiny, by engaging relevant social actors and coalitions of interest. A key challenge lies in creating new forms of accountability based on the concept of extended peer review, – a more inclusive and plural process in which farmers, local resource users, food workers, consumers and other citizens have as much say as scientific specialists, planners and other professionals in validating knowledge and policies.
- Support the emergence of transnational communities of inquiry and coalitions for change committed to equity, decentralisation, democratisation, diversity and dynamic local level adaptation.

But there are very few examples of participatory learning and action that address and seek to reverse large scale or macro structural problems such as the ones listed in Box 7. This must surely be a new frontier for PLA practitioners in the future. This is a difficult challenge. But we know from experience that change is usually messy and chaotic – once a process has been catalysed, many different dynamics can unfold. Perhaps the inherent open-ended uncertainty, latent creativity and unpredictability of change is a reason for hope and renewed commitment to transformative action.

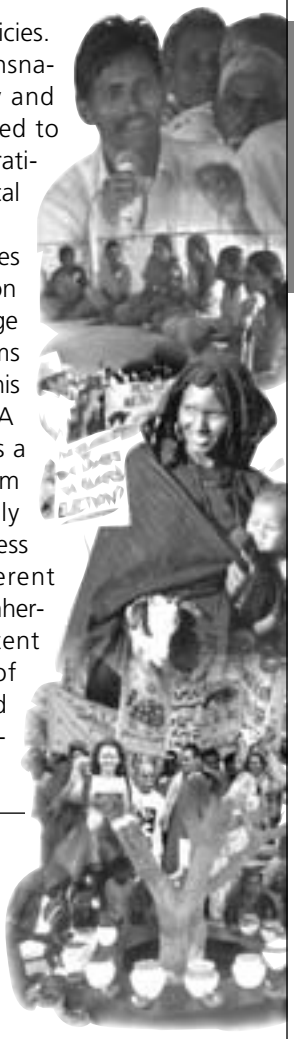

Photo: Oroon Das from www.diversefoodsystems.org

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THEME SECTION

15

Participatory approaches in animal healthcare: from practical applications to global-level policy reform

by ANDY CATLEY

For more than 15 years the use of participatory approaches and methods in animal healthcare and research has been growing and diversifying. In common with other sectors, early interest focused on participatory methods, and the adaptation of interviewing, ranking and visualisation methods to explore livestock-related issues[1]. Over time, some methodological developments were grouped using the term 'participatory epidemiology' (PE) and PE is now recognised as a valuable approach to research and action on animal diseases (Box 1). Running parallel to the emergence of PE was the development of community-based approaches to animal healthcare and the increasing acceptance of community-based animal health workers (CAHWs) for the provision of primary-level veterinary services in rural areas[2]. Important advances during the last five years or so include policy and legislative reform to enable CAHW systems and ensure appropriate levels of quality control. Changes at national level have been complemented by changes to the global standards on animal health. Also important has been progress towards the global eradication of rinderpest and the positive impact of community-based approaches in marginalized pastoralist communities of east Africa.

1 See *RRA Notes* 20 (1994) Livestock.
2 See *PLA Notes* 45 (2002) Community-based animal healthcare.

This article maps out some of the key experiences that have shaped the growing use of participatory approaches and CAHWs. It describes how negative attitudes among professionals and academics have changed during the process of policy reform, and explains how participatory impact assessment and other methods have contributed to the policy process. The article focuses on experiences in east Africa and the Horn of Africa, while also describing how events in these regions have influenced change in international bodies.

Community-level innovation meets professional barriers

The history of community-based animal healthcare starts with a period of innovation and testing in the late 1980s, largely by NGOs running small-scale projects. The common underlying philosophy was recognition of indigenous knowledge and skills, and the involvement of communities in the selection and support of CAHWs. Participatory methods were used during project design, often accompanied by ethnoveterinary surveys. These projects differed from earlier 'vetscout' or 'paravet' projects because of the focus on community involvement in project design and implementation, and the need to address community concerns rather than those of government. Also, CAHW projects used participative training techniques and training courses were often 10 to 14 days duration. The aim was to build on the existing know-how of livestock keepers, and use training methods which were suitable for both illiterate and literate trainees.

Box 1: Some uses of 'participatory epidemiology'

Participatory disease searching (PDS)
PDS is an aid to locating the last cases of rinderpest during disease eradication. PDS practitioners are 'disease detectives', using livestock keeper's knowledge of the disease to find clinical cases in marginalized areas. Although often misunderstood by epidemiologists, PDS is now an accepted approach supported by the African Union/Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources and the Food and Agriculture Organisation. PDS is currently in use in Sudan, Uganda, the Somali ecosystem of east Africa, and Pakistan.

Disease diagnosis and descriptive epidemiology
Information from participatory methods such as matrix scoring, mapping and seasonal calendars can be triangulated with conventional veterinary investigation methods to assistance diagnosis of 'new' diseases. This approach was used to confirm the diagnosis of a chronic wasting disease in cattle in southern Sudan, which was prioritised by livestock herders. Proportional piling can be adapted and repeated to estimate age-specific disease incidence and mortality in livestock.

Disease modelling to understand options for disease control
Computer simulations of disease spread can assist epidemiologists to understand the pros and cons of different disease control strategies. 'Participatory modelling' combines livestock keeper's expert knowledge of disease dynamics within and between herds, with computer modelling techniques. The approach has been used to improve understanding of major epidemic diseases in pastoralist areas of Africa.

Impact assessment
Methods such as proportional piling can be used to assess the relative importance of livestock diseases against locally-defined indicators of disease impact. This approach is particularly useful for understanding the social benefits of livestock (such as dowry payments) relative to the more widely perceived benefits of food, income, draught power and hides and skins.

Assessing association: the mystery of the hairy panters
For many years pastoralist communities in Africa have described sick cattle which develop long, woolly coats, avoid the sun and pant during the heat of the day. They explained that cattle with this strange disease had previously suffered from foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). In Tanzania, matrix scoring and proportional piling were adapted to explore possible association between these 'hairy panters' and FMD.
For more information and references, follow the 'Participatory Epidemiology' link at www.cape-ibar.org

As news spread about CAHW projects, the reaction of the veterinary establishment was often deeply negative. At an organisational level, there was resentment that NGOs were taking over the role of government and working independently to deliver animal health services. Although local government officers often worked alongside NGOs (and were paid for doing so) they did not always report this work to their superiors. At a technical level, there were concerns about the rapid and qualitative nature of the participatory assessment on which CAHW projects were based. Similarly,

Box 1: Community-based animal health workers and rinderpest control

Southern Sudan
Between 1989 and 1992, the UNICEF livestock programme used conventional vaccination campaigns and vaccinated about 284,000 cattle against rinderpest per year. In 1992 the programme came to a virtual standstill as insecurity disrupted cold chains and vaccination teams; only 140,000 cattle were vaccinated that year.
In 1993 CAHWs were introduced and supplied with heat-stable rinderpest vaccine. In 1993, 1994 and 1995 CAHWs in southern Sudan vaccinated 1,489,706, 1,743,033 and 1,070,927 cattle against rinderpest respectively. Confirmed outbreaks of rinderpest decreased from 11 outbreaks in 1993 to 1 outbreak in 1997. There were no confirmed outbreaks of rinderpest in southern Sudan after 1997.

Afar region, Ethiopia
For 15 years the Pan African Rinderpest campaign had been struggling to vaccinate cattle in Afar. In 1994, 20 CAHWs were trained and supplied with heat-stable rinderpest vaccine. Moving on foot they vaccinated 73,000 cattle in one season and achieved 84% vaccination efficiency (compared with 72% vaccination efficiency of Ethiopian government teams). There were no reports of rinderpest outbreaks in the region after November 1995.

there was often a knee-jerk reaction to the notion of the training livestock keepers for only two weeks or so, often exacerbated by the inclusion of illiterate people in CAHW projects. And at a professional level, there were fears that CAHWs would undermine the image of veterinarians and take over their jobs.

In the early years, a few courageous vets and NGO workers presented papers on CAHW experiences in national veterinary association meetings and other forums. The result was often uproar and highly personalised criticism of those few vets who were involved in 'non-professional' CAHW work. When projects were donor funded (as many of them were) there were also accusations that northern governments and donors were trying to maintain African veterinary services in a sub-standard state for their own interests. These various arguments and tensions created a slightly chaotic atmosphere which did not encourage open debate and learning about CAHWs. One outcome was that in many countries CAHWs were not recognised by the veterinary authorities or legislation.

Technological innovation meets community-based approaches

While the NGOs were either battling with or ignoring the veterinary establishment, the eradication of rinderpest from Africa was a major concern for the Organisation of African Unity/Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (OAU/IBAR)

Community-based animal health workers achieved dramatic results in places like the Afar region of Ethiopia

Photo: PARC Communications Unit

and the Food and Agriculture Organization. As a cause of massive cattle mortality, rinderpest was also a disease that was prioritised by livestock keepers[3]. In the Horn of Africa, attempts to control rinderpest through mass vaccination campaigns were frustrated by the limited capacity of government vaccination teams to access more remote pastoralist communities. Therefore, the disease persisted in pastoralist areas and there was a constant threat of disease spread to neighbouring countries.

A turning point was the introduction of CAHWs into rinderpest control programmes, assisted by the development of a new heat-stable rinderpest vaccine. The new vaccine meant that at field level, refrigeration equipment was no longer so important – the vaccine could be carried to remote communities for up to three months in a simple backpack by CAHWs. Selected by and trained within their communities, these CAHWs also provided preventive and curative services for other animal health problems. The results in southern Sudan and the Afar region of Ethiopia were dramatic (Box 2). In 1997, the director of OAU/IBAR, Dr Walter Masiga, told me that initially he had been extremely sceptical about the CAHW approach. However, he also recalled his first trip to Afar to see the CAHWs in action and described it as 'a religious experience'.

Despite the apparently dramatic results from CAHW systems and support from international agencies such as OAU/IBAR and FAO, policy makers in many countries remained unconvinced. They quickly dismissed the experiences claiming that these areas were 'conflict zones' and not relevant to the stable situation in countries like Kenya, Uganda or Tanzania. At the same time, and with decreasing budgets and capacity of government services, they were unable to offer alternative solutions to providing basic animal health services in remote areas of their own countries. Their most common 'solution' was for government to employ and deploy

[3] See the article by Jeff Mariner, Peter Roeder and Berhanu Admassu in *PLA Notes* 45.

This private store in north-east Kenya is run by a veterinary diploma holder who supplies and supervises CAHWs

Photo: Dave Hastings

more veterinarians and veterinary technicians. The fact that there was no money to do this was nearly always overlooked.

Privatisation meets participation

As experiences with CAHW systems were evolving, veterinary services throughout Africa were undergoing radical reform. Structural adjustment programmes and privatisation led to downsized government veterinary services, and numerous aid programmes were set up to encourage private veterinary practice through training and credit support. In many east African countries these programmes focused on vets in more urban and peri-urban areas, because it was assumed that rural areas were high-risk and poorer livestock keepers would not pay for services. Most NGOs (and donors) involved in CAHW systems made the same assumption, and ran projects based on either free provision of veterinary medicines or subsidised 'cost recovery' systems. Many of these projects and systems collapsed when the funding dried up and once again, communities were left without trained veterinary service providers.

Throughout the 1990s I worked for NGOs in the Horn of Africa and was particularly interested in the financial sustainability of CAHW systems. I started to use participatory methods to understand local perceptions of wealth and poverty, and the apparent willingness of different wealth groups to pay for primary veterinary care. In remote parts of Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda poor livestock keepers recognised the value of their animals and the logic of making relatively small investments in basic animal healthcare. People were also frustrated with projects that were not sustained. They didn't want free handouts or even subsidised systems if this meant that their CAHWs would only function for a short time.

For some NGOs, the idea that CAHWs might be 'privatised' was difficult to grasp and was perceived as contradictory to the benevolent, charitable nature of NGO work. There were also concerns about supporting multinational drug companies (although NGOs were already buying and distributing drugs) and the promotion of western medicine over traditional health systems. Suddenly, some NGOs which claimed to be 'participatory' seemed to stop listening to livestock keepers. A further dimension was that in NGO project budgets, veterinary drugs often accounted for a substantial

Table 1: Institutionalising participation and people-centred approaches: the spectrum of current practice in natural resource management

Information required for business plan	Participatory method	Secondary data sources
Definition of area(s) to be covered, including estimates of human and livestock populations, and infrastructure	Participatory mapping, key informant interviews	Official maps, human census, livestock census
Proportion (and number) of households owning livestock by livestock type	Proportional piling	
Relative importance of different livestock types, with reasons	Livestock species scoring	
Relative importance of different livestock diseases, with reasons	Livestock disease scoring	Government veterinary clinic reports
Prevalence estimates for important livestock diseases	Proportional piling	Laboratory reports, disease survey reports
Seasonal variations in important livestock diseases and disease vectors	Seasonal calendars	Government veterinary clinic reports analysed by month or season
Geographical variations in important livestock diseases and disease vectors; seasonal movement of herds	Participatory mapping	Disease or vector survey reports
Existing veterinary services (public, private, informal, indigenous)	Service maps	
Number of CAHWs required per target area	Participatory mapping	
'Demand' for veterinary services and capacity and willingness to pay	Wealth ranking, individual interviews, group interviews, problem plays, proportional piling.	Government veterinary clinic reports

proportion of the overall budget.

Within government veterinary services, the official position on privatisation was often welcoming as aid programmes channelled cheap credit to a relatively select group of vets. But behind closed doors, the unofficial policy was to maintain government delivery of clinical services through subsidised approaches even though these services had very poor coverage. Here also, the notion that rural livestock keepers might actually prefer to pay commercial prices for services was dismissed. A myriad of donor funding policies added to the confusion, with some donors pushing privatisation and others funding the revitalisation and expansion of post-colonial style government services.

In the mid 1990s a few NGOs began to support private sector involvement in CAHW projects. A key question was how to combine community participation in prioritising diseases and selecting people for training as CAHWs, with the profit-driven nature of private business. Although these two approaches seemed to be very different, my experience of private practice suggested otherwise. A successful business responds to the needs of clients. It listens to them and provides a service which people want. In *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the Last First*, Robert Chambers noted how the bottom-up, people-centred aspects of PRA were strikingly similar to the concept of 'customerizing' in business development (page 197). Related to the concept of privatised CAHW networks, supervised and supported by private veterinary professionals, was the opportunity to use participatory methods to develop business plans (Table 1).

Focusing on policy and institutional change

Despite the innovation and progress of community-based approaches to animal healthcare, by the late 1990s CAHWs were still illegal in many countries. Although communities wanted CAHWs, the veterinary establishment either turned a blind eye or launched periodic 'anti-CAHW' campaigns in the

media. Lack of clear policies also hindered privatisation and the use of CAHWs by private vets or animal health technicians.

In December 2000, OAU/IBAR established the Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology (CAPE) Unit to promote the creation of supportive policies and legislation for CAHWs, and institutionalise participatory approaches and methods in veterinary institutions. The CAPE Unit worked in east Africa and the Horn of Africa, and used a variety of learning, research and lobbying methods to engage national policy makers.

National-level participatory impact assessment

The personal experiences of CAPE staff indicated that veterinary policy makers tended to reject research that was conducted by 'outsiders'. Consultancy reports and studies conducted by foreign universities remained on the shelf while heated debate continued between 'pro-CAHW' field practitioners and 'anti-CAHW' veterinary associations, laboratory-based vets and academics. Policy makers also wanted evidence that a particular approach worked in their own country. To assist policy reform, the CAPE Unit invited agencies which made or influenced policy to join a 'National Impact Assessment Team'. The idea was to create a mixed group of CAHW supporters and sceptics, and facilitate community-level impact assessments to improve understanding of the pros and cons of the CAHW approach. It was realised that learning would arise not only from the interaction with communities (a novel experience for some policy makers), but also from conversations and debate between team members. At the time of writing, the CAPE Unit has supported participatory impact assessment in Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda.

Peer-to-peer learning and engaging the international actors

In addition to prompting country-level impact assessments, CAPE staff also realised that the most senior veterinary policy makers – the Chief Veterinary Officers – were heavily influenced by international standards and norms, and each other. Under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement of the World Trade Organization, the *Office international des epizooties* (OIE) sets international standards in animal health. These standards are written, and regularly updated, as the OIE's Terrestrial Animal Health Code (the 'OIE Code'). The OIE is a membership organisation of states, and each state is represented by its Chief Veterinary Officer. Similarly, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization jointly produce international standards on food safety (called the *Codex Alimentarius*).

In October 2002 the CAPE Unit organised an international conference to bring together the OIE, FAO and senior veterinary policy makers from around the world to discuss policy and institutional constraints to primary animal healthcare. A steering committee was set up with representatives from OAU/IBAR, FAO, OIE and NGOs. Although initially called a conference, the format was more of a workshop comprising a mix of formal presentations and working group discussions.

The conference was opened with a film produced by CAPE and showing interviews with livestock keepers in Mali, Kenya and Ethiopia. The key messages were the virtual non-existence of formal veterinary services, and the high impact but low recognition of CAHWs. For the conference presentations, the steering committee identified a small group of senior policy makers and researchers who had already made a difference in their own countries, and asked them to present their experiences. Consequently, senior government veterinarians, legal experts and researchers from Kenya, Ethiopia, Guinea, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Senegal and Indonesia made presentations to their peers.

Throughout the workshop, a recurring theme was inappropriate policies and weak institutional arrangements at national and international levels for the private delivery of veterinary services and the use of CAHWs. The conference recommendations included a call to the OIE to clarify the roles of the private sector and veterinary para-professionals in the OIE Code (the global standards on veterinary services).

The OIE acted quickly on the recommendation and in February 2003 a committee of representatives from Africa (including OAU/IBAR), Asia, South America and Europe, plus the Chairman of the World Veterinary Association, met to brainstorm the topic of privatised vets and para-veterinary workers in relation to the OIE Code. It was during the meetings of this committee that the concept of CAHWs as one type of veterinary para-professional was accepted. The committee recommended changes to the OIE Code so that within each member country, a veterinary statutory body should be responsible for the licensing and registration of veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals (including CAHWs). In May 2004, member states at the OIE General Assembly endorsed this change to the code, thereby creating new global standards to support CAHWs.

Creating national capacity to support CAHWs

While the OIE was formulating new international standards to enable veterinary para-professionals, the CAPE Unit was working with governments and veterinary boards to produce national guidelines for CAHWs, including 'standardised' training curricula. The national guidelines included advice on

Figure 1: Summarised matrix scoring of animal health service providers, Dollo Bay and Dollo Ado districts, southern Ethiopia (source: National Impact Assessment Team, Ethiopia, 2003)

Indicator	Government veterinary service	Drug dealers (black market)	Traditional medicine	CAHWs	Others
'Service is near to us, so our animals are treated quickly'	●●● ●●●● ●●● 11	0	0	●●●●● ●●●●● ●●●●● 15	0
'Service always has medicines available'	●● 2	●●● ●●● ●● 8	●● ●● 4	●●●●● ●●●●● ●●●● 14	● 1
'The quality of medicines is good'	●● ●●● ●● 7	●● ●● 4	●● ●● 4	●●●● ●●●● ●●●● 12	0
'Our animals usually recover if we use this service'	● 1	●●● ●● 5	●● ●● 4	●●●●●● ●●●●●●● ●●●●●● 19	●● 2
'We get good advice from the service provider'	● 1	●● ●●● ●● 7	●● ●●● ●● 7	●●●● ●●●● ●●●● 12	●● ●● 4
'This service can treat all our animal health problems'	●●● ●● 5	●● ●● 4	●●● ●●● ●●● 9	●●● ●●●●● ●●● 11	0
'This service is affordable'	0	●●● ●●● 6	●● ●● 4	●●●●●● ●●●●●● ●●●●●● 18	●● 2
'We trust this service provider'	0	●● ●●● ●● 7	●● ●● 4	●●●●● ●●●●●● ●●●●● 16	●● 2
'The community supports this service'	0	●● ● 3	●● ●●● ●● 7	●●●●● ●●●●● ●●●●● 15	0

Notes for Figure 1
The Ethiopian National Impact Assessment Team comprised representatives from the Federal Veterinary Service Team, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of Addis Ababa University, the Ethiopia Veterinary Association, the National Animal Health Research Centre and NGOs[4].
The matrix scoring was repeated in 10 communities where CAHWs were working; the median scores from the 10 communities are presented. Agreement between the 10 communities was assessed using the Kendal coefficient of concordance for each indicator. For all indicators, there was significant agreement between the 10 communities at the 1% significance level or higher.

[4] See the article by Charles Hopkins and Alastair Short, *PLA Notes* 45.

Cartoon: Joseph Kariuki

community participation in CAHW systems and the need to address community concerns. The standardised training curricula included a set of fixed topics which all CAHWs needed to know, plus a set of flexible topics that depended on the main animal health problems in different communities. By 2004, the process of guideline and CAHW training course development was underway in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia and Ethiopia. Also, government veterinary services in four countries (Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda) had established new central units specifically for the promotion and quality control of CAHWs.

Complementary to the increasing national-level support to CAHWs was the development of AU/IBAR[5] best practice guidelines for training and quality control of CAHWs. These guidelines included licensing of trainers who had themselves been trained in participative training techniques, and suggestions for good training and supervisory practice.

Future challenges

This article shows that much progress has been made to shift professional attitudes and policy makers towards more supportive policies for community-based animal healthcare.

In the CAPE project it was realised that policy change depended on attitudinal change and learning among professionals. Whenever possible, the project tried to create space for policy makers to consider the issues and find out for themselves what needed to be done. Of the various methods used by the project, simply putting policy makers face-to-face with livestock keepers was probably the most influential. In these interactions, senior professionals sometimes visited remote pastoralist communities for the first time and experienced the isolation, limited facilities and in some areas, insecurity. Impact assessment was an expansion of this process, giving more time for teams of policy makers from different agencies to examine specific issues. We encouraged these teams to identify and prioritise their own issues, but also pushed the idea that we needed to understand the links between improved animal health and people's livelihoods. The use of locally-derived impact indicators revealed the wide range of social, nutritional and economic benefits that livestock provide, and simple scoring methods showed changes during and attributable to CAHW activities.

Regarding international-level change, the Mombasa Primary Animal Healthcare workshop was an opportunity for senior vets to learn from each other and hear the views of international agencies. This was really an experiment for the project. We created a space, but controlled it in terms of the

[5] Reflecting the change of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU).

Timeline for practice and policies related to participatory approaches and methods in animal healthcare in east Africa

Late 1980s	• Use of participatory methods such as wealth ranking and livestock disease ranking by NGOs for the design of integrated rural development and community-based animal health worker (CAHW) projects. • Experience with participative training techniques starts to emerge in relation to CAHWs. • Renewed interest in indigenous veterinary knowledge or 'ethnoveterinary knowledge'; comprehensive reviews published.
1992	• Numerous papers on community-based animal health and participatory methods published from the 'Livestock Services for Smallholders' conference, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. • CAHW projects initiated in remote pastoralist areas of Africa through the Pan African Rinderpest Campaign of OAU/IBAR and Operation Life Sudan; CAHWs begin to use a new heat-stable rinderpest vaccine.
1994	• Special issue of *RRA Notes* on livestock issues illustrates diverse applications of participatory methods to assess livestock health and husbandry issues.
1996	• In the FAO Technical Consultation *The World Without Rinderpest,* international experts acknowledge the contribution of community-based approaches towards rinderpest eradication in Africa. • The PARC-VAC Project of OAU/IBAR begins to address policy constraints concerning privatised CAHWs in east Africa, partly in response to limited success of NGO-convened forums. • First peer-reviewed accounts of research using participatory methods appear in the veterinary literature.
1998	• The Participatory Approaches to Veterinary Epidemiology (PAVE) Project of IIED and OAU/IBAR begins to assess the reliability and validity of participatory methods through research projects in southern Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania.
2000	• The Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology (CAPE) Unit is established in OAU/IBAR, focusing on policy and institutional constraints to CAHW services at national and international levels. The unit also supports reviews, training and practice of participatory epidemiology by government veterinary services, veterinary schools and research institutes in east Africa.
2002	• Special issue of *PLA Notes* dedicated to community-based animal healthcare is published, highlighting progress towards pro-CAHW policies and the use of impact assessment to inform policy change. • The CAPE Unit of OAU/IBAR organises an international conference in Mombasa, Kenya, on policy and institutional constraints to primary animal healthcare. The meeting calls on the *Office international des epizooties* (OIE or World Animal Health Organization)[1] to clarify the roles of the private sector and veterinary para-professionals in service delivery. • The OIE establishes a committee to review the status of privatised para-veterinary professionals.
2003	• The OIE committee recognises CAHWs as a cadre of veterinary para-professionals and proposes changes to the OIE Code to incorporate CAHWs into national veterinary services.
2004	• Member states at the OIE General Assembly endorse changes to the OIE Code to recognise veterinary paraprofessionals, including CAHWs. • For the first time, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia establish units in central government veterinary services for the quality control and harmonisation of CAHWs.

1. Under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement of the World Trade Organization, the OIE is tasked with setting the global standards on animal health, from the perspective of enabling international trade in livestock and livestock products. These standards are documented in the 'OIE Code', and include guidelines on the evaluation of veterinary services.

number and type of participants, the invited presentations and the topics for working group discussions. We felt that primarily, policy makers were influenced by each other and the international standard setting bodies, and then by researchers and NGOs. In terms of the workshop recommendations and the response of the OIE, the workshop helped to focus attention on the need for change at international and national levels. Within two years, the global standards had changed to recognise community-based approaches. At national level, the workshop also highlighted the importance of a strong public sector and the need to reform policies on primary veterinary care within an overall process of re-organisation of government services.

While many vets may still feel uneasy about CAHWs, few are offering to move to rural areas and provide accessible and affordable services to livestock keepers. Among these

"Much progress has been made to shift professional attitudes and policy makers towards more supportive policies for community-based animal healthcare"

few are a group of entrepreneurial vets and animal health technicians who have set up small businesses in, or close to pastoralist communities, and who provide services via networks of CAHWs. This privatised and professionally-supervised approach appears to be a good option for ensuring financial sustainability and quality control. If national guidelines are followed, community involvement in CAHW selection and support will be part of the process and system. **But this is a big 'if'.** Government and veterinary boards, by their own admission, remain under-funded and questions remain over their capacity to implement activities related to CAHW supervision and regulation. Clearly, any new procedures have to be based on practical considerations, the need for flexibility and use of existing staff and resources. In general, government is still trying to directly control services which can be handled by others – the reorganisation of government veterinary services and regulatory bodies is still a major challenge in many countries. In addition to supporting CAHWs and private practitioners, government also needs to develop enabling policies and monitor and evaluate policy change. There may be opportunities here to use participatory impact assessment as an ongoing learning methodology.

As privatised systems of community-based animal healthcare expand, there will also be questions of affordability for poorer users. More research is needed on these privatised systems to understand more about those who are excluded from CAHW services, and how to reach them. Not surprisingly perhaps, work in AU/IBAR shows strong linkages between the use of privatised CAHWs and active livestock marketing, indicating that better markets for animals and animal products support improved animal healthcare (and vice versa). The CAPE Unit now also supports a range of livestock marketing activities, varying from small-scale processing of animal products to further reform of international animal health standards.

As the CAPE project comes to an end, AU/IBAR is forming a new Institutional and Policy Support Team with an Africa-wide mandate. The team will continue to support governments on policy reform, implementation and monitoring in the area of community-based animal healthcare, while also working with Regional Economic Communities in Africa to harmonise policies at regional level. In terms of policy process, experiences from CAPE will be modified and applied to other policy areas. Encouraging direct communication between policy makers and communities will continue to be a key aspect of policy and institutional change.

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Videos on Community-based Animal Healthcare
A series of three videos give ideas for setting up community-based animal healthcare systems and influencing policy makers. Visit www.cape-ibar.org for more information.

THEME SECTION

16

Participatory development or participatory democracy? Linking participatory approaches to policy and governance

by JOHN GAVENTA

Introduction

Over the last decade, we have seen a broadening in the uses of participatory methods and approaches from projects to policies, from the involvement of 'beneficiaries' to those of rights-bearing citizens, and from a concern with programme implementation and evaluation to processes of decision-making and democracy itself. With this shift, participatory approaches have inevitably entered the arenas of government and found themselves confronting issues of policy influence and institutional change. Simultaneously, as concerns about government responsiveness grew within development debates, questions about how citizens engage and make demands on the state also came to the fore.

There are many reasons for the increased concern with linking participation and governance:

- In the policy arena, we have seen a widening of understandings of the policy process from being the domain of elected representatives, bureaucrats and experts, to include concerns with inclusion of citizens and a recognition of the importance of different forms of experiential, as well as expert knowledge. With this shift citizens move from being simply users or choosers of public services policies made by others, to 'makers and shapers' of policies themselves (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000).
- In many countries of the South, the last decade has seen the ushering in of new forms of democratic decentralisation. While often driven by a neo-liberal agenda for weakening the central state, decentralisation has simultaneously opened up new opportunities for democratic engagement, especially in countries where strong legislation helped to guarantee participation in governance as a right.
- In the North, as citizens participate less and less through traditional means of engagement, there is rising debate about 'the democratic deficit'. In response, we have seen the flourishing of support and opportunities for new forms of engagement, ranging from traditional citizen consultation methods (e.g. hearings) to a vast array of more innovative forms of public participation and deliberation.
- In the development arena, we have seen increasing focus on a 'rights-based approach' to development, which argues for the rights of citizens to be engaged in the decisions and processes which affect their lives (see also Pettit and Musyoki, this issue).

In response to these larger trends, a number of participatory initiatives around the world have sought to link citizens and states in new ways. Such innovations go under various labels, ranging from participatory democracy, to deliberative democracy, to 'empowered participatory governance' (Fung and Wright, 2003:5). While widely variant and in many different contexts, several common characteristics underlie these various initiatives. These include:

Cover of *PLA Notes* 40: Deliberative Democracy & Citizen Empowerment

"What has become clear… is that realising new forms of participatory governance and development is full of challenges. Participatory governance is not simply achieved from above with new policy statements, but requires multiple strategies of institutional change, capacity building, and behavioural change"

- A concern with more **active and participatory forms of citizenship**. Such views go well beyond the notions of citizens as consumers, as articulated during the 1980s and early 1990s, to citizens who engage in policies and in the delivery of services. They also profess to go beyond consultation to deeper, more empowered forms of involvement.
- A concern with **inclusion**, especially of racial and ethnic minorities, youth, older people, and others seen as previously excluded or marginalized.
- A simultaneous concern with involvement of **multiple stakeholders** in new forms of partnership, which in turn enable wider 'ownership' of decisions and projects.
- An emphasis on broader forms of **accountability**, which enable multiple partners to hold institutions and policy makers to account, and which involve social accountability as well as legal, fiscal and political forms.

Through this approach, the hope is that participation will not only contribute to overcoming the 'democratic deficit' through better governance and a more engaged citizenry, but also that participation will meet developmental goals of improved communities and service delivery.

The extent to which these promises are being realised in new participatory initiatives is now widely debated around the globe. What has become clear, however, is that realising new forms of participatory governance and development is full of challenges. Participatory governance is not simply achieved from above with new policy statements, but requires multiple strategies of institutional change, capacity building, and behavioural change.

The changing debate: a *Participatory Learning and Action* review

None of these issues will be new to the readers of *Participatory Learning and Action*. A review of past issues shows how this network of practitioners and researchers has moved with the debate, and no doubt in some instances has contributed to shaping it as well.

One of my first encounters with the PLA network came in 1996, when as a new fellow at IDS, I participated in two workshops which brought together some 70 PRA practitioners from over 30 countries to examine how participatory initiatives could contribute to policy change, and in turn, to changing the structures, procedures and cultures of large institutions, including government (See *PLA Notes* 27, October 1996). One of the key concerns at the time was how participatory approaches could inform policy by exposing policy makers to local people's priorities and realities. Looking back, at this stage, the primary concern was how participation strengthened voice through better generation of knowledge and views to policy makers, and perhaps less with the direct engagement of citizens as full participants in the policy process itself.

Related issues included how to scale up participatory approaches to influence large-scale policy institutions, while not losing concern with quality and genuine local involvement. Even then, there was also a concern with the 'rigid, mechanistic and unimaginative ways' through which large-scale institutions were applying participatory approaches from above. The editors of the issue warned that 'simply because an institution has made a policy decision to employ a participatory approach does not necessarily mean that it is using it in a responsive, dynamic and flexible manner' (in *ibid*

"One of the key concerns at the time was how participatory approaches could inform policy by exposing policy makers to local people's priorities and realities. Looking back… the primary concern was how participation strengthened voice through better generation of knowledge and views to policy makers, and perhaps less with the direct engagement of citizens as full participants in the policy process itself"

p.26). In light of the ways that the PRSPs have since been used to mandate participation from above, the warning was a propitious one, as no doubt the forthcoming issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* 51 on practitioners' experiences with PRSPs will reflect.

In *PLA Notes* 40 (February, 2001) on deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment, a somewhat contrasting view emerges of how citizens engage in the governance process. In this issue, the focus shifts away from how participation helps **inform** policy-makers, to new ways in which citizens participate directly in policy processes; and from a concern with better, more informed policy, to a concern with the nature of democracy itself. The issue highlights a number of mechanisms for citizen engagement in the policy process, which extended beyond the rich PRA tradition that had emerged in development, such as citizens' juries, consensus conferences, and scenario workshops. Many of these approaches draw from thinking in democratic theory, which puts great emphasis on the quality of deliberation, e.g. the process through which different views are exchanged and debated to create better policy. While such deliberative processes have been used largely in the North, they also have been tried in the South, such as is highlighted in *PLA Notes* 46 on the Prajateerpu project in India, where citizen juries were used with farmers and other stakeholders to engage with debates on agricultural and other development policies.

PLA Notes 44 (July, 2002) adds to the debate by looking at the widespread take-up of participatory processes in local governance, including participatory budgeting, participatory planning, and participation in stakeholder dialogue and conflict resolution. The editors of that volume raise the possibility that perhaps the North has much to learn from such approaches. Indeed the take-up in the North of participatory approaches drawn from the South has been rapid, as seen for example in the use now of participatory budgeting in the city of Manchester, England, inspired by the process in Porto Alegre, Brazil (see also Flower and Johnson, this issue).

In reading back issues of Participatory Learning and Action for this article, I was struck with the different approaches to participation and policy found in the issues on deliberation and empowerment, and on participation in local governance, especially when compared with PLA Notes 43 on advocacy and citizen participation. Quoting from the excellent resource, *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics* (2002), the editors argue that 'advocacy is not just about getting to the table with a new set of interests, it's about changing the size and configuration of the table to accommodate a whole new set of actors'. The issue shares a number of rich case studies of other ways in which citizens engage with government, often from the outside, to demand the right to information or to open up new spaces for participation. In so doing it contributes lessons on linking participation to larger process of social transformation and changing power relationships.

While advocacy is also very much about participation and governance, it is rarely mentioned in the other issues on deliberation, on local governance, or the earlier issue on policy (and vice versa). And yet the strategies of deliberation, participation and advocacy often must all be used. A key challenge is to understand their relationship both conceptually and in practice. When in the process of gaining citizen voice in empowerment processes are advocacy approaches needed? When and how do groups make the transition from demanding a change in the shape of the table to **deliberating** around the table, sometimes with those against whom they have been **advocating**?

Multiple strategies and multiple methods

What is clear from the issues of *Participatory Learning and Action* over the last eight years is that a rich and robust range of methods and approaches are being used for strengthening participation in the areas of policy and governance. In future issues, more focus on understanding the **inter-relationships** of different approaches to strengthening citizens' voices and power might help us develop a fuller understanding of processes of deepening participatory governance.

In earlier work (2001), Anne-Marie Goetz and I review a number of mechanisms from around the world for strengthening the engagement of citizens and governments. In that work, we argue that the various approaches may be seen

along a continuum, ranging from ways of strengthening voice on the one hand, to ways of strengthening receptivity to voice by government institutions on the other. The 'voice' end of the spectrum, we argue, must begin with examining or creating the pre-conditions for voice, through awareness-raising and building the capacity to mobilise – that is, the possibility for engagement cannot be taken as a given, even if mechanisms are created.

As citizens who are outside of governance processes begin to engage with government, there are a series of strategies through which their voices may be amplified, ranging from advocacy, to citizen lobbying for policy change, and citizen monitoring of performance. Then, as we move along the spectrum of engagement, there are the more formalised arenas in which civil society works with the state in the joint management and implementation of public services (through various forms of partnership), as well as in joint planning and deliberation.

Just as there are a number of mechanisms for amplifying voice, the paper argues, so these must also be strengthened by initiatives that strengthen the receptivity to voice within the state. These include government mandated forms of citizen consultation, standards through which citizens may hold government accountable, various incentives to encourage officials to be responsive to citizen voice, changes in organisational culture, and legal provisions which in various ways make participation in governance a legal right.

One of the most significant examples of how citizens have combined and used a number of different participatory strategies to engage in local governance has been in the Philippines. Following decades of authoritarian and centralised rule, the Local Government Code of 1991 in the Philippines was significant not only because it decentralised a number of powers to local government, but also because it created spaces for direct civil society engagement and participation at the local level. Just as significant as the new legal provisions, which opened up the potential of democratic space, was the way that civil society organisations – long used to struggling against the authoritarian state – now took up the challenge of engaging with the state in a way that would broaden and deepen these spaces by working to institutionalise peoples' participation in local governance.

What began as a small initiative known as the 'BATMAN' project emerged into a movement of NGOs, peoples' organisations, social movements and progressive local officials, loosely known as the Barangay-Bayan Governance Consortium (BBGC) – one of the largest organised consortia working on participatory local governance anywhere in the world. The Consortium argues for a 'dual power' approach, e.g. gaining power within local government through strategies of collaboration and partnership, while also maintaining strong community organising strategies at the grassroots. It also argues for 'multiple lanes for engagement', which link community development, social movements, and political parties, with direct local governance strategies. Throughout all of these processes, the Consortium has used a variety of participatory methods creatively.

"Following a decade of experience in many parts of the world, the new questions are less about whether citizen participation in policy and governance is a good thing, but more about how to deepen emergent forms of participatory governance, and what new problems emerge as citizens and governments do engage in new ways"

These lessons are captured in an excellent new book of case studies by practitioners involved in the BBGC (See Box 1). Through example and after example, the book documents that by using the dual power approach, which 'targets civil society, government and the democratic space in between', concrete gains can be made. Such gains include changing attitudes and behaviours, democratising and making more accountable local decision-making, strengthening the institutions of governance themselves, contributing to policy changes, and delivering basic services and livelihoods.

While both documenting and celebrating the contributions of their model, the authors also reflect very openly on the obstacles such work requires and the challenges they face. These include how to:

- challenge deeply engrained political cultures, including both the 'bossism' that persists amongst some officials, as well as the patron-client culture often found in the community;
- scale up and out from local levels to more national levels, and from rural to urban;
- deal with issues of serious conflict;
- carry our participatory work in areas with strong ethnic or religious minorities; and, most of all,
- institutionalise and sustain the gains that are made

Box 1: *Beyond Good Governance: participatory democracy in the Philippines* edited by Marisol Estrella and Nina T. Iszatt

This book brings together for the first time on-the-ground experiences in participatory governance of the Barangay-Bayan Governance Consortium. There are ten case studies featured, each with its own unique story and lessons to share. Yet collectively, they describe how people are changing the way they are look at politics and their role in it. The case studies provide ample material to explore, expand, and challenge concepts and discourse on 'participation', 'good governance', and 'empowerment'. Participation in governance takes on new meanings, as ordinary citizens develop a personal stake in striving for genuine democratic change and transforming power relations and structures that perpetuate patronage, injustice, poverty and marginalization.

The book is published by the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) in the Philippines. For more information on IPD, visit their website at www.ipd.ph or contact Institute of Popular Democracy, 45 Matimtiman Street, Teachers' Village, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

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through local community action.

Further issues are also raised about the challenges of linking civil and political society, either through forging more genuine partnerships between local governments, NGOs, and peoples' organisations, or through working closely with political parties, such as in the Philippines case, Akbayan!, the 'peoples' party' with which many of the Consortium members are also affiliated.

Towards participation as a right of citizens

Regardless of the methods or strategies used, participatory approaches are more likely to have the greatest potential for influence when they can be strengthened by claims to participation as a legal right. The **right to participation** is potentially a more empowered form of engagement than participation **by invitation** of governments, donors, or higher authorities.

One area in which rights to participation are being embodied into law is that of local governance. In 2003, LogoLink, a network of practitioners and researchers working on strengthening participation and local governance, carried out research in 19 countries on the legal frameworks which have the potential of enabling and strengthening citizen participation (see Box 3.) While the legal frameworks are not sufficient by themselves, they can provide an enabling factor to more empowered forms of participation. A number of approaches have developed.

Box 2: *Citizens and Governance Toolkit*, published by the Commonwealth Foundation

An excellent new resource on citizens and governance has recently been published by the Commonwealth Foundation. The toolkit draws upon lessons from 19 action learning projects carried out by partners across the Commonwealth countries. It includes sections on the concept and meanings of inclusive governance, and on various strategies for engagement including citizen organising, promoting multi-sectoral partnerships, participatory methods, and capacity building for inclusive governance. The toolkit also explores themes related to gender, power, conflict, traditional forms of governance, youth, citizenship education and the media. It is accompanied by an interactive CD-ROM.

For further information, see www.commonwealthfoundation.com, or email andrewf@commonwealth.int. The Commonwealth Foundation address is Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5HY, United Kingdom. Tel: +44 20 7930 3783. Fax: +44 20 7839 8157

Box 3: Resources for participation and local governance: The LogoLink Network

LogoLink is a global network of practitioners from civil society organisations, research institutions and governments working to deepen democracy through greater citizen participation in local governance. LogoLink encourages learning from field-based innovations and expressions of democracy, which contribute to social justice.

LogoLink is coordinated by the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies (www.ids.ac.uk), and works closely with partners in different regions of the world, including the Instituto Polis in Brazil; Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participación in Bolivia; the Institute for Popular Democracy in the Philippines; the Society for Participatory Research in Asia, in India; DENIVA, in Uganda; and the Deliberative Democracy Consortium in the United States.

The LogoLink web pages contain a number of resources on participation and local governance, including recent research on legal frameworks for citizen participation, participatory planning, and participation in local budgets and resource decisions. For more information contact: www.ids.ac.uk/logolink or email: LogoLink@ids.ac.uk
Tel: +44 1273 877532 or 606261 ext 7532. Fax: +44 1273 621202

Joint approaches to planning

In the **Philippines** for instance, the 1991 Local Government Code requires citizen participation at all levels of local government through the local development councils. Participation is mandated in the areas of development planning, education, health, bids and contracts, and policing. In theory, the LGC also provides for direct representation of civil society and voluntary organisations on local government bodies, though this has been uneven in its implementation. Legislation also

mandates funds for training of citizen representatives in order for them to participate effectively (McGee *et al*, 2003).

Perhaps the largest scale experiment in the joint approach is found in **Brazil**, where the new Constitution of 1988, termed at the time the Citizens' Constitution, affirmed public participation in the delivery of local services as a democratic right. This has resulted in the creation across the country of municipal level councils which link elected officials, neighbourhood representatives and service providers in almost every sector, including health, education and youth. The scale of these initiatives is enormous. In the case of health, for instance, over 5,000 health councils were created by the 1988 Constitution, mandated to bring together representatives of neighbourhoods, social movements and civil society organisations with service providers and government representatives to govern health policy at the local level.

Changing forms of accountability

Further innovations have not only emphasised citizen involvement with local governments in planning, but also empowered citizen representatives to hold government to account for not carrying out properly the functions of government.

In **Bolivia**, the Law of Popular Participation of 1994 mandated broad-based participatory processes, starting at the neighbourhood level, as part of the process of local government decentralisation. It also recognised the importance of social organisations that already existed (including indigenous communities, with their own practices and customs). About 15,000 such 'territorial base organisations' are registered to participate in the planning process. However, in addition, the particular innovation of the Bolivia law was legally to create citizens' oversight or Vigilance committees in each municipality, which are empowered to freeze municipal budgets if actual expenditures vary too far from the planning processes. Again, the actual implementation of these laws varies greatly, due to differences in understandings, power relations, citizens' awareness, etc. in differing localities.

Empowered forms of local direct participation

While many approaches are looking for new forms of a joint relationship between citizens and elected representatives, others are creating forms of direct citizen participation, which complement representative forms of governance with more empowered, direct involvement of citizens at the local level. In **Brazil**, large-scale neighbourhood meetings may be used as part of the process of participatory planning or budgeting. (In Porto Alegre, estimates are that over 100,000 people, representing some 10% of the population, have attended a participatory budgeting meeting at least once over the fourteen years of the initiative.) In **India**, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments gave local governments (the *panchayati raj* system) the task of planning for economic development and social justice[1]. In theory this process begins at the village level, or the *gram sabha*, though this varies in practice across states. In the State of Madhya Pradesh, a new law was passed in 2001 which virtually transferred all powers concerning local development to the village assemblies, including powers related to village development, budgeting, levying taxes, agriculture, natural resource management, village security, infrastructure, education and social justice (McGee, 2003:49). In Kerala, as part of the People's Planning Campaign, local governments received 40% of the state budget allocation for local services. Grassroots planning processes were carried out in thousands of villages, which were then approved by direct vote in popular village assemblies.

"Far more work needs to be done to articulate from below new versions and possibilities of what participatory governance and democracy might look like, and to be able to discern which models and approaches might best contribute to social justice"

Strengthening the inclusive representation of locally-elected bodies

Another strategy employed in certain countries has been to try to make local councils more inclusive of traditionally excluded populations. For instance, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in **India**, mentioned above, mandated that one-third of the seats should be reserved for women, as well as one-third of the offices of the chairperson. Similar reservations have been made for those of the lower castes and tribes. While making local councils more inclusive, the Constitution also gave them a great deal more power for planning for 'economic development and social justice' in 29 separate areas of local development, including forests, education and irrigation. While the implementation

[1] For information, see also Ahal and Descurtins, in ***PLA Notes*** 49: Community-based planning. April 2004.

Box 4: Reshaping local democracy through participatory governance

A recent issue of *Environment & Urbanization*, based on case studies from Latin America, the Philippines, Kenya and elsewhere, focuses on some of the challenges and dilemmas of implementing modes of participatory governance. It discusses the developing awareness and significance of governance in development and the environment, and its importance in arenas such as poverty reduction, inclusion, environmental protection and public services.

Are local governments able to give more power to poorer groups? And support their capacities for action and partnerships? Can the urban poor make creative contributions to better urban management? The last ten years have seen many local governments, citizen groups and social movements developing more participatory ways of working together. Much has been made possible by more democratic and decentralised government structures and by bottom-up pressures. Even more has been made possible by citizens and civil society organisations demonstrating coherent and realistic alternative approaches to development.

The brief describes some of these new approaches and assesses their effectiveness. It includes a discussion of the following:

- how innovations in more participatory governance were driven by federations formed by the urban poor in Cambodia, the Philippines and Kenya; these provided local governments with effective development models, and developed new grassroots capacity to make such partnerships work;
- the diverse experiences with participatory budgeting in 25 urban centres in Latin America and elsewhere;
- the strengths and limitations of participatory governance initiatives driven by top-down processes (Costa Rica, and Andhra Pradesh in India) and bottom-up pressures (Vietnam, and Cebu in the Philippines);
- the difficulties in getting service providers to be accountable to citizen groups; and
- the difficulties in changing state structures to allow more power to poorer groups both in India (through a discussion of the National Campaign for Housing Rights) and in South Korea.

The examples in this briefing paper highlight the importance of participatory governance for improving and extending access to services and infrastructure. They also demonstrate the very real benefits for local communities and the state that can result from greater political inclusion. However, these innovations in participatory governance face difficulties when powerful groups oppose them and when bureaucratic systems resist change. Three themes emerge from these case studies of participatory governance:

- the dynamic and embedded nature of participatory governance;
- the complexity of the relationships between participatory governance and representative democracy; and,
- the ways in which new institutional capacities themselves become part of the development process, increasing future options and possibilities.

It is easy for governments and international agencies to say that they want participatory governance; it is much less easy to change their structures and their relationships with poorer groups to allow this to happen.

Adapted from: 'Reshaping local democracy through participatory governance'. *Environment & Urbanization* Brief 9 This briefing paper summarises and is based on *Environment & Urbanization* Vol. 16:1 Participatory Governance, April 2004, IIED: London, UK. Also available online at: www.iied.org/urban/pubs/eu_briefs.html

of these new representation processes has been uneven, and while the local councils are not always granted adequate financing from central government, the inclusion of new members in the political processes has been vast. About one million women and about 600,000 lower caste or tribal members have now been elected to local government office.

While none of these approaches offers a panacea, they have created, through legislation, new roles for community leadership in relationship to local governance. However, the extent to which the legislation itself opens new spaces for participation varies a great deal, both according to the characteristics of the legal frameworks themselves, and the broader contextual situation in which they are a part.

What next? Challenges for deepening participatory governance

A great deal has been learnt, and much has changed, since the 1996 *PLA Notes* began to explore issues about citizen participation in policy processes. Then the questions were more about **whether** citizens could engage in a more participatory way in policy and governance processes, and **how** to begin doing so. Following a decade of experience in many parts of the world, the new questions are less about whether citizen participation in policy and governance is a good thing, but more about how to deepen emergent forms of participatory governance, and what new problems emerge as citizens and governments do engage in new ways (see Box 4).

Whose democracy?

Inevitably as participatory processes enter the governmental arena, questions are raised about the nature of democracy itself. In both northern and southern countries, new debates are emerging about whether and how more participatory, deliberative or direct processes of engagement can revitalise and complement existing forms of representative democracy. Yet in these debates we need to be clear about whose versions of democracy we are talking about. The language of participation and democracy is now widely used by a range of actors, ranging from large multilateral institutions and powerful foreign aid programmes, to grassroots activists and social movements, but the words may have radically different meanings, with radically different consequences for putting

them into practice. For some the agenda is one of less governance, driven by a neo-liberal, efficiency perspective; for others it is about strengthening local democracy through greater citizen participation; for others it is about using the spaces and opportunities of democracy for creating broader social change. Far more work needs to be done to articulate from below new versions and possibilities of what participatory governance and democracy might look like, and to be able to discern which models and approaches might best contribute to social justice.

What about the rest of the world?

Despite the spread of approaches to participatory governance in many parts of the world, many of the 'success' stories come from a relatively few countries (e.g. Brazil, Philippines, India, South Africa, some parts of the North) which share certain key characteristics. These are often places with relatively strong or at least functioning states, with strong civil societies, and often a social movement, party or strong political leadership which has worked to create new democratic spaces for participation. But as we know, many parts of the world do not share such characteristics. What are the strategies for building participatory governance in places with weak or non-functioning states, in regions of conflict and massive ethnic violence, in places with little history of organised civil society engagement?

In the rush to spread participatory approaches, especially as they are picked up by large multilateral institutions, there has been a tendency to transplant models of participation, without understanding whether the pre-conditions exist for such approaches to work, or without considering their appropriateness for local cultures and realities. Far more work needs to be done on the local political context, on how key concepts like deliberation, participation and decision-making are understood in local cultures, and on learning about what approaches for engagement and participation are appropriate to which settings. With the rise of conflict in regions around the world, work linking participatory approaches to conflict is also critical.

Which spaces of engagement are spaces for change?

Not all spaces for participation have the possibility to become spaces for real change. As recent work by the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability points out, simply creating a space for participation does not necessarily mean that it will become pro-poor (Cornwall and Coelho, 2004). Rather spaces are imbued and filled with power relations, affecting who enters them, who speaks with what knowledge and voice, and who benefits. Under some conditions participation without a shift in power simply serves to reinforce and legitimate the status quo. To be meaningful, participatory processes must engage with and change power relationships.

"For those of us concerned with democratic and participatory governance, far more work needs to be done simply to understand the complex webs of representation through which community voices reach and influence policy arenas"

As governments, donors and large scale institutions issue more and more 'invitations for participation' to members of civil society and representatives of the poor, far more also needs to be understood about which spaces offer the possibility for meaningful voice and a shift in power relations, and which do not. When does it make sense to engage within 'invited' spaces, and when does it make more sense to remain outside? In *PLA Notes* 43 on Advocacy and Citizen Participation, the report from an international workshop, 'Making Change Happen' includes the development of clear 'criterion for engagement' as one of the key priorities for the field. 'Using such guidelines, citizens and civil society groups can better decide when, whether and how to engage in policy processes.'

Who speaks for whom? The challenge of representation

Often, debates about democracy have contrasted representative forms of participation, in which leaders are elected by their constituents to represent them, and more direct or participatory forms of democracy. Yet participation also includes processes of representation, through which some speak for others as intermediaries in policy processes, often through claims to legitimacy other than elections. Increasingly, as governance processes are opened to diverse forms of engagement, questions are raised about who speaks for whom and on what basis.

For those of us concerned with democratic and participatory governance, far more work needs to be done simply to understand the complex webs of representation through which community voices reach and influence policy arenas. If leaders are elected from 'the community', who counts as that community? If representatives come from key organisa-

"…key issues related to economic policies – be they fiscal policy, monetary policy, privatisation, trade, labour, or foreign investments – are often not on the table. At the national and global levels, this suggests that a key challenge is how to develop strategies and approaches for civil society engagement in these economic arenas"

tions, how are those organisations chosen and credentialed, and how are the leaders accountable to their members? If they are chosen to represent particular 'identities', who participates in that process and which 'identities' will be represented in broader public processes?

Participatory governance, economic inequality and resource control

A key conundrum for proponents of participation is the emergence of more and more potential spaces of democratic engagement in the last decade, which has also been accompanied by a rise of economic inequality in many countries and across the world. And even where opportunities for engagement have opened up, key decisions about economic policy are often 'off-limits' to public debate. One reason for this, as pointed out by a recent study by Action Aid (2004), is that key issues related to economic policies – be they fiscal policy, monetary policy, privatisation, trade, labour, or foreign investments – are often not on the table. At the national and global levels, this suggests that a key challenge is how to develop strategies and approaches for civil society engagement in these economic arenas.

A potential space for engagement on economic issues is found in the involvement of citizens in issues of resource mobilisation and allocation at the local government level and in monitoring how budgets are used. And, where resources can be seen to be generated or re-allocated through community participation and representation, then such engagement is more likely to be seen to be making a difference. In Porto Alegre, for instance, popular participation and engagement in the budgeting process continues to expand year by year. In part, Navarro (1998:68) argues, this is because people could see outcomes of their engagement. These included a reduction in corruption and malpractice, an improvement in the political behaviour or elected and bureaucratic local officials, and, most significantly, a redistribution of resources through higher taxes on the middle class and wealth sectors, and a change of spending towards the priorities of deprived and poor. But is the Porto Alegre experience replicable? More work needs to be done on the ways in which citizens exercise greater voice and influence on budget processes in other settings as well.

Documenting outcomes: what difference does participation make?

After almost a decade of work on participation in policy and governance by those associated with *Participatory Learning and Action* and others, a final challenge is to learn more about what difference participation makes to governance and policy and under what conditions. There are several ways in which such outcomes can be examined. Some approaches look at the democracy-building outcomes, e.g. how participation strengthens capacities, resources and cultures for deepening democracy. Others look at the policy outcomes, e.g. how engagement led to policies or decisions which otherwise might not have happened. Others might look at the development outcomes, e.g. how participatory governance actually makes a difference to the lives and material conditions of those on the ground. Many different approaches could be used, but to do so is critical. Without evidence that more participatory and inclusive policies and forms of governance make a difference to the lives of ordinary people, the spread and deepening of democracy will be hard to sustain.

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THEME SECTION

17

Shifting perceptions, changing practices in PRA: from infinite innovation to the quest for quality

by ANDREA CORNWALL and IRENE GUIJT

Introduction

In the beginning, there were methods. For many of us in the circle of enthusiasts of participatory approaches in the early 1990s, maps and models, calendars and Venn diagrams, matrices and rankings and the interactions and insights they produced defined what we did and what we had in common. It was this, too, that made participatory rural appraisal (PRA) – and rapid rural appraisal (RRA) before it – something that was very different from anything we'd known before. PRA bridged barriers that might otherwise have kept a social anthropologist and an irrigation engineer like us apart. And it brought us together with dozens of others, from a constellation of disciplines and professions, who shared our excitement about an approach that seemed to offer much for 'doing development' differently.

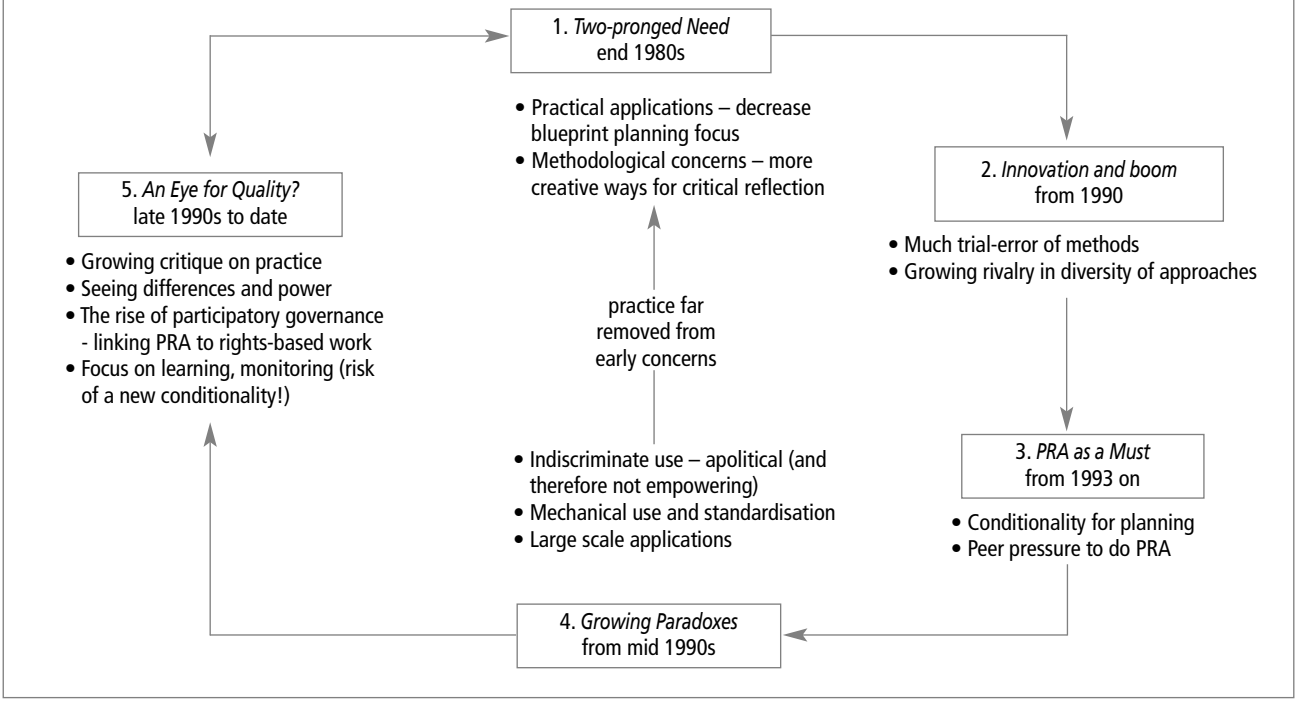
In 1995, we co-edited *PLA Notes* 24 on *Critical reflections on practice*, in which we sought to engage practitioners and advocates in debate about the looming crises of quality that were to become so much a feature of PRA practice in the later 1990s. In this paper, we look back over more than a decade of engagement with PRA as 'critical insiders'. *Participatory Learning and Action* has, naturally enough, served more as a vehicle for practitioners to share their successes and innovations than their critical reflections. Accordingly, we draw here on sources that go beyond it, including reflections from the *Pathways to Participation* project (see Cornwall and Pratt, 2003a, in *PLA Notes* 47, and contributions to Cornwall and Pratt 2003b), from work with gender and participatory development (Welbourn, 1992; Guijt and Kaul Shah, 1998; Cornwall 2000), and from the lively debates that we have had for more than a decade with colleagues the world over.

These thoughts are our personal reflections, from standpoints associated with the two institutions – IIED and IDS – that were so much part of early efforts to promote and institutionalise PRA in international development practice. Our account is, therefore, very much a partial one. We offer it here as a means of locating some of the threads that have run through debates about PRA since the first issues of *Participatory Learning and Action*, and some of the challenges that practitioners of participatory learning and action methodologies continue to face. In it, we reflect on distinct phases in the development of PRA (see Figure 1), during which a series of issues emerged as themes for critical reflection. The phases indicated in the diagram relate generally to the prevailing sentiment and practice. Clearly there are exceptions – there have been critical voices and some were using PRA to address issues of power from day one, just as there is still innovation and excitement in some quarters today.

Modest beginnings

PRA started with RRA – Rapid Rural Appraisal. And RRA

Figure 1. Core phases of development and spread of PRA[1]



started with the recognition that those who make the recommendations and the decisions in development are often poorly informed about the realities of those living with their decisions. RRA was supremely modest in its initial conception, described by Robert Chambers as 'organised common sense'. It was about learning how to listen, about getting people out of the office to find out for themselves what poor people's lives were like, about finding out as much as was necessary in order to begin to act (see contributions to RRA Notes 1,2,3). 'Optimal ignorance' and 'appropriate imprecision' were its watchwords (Chambers, 1997). It didn't involve hiring 'PRA facilitators' to run large exercises or produce reports full of diagrams. And although it was as much aimed at empowering lower-level public sector employees as enlightening their bosses, it had little of the aspiration to 'empower' poor people or seed self-help community development initiatives that PRA was to embody.

We were as critical of RRA as many of the anthropologists who saw it as short-cut 'pseudo-science' (Richards, in *PLA Notes* 24), and the conventional researchers and bureaucrats for whom all this 'playing with beans' (Backhaus and Wagachchi, in *PLA Notes* 24) was no replacement for 'proper research'. What we did not recognise at first, though, was that RRA was offering something rather different. When done well, it challenged deskbound people out of their offices and their mindsets, convening them in mixed teams and sending them out to listen to local people about their issues. The information that was generated was, in many respects, secondary to what happened to people as part of the process. In our first encounters with an approach that was already becoming *P*RA (via PRRA), we both have memories of professionals who experienced quite marked shifts in their perception of 'the poor' in ways that neither of us could have imagined changing without the fieldwork. It was these experiences that mesmerised us, as they did many of those who became 'converted' to PRA through field-based encounters.

Excitement in a growing community of practice

Our first encounters with the PRA scene were equally exhilarating. As we began to engage with PRA, now as trainers, in 1990/1991, we joined first generation practitioners who were inventing new methods, new ways of doing training, developing and promoting a whole new approach. These were heady times. There was the thrill of discovering a new

[1] Adapted from Guijt (forthcoming).

"In our first encounters with an approach that was already becoming PRA (via PRRA), we both have memories of professionals who experienced quite marked shifts in their perception of 'the poor' in ways that neither of us could have imagined changing without the fieldwork"

way of doing things. And then there was the buzz, and the sense of belonging, that came from being part of the 'sharings' – which ranged from gathering in numbers to listen with rapt attention and note every detail, to trading slides and brightly coloured overheads with diagrams to be shown hot-off-the-press in the next training course, or producing the next collection of exciting novelties. We felt part of an evolving and growing 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998), a group of people who interacted intensely through their shared enthusiasm for a different way of doing development.

Along with many others, we were both increasingly critical of some of the practices that we saw being presented as 'participatory' and 'empowering'. We were disconcerted by the consensus-thinking and information-focus that characterised much PRA practice. And yet both of us saw what could happen in the encounters people had with PRA in the field. Focusing our energy on realising the potential of PRA, for us, meant finding ways of bringing more attention to issues of difference and more critical analysis into PRA practice. *RRA Notes* 13, published in 1991, was a watershed issue, bringing into the debate more southern practitioners than had ever been part of previous publications and the tremendous energy and enthusiasm from innovators in India. But it was *RRA Notes* 14 of 1991 that, for us, was at least as significant, with articles by Welbourn and by Jonfa *et al.*, that began to open up questions about difference, that were to be taken up in later editions of *PLA Notes*, such as Welbourn and Guijt's contributions to *PLA Notes* 19, Seeley *et al.*'s in *PLA Note*s 26, Mukasa and Mugisha in *PLA Notes* 34 and many of the articles in *PLA Notes* 37, as well as publications such as *The Myth of Community* (Guijt and Kaul Shah, 1998) and *Stepping Forward* on children's participation (Johnson *et al.*, 1998)

This period saw growing debate about PRA's purpose, practice and politics. Ian Scoones captured some of the critiques and confusions, penning ten commonly held myths propagated by practitioners and academics alike, and asking anthropologists to engage constructively 'to continue the process of reflection, self-critique and theoretical and methodological enrichment [of PRA]' (*PLA Notes* 24, 1995; see also Scoones and Thompson, 1995). By and large, however, the critique was rather less constructive. Critics were dismissive, mocking even, of the earnest PRA crowd, finding them a little too credulous, a little too naïve about power and social change, and a little too willing to let anything pass as 'research'. Many of those engaged with PRA viewed their critics with scepticism and no small measure of disdain: how could they, who knew so little about the diversity of the practice that they were criticising that some seemed to barely know what the acronym stood for, how could they *understand*? And yet many of the criticisms that were made at that time echoed the doubts shared by practitioners out of the arena of public debate.

Use your own best judgement: seeding diversity

It didn't take long for the second generation of PRA practitioners – those trained and inspired by the pioneers – to begin to operate in unexpected ways, encouraged by the prevailing message of 'try it out, make it up and see what happens'. Some marvellous things happened, which would then make their way round the training rooms, told and retold with relish. Open-ended encouragement, given without constraints by Robert Chambers who shared PRA with countless others around the world, gave rise to some fantastic innovations, as practitioners were inspired to carry

PRA into uncharted sectors and settings. This was a time, too, of collecting dozens of acronyms for related methodologies as each new organisational or sector-related application seemed to produce a methodological offspring that built on the earlier RRA and PRA innovations. But sometimes, unsurprisingly perhaps, those whose exposure to PRA was sometimes as little as a day's intensive workshop simply went off and did what they were used to doing, adding a few diagrams into the mix and calling it 'participatory' (see Cornwall and Pratt, *PLA Notes* 47, 2003).

At the time, the emphasis was still on the methods. Most of us were so caught up in the belief that the tools themselves could bring about personal and professional transformation that we could barely imagine them simply being incorporated into 'development business as usual'. Even when a much-cited article (Mosse, 1994) equated the poor practice of a group of Indian male technicians with the methodology as a whole, the lesson this might have taught us didn't really hit home. Doesn't it stand to reason, after all, that people with different backgrounds might be expected to slot the tools into the frames of reference and ways of working with which they were familiar?

Reports of 'bad practice' and 'abuse' began to trickle, and then flood, in. This included formulaic applications of set strings of methods irrespective of context or purpose, as well as haphazard use of random methods. The critics rubbed their hands with glee: *told you so*! Critiques of PRA focused largely on the poor examples – and not as much on a balanced portrayal that included examples that worked. But 'insiders' were becoming quietly alarmed by what was going on. In May 1994, at a time when there was still what might be regarded as a 'PRA community', a cluster of practitioners came together to produce a statement *Sharing Our Concerns*, which was published in *PLA Notes* 22, of 1995.[2] They said:

Many donors, government organisations and NGOs are now requesting and requiring that PRA be used in their programmes and projects. This brings opportunities and dangers. The opportunities are to initiate and sustain processes of change: empowering disadvantaged people and communities, transforming organisations; and reorienting individuals. The dangers come from demanding too much, in a top-down mode, too fast, with too little understanding of participatory development and its implications. (Absalom *et al*., 1995)

[2] The signatories were: E. Absalom, R. Chambers, S. Francis, B. Guèye, I. Guijt, S. Joseph, D. Johnson, C. Kabutha, M. Rahman Khan, R. Leurs, J. Mascarenhas, P. Norrish, M. Pimbert, J. Pretty, M. Samaranayake, I. Scoones, M. Kaul Shah, P. Shah, D. Tamang, J. Thompson, G. Tym, A. Welbourn.

"What we did not recognise at first, though, was that RRA was offering something rather different. When done well, it challenged deskbound people out of their offices and their mindsets, convening them in mixed teams and sending them out to listen to local people about their issues"

The meeting discussed the dilemma of encouraging more diversity versus controlling quality, of continuing to foster or reigning in the spread of PRA. Our own naivety on this quickly exposed, we hoped to trigger a by then, desperately needed discussion on issues of quality. Six core problem areas are highlighted in the *Sharing Our Concerns* statement:

- *personal and professional values, norms and behaviour* that we, 'as PRA professionals' [sic], had a responsibility in ensuring or trying...;
- *community issues*, including the ethics of joint work, seeing differences, clear preconditions for engagement, aspects of practice to ensure quality, and investing in local human resource support and development;
- *organisational structures, styles and practices of management,* in recognition that adopting PRA as a core strategy would often entail extensive refocusing of the organisation;
- *approaches and methods in training*, to reduce the chance of a 'take the method and run' message being imparted;
- *networking and sharing* between all actors, to offset the Northern-professional domination of the discourse and the ownership of acronyms and methodologies; and
- *the policies and practices of donors*, who we viewed as particularly instrumental in pushing a quick-fix approach to PRA that they could dictate.

How many of those at that meeting realised the degree to which their concerns would be amplified in the years to come as the development industry took on PRA as a new technology?

'Scaling up' – PRA meets its nemesis?

Much of what practitioners raised as concerns for the future was happening as a result of the rush to go to scale (see Figure 1), as donor agencies and international NGOs caught on to the potential of PRA and its quick route to 'participation'. Beneficiary participation had been talked about in

Box 1: Sharing Our Experiences: an appeal to donors and governments (in *PLA Notes* 27, from a workshop in Bangalore in 1996)

... We welcome the efforts to mainstream participation in donor agencies such as the World Bank, and the increasing stress on participation by Governments and Government departments. Participation has become a requirement in most donor-supported projects, and is more and more stressed in Government programmes. This has led to some good results. Much more common, though, has been the abuse and bad practice. This has occurred on a huge scale. Again and again, in different countries and contexts, with different donors and Governments, we have found dependency created and participation destroyed by:

- *pressures to scale up PRA rapidly, sometimes to a national level*
- *demand for instant PRA training, one-off and on a large scale*
- *low quality PRA training, limited to routine methods*
- *the rush to prepare projects and programmes*
- *top down procedures*
- *drives to disburse funds*
- *time-bound targets for products, neglecting process*
- *inflexible programmes and projects*
- *neglect and underestimation of the knowledge and capabilities of local people*
- *neglect of local capacity building and institutional development*
- *lack of staff continuity*
- *penalisation of participatory staff, and above all failure to recognise the ABC of PRA – primacy of personal behaviour.*[3]

mainstream development for decades, but what had been missing were the instruments for putting it into practice, tools that were as politically neutral as they were easily transferable. This was a time in which neo-liberal 'do-it-yourself' ideology met the donor romance with NGOs, and as public sector reform met the cry for demand-driven development (see Cornwall, 2000). PRA's potential to deliver 'locally owned' and 'community-based' solutions led to meteoric uptake – in speed and scale. Stories were shared in the mid-1990s of PRAs being made mandatory for planning efforts throughout certain countries, and apocryphal tales were told – such as that of Indonesia, where PRA facilitators were accompanied by the military as they swept through thousands of villages. Reports of 'bad practice' and 'abuse' began to trickle, and then flood, in. This included formulaic applications of set strings of methods irrespective of context or purpose, as well as haphazard use of random methods. The critics rubbed their hands with glee: told you so! – and about simply rounding people up and giving them flip charts and pens, then cobbling it all together to rubber stamp an already-funded-and-planned project. And some expressed their deep concerns (see Box 1).

In this same period, some PRA advocates had set their sights on transforming the World Bank's practice by introducing PRA into its everyday work. The discourse of the PRA 'community' resounded with the idea of 'shifting from projects to policy', and 'policy influence' became the new mantra. Quite what the World Bank was to do with PRA hadn't occurred to anyone at that stage. By the mid-1990s, the Bank had begun to incorporate 'participatory methods' in what came to be called 'Participatory Poverty Assessments' (PPAs, see Dogbe in *PLA Notes 27* for an early example; also the forthcoming issue, December 2004 [4]). With aplomb befitting an institution that sought to make itself 'The Knowledge Bank', the Bank was to stage the largest, and most audacious, of PRA-based studies ever conceived, the *Consultations with the Poor* (Narayan, Chambers, Shah and Petesch, 2000). The jury is still out on whether this study was something to be celebrated, or whether it served to drain the last vestiges of credibility out of a methodology that was, for many, symbolic of an alternative to the very orthodoxies that the Bank used all those thousands of poor people's voices to affirm.

The mid-1990s also saw ongoing work at local level where PRA was inserted into ongoing engagement, often complemented with other methodologies and perspectives, as the *PLA Notes* 28 special issue on methodological complementarity (1997) demonstrates. In some contexts, organisations incorporated PRA into longer-term processes of community-based change work, complementing it with popular education methodologies inspired by Freire, advocacy or community organising (see Archer, this issue; Chapman, 2003). In others, approaches were developed that combined research approaches, using participatory methods with carefully selected samples or as discussion-starters in focus groups and so on. As PRA went to scale, then, it was also 'scaled out' (Gaventa, 1998), being used in increasingly diverse ways for ever-expanding purposes. By the end of the decade, what 'PRA' had come to consist of had become increasingly difficult to define.

Critical for shaping the understanding of what PRA was and wasn't, what it stood for and didn't, what it could do and couldn't, was the role of documentation and publicity. Other applications of PRA – or PPA – at the same time as the

[3] It was signed by G.B Adhikari, Robert Chambers, John Devavaram, Rashida Dohad, Farhana Faruqi, Gemechu Gedeno, Shashigo Gerbu, Haryo Habirono, Fiona Hinchcliffe, Lars Johansson, Kamal Kar, Somesh Kumar, Shen Ramos Maglinte, Saiti Makuku, Abu Hena Mallik, James Mascarenhas, Neela Mukherjee, N Narayansamy, Kamal Phuyal, S Rangasamy, Mallika R Samaranayake, P V Satheesh, Sheelu.

4. *Participatory Learning and Action* 51 will be a special issue on evaluating the effectiveness of civil society engagement in poverty reduction processes, with articles from Africa, Asia, Latin America and elsewhere.

widely publicised *Voices of the Poor* study (Narayan *et al*., 2000), for example, were not so publicly or widely shared. For example, as part of its rights-based approach to development ActionAid India undertook a PPA study in 1998 to understand the politics of poverty (Praxis, 2001). This was followed up by PRA-based planning in 344 villages in Bolangir District, Orissa State. The planning consisted of a vulnerability analysis based on PRA methods, to identify practical needs and strategic interests. This micro-level planning exercise in Bolangir was also PRA-inspired but was not published widely and so has not shaped the public's perception on PRA as much as those experiences that reach the bookshelves and conference halls.

"It was also towards the latter end of the 1990s that the next fixation was to hit the decks: participatory monitoring and evaluation... Just as with PRA, there was and is a huge diversity of understandings of what PM&E is, and what it contributes. The wave of critical thinking about PM&E has, however, yet to hit the development discourse"

Many PRAs, many pathways

By the late 1990s, the term 'PRA' had acquired associations that represented some of the worst fears of those who had shared their concerns and experiences in 1995 and 1996. Amongst some, it had come to be seen as an instrument and funding conditionality imposed by mainstream development agencies and a label for the latest addition to the consultants' toolkit. For others, though, years of practice and of innovation had deepened their use of the approach, adding a new maturity and depth to the kind of work they did. Recognition of the associations people had come to have with the label 'RRA' and the need for something more all-encompassing that went beyond PRA to embrace other approaches, from participatory theatre and video to Participatory Action Research and popular education, had led IIED to change the title of this very journal some years before, to *PLA* (*Participatory Learning and Action*) *Notes*. Soon enough, though, the acronym 'PLA' became the latest means used by people to distinguish what they did from the shortcomings that had come to be associated with much of what went by the name of 'PRA'. Just as RRA had become almost a term of abuse by the mid-1990s for not being 'empowering', so too PRA was going out of fashion for not being 'empowering' enough! In some quarters, PLA became the latest new-and-good thing, counterposed to old, jaded, co-opted and abused PRA.

It was also towards the latter end of the 1990s that the next fixation was to hit the decks: participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E, see *PLA Notes* 31, 1998; see also Estrella *et al*., 2000). Everyone had to do it, all projects needed a PM&E system or component, it was a conditionality of loan agreements – and yes, the World Bank too, took hold of this phenomenon. Now that micro-level planning using PRA was methodologically 'taken care of', the idea of feeding ongoing cycles of planning and of holding people, groups, and the state accountable to its plans led to the popularisation of participatory M&E. Here the slogan shifted from that of PRA – 'whose reality counts' (Chambers, 1997) to that of PM&E – 'who counts reality' (Estrella and Gaventa, 1998). Applications run the gamut from work on farmer experimentation to engaging citizens in tracking government budget expenditure and undertaking social audits. Just as with PRA, there was and is a huge diversity of understandings of what PM&E is, and what it contributes. The wave of critical thinking about PM&E has, however, yet to hit the development discourse.

Beyond methods

The late 1990s saw a growing shift of attention to questions of governance and politics, still with a small 'p', in ways that simply would not have been possible – or desirable – in earlier times. During the 1990s, development orthodoxy spoke of the importance of 'civil society' and prescribed a range of 'do-it-yourself' solutions to community-level problems, in which participation was writ large. The convergence of strands of the 'good governance' debates with debates amongst PRA practitioners about local governance, adaptive planning and moving beyond the 'users and choosers' approaches of the mid-1990s struck a chord with those who had become increasingly restless and critical with what was seen as a continued fetish with methods. Participatory governance brought terms like 'Citizenship', 'Rights', and 'Democracy' into focus; it turned attention to advocacy and to rights-based action, reflected in a number of *PLA Notes* special issues such as *PLA Notes* 40 on deliberative democracy, *PLA Notes* 43 on advocacy, and *PLA Notes* 44 on participation in local governance. It is only more recently that the attention of those from the 'PRA community' who shifted

"Over the course of the 1990s, the 'community of practice' that involved those developing, promoting and spreading PRA grew rapidly. Despite their differences, first and subsequent generations of practitioners were still connected as a loose network through a shared appreciation of the power of a way of working that, by now, had mutated into a variety of forms of practice"

focus and direction has begun to return to questions of method, and that a new wave of innovation is beginning to take place in the context of rights-based approaches (ActionAid, 2001; Pettit and Musyoki, this issue).

As some PRA practitioners moved into engaging more with questions of governance – as testified by the growing number of related articles and special issues of *PLA Notes* – others began to delve more deeply into questions of learning. Many problems of sustainability and inequity are so-called 'wicked problems' (Rittel and Webber, 1973). These problems cannot be solved in traditional linear fashion, as the understanding of the problem evolves as solutions are tried and the very diversity of potential stakeholders adds complications. To tackle such societal challenges requires new mindsets and out-of-the-box inspirations, plus a trial-and-error approach to solutions. Thus the idea of 'social learning' as a means of overcoming such challenges has gained in currency (cf. Leeuwis and Pyburn, 2002). This entails more than simply group-based learning, but rather bringing together a range of unlikely comrades in multi-stakeholder processes of joint fact-finding, negotiation, planning, reassessing, and refocusing. PRA can play a significant role in these processes, as practitioners have begun to discover (see, for example, Florisbelo and Guijt, 2004), but in no way has methodological primacy.

A new pluralism?

Over the course of the 1990s, the 'community of practice' that involved those developing, promoting and spreading PRA grew rapidly. Despite their differences, first and subsequent generations of practitioners were still connected as a loose network through a shared appreciation of the power of a way of working that, by now, had mutated into a variety of forms of practice. By the end of the decade, the imperative to hold together had gone. Some of those involved in its innovation and spread had gone on to other things; others had developed practices in which PRA played only a minor part; others still were mixing and merging aspects of PRA into their everyday work and no longer using the term to describe what they did (see contributions in Cornwall and Pratt, 2003). Times had changed. It was no longer necessary to defend practices that one might consider to be problematic, no longer necessary to protect PRA from the assault of the mainstream. And with this recognition came a new openness, out of which new possibilities could be born.

These moves have given rise to a new pluralism, characterised less by 'anything goes' than by a recognition of the cleavages within the 'PRA community' that no longer needed to be held so closely together. Some of those who were involved with PRA ten years ago have moved on to pastures completely new. Across a spectrum of areas of development work now are people who have engaged in some way with PRA. Participatory learning and action approaches have come to be used in myriad settings, in ways that are so diverse that they have given rise to entire new areas of work – whether in policy research, learning, participatory governance or rights-based development work. In many respects, we've come full circle. Looking to the future, the challenge is how to recapture the kind of excitement, energy, and creativity that gave rise to PRA and turn it to animate a new generation of innovators and pioneers to help us meet the challenges that development now faces.

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Regina's *Participatory Learning and Action* illustration challenge

Congratulations to IIED on their 50th Issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*! It's been fun and **extreeeeemely** challenging to be the cover artist for these past few years. I've moved a lot, and my *Participatory Learning and Action* file only goes back to Issue 29 (June 1997), so I can't remember if I did any covers before that date. I do know that my relationship with IIED started in 1993 when I did lots of illustrations for the *Trainer's Guide for Participatory Inquiry* and for the final version, *Participatory Learning & Action: A Trainer's Guide* in 1995.

Every successive IIED Editor I've worked with (Jo Abbott, Laura Greenwood, Cristina Zorat, Angela Milligan, Nicole Kenton and Holly Ashley) has had a huge, wild and very fertile imagination, along with a very optimistic expectation that I could fulfil their artistic vision in one little 8.5 x 6.5 cm square!

I've been working in health education materials production (writing, editing and graphic design) since my Peace Corps and UN Volunteer days in Liberia in the early 1980s. I continued as Materials Production Programme Officer for UNICEF in Uganda from the mid-to-late '80s; took a 'break' to do my Masters at the University of London, Institute of Education in 1989/90 (studying Education in Developing Countries); and have since then been a roving consultant in both materials production and school-based health education in Uganda, Namibia, New York, Kenya, Botswana, Zimbabwe and now long-distance out of my little home town in Pacific Grove, California.

I have worked on writing AIDS prevention booklets, set up IEC units in several ministries of health, drawn illustrations for safe motherhood posters, edited a newsletter for a new computer system and run workshops from water and sanitation to assessment, analysis and action. But without a doubt, I have never been as challenged as I always am when it comes to doing that itsy-bitsy cover drawing.

It's been fun, guys! I'm looking forward to the next 50 issues!

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general section

19

Beyond continuum thinking: participatory development is possible even in wartimes!

by BENEDIKT KORF

Introduction

Do aid agencies, when they provide relief in times of warfare addressing immediate needs, also reflect on the developmental consequences of the way they provide food and other 'gifts'? Could the humanitarian community do more to involve aid recipients and build local capacity in the midst of violent conflict and civil war? It is often argued that in the immediate aftermath of a disaster or in times of war, participation of local people in planning, implementing and monitoring projects is not feasible due to the pressing needs requiring immediate action and quick impacts. In this article, I want to argue that participation is as essential in emergency responses as it is in development cooperation. Participatory approaches in aid interventions can be an important instrument to help build local capacities for development and to re-establish local governance rules, even in times of ongoing civil warfare. Community projects then may become a vehicle to prepare the grounds for more long-term development.

Beyond continuum thinking

Programming aid interventions that take place during ongoing civil wars or immediately after wars end, is still shaped by the influential 'continuum' thinking (Smilie, 1998). 'Continuum thinking' views relief, rehabilitation and development as distinct sequential endeavours in a static time-phase model. In times of ongoing warfare or immediately thereafter, aid agencies would have to provide immediate relief to 'helpless victims' in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. Only when these immediate needs were fulfilled and political stability restored could aid agencies start a new phase of rehabilitation and reconstruction and later on, development.

I want to advance four main arguments to underline why the continuum thinking may not be useful under conditions of violent conflict and civil warfare:

- In the often circular nature of social conflicts and civil warfare, periods of relative calmness are often interrupted by sudden eruptions of violence, destruction and displacement, followed by another phase of relative stability. In conflicts of a protracted nature, aid agencies tend to remain in the relief phase of the continuum model for too long a period (e.g. Sudan, Sri Lanka), until the wars are over. However, development-oriented emergency aid is not to be restricted to post-war interventions, but should start as early as possible, even while violent conflict is ongoing.
- One never encounters a 'pure' emergency situation (where only relief is possible) as distinct from development situations, but rather elements of each type are found during specific periods of a humanitarian crisis. Hence, agencies need to develop a bundle of relief and development measures at the same time that may be applied in different localised contexts.

Army checkpoint in Muttur

Photo: IFSP

Box 1: The Integrated Food Security Programme, Trincomalee

From 1998 to 2003, the Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP) has provided livelihood support to people in the war-affected Trincomalee district in the east of Sri Lanka. The IFSP was funded by the Federal Republic of Germany (BMZ) through the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Government of Sri Lanka through the Ministry of Eastern Development and Muslim Religious Affairs and the North East Provincial Council (NEPC). IFSP was addressed as a 'special project' under the overall development efforts for the north and east of Sri Lanka. Implementing a variety of village projects in the district of Trincomalee, participatory needs assessments and community mobilisation were carried out in approximately 40 villages. In addition, the IFSP implemented smaller projects in another 130 villages. For more information see: http://ifsp-srilanka.org

- Rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches all too often focus on the reestablishment of the situation, based on predicted results. This overlooks the fact that the situation prior to warfare had carried the seeds for the subsequent escalation into violence. We need to find an approach that prevents a reappearance of such destructive patterns and to find a new way forward.
- Emergencies do not take place in a social and political vacuum. Emergency response cannot be separated from peace building, since any kind of aid is political. While humanitarian agencies may want to be neutral actors, the question is whether or not local people and power holders also perceive them like this.

Nevertheless, continuum thinking remains fairly popular. This is because many policy makers, donors and agencies regard conflicts as something abnormal in the path of development and perceive civil wars and 'ethnic' conflicts as 'human disasters' and 'complex political emergencies'. They therefore respond to these challenges in an emergency mode. Aid is primarily perceived as a logistical and technocratic challenge. Conflict as such is, however, inherent in social interaction. It is the escalation of conflicts into violence and war, which causes concern, because this is an indication that the institutions, which a society has developed to resolve conflict, are defunct. At the same time, aid is not delivered in a social vacuum, but aid can contribute to fueling warfare (Anderson, 1999) or be used as a weapon in international politics – rewarding governments or withdrawing aid – depending on a government's behaviour (Duffield, 2001).

Participatory development in times of war: experiences from Sri Lanka

The following case study from Sri Lanka shall underline **how** participation can be instituted in aid interventions even in times of **ongoing** warfare. Since 1983, the war zones of Sri Lanka have experienced recurrent cycles of violence, both between village communities of different ethnic backgrounds and between a Tamil rebel group and the Sri Lankan army. Many local farmers and fishermen were temporarily forced to leave their homes, and after returning, often could not pursue their traditional livelihoods because of the war (Korf, 2004). Warfare came to a halt only in February 2002 when the Tamil rebels and the Sri Lankan government signed a ceasefire agreement.

In this context, from 1998 to 2003, the Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP) worked with local communities to stabilise livelihoods and improve household food security. The IFSP was closely cooperating with partner institutions and community-based organisations. Although working in areas of violent conflict, the IFSP lobbied for a development-oriented participatory approach to allow local communities to identify and utilise local potentials and opportunities, even though these may be limited in scope in view of the violent environment. It was the IFSP's firm belief that it was essential to enable communities to actively take part in development efforts without relying on relief alone. IFSP aimed to 'break dependency'. Only then would people be in a position to benefit from post-war development, which started slowly after the ceasefire agreement was signed in February 2002.

Community mobilisation was the project's core strategy to address priorities for village development. Needs were assessed in discussion with the local population (Korf, 2003). The most important role has been given to the participation of local implementing partners, established community-based organisations and/or informal action groups formed for the

Development cooperation in times of war

Photo: IFSP

specific purpose of implementing a local project. Targeting was based on the identification of vulnerable groups and is done by the communities. This procedure was based on the criteria of war affectedness, social deprivation and seasonal food deficit rather than individual interest. IFSP supported local implementing partners and encouraged transparency and accountability of all involved stakeholders as a first step to re-establishing good governance on local and intermediate levels. The IFSP supported initiatives to rehabilitate local infrastructure (e.g. roads, schools) and the agro-economic production base (e.g. irrigation systems);provided assistance in income-generating activities to vulnerable families; and engaged in health and nutrition campaigns. At the beginning of a project cycle, a team of facilitators supported communities conducting a participatory needs assessment (PNA).

While participation seems to be a widely accepted approach in rural development in the peaceful areas of Sri Lanka, it was new in the war-affected areas. Before IFSP started its activities in the district, most aid agencies concentrated on distributing relief items and implementing small rehabilitation projects without much involvement of either the local population or the state. In fact, the IFSP even faced considerable challenges from other aid agencies and governmental organisations. The latter argued that participation would cost time and money, a luxury unnecessary and even dangerous in view of the pressing needs of the war-affected population. However, an impact evaluation conducted towards the end of the project (Schenk and Srimanobharan, 2003) confirmed that governmental and local implementing partners as well as direct project beneficiaries expressed their appreciation about the project's approach, in particular that they were actively involved in all decisions and in the implementation process. They said this even though the project would also demand a considerable local contribution in labour and kind for each project, while other agencies would provide everything as a gift.

Seven pillars of participatory development in times of war

Seven pillars in the project's strategy were essential to successfully ground a participatory development approach in the context of violent conflict.

Box 2: Participatory needs assessments

Participatory needs assessments (PNA) are a process whereby local communities assess their needs, identify village projects and plan to implement and monitor them. A team of field officers from various service providers and from the IFSP facilitates this process. A PNA workshop may last two to three days. During the first day, the facilitator team invites the whole village community to discuss communal problems and to identify community projects, which are then ranked according to priorities. This ranking is done for women and men separately to see whether their needs and concern differ. The community also analyses existing organisations in the village and service providers from outside and defines which of these are most suitable to support and implement a specific project. During the second day, the facilitators form small sub-groups with vulnerable families to provide them specific space for identifying livelihood support activities. These vulnerable families are selected in an open process by the community. Three considerations are essential in PNA:

- such workshops need careful preparation, flexibility and fine-tuning that they fit with the time availability of the communities;
- the service providers need to offer something that satisfies the interests of better-off families, while also targeting livelihood support to the most vulnerable; and
- PNA is only the starting point for a long process of collaborative community development.

Balancing output and process

Challenge

In the context of violent conflict, it is essential to find an appropriate balance between physical output and participatory process. To only commence with a long mobilisation process without simultaneously combining the concrete realisation of tangible livelihood projects will create an impression among the population that other than 'hot air', little else will happen. Since the future is uncertain and can, in the short and medium term, easily change again, people are generally wary of making long-term investments. This is true of both physical as well as of social capital.

Conceptual approach

The project adopted a pragmatic approach. The basic idea was to strengthen the practical problem-solving and functional capacities of community-based organisations (CBOs), informal action groups and vulnerable families 'on-the-job'. While taking over tasks and responsibilities in specific activities and village projects, the villagers develop confidence and capacities. The activities and village projects, the vehicles for developing these capacities, also need to make significant contributions to improving the immediate livelihoods of people.

Experiences

In Trincomalee, many aid agencies conduct some form of needs assessment with the people, however, often not in a consistent manner. What appear are long 'shopping lists', which these agencies cannot fulfil. Then, they do not dare to go back to the community and vanish. Easily accessible villages often describe such stories. The IFSP has made an effort to link needs assessment with the immediate planning steps thereafter, continuing communication with the community and keeping them in the picture about the status and progress of planning procedures. The project developed procedures to speed up decision-making and screening processes internally in the project and with service providers cooperating with the project (Korf and IFSP Team, 2003). The impact survey (Schenk and Srimanobhavan, 2003) underlines that this transparency in procedures and the clear link between participatory processes and progress in livelihood projects was what both service providers and project beneficiaries valued most.

Targeting: reaching the unreached

Challenge

It is important to target interventions carefully to reach the most needy with adequate support, rather than to those who have best access to those with political power. In times of violent and ethnicised conflict, access and allocation of funding and benefits often follows clientele networks. Ethnically biased decisions can then easily fuel grievances between politically opposing groups. Government officials are not neutral actors. They too can act according to an ethnicised logic, because this is how they can best safeguard their own position and political survival.

Conceptual approach

Targeting needs to work on two different levels. On a regional level, it needs to identify marginalized geographical areas and localities and, it needs to identify the more vulnerable within the community for specific support. Regional targeting needs to rely on technical, socio-economic data to counter political interference, while community targeting should be done by the community itself during PNA, possibly with facilitation support from project staff. In order to allow comparison across communities, it is fairer to suggest pre-defined criteria instead of allowing the communities to define their own criteria, which may then vary considerably across communities. That could mean that people who are ranked eligible for specific support confined to vulnerable

Planning projects – making transparent decisions. Photo: IFSP

groups may not have been selected in another community, which develops stricter categories of ranking vulnerable and non-vulnerable families.

Experiences

The experience from Trincomalee shows that government officials are not necessarily the best advisors in identifying truly needy villages and communities. Either they do not have much knowledge about remote areas or they might be ethnically biased (or be under political pressure to favour certain ethnic groups). By establishing a simple data system, which can often be based on already existing information, and by ranking priorities according to specified criteria, aid agencies are in a better position to justify their selection against political pressures. IFSP has collected ambivalent experiences with community targeting: the community selects the vulnerable people along pre-defined criteria. The local elite has to take social responsibility for the community, since it might be a small number of people pre-selecting the beneficiaries. However, the whole community has to agree on the selection. In some cases, this has been conducted with significant positive outcomes, and in others, it has been a very sensitive and difficult process. Overall, communities dislike identifying some individual families for specific support packages, because this always means excluding others, especially when wealth differences may rather be in nuances in the lower strata of rural societies.

Sharing the cake

Challenge

There is a danger when working exclusively with vulnerable groups of ignoring or sidelining the local elite. The latter can easily undermine attempts from outside to challenge existing power structures and local institutions. When working exclusively with existing organisations, on the other hand, benefits may not reach the most vulnerable, because the local elite can divert funds to benefit their specific clientele. In times of war, social obligations of local elites to their own clientele may be particularly pronounced in view of the emergency conditions.

Conceptual approach

The IFSP followed a two-pronged project approach: while community projects – mainly infrastructure rehabilitation – provide assets that benefit the whole community (and often benefit the middle-class and elite more than the vulnerable), the project also implemented income-generating projects for vulnerable families. It offered something to the leaders while at the same time bargaining for space for specific support to the poorest or disadvantaged households and individuals. The project's strategy was to involve village leaders in the whole process, from selecting the vulnerable families, through to guiding them in the project planning and implementation process. The project appealed to their social responsibility for the poor. It cooperated with existing community-based organisations, which are largely elite-dominated, as well as with informal action groups, which involve vulnerable families.

Experiences

A project's scope in reaching the vulnerable will depend on the willingness of local elites to let projects work for them. Success and failure largely depend on local context. However, the more successful the broader community projects are, the more project staff develop lobbying pressure to urge local leaders to assume their responsibilities. Also, when villagers recognise the value of local organisations, they select their

"Participatory approaches in aid interventions can be an important instrument to help build local capacities for development and to re-establish local governance rules, even in times of ongoing civil warfare. Community projects then may become a vehicle to prepare the grounds for more long-term development"

representatives and officials in these organisations more carefully and opt for people who can be trusted and who carry out their task in a more responsible manner.

Building capacities: an institutional sandwich strategy

Challenge

In times of political instability and warfare, local institutions and governance structures are often weak. Aid agencies face the dilemma that if they focus on organisational capacity building, this may take too long a time and yield meagre tangible outcomes. More medium-term and informal solutions of collective action and organisation might then be more appropriate depending on the local circumstances.

Conceptual approach

It is essential to work on two levels: encouraging local partners at community level to take an active role whilst strengthening service providers to improve their work. The IFSP employed field staff to work on the communication link between local implementing partners and service providers. This was necessary because of the weak organisational capacities on both levels, which 20 years of civil war had left behind. In addition, the project provided targeted organisational capacity building, mostly on the job, by training, encouraging and urging governmental officials to take over their tasks. The project always involved the responsible government officers in planning and implementation procedures, such as PNA, with local implementing partners. On the community level, the project field facilitator worked closely with local implementing partners to build their capacity to manage projects, communicate with service providers and to organise their internal decision-making in a transparent manner.

Experiences

In Trincomalee, many international NGOs used to implement village projects using their own personnel without involving government authorities, or local NGOs and other organisations, arguing that they lacked the capacity to achieve the project's purposes. Such agencies could quickly achieve 'visible results', but this contributed to further undermining the government's capacities. Similarly, they often founded ad hoc organisations for their specific project purposes only. The IFSP's experience showed that it is worth the effort to involve already existing organisations, be it on community or governmental level, even though they may be weak. The project planning and implementation process offered sufficient scope to work on capacity building for local groups and governmental or non-governmental service providers. Of course, this is not always successful, but these should not deter careful consideration and involvement of local capabilities in project management. In fact, closing the gap between local organisations and their demands for services and the ability of governmental and non-governmental organisations to respond to these is an important precondition for gradually strengthening local governance capacities in war-affected areas.

Negotiating the tasks: local contribution

Challenge

It is often argued that in times of war, people are too poor to contribute. However, a significant contribution 'beneficiaries' can make comes in the form of labour, material or money, and remains an important element of participatory development. This is part of the deal struck between the project and its partners. It is a basic prerequisite to ensure that a sense of ownership develops, which encourages partners to further develop their capacities to maintain and continue the work for which they have invested efforts.

Methodology

One of the IFSP's principles was that of requiring local communities to contribute in cash, labour and kind to differing degrees according to the level of poverty. These conditions were negotiated with the community in a transparent process during the planning stages, starting in the PNA. The IFSP also urged governmental partner organisations and NGOs to contribute their share. This was called the tripartite approach: IFSP, local implementing partners and service providers each contribute to the project.

Experiences
When IFSP appeared on the local scene, and insisted on local contributions, it faced a great deal of difficulties, because the population had quite simply become used to another way of doing things: the handout economics of relief organisations, which distribute assistance free of charge. In those areas served by several different organisations, this could lead to a situation where the population would simply look for a better agency offer, i.e. one willing to offer superior terms (meaning less or no contribution). In such instances, the IFSP refused to water down their conditions, which required contributions. At first, it was difficult for IFSP to motivate local partners to contribute because of the contradicting practice of other agencies. However, with the continuous involvement of local partners in the process of planning, implementing and monitoring, many of them recognised that even though they may have to contribute, they also benefited in increasing their management capacities and self-esteem.

Sharing knowledge, coordinating action

Challenge
Strong donor coordination at various levels (national, regional, local) is essential for long-lasting, sustainable impacts of donor interventions. Unluckily, donor coordination rarely happens, not even at the local level. In emergencies, donors as much as local NGOs rather 'fence' or demarcate 'their villages', be it in geographical or sectoral terms. This leads to contradicting approaches on the ground. People might face different agencies demanding profoundly different terms of cooperation.

Methodology
IFSP's policy was to provide access for any interested party to its planning documents, such as reports from participatory needs assessments, evaluation reports and surveys. Local implementing partners documented project progress in local project books. The IFSP incorporated and sought to collaborate with governmental and non-governmental organisations, and encouraged local partners to link up with other donors and service providers.

Experiences
It seems that many organisations have little interest in sharing of knowledge and coordinating action, because they perceive other agencies as competitors on the development market. Although the different aid agencies and NGOs in Trincomalee regularly meet, they follow a minimalist practice of coordination, because they do not have a shared interest in stimulating critical debate around policy and programme issues; they concentrate on logistics and technical aspects. For example, in the five years of the IFSP's existence, it was not possible to find a common ground among aid agencies in Trincomalee on how much (and whether at all) local beneficiaries should make a contribution to project investments. Data and information was not openly shared, many organisations did not openly advocate the approaches they followed in easily accessible documents. The result was that needs assessments were often duplicated and several organisations worked in the same villages without much knowledge about the others' work. In this regard, an organisational analysis (who does what and how?) during a participatory needs assessment is a useful tool to identify beforehand which organisations may be working in a specific locality.

"While participation seems to be a widely accepted approach in rural development in the peaceful areas of Sri Lanka, it was new in the war-affected areas. Before IFSP started its activities in the district, most aid agencies concentrated on distributing relief items and implementing small rehabilitation projects without much involvement of either the local population or the state"

Dialogue and confidence building with the conflict parties

Challenge
In times of war, no aid agency can work without negotiating with the conflict parties. However, aid agencies need to find a balance when in discussion with these conflict parties without giving up their principles and conceptual approach. Conflict parties will want to influence where funds are allocated and which individuals will benefit from fund flows, because this helps them stabilise their legitimacy. The governmental machinery may also be perceived as a conflict party and aid agencies therefore need to reflect upon what signals they send out when collaborating with governmental officials.

Participatory needs assessment

Photo: IFSP

Conceptual approach

IFSP undertook continuous dialogue with both conflicting parties, which was necessary to guarantee the security of staff and goods. Sharing information and knowledge and full transparency in activities contributed to establishing a good reputation for the project and encouraged conflict parties to achieve a certain degree of understanding of what participatory development can offer. The dialogue with both parties can reduce their suspicion of agencies and government officials of being spies or agents for the other party. This is a prerequisite to opening space for participation, engagement and development as a contribution to local peace building. The IFSP closely collaborated with the governmental organisations and lobbied for an ethnically unbiased approach in its work.

Experiences

Initially, the IFSP was under considerable political pressure from both conflict parties, who both sought to influence the project's policy. Central government officials urged the IFSP to implement projects that favoured their clientele. The Tamil rebels argued that in the areas under their control, participation would not be necessary, because they, as representatives of the Tamil people, would know what the needs of the people were. The IFSP insisted that it would only work if it could follow its own principles, and, in fact, it was quite successful in taking this hard stance, since both conflict parties wanted the project to invest in their respective areas. At the same time, one needs to be aware that conflict parties may use the achievements of projects for their own political purposes (e.g. to show that they were best placed to care for the well-being of their people).

Conclusion

When the IFSP started its activities in the war-affected areas of Sri Lanka in 1998, it faced the reminiscences of 'continuum thinking'. Most aid agencies focused on delivering relief without a longer-term development perspective on the premise that as long as the war was ongoing, long-term development would not make sense. The IFSP developed a more development-oriented and participatory approach and collaborated with local implementing partners as well as governmental service providers and NGOs. This approach was to offer local communities at least a medium-term perspective, even in times of civil war.

Overall, the impact evaluation of the IFSP revealed that the participatory approach was highly valued by the beneficiaries, local implementing partners and governmental organisations, because it allowed them to build up their capacities to manage their village affairs and contributed to increased confidence. In this regard, the project's approach to link participatory processes with practical livelihood projects, which showed immediate benefits, was most useful in addressing the urgent needs in the context of war and in strengthening local capacities. The project's attempts to secure transparency, accountability and to demand responsibility from the stakeholders involved was an important step forward, in particular, since in times of war, transparent rules are rather the exception.

The experiences show that participatory development requires a process of continuous negotiation with local implementing partners on various levels, which also requires cooperation with service providers (regarding the approach used to deliver support to local communities) and with politicians and the military parties (to provide space for civic development) and a transparent process of fund allocation.

On the other hand, the lack of coordination among different aid agencies limits the success of participatory development. In over-aided villages, where different agencies offer different forms of packages, often as gifts without any local contribution, it is difficult to achieve ownership and to initiate local commitment. Local groups select those packages that appear most attractive to them, which means those where they receive most and have to contribute least. Where aid agencies are not interested in coordinating their work remains a serious bottleneck in attempts to institute participatory development. This is unfortunate, because participation in the context of violent conflict is not only feasible, but a necessity. Only if aid agencies understand their interventions in times of war as a broad concept incorporating both economic and social development, can their work can contribute to the social and economic recovery of a war-ridden society.

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20

Participatory monitoring of sanitation: Wotawati hamlet, Indonesia

by KUMALA SARI and the PRADIPTA PARAMITHA TEAM

Introduction

In September 2000, the villagers of Wotawati evaluated their water supply and sanitation service using a new methodology, the Methodology for Participatory Assessments (MPA), together with the participants of an international workshop on this methodology[1]. With this methodology, the villagers quantified the outcomes of PRA activities with the help of ordinal scales with 'mini-scenarios'. The scales are gender and poverty specific: the more equitable an option is, the higher the score. The scoring makes it possible to compare progress over time. In 2003, they investigated what has happened in the community three years after the first study. The methodology was the same, but this time focused only on environmental sanitation in its narrow sense of the replacement of open-air defecation by the installation and use of latrines.

Characteristics of Wotawati

Wotawati is a hamlet in Pucung village in Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta Province. It has 78 households with a total population of 294 people. Its location is quite isolated. It lies away from the main village road and to reach it one must climb a steep path.

The houses are grouped together and are surrounded by farms and plantations. The means of livelihood are dry land agriculture and cattle farming. The main crops are rice, vegetables, cassava and corn. Cows, goats and chickens are the livestock.

To determine local socio-economic differences, community women and men carried out a household welfare clas-

The road to Wotawati

Photo: Maurie Azhary

[1] See: Postma, Leonie, Christine van Wijk and Corine Otte, (2003) 'Participatory quantification in the water sector'. *PLA Notes* 47: 13-18; Mukherjee, Nilanjana and van Wijk, Christine (eds.) (2003). *Methodology for Participatory Assessments: Helping Communities Achieve More Sustainable and Equitable Services*. Jakarta, Water and Sanitation Program-East Asia and the Pacific.
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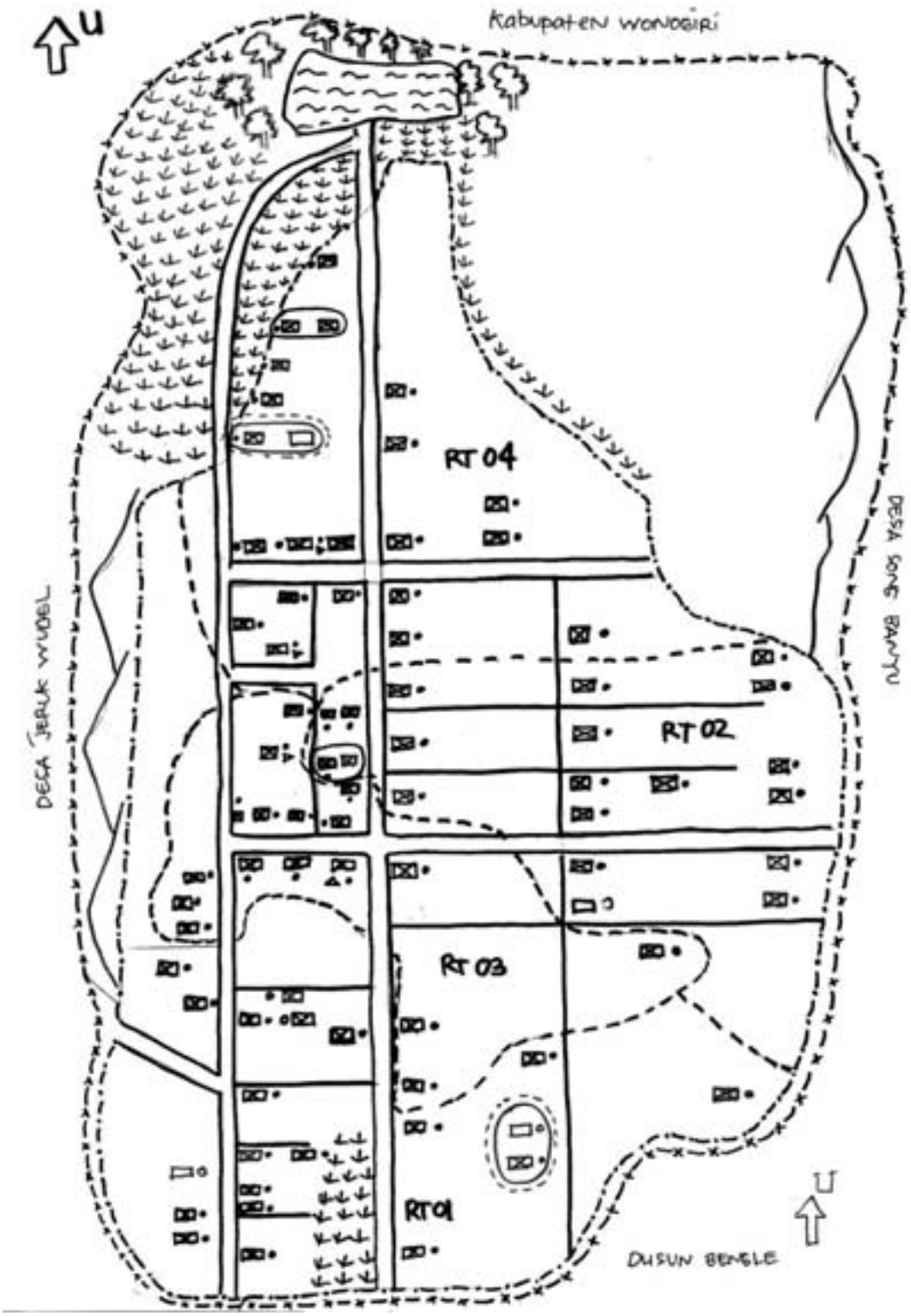

Puncung village map, wealth ranking exercise

Credit: Pradipta Paramitha Foundation

Wotawati settlement pattern

Photo: Maurie Azhary

Mapping sanitation in 2000 and 2003

Photo: Christine van Wijk, IRC

sification with participatory tools using locally set welfare criteria, such as types of housing, household assets and income from seasonally migrated family members. The outcomes showed that 20 households (26%) belonged to the category of the locally better off, 45 households (58%) belonged to the local middle class, and 13 households (17%) were poor. They used this information to draw a map, which linked socio-economic conditions with local water supply and excreta disposal conditions.

In the last five years, the proportion of poor households in Wotawati has dropped. Table 1 shows the change between 2000 and 2003. For example, when about half of the villagers began to work in Jakarta and other big cities, many poor households could improve their prosperity and moved to the middle class. Those living in the houses are mostly elderly people and children.

Table 1: Self-classification into socio-economic categories, 2000 and 2003

Number and % of households belonging to:	2000	2003
Locally best-off	6 (8%)	20 (25%)
Local middle classes	35 (44%)	46 (58%)
Local poor	38 (48%)	14 (18%)
Total	79 (100%)	80 (100%)[3]

Table 2: Outcome of participatory mapping of household latrines in 2000

Welfare level	Households with a latrine	Households without latrine	Total
Best-off	6 (100%)	0 (0%)	6 (100%)
Middle class	23 (66%)	12 (34%)	35 (100%)
Poor	29 (76%)	9 (24%)	38 (100%)
Total	58 (73%)	21 (27%)	79 (100%)

Sanitation development history

From 1995 to 2000, PLAN International had a Family and Children Prosperity (PKAK) Programme in Pucung. Under the programmes, a number of families of school age children received aid to get out of the poverty trap. Participating families received general aid for four years and aid focused especially on children for two years. In Wotawati, five groups of ten households received support on a rotational basis. PLAN chose a local man as facilitator. He did a household inventory, organised a village needs assessment, and helped the households form five smaller groups and choose their own group leaders. Each year, every group could get two packages for healthy homes, two goats, two heads of cattle, and materials and help from a trained villager to build two latrines and two rainwater storage tanks for domestic use. Only the poorer villages could get this full range of support packages based on their identified needs; less poor areas would get less support. Over the years, the groups would discuss who would get what and divide the available aid between their members.

In 2000, 58 out of the 79 families, or 73%, had a latrine. Fifty of them were direct pit latrines with a concrete slab such as the one in the photo overleaf, while eight had a ceramic pan. All were flushed by water carried in buckets. Forty families got their latrine under the PKAK Programme. The other

[3] 100% after rounding off

Pit latrine with concrete slab

Photo: Maurie Azhary

Pit latrine with ceramic pan

Photo: Kumala Sari

18 families installed them with private means. Using their class-specific map, in 2000, the villagers analysed how the latrines were divided over the three welfare groups. The analysis revealed that the programme had improved latrine ownership, but that not all poor families had benefited (Table 2).

Changes in defecation habits

Before the PKAK programme of PLAN started, only a few people owned a latrine. Those who owned a latrine were rich families. Most of the community defecated anywhere around the housing area. There was an agreement between the villagers that the areas used for defecation should be outside the housing areas, e.g., a plantation or a field in which the local farmers had not yet planted any crop.

With the arrival of the rotational support, more families began to build their own latrine. The programme led to a new agreement in the village that those who have a latrine have to use it for defecation and can no longer do it wherever they like. The only exception is when one is working in a field far from home, because it is impossible to go home and the smell will not reach the housing area.

The shift from open area defecation to the use of latrines took only some three months. The adjustment was relatively fast because people did not experience the move from using a dry open area to using a dry latrine as a difficult change. The rapid change was also influenced by other factors:

- The existence of a cholera epidemic in the hamlet, and the advice from the local doctor for people to stop defecating everywhere.
- The existence of a local agreement to use the latrines and no longer defecate in other places. This agreement created an extra bond between households in this closely knit community, which facilitated latrine sharing until a household had built its own.

Table 3: Outcome of participatory mapping of household latrines in 2003

Welfare level	Households with a latrine	Households without latrine	Total
Best-off	20 (100%)	0 (0%)	20 (100%)
Middle class	44 (96%)	2 (4%)	46 (100%)
Poor	10 (71%)	4 (29%)	14 (100%)
Total	74 (93%)	6 (7%)	80 (100%)

- Consciousness of the community to keep the environment clean. This was based on the experience that in the dry season the village surroundings were polluted by excrements, which caused a bad smell in the housing area. In the rainy season, the excrements could be seen everywhere along the path to the plantation.
- There is a tradition of mutual help in the village. When a family builds its latrine, the neighbours help with the construction. One of the reasons why they then use it is that they would feel guilty towards their neighbours if they did not use it after having been helped to build it.
- When household members who had migrated during the labour season came home, they set an example by using the family's latrine.
- The construction of rainwater storage tanks. For families who already had a rainwater tank before building their latrine, it was easier to change their habits and begin to use the latrine because of the availability of water for flushing and to clean oneself with soap after defecation.

The women found it easiest to change their habits from outside defecation to using a latrine. They had had great difficulties in defecating far from home, especially at night. They were also motivated by wanting to improve life for their children. The groups whose defecation habits were hardest to change were the senior villagers and the children under five years of age. Grandparents were used to defecating in an open space, while children were still learning to know what a latrine is.

At this moment, when the empty houses are not counted, latrine ownership in the village is 93% (Table 3). All members of these families consistently use a latrine. However, overall latrine use in Wotawati is already 100%, because the remaining six families use the latrine of their children, parents or other relatives whose house is next to theirs.

"To determine local socio-economic differences, community women and men carried out a household welfare classification with participatory tools using locally set welfare criteria, such as types of housing, household assets and income from seasonally migrated family members"

Technology choices

At the start of the latrine programme, the households got information about the types of latrines that they could install. The PLAN field worker gave the information separately to the men's groups and the women's groups, because the two types of groups have different routines for gathering. They could choose from three models:

- A direct dry pit latrine. This is a slab with a hole directly over the pit.
- An off-set dry pit latrine. This is a dry latrine with a slab and a hole connected by a pipe to a pit in a different place.
- A pour-flush latrine. This is a wet latrine with a slab and a ceramic pan connected by a pipe to a pit in a different place.

Most people opted for dry pit latrines for several reasons:

- The hamlet is located in a dry area and due to a shortage of water sources the families depend on rainwater. After the construction of rainwater storage tanks, the groups still wanted a latrine type that requires only a limited amount of water.
- The average economic conditions of the community made it more realistic to build direct dry pit latrines than pour-flush latrines. The latter are more expensive and it is harder to get the ceramic pan and water seal.
- The people are used to defecating in any possible dry area, so it seemed easier to use also a dry latrine.

After the families had made their choice, the PLAN facilitator gave technical support on how to build the latrine. The underground pit and platform are more or less the same for every latrine. The pit is lined with rocks, which can easily be found around the village, and which are stacked around the walls of the pit without cement. The diameter of the pit is adjusted to the number of family members living in the household. The latrine slab is generally made from cement plaster with a hole in the centre and is connected by a pipe to the pit. The type of walls and roof depends on how much

Bamboo outhouse

Photo: Maurie Azhary

Brick outhouse

Photo: Kumala Sari

a family can afford and wants to spend. Rich families build the walls with concrete bricks while poor families prefer walls made of bamboo.

In the last five years, there have been improvements in latrine structures. Most usual is that the families build a better outhouse. If in the past they built only rock walls, they now build concrete brick walls.

Almost all the latrines are dry pit latrines. Only the richer families own pour-flush latrines, because they have more or larger rainwater harvesting tanks. Even they have built the new pour-flush latrine next to the dry latrine and use the flush latrine only in the rainy season, when there is plenty of rainwater. The preferred place for the latrines is behind the house, usually near the pen for the livestock, so that the 'dirty places' are all in the same area.

[4] 1 euro = Rp 10.375 per December 12, 2003

Willingness to pay for latrine development

Under its family aid programme, PLAN provided each household with one bag of cement, one iron bar, 500 concrete bricks, 125 roofing tiles, connection pipes and 1.5 m^2 sand. The total value was Rp. 241.000, (2000 price) or € 23,2[4]. Families who built a latrine privately or after the year 2000 did not get external material support.

The households did all the work themselves: they dug the holes, collected rocks, lined the pits, collected water to mix the cement for the slabs, cast and cured the concrete, built the outhouses in bamboo or brick, and provided food for the workers. The families did all the work themselves together with their relatives and neighbours. They did not spend any money on paying wages, but sometimes decided to buy additional materials.

Willingness and ability to invest extra money in a latrine depended on the family's economic conditions and the

Closed rainwater storage tank

Photo: Maurie Azhary

Open reservoir with loose cover and bathroom with drainage

Photo: Maurie Azhary

chosen model. The amount of work and money spent on the underground structures and the platforms was much the same. The differences came with the types of outhouses; as for brick walls extra investments were needed.

Usually, the money for building a latrine did not come from the household's daily income. The majority of the households, especially in the poorer groups, sold some belongings before buying the needed materials. They sold goats, grain stock or jewellery, which they used as family savings. The extremely poor and the elderly, who had fewer resources to build a latrine, were helped by their relatives or neighbours.

Gender roles in the latrine programme

In the households in Wotawati, the men provide the main family income and the women manage the family budget. It is common for the men to give their incomes to their wives. Within the households, the women needed to own a latrine and they convinced their husband and other male relatives of its value for the family. Women could 'push' the men to build a household latrine as their position as the family's financial manager made it possible for them to allocate resources for its construction.

The aid was given at the village level. Here, the men were in charge. They decided on the distribution of the latrine materials, the technology options and the development process. Even so, they invited the women to the village meetings in which the latrine programme was discussed. During construction, the men did the physical work and the women bought the ingredients and prepared the refreshments. The latter was a valuable part of the process since help for construction was not paid. Refreshments were provided under the understanding that they would not be luxurious, but simply serve as an expression of gratitude to whoever was involved in the constriction work.

Access to water for latrine construction and use

Wotawati is located in an area with dry lime hills. It has a maximum of six months of rainfall per year. The only nearby source of clean water is water from rainwater storage tanks. Tanks used to draw water for drinking and cooking are closed structures, while tanks storing rainwater for washing and bathing are open.

Washing and bathing in the village pond

Photo: Maurie Azhary

In the rainy season, the households use the rainwater from the storage tanks for drinking, cooking, washing, bathing, watering the livestock and cleaning the latrines. There is then enough water for basic hygiene. In the dry season, there is a water shortage and they use water from the storage tanks only for drinking, cooking and washing household utensils. Bathing, washing clothes and watering livestock are then done at a pond at about one kilometre from the village. This is also the source from where the women bring water for use in the latrine and for domestic hygiene.

In 2000, all rich and middle-class families had a rainwater tank or tanks attached to their houses. Of the poor households, only 77% had a tank. Poor families who did not have a rainwater tank usually used the ones owned by nearby living parents, children or other relatives.

In the dry season, the households run out of water from the storage tanks, they have to buy water. One storage tank filled with 5,000 litres of water serves one household of eight family members for one month with water for drinking, cooking and dishwashing. In Wotawati, filling a 5,000 litre tank with water cost Rp. 70.000–90.000, or € 7–9.5 while outside the hamlet the price is only Rp. 60.000 (€ 6.3). The seasonal water shortage affects especially the domestic hygiene of poorer families, who have no tank or tanks of their own.

Benefits from sanitation and monitoring

Using a rating scale, the villagers ranked the benefits of the household latrines in order of importance. The results, in Table 2, show that hygiene, health, convenience, cost savings and meeting social norms all scored equally high (10 out of 10). Safety and clean habits of children came as close second and thirds.

Another more indirect benefit is an environment free from dogs' excreta. When the programme began, a large

Table 3: Experienced benefits of household latrines

No	Benefits	Score
1.	Better health and no more skin irritation because before they used to clean up after defecating by rubbing their hands with rocks. Now they wash their hands with water and most of them already use soap.	10
2.	Nearness of a place to defecate. Previously they had to go outside the housing area.	10
3.	The environment is clean. There are no more excreta especially along the path to the fields.	10
4.	The environment is odourless. The wind no longer carries the bad smell of human excreta from the plantations to the housing area.	10
5.	Electricity can be used to light the latrine at night. This saves batteries and kerosene.	10
6.	They are no longer afraid of being bitten by snakes, centipedes and scorpions.	10
7.	People no longer need to be ashamed of defecating just anywhere.	10
8.	The latrines prevent the spreading of diseases such as diarrhoea, vomiting and cholera.	10
9.	They no longer fear to go out to defecate at night.	9
10.	There is no need to be escorted outside to defecate at night.	8
11.	Children defecate in latrines. They no longer defecate anywhere e.g. in garbage dumps or cattle pens.	8

number of wild dogs wandered around the houses. They were tolerated because they ate human excreta, mostly from children and babies, which were left or thrown in the yard. All villagers, grown-ups as well as children, now use the latrines. Baby excreta are also thrown into the latrines. The environment is free from human excreta, but is still polluted by the excreta of wild dogs. During the discussions of the data the villagers decided that wild dogs would no longer be allowed to roam the hamlet, so that the environment would be free from all excreta, including those of dogs.

At the time of the second study, the people of Wotawati remembered the first study well. It had been a big activity, with foreigners, that involved everyone in the hamlet in social mapping, pocket voting, and a transect walk. However, the biggest lesson that they mentioned was what they learnt from the process, because they could openly express their experiences and initiatives.

The families in Wotawati greatly valued the project and the local facilitator who helped organise and implement it. When the project ended, they chose him as the next village chief.

Conclusions

Started off by the NGO PLAN International, the families of Wotawati, a poor village on the outskirts of the main community of Pucung, realised at least one of their own Millennium Development Goals. They not only cut the number of households without basic sanitation by half, but achieved almost 100% latrine coverage and 100% use. Neither their isolated location nor their lack of a reliable water supply stopped them from reaching their goal.

Other conclusions are:

- Although subsidies went to individual households, the programme was managed by the community, with complementary roles and influence of women and men.
- The villagers changed from open defecation to generally used latrines which were easy to clean. This was done with little more inputs than a gender-based information and consultation approach linked to their own organisation and management system.
- A combination of peer support and peer pressure along with a perception of many benefits – social, economic, hygiene, health – were strong motivating factors.
- An informed choice of technology made the villagers opt for dry latrines in a culture for which outsiders often

"At the time of the second study, the people of Wotawati remembered the first study well. It had been a big activity, with foreigners, that involved everyone in the hamlet in social mapping, pocket voting, and a transect walk. However, the biggest lesson that they mentioned was what they learnt from the process, because they could openly express their experiences and initiatives"

assume that pour-flush latrines are the most appropriate. Their choice meant that less water was needed to keep the latrines clean and women and children needed to collect less water for flushing.

- Not all subsidies benefited only poor households.
- Participatory methods of local welfare classification and stratified village sanitation maps have helped create a more transparent allocation and accountability.
- When the subsidies ended, the programme continued. It depended less on subsidies than on information, communication, cooperation and gender and peer-based pressure.
- Stratified village maps, based on the villagers' own definitions of poverty, are excellent monitoring tools for community-managed sanitation improvements.

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21

From MPA to NPA: participatory assessment of water & sanitation projects in rural Nepal

by AJ JAMES, RAJU KHADKA, MICHELLE MOFFATT and CORINE OTTE

Introduction

Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH) is a non-governmental organisation working in the water and sanitation sector in rural Nepal. Over 10 years of experience implementing water and sanitation projects in rural Nepal confirmed to NEWAH that the richest so-called higher caste men dominated all aspects of these projects and that women, the poor, and socially excluded groups such as *Dalits* were not represented in key decision-making processes, and also unable to gain equal access to safe drinking water, all of which made projects unsustainable.

To address gender equity and poverty issues, in 1999, NEWAH hired an external gender consultant, set up a Gender and Poverty (GAP) unit, and piloted a GAP approach to implementing water and sanitation projects. In order to evaluate these GAP pilot projects, NEWAH chose a new participatory evaluation tool called the Methodology for Participatory Assessment (MPA) (Postma, van Wijk and Otte, 2003).[1]

The experience however revealed that the MPA needed to be simplified, streamlined and adapted for the specific conditions of Nepal. This article describes the difficulties and advantages to NEWAH of creating the NEWAH Participatory Assessment (NPA), for use in rural water and sanitation projects.

NEWAH's gender and poverty approach

Starting in 1999, NEWAH developed a GAP approach, funded by DFID UK and integrated throughout NEWAH's programme. This approach recognises that, without agency intervention, poor women and men are automatically excluded, and thus aims to ensure that benefits obtained through improved water supply and hygiene practice are sustainable and reach to women and the poorest (see Box 1).

The GAP Unit, comprising of six operational teams of both technical and social staff (30 men and six women) at its Kathmandu Head Quarters and at each of its regional offices in the five development regions of Nepal, was trained to apply a GAP approach in communities, including gender awareness training to partner organisations and communities, and to apply PRA methods in a gender-sensitive manner. From 1999 to 2002, the GAP approach was piloted in five projects in the five development regions of Nepal.

Evaluating the GAP approach with the MPA

To evaluate the impact in five pilot GAP project communities,

1 See Wijk (2002) for a comprehensive description of the MPA methodology; Dayal *et al.*, (1999) for the original MetGuide; Mukherjee and Wijk (2003) for the revised methodology; and, for applications, Wijk *et al.* (2002) and Wijk and Postma (2003).

Box 1: NEWAH strategies to implement the GAP approach

- Gender awareness training to partner organisations and community;
- Building the confidence of women and poor men to participate in projects;
- Providing additional support to poorest households, including constructing free latrines, and instituting a graded rate system of operation and maintenance (O&M) payments according to ability to pay;
- Consulting women also in design and planning of water supply systems;
- Giving health and sanitation education to men as well as women;
- Providing health and sanitation education to 'in-school' and 'out-of-school' boys and girls;
- Encouraging gender balanced community project management committees;
- Implementing 50% payment for unskilled labour contribution by poorest households;
- Encouraging women to train along with men for paid project jobs; and
- Introducing kitchen garden technical training and vegetable seed subsidies.

NEWAH chose not to use the less effective questionnaire survey method that reduces water users to passive respondents, and instead opted for the MPA, which essentially uses a set of sector-specific indicators to assess sustainability, demand, gender and poverty-sensitivity in water and sanitation projects. NEWAH was interested in the participatory MPA methodology in order to make future projects more demand-responsive, empowering, participatory and sustainable. Specifically it wanted to enable the GAP team and rural communities to assess and improve the sustainability of services by:

- investigating how equitably poor households and women participate in, and benefit from projects; and
- making visible the key factors for attaining success in community water-sanitation projects, while simultaneously allowing quantitative aggregation of village-level participatory monitoring data for use at programme and policy levels.

After a two-week training in the MPA methodology in early 2002, 40 members of NEWAH's GAP teams from the regions and head quarters field-tested the MPA in Rayale and Bihabar, two rural communities in Nepal's Central Region. This was followed by an MPA database training, in which the GAP teams entered data into a specially created computer database, while the external consultant analysed the data and presented the key findings of the two villages.

Developing the NEWAH Participatory Assessment (NPA)

After the MPA training, the field-testing and the MPA database training, the GAP teams felt, while that the assessment reflected the situation in each project on the whole and could provide valuable community-level information to plan corrective action, it was not very cost effective for NEWAH's staff and men and women from the community. Specifically, the staff found that:

- the process was too time-consuming for them and for communities, since each assessment requires around five to six days in each community;
- the amount of time required of the community to participate in the MPA unfairly penalises the poor since they have to give up daily labour wages or working in their own fields;
- the assessments create high expectations; and
- strong facilitation, computer and analysis skills are needed to conduct the MPA properly.

Instead of looking for another methodology, and then

Box 2: Components of the NPA

- **Community meetings**: to assess general information about the village, including access to social and economic infrastructure, information on past projects, major caste groups, religions and languages spoken, number of households (by socio-economic group, caste and ethnicity) not served by, and requiring access to, water supply and sanitation systems, along with reasons for current lack of access.
- **Well-being ranking and social mapping**: to identify households by socio-economic, caste and ethnic groups, and to represent this information on village social maps.
- **Water system mapping**: to mark all existing water points and sources (traditional and improved), and components of water systems (if any).
- **Water point surveys**: to assess status of existing water points, including number of users (by caste and socio-economic group), adequacy, reliability, timeliness of repair, water quality, leakage, environmental sanitation (around the water point), effectiveness of maintenance training, default rates in user monthly charges (and reasons for non-payment), and social barriers to access; along with specific reasons, in each case.
- **Household survey**: to assess issues that are difficult, time-consuming or non-verifiable in a focus group discussion, e.g., water collected per household for different uses, hygiene in water and food storage, and individual household latrine surveys.
- **Focus group discussions by gender and class (and also with school children and out-of-school children)**: to assess differences in current health, hygiene and sanitation issues and practices, performance of past project (e.g., participation in decision making, voice and choice in technology design, location, contribution to initial construction costs, financing for O&M etc.), gender division of labour within households, and participation by poorest men and women in community decision-making.
- **Case studies**: to pick up positive and negative impacts experiences with past projects and other community initiatives.

Box 3: Ordinal scoring systems

Standard PRA tools like focus group discussions are useful in generating information on people's perceptions for a range of qualitative issues. However, aggregating these across large numbers of groups, villages or water points is difficult. Scoring systems using ordinal numbers are a useful way of aggregating this information. Here, community men and women or assessment team members rank the possible outcomes to a certain issue (e.g., women's participation in village meetings) from the worst case (e.g., women do not even attend meetings) to the best case (e.g., women attend and discuss all issues as equals with men) and give each of these cases a score. This ordering of cases from worst to best (e.g., from 0, 25, 50, 75, 100 or 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) is called an ordinal scoring system. Each issue (such as women's participation in village meetings) will generate a unique score for each village, which makes it easy to represent even information from 1,000 villages on a single spreadsheet.

There are more advantages. By linking ordinal scores to 'descriptive categories' – what these scores represent (e.g., 0 = women do not even attend meetings; 25 = women attend but do not speak, etc.), it is clear to everyone what the score stands for. Since the same categories are used in all sampled villages, the responses can be compared. Further, because they represent a concrete situation in the village (e.g., 'women attend but do not speak in meetings'), the scores for any particular issue in Village X in August 2004 will not change over time or in the eyes of another group of respondents from the same village. Ordinal scoring with descriptive categories is thus a 'reliable' way of generating statistical data within the community. Results from some ordinal scoring systems (e.g. those without descriptive categories) tend to be different when repeated over time, or with a different group of respondents. For more information on ordinal scoring and its applications, see James (2003). 'Quantified Participatory Assessment' WHiRL working paper, Water Households and Rural Livelihoods (WHiRL) project. See also www.nri.org/whirl

undergoing training to use it, field test it and then carry out assessments, NEWAH decided to modify the MPA to suit their purposes. GAP teams and external consultants spent nearly six months developing and field-testing the NEWAH Participatory Assessment (NPA), which was finalised by end 2002[2]. It uses a combination of PRA techniques, household questionnaires and case studies to collect community-level information (see Box 2), and uses a descriptive ordinal scoring system (like that of the MPA) to translate qualitative information into numbers (see Box 3).

Like the QPA in India, the NPA is a flexible methodology where assessment issues, indicators, and methods can be adapted to suit local conditions and requirements of different projects, although it has been developed for use in NEWAH to assess gender, poverty, participation and sustainability aspects of rural water and sanitation projects (see Box 4). Although several of these features are similar to the MPA, the NPA is different from the MPA in several ways (NEWAH, 2002).

Box 4: Basic features of the NPA

- **Flexibility**: to suit particular situations, including socio-economic and institutional issues of gender, poverty, caste, ethnicity and participation, and for use at different points of the project cycle, including planning, monitoring and assessment.
- **Standard PRA tools**: such as transect walks, focus group discussions, pocket voting, well being ranking and social mapping.
- **Descriptive ordinal scoring** which is a reliable method to translate qualitative community responses into numbers[3].
- **Collects quantitative and qualitative information** to explain these scores, and to probe issues in further detail (e.g., in case studies).
- **Information shared with the community** and also filed in community folders for future use by project implementing field teams.
- **Computerised database**: to store information for analysis, reporting and presentations[4].
- **Adapted to the Nepal context**: The field manual is bilingual (English and Nepali) and the tools have been modified (and field-tested) to capture important contextual differences between gravity flow systems (in the hills) and the tube well systems (in the *terai*).
- **Addresses gender, caste, ethnicity and poverty issues relating to water and sanitation**: especially given important and often related differences between caste and ethnic groups.
- **Greater attention to health, hygiene and sanitation issues** through tools designed to gather information by gender, caste, ethnicity and socio-economic groupings.
- **More qualitative information**: through individual case studies, to complement the quantitative information.
- **Fewer participatory tools**: time-consuming participatory tools are replaced by focus group discussions wherever possible.
- **Peer-group scoring**: wherever self-scoring was time consuming and confusing to respondents; each assessment team scores the existing situation (noting down with reasons for their scores), and defends these scores to other members of the assessment teams.
- **Benchmarking of ordinal scores** at the mid-range score of 50, in order to facilitate assessment, with scores of 50 and above being 'satisfactory', and scores below 50 indicating problems.
- **Case Studies**: based on taped semi-structured interviews with men, women, boys and girls from different socio-economic groups, to enable personal perceptions and stories to be revealed in relation to NEWAH's GAP approach, implementation and impact.

[2] This was with the assistance of a consulting economist who had already revised and field-tested a version of the MPA in India called the Quantified Participatory Assessment (QPA) (James, 2003).

[3] 'Reliability' is the ability to elicit the same response in repeated focus group discussions. Results from some ordinal scoring systems (e.g., those without descriptive categories) tend to be different when repeated over time, or with a different group of respondents.

[4] GAP teams underwent training in using an MS ACCESS database, and developed a customised database for the NPA, taking care to ensure that the computer data entry sheets were similar to the paper assessment sheets, in order to minimise data entry errors.

Table 1: Components of the GAP approach adopted in the proposed CBWSS project in Nepal

- Fifty percent paid unskilled labour contributions to the poorest households;
- 50/50 gender balance and proportional representation of castes and ethnic groups in Water User Committees;
- Trained women and men in paid technical jobs;
- Inclusion of men and 'out-of-school' children in health, hygiene and sanitation education;
- Subsidised sanitation units for the poorest households who are below the poverty line; and
- Subsidies to poor and remote communities.

Using the NPA

An opportunity to use the methodology soon after its development was a five-village socio-economic survey for the Project Preparation Technical Assistance (PPTA) by ARD International, USA, for the Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation (CBWSS) Project in Nepal, funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The NPA findings (NEWAH, 2003) were well appreciated by both ARD and ADB, with many of the strategies of the GAP approach being adopted in the design of the proposed project (see Table 1).

GAP teams also evaluated 15 projects (one GAP pilot project and two non-GAP projects in each of the five regions of Nepal) from July to September 2003 to assess the impacts of a GAP approach (James et al., 2003). This assessment revealed that GAP villages allowed different socio-economic groups more voice and choice in technical and design issues of water supply, and in management. Two particular areas of better implementation results are:

Greater voice and choice in project management

Since all socio-economic groups had a better voice and choice in electing or selecting their Project Management Committee in GAP projects, the water systems in these villages perform better, and there is more equal division of unpaid and paid labour between men and women from all socio-economic groups.

Significant empowerment of women

Women in GAP villages are more confident, in responsible positions in the project management committees, and participate more actively in community meetings, suggesting that there may be relatively fewer social barriers to women participating in future community project meetings, if gender-sensitive processes are applied by projects that encourage and enable them to participate.

Challenges and potentials

The real worth of the NPA to NEWAH is its ability to capture effectively the difficult-to-measure benefits of a gender and poverty approach and to identify corrective measures necessary to make the GAP approach even more effective in achieving sustainability of poverty and gender-sensitive rural water and sanitation projects. The NPA-based evaluation of NEWAH's GAP approach had a number of lessons to guide future GAP interventions, including further development of the NPA[5]. Challenges here include the use of the NPA for continuous monitoring (giving annual snapshot views to complement baseline and end line evaluations) and integrating its database of qualitative information with MIS and GIS databases.

Given the problems that invariably accompany the creation of any new methodology, the NPA has been relatively expensive to create. But it has already yielded rich dividends by helping to make the GAP approach more effective, and promises more in future. Additionally, NEWAH can also now market their newly developed expertise within the water and sanitation sector.

To other NGOs struggling to find a way to address effectively the many 'soft' issues that make projects sustainable, and community men and women empowered and engendered, the lesson from NEWAH's experience with the NPA can be summed up in just three words: 'It is possible'. With dedication and hard work, they have taken a useful methodology, improved it and made it more suitable for their own purposes.

[5] Based on the evaluation of NEWAH's GAP and non-GAP projects (James, Moffatt & Khadka, 2003).

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tips for trainers

Quoting the issues

by ALICE WELBOURN

This exercise was used at a Skills Building Workshop in Bangkok, which I hadn't done before, but which worked really well. The workshop was on ethical guidelines for involvement of HIV positive women in research (see www.icw.org) and my co-facilitator, Violeta Ross and I wanted to design an exercise which would enable people who had never met each other before to engage quickly (for themselves and with each other) in the issues which we were trying to address in the workshop – we only had 90 minutes for the whole workshop...!

So we asked people to divide into groups of five. In each group there were people from different continents and from a mixture of backgrounds (e.g. academics, NGOs, HIV positive women, lawyers, pharmacy staff). We asked them to read together and discuss some quotes that we had printed out for them on strips of paper in advance. We gave each group five minutes to discuss each quote, and gave them a new quote to consider every five minutes – though they could go on discussing the earlier quotes if they preferred. For each quote, we asked them, as a group, to define what the problems were and, from their own experiences, to come up with suggested solutions to ensure that these problems wouldn't happen again.

Altogether we had prepared seven quotes, each one covering a different aspect of the issues that we wanted to cover in the workshop. In the end (what with people arriving late etc.) there wasn't time to discuss all the quotes. But all the groups discussed the first five quotes. The discussion in each group was intensive and lively and this process seemed to work really well in bringing the issues to life for the participants. At the end of the time available, each group was asked to summarise two key learning points from the discussions that they had had.

Several participants – even several seasoned participatory practitioners – commented on having had 'aha!' moments with these quotes. The quotes that we used are below, but of course they could be adapted for different contexts, from quotes that trainers have themselves heard from their own experiences.

Summary

This exercise seemed to work really well in putting 'flesh on the bones' of the issues being discussed; it quickly broke down barriers between participants who were strangers, produced lively discussions amongst them and appeared to shift the thinking of quite a few of those who took part.

She interviewed me in a room with the door open, so people could hear what I was saying if they wanted to when passing in the corridor. But I was too scared to complain, in case she wrote something down about me being a troublemaker. She wrote down everything I said, and she offered to show it to me afterwards, but I can't read, so I said no, that's fine thanks.

I was feeling really scared about the interview, but was determined to help. But then when I got there, there was a student with her, which I hadn't reckoned on. She did ask if that was OK and I said no, I just want to talk to you. But then the student was obviously cross and didn't close the door behind her when she left the room. No, no one apologised.

All the questions were focusing on the bad stuff I'm going through. I felt so depressed by the end of the interview, that when I was on the bus, I just started crying. It thought it would be good to have the $20 but afterwards I felt drained for days and just shouted at the kids. Life's hard enough without that.

What do these people do with all these questions they ask us? They come in their smart vehicles, ask us loads of questions and then they disappear again and you never hear anything more from them. I used to stop and help them, in the hope that they might help us but I never bother now.

You could tell that they didn't know the first thing about our lives. They kept on asking us about how long it takes us to get to the health centre and what we think of how the staff treat us there. When did we last have the time or money to get to the health centre? The trouble is you daren't tell them that because then our district chairman might get cross with us if he hears you haven't answered their questions correctly.

Yes, they always ask our leaders the questions. No, they never ask us anything. But you see they are very important people from the university, so I know they haven't got time to ask us all.

Well I tried to explain that if I didn't already have a child that I would have wanted to go ahead with the pregnancy, no matter what, just in the hope that the baby might be OK. But she said there wasn't room on the form for that answer, so I'm not sure what she wrote.

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Photographs

by REFLECT

There are various ways of using cameras to bring the power of the photograph in to the Reflect process.

Why? Photographs have the ability to really grab our attention and get messages across quicker or with more impact than other means. Newspapers rely heavily on photographs to attract and keep their readers engaged. It is logical then that as part of their analysis of communication and power, Reflect participants should explore the power of photography and, where possible, experiment with using the medium.

When? At any stage

How? Effective work on photographs will include both taking pictures, and analysing their use by others. A set of pictures compiled by the group, or the facilitator, from newspapers, magazines, posters etc, can be used to stimulate critical discussion, in particular questioning the apparent neutrality of photographic images. Looking through the pictures, the group might think about why particular images are used, why they are effective, how the framing might be used to emphasise particular points, and what might be hidden, or out of shot. Is this what our world really looks like?

Provoking analysis through photographs: Powerful work can be done with photos that capture local problems or contradictions. A well-chosen photograph can enable people to see something everyday from a fresh perspective, with fresh eyes. Seeing something from a "distance" can actually be a means to see something more closely than ever before. This holds true even where the photograph has been taken by someone within the group. At first participants describe what they see and they are progressively asked to analyse the picture until they truly confront the issue and its role in their own lives.

A powerful photo that makes the point that photos speak louder than words.

Or someone using cameras in a village in a clearly participatory process.

Introducing cameras: Cameras can be used in many ways within a Reflect process – and with the availability of cheap, disposable cameras it is now easier than ever. The main costs will probably be in the developing and printing of films, although sharing this information with the group can help people to focus their minds on the careful selection and use of images. As digital cameras become cheaper this process can be much easier to manage.

When first introducing cameras to the Reflect group it can be good to let participants take a range of photos without much direction or guidance. These images can then be subjected to the same critical questions used above, encouraging discussion of

The NGO Photo Voice have done remarkable work with Vietnamese street children, giving them cameras and basic guidance in how to use them – and then mounting exhibitions of their work to challenge attitudes and prejudices of others. At first kids took photos of themselves in fantasy settings – posing on parked motorbikes etc. However, they soon moved on, taking images of personal significance which offered a real insight into their world. Each photo is analysed to explore – why was it taken? What do you think other people will see in it and what is its different significance for you? [see *PLA Notes* 39]

subject matter, framing and the qualities of a good photo. Ground rules might be drawn up for future reference about what types of photo work best, the reasons for taking photos and when not to take a photo.

Using cameras for documentary purposes: Enabling participants to photograph their reality can be very powerful. This could be for the purposes of a local exhibition, which may aim to capture the everyday life of the community or a particular slice of life, for example parts of traditional culture that are being lost, or the world from a particular group's perspective. The group then need to agree the range of photos to be taken and selected for exhibition. Captions may also be added to the photographs, requiring more negotiation.

Using cameras for advocacy: Photography can also be a useful tool for advocacy work, taking evidence of people's priorities or problems to those in power, to complement oral or written arguments. Posters showing key images, or mobile photography exhibitions can help to reach larger audiences and build mass support or awareness for a campaign. A good photo can also increase the chances of getting an article published in a newspaper (and read!).

Children in Malawi

Photo: © 2002 Arzum Ciloglu/CCP, Courtesy of Photoshare

Examples from Practice:

In Lesotho, Reflect facilitators are given cameras in order to record what is happening in their circle. They claim to have found this very empowering – as it enables them to document what is happening without having to write long reports. It also helps them to reflect on a different media of communication and related issues: what it means to have the power of framing a picture (what do you include and what not?) and the power of editing (which photos do you show and why?).

Discussion of the photos can give great insight into the perceptions the facilitators have of their own circles and wider environments.

In Malawi Reflect trainers were given cameras to take photos of different literacy events or practices – to help them develop a sensitivity to the diverse ways in which literacy was used locally and the resources in the local environment that could help reinforce the Reflect process.

Ground rules

by ANDREA CORNWALL and GILL GORDON

When working with groups of participants in workshops, it can be a good idea for those involved to agree 'ground rules' for the discussions. This simple exercise suggests a way in which groups can come up with a set of ground rules at the start of a workshop.

Safety and confidentiality

Ground rules can help participants to feel safe expressing themselves and can reassure them that what they say will be treated as confidential and not repeated outside of the group exercise. By agreeing a set of ground rules at the onset, the group has effectively formed a 'contract' that can also be referred to throughout the rest of the workshop when necessary.

However, it is impossible to completely guarantee confidentiality in a group, so people can, if they prefer, discuss ways of sharing experiences that do not put them at risk – for example, by referring to experiences that happen to 'people like us' rather than personally. This is especially important when groups are discussing issues such as sexuality and gender when openness about relationship problems could, for example, lead to violence at home. Particularly, participants should take care about sharing private things that could be harmful to himself or herself or to anyone else if they were told to others.

There are other more complicated versions of this exercise, which look further at degrees of confidentiality, how to create a safe space, and how to recognise whether the rules agreed to are reinforcing the status quo of existing power dynamics (e.g. see www.mhhe.com/socscience/education/multi/activities/groundrules.html) but this exercise gives you some idea of the basic guidelines.

Brainstorming ground rules

Begin the exercise by asking participants to brainstorm a set of key 'rules'. Encourage people to make positive ground rules (dos) rather than focusing on prohibitions (don'ts). This can be done either in a group, and listed on paper; by individuals writing their thoughts on slips of paper; or by individuals or groups drawing images which represent different rules (especially useful as drawing does not require that participants are literate). The drawings do not have to be works of art, as you can see from our example!

Depending on the time you have available, and depending on how experienced participants are in setting ground rules, this exercise will probably take about 30 minutes. For groups of more than 10 people, it might be better to split them into smaller groups to begin with, and then bring the groups back together after 10 minutes of brainstorming.

Agreeing the ground rules

The whole group can then collate the different 'rules' that they have come up with, and have a focused discussion to agree which rules they want to use for the rest of the workshop.

Some examples of possible ground rules include:

- Let people speak without interruption.
- Don't pass judgement on others.
- Respect other people's thoughts and opinions, but challenge each other to think more deeply.
- 'Pocket your status': no one has a higher or lower status than anyone else – everyone is equal.
- It is fine to say you would rather not participate at any stage.
- Keep it confidential – no one will discuss what people share in the room outside of it.
- Avoid generalisations – say 'I think that...' or 'people like us think' instead of 'some people think…' although if you are unsure about sharing private information, use generalisations to be on the safe side.
- Be aware of how much you are talking and leave room for others to contribute.

It is important for the facilitator to help people to think critically about the ground rules they generate together and to challenge conservative ones. Establishing rules such as 'challenging each other to

Drawing the ground rules – it's no Picasso!

Illustration: Holly Ashley Photo: Chi-Chi Tang

think more deeply' at the same time as 'don't pass judgement on others' can also be important. Simply asking that no one judge one another can lead to situations where every answer is correct and the acceptance of harmful attitudes etc. It might also be useful to see where rules are **not** working, which in turn might challenge the participants to think critically about **why** rules might not be as effective as anticipated.

This exercise is a learning activity in itself and if the ground rules are placed where everyone can see them and remind each other about them, it can help people to practice new ways of interacting.

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Fishbowl

by GILL GORDON

A group of teachers in Zambia on a workshop to develop sexuality and life-skills lessons and materials with their students

Photo: Vincent Mwale, PPAZ

Introduction

This activity enables people from different groups to ask questions of each other and get listened to in a safe way. Each group thinks of all the questions they always wanted to ask the other group on a certain topic. The groups discuss the questions from the other group. One group then sits in the middle facing inwards and answers the questions whilst the other group sits around the outside and listens to the answers without speaking. The groups then change over.

We have used this activity with male and female teachers and pupils in relation to sexuality in rural Zambia and it helped people to understand each other's feelings, thoughts, hopes and fears more deeply and with more empathy. Groups only explored thoughts and feelings about the opposite sex because it was early on in the project and the facilitators thought that more time was needed to talk about feelings for the same sex safely.

The activity generated a lot of questions from men and women on what they would like to know about the opposite sex.

How the fishbowl works

• Divide participants into separate men and women's groups.
• Ask participants to individually think of all the questions they always wanted to ask the opposite sex about their sexuality, feelings, experiences, behaviour, concerns and preferences.
• Write all the questions down or give them to the facilitator who can write them down.
• If the participants can read easily, give the men the women's questions and the women the men's questions. Otherwise the facilitator can read the questions out one by one to each group separately, giving each person one question to remember. With the groups, remove duplicate questions, merge similar questions and remove any that the group are not prepared to answer.
• Give the groups time to discuss the questions in separate groups.
• Form a circle or **fishbowl**, with the women in one circle, sitting in the middle facing inwards in a group, and the men in another circle sitting on the outside.
• Ask the women to give their answers to the men's questions while the men listen silently. The men are not allowed to interrupt or ask questions, only to listen.
• Repeat with the men in the middle answering the women's questions.
• Bring the groups together and ask what they have learnt from the discussion and how they will apply that learning in their lives. Ask what issues, topics or questions they would like to discuss further and learn more about.
• The facilitator adds issues that he or she feels need to be discussed further or challenged.
• Record the questions and the answers and make a note of issues that need follow-up.

The fishbowl activity can be used with other sensitive topics or to generate dialogue between groups on any topic.

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Ranking lines: exploring local indicators of wealth and health

by VICKY JOHNSON and ROBERT NURICK

A really useful tool that Development Focus has used in a UK context is a ranking line for determining local indicators of poverty and wealth, health, local environment etc.

It is really easy for people to interact with this tool on the streets as well as in facilitated groups. You can also start people off in groups by making physical lines with extremes at either end of the line – say good health and poor health, or lots of sleep and no sleep, or good diet and poor diet. People get onto different positions on the line and then say why they are there. They also discuss how they would take action to move up the line to the positive end. This physical exercise can also be used to introduce a team to concepts of relative positions, discussion of those positions on the line, flexibility to move on the line, indicators defined by participants and making tools action-orientated.

Visually, the line can be drawn out with a question that you are asking at the top or an issue you are exploring. Different visuals and words are then discussed and decided on by the team. For example putting a happy and sad face at either end, or putting the words, for example in a UK context 'skint' meaning poor and 'rich' at either end.

Photo: Development Focus

Above: A physical ranking line with young people from Save the Children's Saying Power Project.
Right: The Action 4 Living Team using a ranking line in a Newsagents in Lincolnshire

Photo: Development Focus

Participants then put sticky dots on the line with their reasons WHY they have placed themselves in a particular place below the line on post-its or cards. In a different coloured card they can put the reasons that people may find themselves at different ends of the line. Participants are then asked to put ideas for ACTION to move themselves up the line unless they are happy to stay where they are. From this, teams have been able to look at

The Action 4 Living Team collating and reviewing data back at base

Photo: Development Focus

different local indicators defined by participants and ideas for action to take forward and explore further with further questions and tools.

Wealth Ranking lines can be a very useful way to start to explore local indicators of poverty, and to explore further and feed into monitoring a process to ensure involvement of the poorest and hardest to reach people in a particular society.

Ranking lines can be useful in starting off, for example, local needs assessments and health action plans, or they can be used to start to explore specific issues, such as food poverty or safety in the community.

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in touch

Welcome to the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*. Through these pages we hope to create a more participatory resource for the *Participatory Learning and Action* audience, to put you, as a reader, in touch with other readers. We want this section to be a key source of up-to-date information on training, publications, and networks. Your help is vital in keeping us all in touch about:

- **Networks**. Do you have links with recognised local, national or international networks for practitioners of participatory learning? If so, what does this network provide – training? newsletters? resource material/library? a forum for sharing experiences? Please tell us about the network and provide contact details for other readers.
- **Training**. Do you know of any forthcoming training events or courses in participatory methodologies? Are you a trainer yourself? Are you aware of any key training materials that you would like to share with other trainers?
- **Publications**. Do you know of any key publications on participatory methodologies and their use? Have you (or has your organisation) produced any books, reports, or videos that you would like other readers to know about?
- **Electronic information**. Do you know of any electronic conferences or pages on the Internet which exchange or provide information on participatory methodologies?
- **Other information**. Perhaps you have ideas about other types of information that would be useful for this section. If so, please let us know.

Please send your responses to:
Participatory Learning and Action,
IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H ODD, UK.
Fax: + 44 20 7388 2826;
Email: pla.notes@iied.org
Participatory Learning and Action is published in April, August, and December. Please submit material two months before the publication date.

Book reviews

Inclusive Aid: Changing power and relationships in international development

● Edited by Leslie Groves and Rachel Hinton, Earthscan, London UK. 2004

This edited volume brings together a number of papers presented at an IDS workshop on "Power, procedures and relationships". It is divided into three sections, i) history; ii) current tensions within aid agencies and between such agencies and other development institutions; and iii) proposals to improve relationships. The editors recognise that the changes in respect of participation and citizenship have been significant, but suggest that further organisational changes are needed in order that aid agencies be more effective. In sum they explain, "We argue that if the new development agency is to succeed, then new behavioural traits and capacities need to be prioritised". Such new behaviours include flexible, innovative procedures, multiple lines of accountability and the development of new skills for relationship building, such as language and cultural understanding. Internally, new organisational norms based on learning, growth and mutual respect would encourage teamwork. However, stacked against such ambitions is the distribution of overt and covert power and its operation within and between organisations.

The first section includes a review of recent aid from the perspective of the multilateral institutions as well as

a discussion of present tools (and associated relationships) for understanding organisational change processes. The section features papers from individuals involved with different aid organisations. The final section develops strategies for change. There are papers on organizational learning, institutional reform, personal change (and commitment to change), and donors' objectives and strategies.

The volume argues that some progress has been made but much remains to be done. Overall, the authors are firmly (although not uniquely) of the opinion that well-motivated and committed aid agency staff can succeed in changing institutional realities to ensure that aid supports social justice and the meeting of basic needs. There is little consideration of the structural constraints on such a transformation, nor is there much reflection or historical analysis in respective of earlier attempts to reform aid.

Reviewed by Diana Mitlin

■ Available from Earthscan/James & James, 8-12 Camden High Street, London NW1 0JH, UK. Email: earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk Website: www.earthscan.co.uk

Making waves: integrating coastal conservation and development

● Katrina Brown, Emma Tompkins and Neil Adger. Earthscan, London, UK. 2002. ISBN 1-85383-912-4.

Making Waves was published two years ago – but so far may not have been making many waves outside the coastal management sector. It is surely time for wider circulation, since the book's straightforward, pragmatic guidance on how to negotiate conservation and development trade-offs is relevant to all land and marine sectors. Based on experience in coastal management in the Caribbean, particularly the Buccoo reef area of Tobago, the book is a careful blend of abstract concepts and real-life examples. The first two chapters deal succinctly with the key ecological and social issues of coastlines (did you know that around 70% of the world's population lives within a day's walk of the sea?) Chapter 3 takes an interesting look at the limits to joint decision-making and the role of collective action and social capital, using examples from fisheries around the world, to develop principles for "deliberative inclusionary processes". More guidance follows on selecting who needs to be included and how engagement can be managed. Chapter 5 is the crux of the book: it takes the reader step-by-step through a trade-off analysis tool, which has many potential applications and adaptations. Specifically designed as an aid to multi-stakeholder negotiations, the tool uses a clever blend of quantitative and qualitative exercises, none of them too complicated, to encourage stakeholders to articulate their priorities in realistic, transparent and comparable ways. The authors rightfully refer to this trade-off analysis tool as "citizen-oriented science". The book's final chapters revisit the messy business of how to manage pluralist processes, offering good advice gleaned from the Caribbean experience.

Reviewed by Sonja Vermeulen

■ Available from Earthscan/James & James, 8-12 Camden High Street, London NW1 0JH, UK. Email: earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk Website: www.earthscan.co.uk

Images of Women in the Folk Songs of Garhwal Himalayas. A Participatory Research

● Anjali Capila Concept's Discovering Himalayas Series No. 6, 2002

The book looks at folk songs as a source material for understanding women's lives. It studies the relationship between the life patterns of women in Garhwal and the songs by analysing their content with special reference to women and environment, life-cycle events, social relations, work roles and activities performed, aesthetic depiction and contemporary issues.

The way the songs have been looked at in this book provides significant answers in terms of the new directions which need to be taken into account wherever human communities are involved. This is especially relevant for India because cultural traditions are largely transmitted orally. This is the core methodology of this book. The conceptual-theoretical framework provides a background to show that folk songs are to be understood as a matter of actual experience, through participation and observation. At this level, folk songs provide cohesiveness to a community.

This is discussed in the introduction along with the importance of oral traditions in the context of Indian civilisation, with special emphasis on folk songs. It looks at various definitions of folk songs, locating these songs as entry points to a culture. The second chapter gives a geographical profile of Garhwal, as well as its history and culture. The third chapter looks at the theoretical aspects of the research and

focuses on the notion of participation as an integral aspect of all stages of the study. The fourth chapter looks at the natural and socio-cultural framework.

The summary and conclusion chapter reiterate the important contribution of this research. Visuals form an integral part of the book – the visual images created by the songs are presented in the form of line drawings. The book also contains some colour photographs. The appendices consist of the songs translated into English by the author, the transcribed interviews with various people in Hindi, and a compilation of the socio-economic cultural background of the people of Garhwal, also in Hindi. Overall, this book has an esoteric quality and is highly specialised.

■ Available from Concept Publishing Company, a/15-16 Commercial Block, Mohan Garden, New Delhi-110059.
Fax: +91 11 5648053.
E-mail: publishing@conceptpub.com

Participatory Rural Appraisal. Methods & Applications in Rural Planning

● Studies in Rural Participation-5, second revised edition 2004
Amitava Mukherjee
Essays in Honour of Robert Chambers

The intention of the book is to encourage wider use of participatory methods in micro-level planning for rural development. The first edition of this book ran out of print in 1998. It was used extensively for training development workers from the development sector, government departments and academicians. The second edition has been revised in terms of organisation of the chapters and content. In this edition, two separate chapters have been included on methodology – the "soft-system approach", that is a methodology for micro-level planning where no problem is assumed to exist. The second deals with the "hard-system approach" to micro-level planning, where a problem has been identified and the process of micro-level planning initiated to tackle the problem. In the first edition, there was a chapter on assessment, monitoring and evaluation, which has been dropped from the second edition and given full treatment in the companion volume reviewed below. Though the primary focus of the book is on micro-level planning for rural areas, the principles and methodologies apply as much to urban planning as well. This book, like its earlier edition, is an invaluable guide to all who are interested in micro-level planning.

Participatory Learning and Action. Monitoring & Evaluation and Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation

● Studies in Rural Participation-6, 2004
Amitava Mukherjee
Essays in Honour of Robert Chambers

This book, a companion to Studies in *Rural Participation-5*, examines the difference between Traditional Monitoring and Evaluation using PLA Tools and Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E). The book is a combination of conceptual specifications of PM&E, four case studies from India, where participatory tools have been used for traditional evaluation and two case studies on participatory evaluation from Nepal and Sri Lanka. It shows how the two systems of evaluation can be carried out in different kinds of projects and environments and is an invaluable guide to development workers, development organisations, international donors, government departments engaged in M&E and students of development economics.

■ Both volumes available from Concept Publishing Company, A/15-16 Commercial Block, Mohan Garden, New Delhi-11059, India. Fax: +91-011-25357103. Email: publishing@conceptpub.com

Training across cultures. A handbook for trainers and facilitators working around the world

● Lead International, London, UK, 2004

In order to engage effectively and sensitively with participants from different cultures, trainers and facilitators need to adapt their behaviour and training style in ways that are culturally appropriate. This handbook is an interesting collection of short chapters aimed to help a newcomer engaged in training or facilitation in Brazil, Canada, China, the Commonwealth of Independent States (former Soviet Union), francophone Africa, United Kingdom, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan or Southern Africa. Practical tips and information are offered to help trainers prepare and adapt aspects of the training, from content delivery to logistics and social time, to understanding the nuances

of a new culture and how to build trust and meet participants' expectations.

■ Available from LEAD International, 48 Prince's Gardens, London SW7 2PE, UK. Tel: +44 870 220 2900. Fax: +44 870 220 2910. Email: info@lead.org Website: www.lead.org

Participation: Sharing our resources

● FAO, Rome, 2004

A resource CD-ROM on participatory approaches, methods and tools available in English, French and Spanish from the Informal Working Group on Participatory Approaches and Methods to Support Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Security at FAO. This CD-ROM contains a selection of 215 full-text FAO documents pertaining to participation in development and a database featuring 135 participatory approaches, methods and tools.

■ Available from FAO Participation Website Team, Rural Development Division, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy. Email: IWG-PA-Webbox@fao.org Website: www.fao.org/participation

Palar Panchayat (Children's Parliament)

● SPEECH/CCFF, India, 2004

On 4th October 2003, the village of Oorampatti, Tamil Nadu, India held the first ever election for a *Palar Panchayat*: a children's parliament. This fascinating film, available on DVD, was co-produced by SPEECH, the Child Rights Protection Centre and CCFF. In India, the *Panchayat Raj* system is central to local governance. The children's parliament has actively involved local kids between the ages of 14 and 18 in the realities of the democratic process. It follows the children on their election campaigns and shows how PRA methods and processes – such as social mapping and role play – enable children to learn about good governance, leadership, decentralisation, gender, child rights and welfare. The newly elected children will play a key role in the village, working alongside the adult *Panchayat* elected members. As one child comments, from now on they will know to 'review passed performance before voting!'

■ Available from SPEECH, 2/1060 Manoranjitham Street, Ezhil Nagar, Madurai 625 014, India. Email: rcpds@sify.com. Cost for orders delivered outside of India: £5.00. Cost for orders delivered in India: Rs.250

Participatory videos

The following are not new, but are included in this special issue as useful resources

Lines in the Dust

● Karpus / CIRAC, 2002

This video explores the Reflect approach through telling the personal stories of Sanatu, a village trader in Ghana, who gains the confidence to challenge the traditional roles of men and women in rural Ghana, and Balama, a farmer in India who becomes active in a people's movement – making links between the changing pressures on her village and wider issues of economic globalisation and privatisation.

20 minutes, originally broadcast on BBC World Service TV (available in English, French and Spanish, in Betacam or VHS, PAL or NTSC version).

■ Available from www.reflect-action.org or knewman@actionaid.org.uk

Participatory Research with Women Farmers

● Television Trust for the Environment (TVE), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), 1991

Through their large share of work in food production, storage and food preparation, women play a key role in extending and conserving genetic diversity. This film shows how ICRISAT is working with women farmers to preserve and promote their valuable knowledge for the future. Through its focus on participatory research, the video invites reflection on the changes in institutions and attitudes that allow people to learn through a process of mutual dialogue. It is designed as an education tool which:

• Explains why farmers should be involved in the evaluation of pest-resistant lines developed on research stations where conditions differ from those on farmers; fields in the semi-arid tropics.

• Shows how scientists can facilitate a process whereby resource-poor farmers assess genetic material grown under their circumstances and with their own management. Farmers are effectively involved in a decentralized research mode that seeks to complement the transfer of technology model of agricultural research and development.

■ 30 minutes, Available from www.icrisat.org

Questions of Difference: PRA, Gender and Environment. A Training Video

● IIED, London, 995

How women and men use, manage and are affected by their natural

environment is strongly influenced by their socially-determined roles and responsibilities. PRA can help development workers explore the links between gender and the environment, enabling more effective work with local communities. This video is part of a trainer's pack and complements the trainer's guide and slide set. The thought-provoking images in the overview and case studies can be used to stimulate discussion and lead into exercises. The overview presents a summary of the key elements for using PRA to understand gender and environment. Structured as a series of short thematic segments ranging from 2-14 minutes, trainers can select sections to stimulate discussion for specific training objectives. The sections deal with people's roles, images and realities, key questions, an introduction to PRA, thinking about communication, PRA methods for analysis, revealing difference. The case studies show workshop participants using PRA methods to explore gender and environment issues in the field. Each case study takes place in a unique socio-cultural and environmental setting, allowing the trainer to choose the most appropriate context for specific training needs. The case studies (28 minutes each) can be used as fieldwork examples or for more extended class-based analysis, together with the handouts in the Trainer's Guide. The case studies consist of (1) Exploring Mangrove Use in Pakistan; (2) Exploring Drylands Use in Burkina Faso; (3) Exploring Biodiversity in Brazil.

● Available from www.earthprint.com

Events and training

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
28th February – 18th March 2005
IIRR, Philippines.
Course fee: US$2,500

This course is intended to broaden participants' understanding of PM&E as a support to programme/project management at different levels and as a tool for strengthening participation, enhancing local capacity, and increasing local people's confidence and control over development decisions and processes. The course examines PM&E concepts and principles, as well as methods, tools and techniques, which have been tested and used in the field. Drawing from a range of significant experiences, the course also highlights key elements that enrich the application and maintenance of PM&E system.

■ For more information about these courses, please contact: Course Coordinator, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), Y.C. James Yen Centre, Silang 4118, Cavite, The Philippines.
Tel: +63 (46) 4142417; Fax: +(63) 46 4142420;
Email: Education&Training@iirr.org;
Website: www.iirr.org

Five-day Participatory Appraisal training course
24th – 28th January 2005
PEANuT, UK
Course fee: Full cost £380; voluntary/not for profit sector £190
(inclusive of all course materials and refreshments and lunches on 4 days, but not overnight accommodation).

Alongside 'traditional' users of such course provision (for example, those who are employed in community-based work such as health professionals, youth workers, carers, support workers, housing officers, teachers etc.) participatory appraisal (PA) is explicitly designed to further the ability of local people in identifying and effecting the changes they desire in their communities. These PA courses are open to anyone with an interest in the communities in which they live and/or work.

During the course participants learn about the background and philosophies of participatory appraisal and how to use the tools and techniques with confidence. Pre-arranged fieldwork placements enable students (in teams) to practice their skills in an ongoing, real-world project. Themes of previous placements have included homelessness, consulting young people and financial exclusion.

■ For more information contact: PEANuT, Northumbria University, Division of Geography, Lipman Building, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)191 227 3848 or 227 3753;
Fax: +44 (0)191 227 4715;
Email: ge.peanut@northumbria.ac.uk;
Website: http://northumbria.ac.uk/business/pa/pacourses/

Courses available at the Coady Institute, Canada

The Coady International Institute provides leaders, managers and staff of non-profit or development organisations with opportunities to build their capacity to bring about more just, sustainable and equitable outcomes at the community level. Coady offers a range of educational programmes for practitioners at the Certificate, Diploma and Master's level.

Certificate Programmes
May and September 2005
Course fees: tuition: CAN $2,000; accommodation: CAN $ 1,000; total: CAN $ 3,000. Bursary assistance may be available for qualified applicants.
The Coady Institute offers several short certificate courses each year, which are open to development practitioners from the North and South:

- **Community-based microfinance**
- **Community-based resource management**
- **Advocacy and networking**
- **Management of development organisations**
- **Community-based conflict transformation and peacebuilding**

Conducted by Coady staff, the Certificate Programmes are highly participatory, providing candidates with an opportunity to share ideas and to exchange experiences with each other and with participants in the Institute's Diploma Programme.

Diploma and Master Programmes
The Coady Diploma Programme runs from July to December. A new joint Master of Adult Education Programme will have its first intake in April, 2005. Because of the long lead-time, international participants should register as soon as possible in order to acquire visas, make arrangements for leave, funding, etc. Course fees: Master of Adult Education: tuition only: CAN $9, 970 for international students or CAN $6,070 for Canadian students. Bursary assistance for tuition is available for qualified applicants. Diploma in Adult Education: Tuition: CAN $9, 500; Accommodation: CAN $4,300; Total: CAN $13,800. Bursary assistance for tuition is available for qualified applicants.
■ For more information, please contact: Nancy Peters, Programme Associate, Recruitment, Coady International Institute, PO Box 5000, Antigonish, NS B2G 2W5, Canada. Email: coadyreg@stfx.ca or visit www.stfx.ca/institutes/coady

Australian Aid Resource And Training Guide (AARTG)
The Australian Aid Resource and Training Guide (AARTG) is a window into for aid practitioners to plug into the humanitarian and development world. It consists of four main sections: advice for those seeking overseas work; useful Australian contacts in the aid field; useful overseas or international contacts related to the aid field.

It is also the main guide to aid-related training courses on offer in Australia. The AARTG is produced by TorqAid, an Australian overseas aid consultancy specialising in disaster management, training, project management, and human resource management.
■ For more information and to subscribe to their monthly newsletter, contact: Chris Piper, Director, TorqAid, PO Box 13, Torquay 3228, Australia. Tel: +41 2497317; Email: pipercm@iprimus.com.au

Building Communities from the Grassroots
Empowering Communities for the Future
20th March – 25th March 2005
Community Development Academy, Excelsior Springs, Missouri, USA
Course fees (per course): US$500 non-credit (4.0 CEUs); US$764.40 (3 semester credit hours undergraduate credit); US$899.70 (3 semester credit hours graduate credit). Food and accommodation is separate. Financial assistance may be available – contact CDA.
The University of Missouri Community Development Extension Programme offers a series of courses called the Community Development Academy.

Each of the courses is an intensive, experiential, five-day course that explores ideas and develops practical skills for effectively involving and empowering local citizens and leaders in community-based efforts. Courses can be taken for University Credit or professional development.
■ For additional course information and to register, contact: Lorie Bousquet: Tel: +1 (573) 882 6059; Email: BousquetL@missouri.edu or Becky Humphrey: +1 (573) 882 8320; Email: HumphreyB@missouri.edu or visit www.muconf.missouri.edu/CommDevelopmentAcademy

e-participation

For this issue we have decided to expand our e-participation resources section to include reviews of several websites mentioned in our theme articles in this issue. You will find a wide range of topics covered by these websites. Some have been reviewed in previous issues, but are listed here again to take into account new updates and additions.

The International Community of Women Living with AIDS (ICW)

www.icw.org

This website is a fantastic resource for anyone who is working with or affected by HIV and AIDS. ICW is a network of over 19 million women worldwide, with offices based in the Africa, Asia-Pacific, the Caribbean, Europe, UK, North America and Latin America. It hosts the Women Living with HIV/AIDS forum – a space for women to engage, network, and share experiences and learning. The site includes guidelines on ethical participatory research with HIV positive women, and has a substantial and searchable links directory, sub-divided into categories such as community-based help, positive living etc. There is also a searchable list of current and archived articles, including key texts from events such as the International AIDS Conference in Barcelona; other documents online, such as *Positive Women – Voices & Choices*; and ICW News Bulletins and fact sheets. All publications are in Portable Document Format (PDF) including *A Positive Women's Survival Kit* in both English and Spanish. Plus information about current ICW activities, conferences, and how to submit articles.

The UK Consortium on AIDS and International Development

www.aidsconsortium.org.uk

The UK Consortium on AIDS and International Development is a group of more than 70 UK-based organisations. They work together to understand and develop effective approaches to the problems created by the HIV epidemic in developing countries through information exchange, networking, advocacy and campaigning. There are several key publications and documents relating to ongoing initiatives online in PDF format, such as the *HIV/AIDS Prevention of Mother-to-Child-Transmission Best practice recommendations*. Access to some areas of the site, such as the monthly bulletin, are restricted to members of the Consortium only – membership is open to all civil society organisations that are based in the UK and are concerned about issues of HIV/AIDS and development.

Oxfam GB UK Poverty Programme

www.oxfamgb.org/ukpp

This website focuses on issues of poverty in the UK. It includes a useful online resources section, covering general poverty-related issues, as well as asylum, participation, gender and diversity, and livelihoods. Documents are free to download in PDF format, and include reports such as *From input to influence: Participatory approaches to research on poverty* which gives a UK overview of 'participatory' approaches that respect the expertise of people with direct experience of poverty and give them more control over the research process and more influence over how findings are used. There is also *Have you been PA'd? Using Participatory Appraisal to shape local services* – a report that introduces Participatory Appraisal, showing what it is (and what it is not) and what it can achieve.

In late summer 2004, a new online resource will be available, the Social Inclusion Database, through which information on participation, gender and livelihoods in the UK can be found.

The Catalyst Centre: Promoting cultures of learning for positive social change

www.catalystcentre.ca

The Catalyst Centre is an online resource for popular education and research (pop-ed), an umbrella term for social justice education. The site seeks to maintain and further develop the Canadian community of organisations and individuals involved in social justice education.
It includes links to its newsletter *Networker* as well as other online resources – articles, journals, educational kits and websites – that deal with popular education and other relevant themes. Categories include popular education and theory, Paulo Freire, popular theatre and literacy etc. Although some of the links do not work or have become out of date, it is still a useful resource for anyone interested in pop-ed.

In addition, the Catalyst Centre and partners have been developing a concept of a democracy – or activist – school. A current working paper on the idea can be found on the site and the project will soon have its own dedicated website. The site also has information about their Popular Education Mapping Project, which seeks to create a 'living map' to reflect the growing and constantly changing nature of the popular education and social justice movements.

Development Focus

www.devfocus.org.uk

This site is currently working as a

homepage for Development Focus, which focuses on community participation in the UK. However, it will soon include e.g. online reports from Community Assessment and Action processes. Watch this space!

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

www.jrf.org.uk

Joseph Rowntree Foundation carries out work on a range of issues relating to poverty and social exclusion in the UK. Of particular interest is their *Findings* series, which are short summaries of their main reports from the Community Links Social Enterprise Zone (SEZ). The SEZ is a test bed for new policies and services tackling regeneration in deprived areas. Users of public services and front-line workers generate all the ideas. The *Findings* are produced by those involved in running the SEZ and report on the lessons from its first years.

There are also archives of discussion forums, although there are no forums running on the site currently, and a good links section.

Renewal.net

www.renewal.net

A web-based resource established by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit that covers a range of issues relevant to regeneration in the UK. Although previously reviewed in *Participatory Learning and Action*, the site has some new resources, documents, forums and links online, as well as events listings and other relevant information. Forums include discussions e.g. around health, education, housing and local economies. In addition to the Local Strategic Partnerships toolkit, there is now also a sport, physical activity and renewal toolkit online.

Reflect

www.reflect-action.org

As discussed in our article in this issue by David Archer, *Reflect* is an approach to adult learning and social change, used by over 350 diverse organisations in more than 60 countries. This website is a great online resource, and includes PDF versions of the Communications and Power manual, one of which is included in this issue in our Tips for Trainers section. This manual contains over 70 two-page, easy to follow PDF documents that are split into themes such as the written word, spoken word, numbers and images. There is also a Reflect calendar highlighting some (though not all!) Reflect activities going on around the world.

BRIDGE

www.bridge.ids.ac.uk

BRIDGE is an Institute for Development Studies collaborative initiative which supports gender advocacy and mainstreaming efforts by bridging the gaps between theory, policy and practice. It has accessible and diverse gender information in print and online. The site is a 'virtual bookcase' where you can download copies of all BRIDGE publications. These are searchable by theme or by type of publication. Titles include, for example, *Gender and Development: concepts and definitions and Gender and Monitoring: review of practical experiences*. There are also links to www.Siyanda.org, a searchable collection of international materials including tools, case studies, policy papers and research. The site is also a space where gender practitioners can share ideas, experiences and resources.

BRIDGE also includes several *Cutting Edge* packs – such as gender and citizenship, gender and participation, gender and armed conflict, and gender and budgets, available to download in both Word and PDF versions, and many in French and Spanish as well as English.

Engender

www.engender.org

Engender is an information, research and networking organisation for women in Scotland in the UK, working with other groups locally and internationally to improve women's lives and increase their power and influence. The organisation campaigns to ensure that woman and their concerns have greater visibility and equal representation at all levels of Scottish society.

The website lists events, conferences and seminars, and although it does not contain many PDF documents to download, most documents listed can be posted as hard copies if you request them and send in a stamp addressed envelope. The links section includes, amongst others, links to related websites on disability, feminism, health, women and the media, women and the web, women in employment, women in politics and research as well as links to other related online publications.

Just Associates (JASS)

www.justassociates.org

Just Associates (JASS) is a strategic support and learning network committed to strengthening the leadership, strategies and impact of organisations that promote human rights, equality and economic justice. It seeks to enable organisations to engage in and promote active citizen participation, democratic practice and accountability for more equitable and healthy societies through effective

capacity building – combining political analysis, popular and political education, community development, citizen action, strategic planning, conflict transformation and advocacy.

The website contains online versions of two publications that have both previously been reviewed in *PLA Notes 43 – Advocacy and Citizen Participation: A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation* and *Making Change Happen: Advocacy and Citizen Participation*. In addition, there are numerous reports and some training tools.

Community Integrated Pest Management

www.communityipm.org

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is an ecological approach to plant protection. In the last two decades, Asian Governments, NGOs and international agencies have been working together to organise training that helps farmers to learn about the ecology of their fields and, as a result, enables them to make and implement decisions, which are safe, productive and sustainable. In recent years, IPM farmers have started organising themselves in order to carry out field experiments, train other farmers, and interact more effectively with government agencies. These developments have given rise to a new term, Community IPM. This website is a source of information about Community IPM in Asia. The site is divided into the several major sections, including news, online reports, a newsletter, members, links and case studies.

Online reports include the recent FAO report *From Farmer Field Schools to Community IPM: Ten Years of IPM Training in Asia*. This is broken down into easy to download chunks, with a list of contents, and each chapter downloadable in either Word or PDF formats.

Institutionalising Participation case studies

www.iied.org/sarl/pubs/institutpart.html

The Institutionalising Participation project has conducted a comprehensive assessment of the dynamics of scaling up and institutionalising people-centred processes and participatory approaches for natural resource management (NRM) in a variety of settings. How can large organisations working in NRM actually facilitate, rather than inhibit, participation and the adaptive management of natural resources? How do roles, rights, responsibilities and the distribution of costs and benefits need to change among actors in civil society, government and the private sector?

This link to the IIED website takes you directly to an online listing of PDF case study publications, as well as a useful summary document. Each case study details both the organisational and impact analysis used to determine the impact of key policies and events that have influenced the design and institutionalisation of participatory and people-centred approaches.

The Self Employed Women's Association

www.sewa.org

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is an organisation of poor, self-employed women workers. SEWA's main goals are to organise women workers for self-reliance through self-employment, helping to ensure work security, income security, food security and social security (at least health care, child care and shelter) and by promoting women's capacity to be autonomous and self-reliant – individually and collectively – both economically and in terms of their decision-making ability.

The website details information about the movement, their campaigns, events, and lists related services such as the SEWA bank (www.sewabank.org/) which aims to empower women through the support and provision of micro-credit, such as for the Women Farmers Credit Scheme and the Housing Finance Scheme. It also links to the SEWA fortnightly newsletter www.anasooya.org. Anasooya focuses on injustices done to the employed women and the way they are exploited, policies for the self-employed.

Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC)

www.sparcindia.org

This website is a great resource for anyone who wants to find out more about urban issues and the work of the Alliance between SPARC, Mahila Milan and the National Slum Dwellers Federation and with other partners. It contains information on relevant topics such as international exchanges between organisations, and has lists of current projects e.g. about resettlement programmes and community toilets. There are stories and policy briefings e.g. about slums and a good links page. There are some great reports with photos e.g. housing exhibitions by Mahila Milan, and household enumeration surveys. It also has a host of online publications and reports, from water and sanitation issues to capacity building to savings and credit schemes to housing.

The Nigerian Development Research Centre

www2.ids.ac.uk/drccitizen/highlights/Abuja.htm

The Nigerian DRC on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability aims to identify ways of ensuring that development policy and practice provide more effective support for poor people's own efforts to transform their rights into realities. It is convened by Theatre for Development at Ahmadu Bello University, with collaborating researchers from NPTA, the University of Jos and Legal Watch. This excellent website has information about three current research programmes: Encountering Citizens: perceptions, realities and practices in Nigeria; Theatre for Development and citizenship in Nigeria and India; and Understanding and expressing citizenship through Theatre for Development. It also contains links to publications, working papers, news and bulletins, and recent research highlights.

International HIV/AIDS Alliance

www.aidsalliance.org

International HIV/AIDS Alliance is a development organisation specialised in supporting communities in developing countries to tackle the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS. It includes various online toolkits, such as the *HIV/AIDS NGO/CBO Support Toolkit*, in both English and Portuguese. There is also the *Antiretroviral Treatment Toolkit* which provides user-friendly technical guidance on planning and implementing ARV treatment programmes in resource-limited settings. There is an extensive list of other online publications and toolkits in different languages, ranging from civil society and development to orphans and vulnerable children, to more general publications.

Open Forum on Participatory Geographic Information Systems and Technologies

www.PPGIS.net

PPGIS is an informal network of development/GIS practitioners and researchers operating in developing countries and elsewhere. Members share common interests in participatory spatial information and communication management, community mapping, participatory GIS practice and science, spatial thinking, memory, and language, cognitive maps, and more. Their aim is to provide disadvantaged groups in society with added knowledge-based resources in interacting with higher-level institutions, negotiating territorial issues, participating in land/resource use planning, management and decision-making, and influencing policy-making. Members can share information and lessons learnt and post questions, resource documents and announcements which are relevant to the practice.

RCPLA Network

In this section, we aim to update readers on activities of the **Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network (RCPLA) Network** (www.rcpla.org) and its members. RCPLA is a diverse, international network of 17 national-level organisations which brings together development practitioners from around the globe. It was formally established in 1997 to promote the use of participatory approaches to development. The network is dedicated to capturing and disseminating development perspectives from the South. For more information please contact the RCPLA Network Steering Group:

RCPLA Coordination: Tom Thomas (Network Coordinator), Director, Institute for Participatory Practices (Praxis), S-75 South Extension, Part II, New Delhi, India 110 049. Tel/Fax: +91 11 5164 2348 to 51; Email: tomt@praxisindia.org or catherinek@praxisindia.org
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Southern and Eastern Africa Region: Eliud Wakwabubi, Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK), Jabavu Road, PCEA Jitegemea Flats, Flat No. D3, P.O. Box 2645, KNH Post Office, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel/Fax: +254 2 716609; Email: pamfork@nbnet.co.ke

News from Praxis

Communication for Change – a view from the South. An RCPLA initiative

Today we find ourselves in a scenario where a majority of the discourse created and circulated about international development is dominated by academics and practitioners from the North. Therefore, the rich experiences of development professionals intimately involved with these issues remain undocumented. Undoubtedly, practitioners from or based in the North represent a different perspective, and it is time for those perspectives to no longer overshadow the experiences and insights of Southern development workers. Often times, quintessential Southern debates are taking place in the North "on behalf of" those actually involved. In many ways this dichotomy exists only because Southern practitioners often lack the time and the confidence to document their experiences in a manner that is disseminated widely. It is time to develop a strategy to bring the perspectives of the South to the forefront of the discourse. Practitioners being ill equipped to communicate their experiences is not an excuse for them to remain unheard. Instead, we need to think of innovative ways to build those capacities and find creative outlets for development workers to impact change.

To address the endemic problem of Southern voices remaining unheard in the development dialogue and as an outcome of an RCPLA steering group meeting hosted by PAMFORK in Nairobi in July 2004, the RCPLA has decided to refocus its efforts on a *Communication for Change* initiative. RCPLA recognises that there is an incredible need to facilitate knowledge creation in the South, so that the Southern perspective can be powerfully represented among the discourse. The initiative will focus on: (a) bringing forth Southern perspectives on international development, (b) capturing them in a collective manner (c) utilising multiple mediums rather than just the written word, and (d) disseminating these experiences not merely for sharing, but to impact social change. This initiative seeks to build capacities of

development practitioners in the art of effectively and creatively utilising different forms of communication. Given the global reach of RCPLA, the *Communication for Change* initiative has the potential to emerge as a leading catalyst advancing South-driven social change.

Communication for Change plans to expand beyond the traditional scope of written documentation, and challenge preconceived notions that the written word is the only respected form of expression. Instead, the RCPLA is dedicated to breaking down that framework and recognising the power in alternative forms of communication. By building the capacities of development workers to communicate their experiences through writing, participatory video, theatre, etc., activists can be equipped with a range of new tools to affect change.

First Steps

In order for RCPLA to facilitate this process, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive understanding of the processes involved in communicating through these many mediums. Therefore, RCPLA proposes that the first step in the *Communication for Change* initiative is to create a sourcebook for those interested in communicating to bring about change. This book will articulate the ABC's of how to write an article, make a participatory video, produce theatrical productions, etc. and serve as a "How to" guide on the process of engaging in the development debate in a powerful manner. It will be arranged in a manner that will allow for modifications to be made according to cultural contexts, so that the sourcebook can be relevant to a diverse group of practitioners. This sourcebook will not only shed light on the specific communication tools, but will also inform the reader of other applicable skills such as advocacy. Therefore, the practitioners will be equipped with the capacity to strategically place their work within the discourse and put forth their perspective in a politically engaging manner.

RCPLA proposes to launch the *Communication for Change* initiative by holding an international workshop in February 2005, which will assemble a group of prominent practitioners from a variety of communication fields. Please contact the network coordinator if you would like to be involved. We are looking in particular for those involved in forum theatre, participatory video, puppetering, etc. The workshop will create a forum for these professionals to focus on formulating the sourcebook. These communication advocates will be able to build upon their experiences in a collaborative manner throughout the course of the workshop and form this sourcebook together. Our participatory approach towards creating this sourcebook seeks to successfully utilise the diverse insights of those involved. Our approach to the international workshop will be informed by the insights gained from a series of writing workshops that RCPLA has conducted to capture grassroots experiences. These writeshops have illuminated the need for training in basic writing skills amongst development practitioners, and have also reiterated the conclusion that writing is not always the most effective form of communication.

Scaling up

This sourcebook has the potential of evolving into one of the premier resources in the development sector, which provides a vital overview of the pertinent processes involved in communicating for change. Regional and country-specific members of RCPLA will take the lead and adopt this sourcebook to be relevant in their respective countries. It will then be utilised as a guide in regional workshops where practitioners will come together and make participatory videos, produce theatre, create folk artistic expressions, etc. RCPLA plans to disseminate this guide through its wide array of networks throughout the South, so that development workers gain an understanding of these critical processes. After holding a series of capacity building regional workshops, RCPLA will focus upon establishing regional partnerships between network members and organisations more specifically focused on communication. The network plans to partner with media outlets, local theatre groups, etc. to strategise about innovative ways that these creative forms of documentation can reach a wider audience. Newspapers can become the forum for articles on development, local festivals can become the showcase for theatre and folk art, television programmes can broadcast participatory videos, to name a few of the possibilities. RCPLA will be specifically involved in the capacity building processes and will facilitate the widespread dissemination, and envisions the development practitioners involved to be empowered with additional tools to bring about social change. In the eyes of the RCPLA, the *Communication for Change* initiative is a movement to bring Southern perspectives to the forefront of

development discussions. If practitioners are empowered to creatively share their wealth of experience, the entire framework of the development discourse will shift. The RCPLA is dedicated to ensuring that these relevant voices are incorporated meaningfully into debates surrounding development.

For more information, contact the RCPLA Coordinator.

News from PAMFORK

Background

Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK) is a network under the National Council of NGOs of Kenya made up of organisational and individual researchers and practitioners working in partnership to support the innovation of participatory processes to strengthen citizen voice, influence policy making, enhance local governance and transform institutions. PAMFORK is involved in promoting citizen participation and rights-based development in governance for sustainable development and poverty reduction in Eastern and Southern Africa. It is doing this under the aegis of RCPLA.

PAMFORK is the convenor for the Eastern and Southern Africa Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (ESARCPLA) network. Other members of ESARCPLA are Zimbabwe PRA Network (ZIMPRANET) and the Uganda Participatory Development Network (UPDNet). Citizen participation and rights has been identified as a key challenge in the region and hence the need to strengthen it in the region. Citizen participation is a *conscious process of an informed and active involvement and equitable inclusion of all sections of typically stratified communities: women, men, older, younger, rich and poor, in the analysis of their own development challenges, priority setting, design and implementation of development interventions*. It entails building capacities of communities to analyse and appraise their situation and empowers them to challenge inequitable resources distribution and injustices among other issues. The approach is based on the understanding that involving stakeholders in policy processes is empowering, since it ensures their participation in the making and ownership of decisions affecting their lives by building on the knowledge and experiences of stakeholders.

RCPLA writeshop in Kenya

The above notwithstanding, the gap between citizen participation and rights-based development has continued to widen thereby exacerbating poverty. It is against this backdrop that PAMFORK initiated a process of strengthening capacities of practitioners and researchers to scale up participatory approaches to development in order to take advantage of new spaces opened for citizen participation in policy-making, implementation and monitoring processes in the eastern and southern African region. In the bid to realise this, PAMFORK is convening a writeshop on citizen participation in governance for practitioners and researchers to share current practical experiences, critical perspectives and methodological innovations on citizen participation for good governance and sustainable poverty reduction. The overall objective of the workshop is to promote citizen participation and rights-based development as a strategy for promoting good governance for sustainable poverty reduction.

The specific objectives are to:

- Create awareness and facilitate sharing of experience by practitioners and researchers on citizen participation and rights-based development
- Enhance acknowledge and skills of practitioners and researchers in documentation, advocacy and implementation of rights-based development approaches for governance and poverty reduction.

The writeshop is tentatively scheduled for late November or early December 2004. For further information please contact the coordinator, Eliud Wakwabubi.

News from the Asia Region

Writeshop on Participatory Democracy

RCPLA held its first writeshop in the RCPLA Asia Region on 21-24 April 2004, in the outskirts of Delhi. We were experimenting with a new concept and luckily with the cooperation of our facilitators and participants it was a successful pioneering initiative. Not only were we playing with the idea of a writing workshop, but we were also trying to see if a publication of this kind could be written in a participatory manner. We brought together a small group of people with a diverse set of experiences to give them an opportunity to reflect upon their work and write. The writeshop was focused around grassroots experiences with participatory democracy, and we were hoping to examine the dynamic nature of

democracy and participation. In today's international community, where neo-colonial versions of democracy tend to be gaining international currency, we thought it was beneficial to bring an alternate dialogue to the forefront. Therefore, the writeshop sought to present alternative perspectives and experiences, both historical and contemporary, to the discourse surrounding participatory democracy. The publication seeks to highlight the unique grassroots work of development practitioners, and place these important field experiences within the broader theoretical discussion on participatory democracy.

The writeshop was organised around four sub-themes related to participatory democracy:

- The right to self rule (analysing fundamental principles of self-rule, not simply in the context of being constitutionally sanctioned);
- Recapturing historical governance traditions (looking at traditional forms of governance and democracy, which traditions we can utilise in the modern context);
- Putting constitutional principles into practice (how can we advance a participatory agenda within the constitutional framework);
- Inclusion of historically marginalized groups (analyzing processes of marginalisation and forms of inclusion).

Although there are a great number of sub-themes we could have focused on, we felt as though this would be a solid beginning to our analysis. Each thematic group was responsible for one section of the final publication.

This writeshop was a strong first step in RCPLA's grassroots documentation initiative. Our first attempt was a great learning experience, and gave us a number of insights into how to organise a writeshop. As a result of this experiment, RCPLA is better equipped to take this grassroots documentation initiative forward. Now RCPLA can utilise the scope of this network and plan more writeshops of this kind throughout the world. For a copy of the final report, please contact the RCPLA coordinator

News from the Latin American Region

Background on the GNTP

In Bolivia, the National Working Group on Participation (GNTP) is a founding member of the RCPLA and the Regional Resource Centre. GNTP is a national network of NGOs and professionals, which seeks to ensure greater participation of the poor in local governance and decision-making processes. Currently, GNTP is especially interested in fostering discussions of citizen participation in local governance, participatory learning and action and communications for change in South America, particularly in the Andean region (Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia).

Recently, GNTP together with Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG)-Latin America and Fondo de Apoyo Social y Comunitario de Ecuador (FACES-Ecuador) initiated a project titled: *Improving Civilian Participation and Local Economic Development in Rural Areas of Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador*.[1] This project works at the level of municipal associations. ITDG is a British NGO with years of experience working with civil participation in local economic development and municipalities in Peru and other part of Latin America. FACES is an Ecuadorian NGO which supports local development and strengthening of productive initiatives in various municipalities in Ecuador. GNTP and its partners also have or are developing direct ties to several academic institutions including Nur University (Bolivia), Cordillera University (La Paz, Bolivia) and FLACSO (Ecuador).

Most Latin American countries including Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru and others have implemented some form of decentralisation in the last decade or so. Among these countries, Bolivia has been widely touted as model of democratic decentralisation, but there is still insufficient knowledge of the impacts (positive and negative), processes and results of participatory local governance. In Latin America, governments, NGOs and international donors continue to fund and promote decentralisation and participatory local governance, although they lack the types of information that serves to define how and where to invest funds and how to promote democracy and citizen participation more effectively.

Writeshop on experiences with promoting people's participation in local governance in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil

GNTP is organising a writeshop on *Experiences with Promoting People's Participation in Local Governance in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil*, aimed at capturing the rich

1. A municipal association is a group of municipalities which unite to work towards a common objective. These municipalities can unite for various reasons such as to defend themselves against large mining exploration or to resolve common problems etc.

experiences that practitioners in these countries have in this area. GNTP would build on its institutional ties and partners in Ecuador, Peru and Brazil in the context of implementation of this event.

The writeshop has the following objectives.

- To provide space and time for authors to share their experiences engaging in Promoting People's Participation in Local Governance the implementation, through presentations and group discussion sessions;
- To review and finalize draft articles through group discussion sessions and bilateral sessions with authors and guest editor;
- To identify and develop overarching common themes, experiences and lessons that emerge from the experiences;
- To provide participants with training on writing skills and mutually build a more effective capacity to communicate experiences to international audiences;
- To provide opportunity to network with one another, and bring new South American partners into the Resource Centres on Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) network;
- To produce an RCPLA publication, which would be a compilation of experiences presented in the workshop;
- To disseminate the experiences of practitioners in the South;
- To provide valuable inputs for RCPLA's forthcoming event on *Communications for Change.*

The event is being hosted by GNTP in November 2004. For more information, contact the Latin American coordinator.

News from the European Region

From the Participation Group (PG), IDS

Work continues on our *Participation, Power and Change* programme, which seeks to deepen understandings of power, exclusion and processes of social and political participation and change. Within this programme we are working on issues around rights and inclusion, participation in economic agendas, behaviour and change in development institutions, and teaching and learning participation. Recent documents include the IDS Working Papers "*Mapping Trade Policy: Understanding the Challenges of Civil Society Participation*" by K. Brock and R. McGee, and "*Learning and Teaching Participation: Exploring the Role of Higher Learning Institutions as Agents of Development and Social Change*" by P. Taylor and J. Fransman, as well as "*Inclusive Aid: changing power and relationships in international development*" edited by L. Groves and R. Hinton (Earthscan Publications).

A key event in the work of the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability was a collaborative workshop and information stall at the World Social Forum, Mumbai, India, where several 'stories' of citizenship being claimed were presented and participants were invited to share their own experiences. A trip report and photos are available at: www.drc-citizenship.org. Meanwhile The Learning Initiative on Citizen Participation and Local Governance has partnered with the Deliberative Democracy Consortium and will be participating in two joint research initiatives on deliberative democracy. For more information, visit the LogoLink website at http://www.ids.ac.uk/logolink/initiatives/projects/ddc.htm. Our Pastoralist Communication Initiative, working in the Horn of Africa, has recently produced two publications: "*Pastoralism: Governance, Services and Productivity – New Thinking on Pastoralist Development*" and "*The Processes and Dynamics of Pastoralist Representation in Ethiopia*". Contact the PG for more details.

May saw the commencement of our new MA in *Participation, Development and Social Change*, which uses an innovative and reflective learning approach, linking conceptual knowledge with practical work experience, and which includes students from around the world. Earlier in the year we launched *Mzizi*, our electronic newsletter, detailing our current activities, new publications and other news and events (contact us if you wish to receive copies). And lastly, 2004 has seen the expansion of our Participation Resource Centre with the welcome merger with IIED's collection on PLA. Now housing around 6,500 documents, books and videos, the Centre offers practical and analytical materials relating to participatory approaches to development, citizenship, rights, governance and the environment. Our database can be searched online, providing many abstracts, links and sources and we continue to operate a limited document delivery service for requests from the South (more details at www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/information/)

News from IIED

FARM-Africa communications workshop

In June, FARM-Africa held a week-long communications workshop which was hosted by the London office and attended by country staff. The workshop had the following objectives:

- To raise the profile of communications activities across FARM-Africa in line with the FARM-Africa Strategy *Towards 2015: Innovative Solutions to Africa's Rural Livelihoods* (2003) with senior and information Staff from Africa.
- To share information about communications activities across the organisation.
- To participate in selected training sessions on particular aspects of communications, to build general communications capacity (e.g. communications planning, media, print/production, documentation, marketing and promotion etc.).
- For each country group, to plan and develop a discrete piece of work during the week and to take it to completion on return home.
- To start and maintain a dialogue throughout FARM-Africa on key communications strategies.

The *Participatory Learning and Action* Acting Editor, Nicole Kenton, was invited to facilitate a session on *Using Other publications to Get the Message 'Out There'*! She gave an overview of how to submit and structure an article for *Participatory Learning and Action*, giving tips on what elements to include and the review process. Participants then worked on drafting an abstract on one of their country projects, based on these criteria. We look forward to future contributions from FARM-Africa staff!

Residents 4 Regeneration Europe conference, The Hague

In October 2004, Holly Ashley attended a three-day conference held in The Hague, The Netherlands. This was the first international gathering organised by the Residents University. The objective was to allow people living in neighbourhoods in various European cities to learn from one another and to let professionals in neighbourhood renewal learn from what they have to say. Following on from the success of the event, Holly hopes to visit some of the UK residents' groups who participated in the near future to run some writeshops similar to the one Nicole facilitated at FARM Africa in July 2004. You can find out more about the Residents University at www.r4r-europe.com

If you are interested in having a copy of the 'Get the message "Out There"!' presentation, please email pla.notes@iied.org

Participatory Learning and Action 51 authors' writeshop

July saw another writeshop in Kenya, hosted by PAMFORK and jointly organised by IDS, IIED and PAMFORK. This time it was an authors' writeshop for *Participatory Learning and Action* 51, due to come out in April 2005. This will be a special edition on *Civil Society Participation in the Implementation and Monitoring of Poverty Reduction Strategies* (PRSs).

The objectives of this workshop were:

- To share the rich experiences of practitioners' engagement in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation process of PRSs. These were shared through presentations and discussions of the articles prepared for *Participatory Learning and Action* 51.
- To finalise these articles and to mutually help one another build capacity to communicate these experiences to international audiences.

Participants came to the writeshop with their first drafts and feedback from the guest editors, Alexandra Hughes and Nicholas Atampugre, and the *Participatory Learning and Action* Editorial Board. During the writeshop they had an opportunity to discuss their paper with other participants, and with the resource persons, and provided feedback to other participants on their papers. Look out for this special issue!

Other news from IIED

As mentioned in the editorial, we say goodbye to John Thompson and we welcome Michel Pimbert as Acting Director of IIED's Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods programme. Since joining IIED in 1999, Michel has co-ordinated action research on *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods* as well as a joint IIED-IDS project, *Institutionalising Participation in Natural Resource Management*. He was also a coordinator of the Prajateerpu citizen jury process, which was featured in *PLA Notes* 46.

We also welcome our new Editorial Board member, Dr Ivan Bond. Ivan joined the Forestry and Land Use (FLU) programme at IIED as Senior Research Associate in January this year and subsequently our editorial board. Ivan is a Zimbabwean-British natural resource economist who worked for WWF for 13 years, based in its Southern Africa regional office in Harare. With experience in several

countries of Southern Africa, he has been a leading figure in WWF's community based land use and wildlife management programmes in the region – including managing WWF's support to the CAMPFIRE programme in Zimbabwe. He has planned, gained support for, and delivered substantive projects on a regional and national scale – working with a wide range of local and national organisations and donor agencies.

Ivan has also developed multi-disciplinary training methodologies for natural resource management using manuals, toolboxes and games. Through his work he has put an emphasis on trying to make economics thinking useful and understandable to others. He has a particular interest in developing incentives for institutional change and in reducing the transaction costs of approaches that work. Some may remember his article in *PLA Notes* 33 featuring a board game for financial management training which described a board used with local wildlife management committees in Southern Africa, to help them (in conjunction with more formal training) to develop their financial management skills in a way that is active and fun. Ivan is currently involved in work on shaping markets for watershed protection services to benefit local livelihoods.

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Types of material accepted
- *Articles*: max. 2500 words plus illustrations – see below for guidelines.
- *Feedback*: letters to the editor, or longer pieces (max. 1500 words) which respond in more detail to articles.
- *Tips for trainers*: training exercises, tips on running workshops, reflections on behaviour and attitudes in training, etc., max. 1000 words.
- *In Touch*: short pieces on forthcoming workshops and events, publications, and online resources.

We welcome accounts of recent experiences in the field (or in workshops) and current thinking around participation, and particularly encourage contributions from practitioners in the South. Articles should be co-authored by all those engaged in the research, project, or programme.

In an era in which participatory approaches have often been viewed as a panacea to development problems or where acquiring funds for projects has depended on the use of such methodologies, it is vital to pay attention to the quality of the methods and process of participation. Whilst we will continue to publish experiences of innovation in the field, we would like to emphasise the need to analyse the limitations as well as the successes of participation. *Participatory Learning and Action* is still a series whose focus is methodological, but it is important to give more importance to issues of power in the process and to the impact of participation, asking ourselves who sets the agenda for participatory practice. It is only with critical analysis that we can further develop our thinking around participatory learning and action.

We particularly favour articles which contain one or more of the following elements:
- an **innovative** angle to the concepts of participatory approaches or their application;
- **critical reflections** on the lessons learned from the author's experiences;
- an attempt to develop **new methods**, or innovative adaptations of existing ones;
- consideration of **the processes** involved in participatory approaches;
- an assessment of the **impacts** of a participatory process;
- potentials and limitations of **scaling up and institutionalising participatory approaches**; and,
- potentials and limitations of **participatory policy-making processes**.

Language and style
Please try to keep contributions clear and accessible. Sentences should be short and simple. Avoid jargon, theoretical terminology, and overly academic language. Explain any specialist terms that you do use and spell out acronyms in full.

Abstracts
Please include a brief abstract with your article (circa. 150-200 words).

References
If references are mentioned, please include details. *Participatory Learning and Action* is intended to be informal, rather than academic, so references should be kept to a minimum.

Photographs and drawings
These should have captions and the name(s) of the author(s)/photographer clearly written on the back. If you are sending electronic files, please make sure that the photos/drawings are scanned at a high enough resolution for print (300 dpi) and include a short caption and credit(s).

Format
We accept handwritten articles but please write legibly. Typed articles should be double-spaced. Please keep formatting as simple as possible. Avoid embedded codes (e.g. footnotes/endnotes, page justification, page numbering).

Submitting your contribution
Contributions can be sent on paper, by email, or on disk. We use Word 6 for Windows, but can read most other word processing packages. If you are sending a disk, please include a hard copy of the article as well. Contributions should be sent to: **The Editor, *Participatory Learning and Action* , IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1 0DD, UK.**
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Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network
Since June 2002, the IIED Resource Centre for Participatory Learning and Action has now relocated to the Institute for Development Studies, UK. Practical information and support on participation in development is also available from the various members of the RCPLA Network.

This initiative is a global network of resource centres for participatory learning and action, which brings together 15 organisations from Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe. The RCPLA Network is committed to information sharing and networking on participatory approaches.

Each member is itself at the centre of a regional or national network. Members share information about activities in their respective countries, such as training programmes, workshops and key events, as well as providing PLA information focused on the particular fields in which they operate.

As part of the devolution process, Tom Thomas, of Praxis, India has been appointed as network coordinator by the RCPLA steering committee. More information, including regular updates on RCPLA activities, can be found in the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action* , or by visiting www.rcpla.org, or contacting:

Praxis, Delhi Office, C-75 South Extension, Part II, New Delhi, 110 049, India. Tel/fax: +91 11 5164 2348-51; Email: tom@praxisindia.org or catherinek@praxisindia.org

Participation at IDS
Participatory approaches and methodologies are also a focus for the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This group of researchers and practitioners are involved in sharing knowledge, in strengthening capacity to support quality participatory approaches, and in deepening understanding of participatory methods, principles, and ethics. It focuses on South-South sharing, exchange visits, information exchange, action research projects, writing, and training. Services include a Participation Resource Centre (open weekdays) with an online database detailing materials held. The Group also produces a newsletter and operates an email distribution list.

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Participatory Learning and Action is the world's leading informal journal on participatory approaches and methods. It draws on the expertise of guest editors to provide up-to-the minute accounts of the development and use of participatory methods in specific fields. Since its first issue in 1987, *Participatory Learning and Action* has provided a forum for those engaged in participatory work – community workers, activists, and researchers – to share their experiences, conceptual reflections and methodological innovations with others, providing a genuine 'voice from the field'. It is a vital resource for those working to enhance the participation of ordinary people in local, regional, national, and international decision making, in both South and North.

This special 50th issue brings together previous guest editors and authors to give an up-to-date picture of developments in participatory approaches in their particular fields, to look ahead to the future and ask, what next for participation?

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