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participatory learning and action

General issue



June 2007

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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 1987, *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'.

We are grateful to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for their continued financial support of *Participatory Learning and Action*. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding organisations or the employers of the authors.

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Printed by: Russell Press, Nottingham, UK

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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), Méthode 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.

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.

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

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Photo: CWC, India



Child researchers mapping mobility problems – see Chapter 7, this issue, by PJ Lolichen.

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editorial

Welcome to the 56th issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*. For this issue, we have published a series of articles of general interest. We are grateful to all the authors for their contributions to the series – and to our International Editorial Advisory Board for their comments and suggestions.

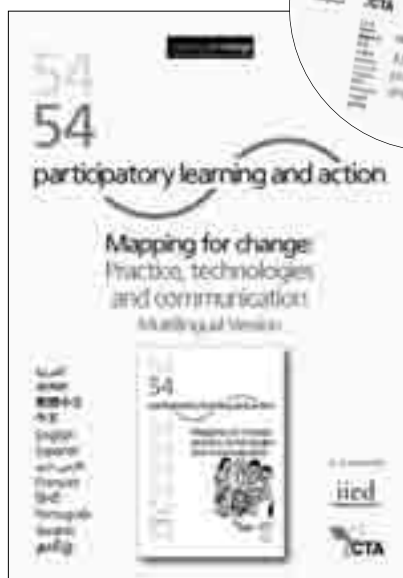
The first half of 2007 has been busy for the PLA team. In particular, there have been three very important developments! Here's what has been happening:

***Participatory Learning and Action* subscriptions now online**

The *Participatory Learning and Action* series has teamed up with IngentaConnect, a leading international online publisher. Current subscribers will now have a free online subscription in addition to their paper copy subscription and will be able to read current issues of *Participatory Learning and Action* free online as soon as it is published! Or, readers can choose whether to have an online only subscription. All our current subscribers will have received a letter with this issue, with details of how to access their *PLA* subscription online. If you're not a subscriber, you can use the pay-per-view service to read current issues online. And back issues are still free to all to download from our website. For more information, see our subscriptions order form at the end of this issue, visit our website www.planotes.org, or email us at pla.notes@iied.org.

Multilingual CD-ROM: *PLA 54 Mapping for Change – practice, technologies and communication*

We are pleased to announce the publication of our new CD-ROM. All subscribers will have received a free copy with this issue. Co-published by IIED and CTA, the CD-ROM includes



translated articles in twelve languages: Arabic, Bangla, Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), English, French, Hindi, Persian-Dari, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili and Tamil. It also includes other key resources, such as DVD examples from practice, a glossary of terms, and practical ethics for PGIS practitioners, as well as previous relevant articles which appeared in *PLA* – all presented in an easy-to-use format. We are grateful to all our partners for their support and to the Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network and other colleagues for assisting us with the translation of articles. Thanks especially to co-Editor **Nicole Kenton**, who has so successfully coordinated this huge project!

We hope that you find the CD-ROM useful and look forward to your feedback. Please send your comments to us at the usual address, or by emailing us at pla.notes@iied.org

Proposed Arabic edition of *PLA*

Producing the new multilingual CD-ROM has had one very important

offshoot: a proposal to produce an Arabic edition of *PLA*.

The project will be a collaboration between partners in the RCPLA Network, of which IIED is a member. It will be led by the Center for Development Services (CDS) in Egypt. CDS is Chair for the RCPLA Network, and coordinated the Arabic translation for the *PLA 54* CD-ROM.

Many participatory practitioners from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are unable to access *PLA*, as most development practitioners in this region are Arabic speakers. This limits the resources, information and knowledge they can access. The proposed Arabic issues will include the main themed issues as well as the most important case studies that this region can benefit from. A specialised MENA committee of practitioners, academics and researchers from the region will select articles for translation. We hope that translating back issues of the *PLA* series into Arabic will be an effective method to share participatory approaches with development practitioners in the region.

Initially, the Arabic editions will contain all the most relevant articles from the series in five volumes, each covering ten issues. The aim is for the Arabic editions of *PLA* to catch up with the current international issues within two years. After this, a regional agency will produce the Arabic edition on a regular basis.

***PLA* International Editorial Advisory Board**

A warm welcome to new members

We are pleased to welcome two new members to the International Editorial Advisory Board:

Giacomo Rambaldi works for the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) in the Netherlands. Giacomo has worked in participatory mapping in developing countries since the late 1980s. In 2000, he launched Participatory Avenues – www.iapad.org – a website dedicated to sharing knowledge on participatory mapping methods and approaches. In 2004, he launched the Open Forum for Participatory Geographic Information Systems and Technologies (www.PPgis.net).

His expertise includes visualising indigenous spatial knowledge for improving communication, facilitating peer-to-peer dialogue and managing conflicts on issues related to the territory, collaborative natural resource and protected area management, participatory spatial planning, and networking, information management and communication. Giacomo was also one of the guest editors for the recent special issue, *PLA 54 Mapping for Change – practice, technologies and communication*.

Lolichen Pullempavil Joseph has been working with the Concerned for Working Children (CWC), Bangalore, India with children and information management for the past eleven years. He currently heads the Centre for Applied Research and Documentation (CARD) at CWC. Lolichen has previous work experience with the students' movement and the tribal populations of northeast India. He is a recipient of the Macarthur Fellowship of Leadership Development on a participatory project on the sexual and reproductive rights of children and youth.

Lolichen has been involved in training and capacity building in the areas of children's participation, protagonism and governance, both at the national and international level. He

has been leading an innovative area of empowering and facilitating children to carry out their own research, resulting in their informed participation in governance. We are pleased to include a contribution on children's participation by Lolichen, Chapter 7, this issue.

We look forward to the continued input of these new members to the series.

In memory of Anil C. Shah

We are very sorry to share the news that *PLA* Editorial Board member Anil C Shah passed away on the 12th April 2007. Anil was a very experienced participatory development practitioner, and an active member of our International Editorial Advisory Board. Anil succumbed to cancer after fighting the disease for almost three years. He had been working on an article for *PLA* (Chapter 1, this issue) right up to the week before he died.

Anil was the Founder Chairman of the Development Support Centre, Ahmedabad, Gujarat and also the first Chief Executive of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India). Both are non-governmental organisations that have played a major role at the state and national level in demonstrating the feasibility of community managed natural resources. Before retirement, Anil was a member of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) where he held important positions as head of different government departments such as Agriculture, Rural Development and Industries.

Blending field-level issues with macro-level policy, he played a crucial role in reforming major policies and procedures governing participatory natural resources management programmes such as Joint Forest Management (JFM), Watershed Management and Participatory

Irrigation Management (PIM) at the state and national level. He adapted and popularised participatory methodologies such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) among development practitioners, academic institutions and government functionaries. He was also a prolific writer and researcher and has written more than 100 papers in English and Gujarati on issues related to natural resource management and his experiences in Government.

His colleague at DSC, Executive Director Sachin Oza, shared his personal reflections with us:

He was so passionate about PRA that he used to tell us that, as a doctor always carried his stethoscope and a barber his tools, as development practitioners we should never be going to villages without carrying a few chart papers and markers. In fact he instructed the drivers that these should always be there in the DSC vehicles! He could never imagine how one could have dialogue with villagers without employing some method or other. It was a treat to watch him employing various methods, which came so naturally to him.

As always, he never gave up and until the end was working on refining his paper, 'Sequential steps for empowering rural communities for local development', something that was always so dear to him. As a person who championed the cause of people's participation in natural resource management, it will be difficult to fill the void that he has left. However, the best way of respecting and remembering him would be by taking his work forward.

In this issue

In memory of **Anil Shah**, our opening article is his 'Sequential steps for

empowering rural communities for local development'. When development professionals approach a community, they often have an agency mandate to introduce a particular development programme. In Anil's experience, the tendency is to offer it to the community before they even have a chance to consider whether it is relevant or appropriate to them. Anil argues that true empowerment only comes when the community themselves has precedence over the decision-making process.

Here, Anil shares his personal account of a facilitating approach, intended as a guide for development professionals. He takes the reader through a step-by-step sequence of activities. In this process, the facilitator works with the whole community to:

- identify what type of development the community might need;
- assess whether and how the development might be beneficial to them; and
- decide how they could plan, implement and, ultimately, sustain the development in the long-term.

Anil argues that only once the community has been through this process, should a development professional even propose that any programme of development is available. As he writes, real empowerment does not occur when there is the lure of subsidy to be had. It occurs when communities are able to plan what development is most appropriate – and of most benefit – to them.

The next article is by **Karen Hillyer** and **Simone Purohit**. They describe the evolution of a participatory monitoring and evaluation process in Bangalore, India, and the learning through trial and error that took place before a

satisfactory process was developed. After asking communities for their help in identifying indicators for M&E, the facilitators realised that they had dominated the process and that only limited participation took place. In the next stage, they worked with self-help groups not just in identifying indicators, but also in deciding how to measure them, who would do this, and how frequently. Despite the self-help groups and facilitators working closely together, there were still doubts about the sustainability of the monitoring process because communities did not see the use or value of much of the monitoring. The breakthrough came when the results for one indicator were analysed and shown graphically, so that communities could see the results and discuss them. The facilitators realised that if the full cycle of design, data collection, analysis and interpretation was completed for a single, simple indicator, participants could appreciate the purpose and value of M&E, and gain confidence that they could do it themselves.

Next, **Clement Akasoba** and **Lance Robinson** describe a participatory approach to public accountability that is being used by communities in Ghana, with support from a network of NGOs. Communities assess the performance of government service providers, in this case primary schools, by developing criteria and indicators for performance. They then score schools according to the criteria and summarise these scores for different communities in a district. Some of the areas of poor performance identified can be addressed at local level with school heads and teachers. However, some issues need to be taken to the district level. The communities present the scores at a multi-stakeholder, district-

level forum, which includes representatives of the ministry of education, head teachers from the schools concerned, teachers, parent-teacher association members, local leaders and NGOs. The main value of the forum is in providing an opportunity for communities and education providers to meet face-to-face and for each to gain a better understanding of the others' perspective. However, there is also great potential to use the forums for action planning, so that possible changes and improvements identified during the dialogue are actually put into practice. The forums could also form part of longer term monitoring of education providers (or other service providers), if repeated every year or two, providing information for communities and their supporters to lobby for further improvement in services.

In his article, **Chris Lunch** discusses how two methods – participatory video (PV) and Most Significant Change (MSC) – can be combined in a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process. PV is useful for opening up channels for community-led learning, sharing and exchange. It can convey a 'rich picture' of voices and views across different sections of a community. The MSC technique is a qualitative M&E process. It is akin to storytelling, and uses participatory approaches to document and systematically analyse stories of significant change. By combining the two, communities can document their MSC stories themselves, with minimal training. Different sections of the community can film their stories of most significant change and show them to the whole community for feedback. Filming the stories allows them to be shown and disseminated widely, and feedback from, for

example, decision makers and scientists can also be videoed and shown to the communities, creating a feedback loop. The article includes an example from a workshop where the combined methods were used to evaluate a research programme, to illustrate how the technique works.

Next, **Frances Hansford, Virginia Araújo Lima Santana, and Gérman Hilares Reinoso** describe a participatory systematisation process. A group of NGOs had completed demonstration projects to strengthen food and nutritional security in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. So a participatory systematisation process was developed to promote a regional network for sharing learning more widely and influencing policy within the region. The group wanted to capture diverse local perspectives and knowledge about the projects, and put these experiences into an organised system of information. It was also seen as a way to promote a dynamic process of collective learning and action.

To implement this, an effective two-phase process was used to train 20 local NGO facilitators by external consultants, who then applied their skills in the field over the following months. In phase one, ten facilitators were trained, and in phase two, these facilitators trained another ten. A series of workshops enabled the trainee facilitators to learn how to apply the methodologies, review progress, and learn about information analysis, documentation and dissemination. A final workshop reflected on lessons learnt and to prepare the facilitators to replicate the methodology. Following this, each facilitator formed a core local research

team, working with local communities. Using examples, the article outlines the basic steps needed to implement the systemisation process. It discusses local outcomes, and the impact that the process has had on increasing both capacity and confidence, and in influencing food security policy at regional levels. Lastly, the authors discuss some of the challenges they faced – and provide advice for others thinking of engaging in a similar process. Our tips for trainers this issue (page 56) 'Reflective learning: building capacity in systematisation methodologies' discusses this further.

Next, **Ravi Jayakaran** describes the wholistic worldview analysis (WWVA) tool. Using PLA exercises, this tool has been used successfully to create a wholistic baseline for a community, analyse its needs and identify its vulnerabilities, with the ultimate aim of building capacity to overcome those vulnerabilities which had been hindering any community-level development plans. The author discusses how a community's worldview and its survival strategy are connected, i.e. what challenges they must face to survive and how they perceive them in relation to their survival strategy, and their capacity to cope with them. The article then describes how to create a WWVA diagram. Using a combination of PLA analysis methods, such as livelihood, problem and uncertainty analysis, the community decides which issues they want to analyse in the diagram. Then, the community is facilitated to assess which of these issues are within or outside of their control to change. The diagram is used as a visual aid and a record, helping to analyse how – or if

– these vulnerabilities can be reduced, who the key stakeholders are, and what programme activities and capacity building are needed to address the issues.

Our final article is by **PJ Lolichen**. He describes how children themselves became researchers – planning, collecting information and analysing data – in a study of children's mobility and transport issues in Karnataka, India. Despite the difficulties involved in fitting the research work around their school, home and work responsibilities, the children felt they had gained a huge amount from being researchers. The process of the research equipped them with the skills and expertise to plan and carry out research using appropriate tools, hold discussions with children and other stakeholders confidently, and put across their points, supported by appropriate data. They have also developed solutions to their problems and formed organisations to implement these solutions, in partnership with other stakeholders. They are in the process of negotiating with local-level bodies for permanent and fully recognised children's participation in decision-making and governance, and have become strongly aware of their right to know and the need to participate.

Next issue

Our next issue, no 57, will be on the 'unspoken dilemmas of participation'. Our guest editor will be Tom Wakeford and others. This issue will reflect critically on 'citizen participation' and its impact on the mainstream policy-making processes and look at ways forward. We anticipate an interesting debate.

general section

Sequential steps for empowering community organisations for local development

by ANIL C. SHAH

Introduction

Empowerment is about enabling local groups to analyse their own problems and think of possible solutions according to their knowledge and understanding. It should enable them to examine alternatives that may be suggested by a facilitating outside agency, to consider options, and to decide what they think is the most appropriate development strategy and programme.

In a good development process, the people have to have precedence. The role of outside agency should be that of a facilitator. This means not imposing directly or indirectly – or in a subtle manner – their own ideas about what is good for the local groups before **they** have analysed their situation and worked out tentative solutions. Until this stage, an outside development facilitator should avoid the temptation to offer solutions or even give advice (Shah, 2001¹).

Such restraint is essential for facilitating the empowerment process. The process should make a programme sustainable – one that is continually managed by the local

Anil Shah encouraging women to describe their problems



Photo: DSC

groups, even when the facilitating agency has withdrawn or at least has diminished its involvement. This looks simple in principle but can be extremely difficult in practice (Box 1).

One way of approaching the process is to have a series of sequential steps as a guide. In this article, I want to share some suggestions based on my own field experiences of developing natural resources development programmes.

People first, development agency second

Programme activities and structures should be ones that local

¹ Where Shah narrates an experience when government technocrats were taken to see a proposed watershed plan prepared by the local village group. They were asked not to give advice until they had listened to the farmers. If the visiting experts started giving advice, the development worker tapped the shoulder of the visiting experts, reminding them that it was still not time for offering advice!

Box 1: The significance of sequence

I was visiting a senior officer in charge of a watershed development programme in India. He showed me with some pride the latest development. Using satellite imagery, his department was preparing a colourful village map. It clearly indicated, for example, barren parts where greening was needed, and locations where rainwater storage could be located. He explained how the maps would be used to quickly work out a plan for watershed development for that village.

He said, 'The watershed expert can carry the village map with him to show villagers how easy it will be for them to plan watershed development.'

I asked, 'And what will be the role of villagers?'

He replied, 'Of course, before finalising the watershed plan, the expert will consider their views and suggestions.'

He saw that I was amused, and asked if I had any reservations about the new technique.

I said, 'Perhaps the expert could keep the map in his bag at first, and instead ask the villagers what they think are the special features of the terrain, and how they think the development could be planned. Afterwards, the expert might tell them that there are some other experts who are interested in their village. That, with the help of photographs from the sky, they could prepare more accurate development maps. Would they be interested in looking at them? If the villagers showed an interest, the expert could then show them the maps and explain how they could be used for planning watershed development. And afterwards, the villagers could offer further comments and suggestions for the expert to consider.'

The state officer was also amused at what I said. He said, with a smile, 'Well, it is more or less the same thing. Only the sequence is different.'

I jumped at the emerging point: 'Yes, the difference is in the sequence. Real development and empowerment take place when villagers take precedence over the experts. The final decision should be a blending of both the views of the villagers and of the experts.'

groups want to maintain and use even after the project period is over and the facilitating agency may not be around. So it is important to keep in mind some basic principles of empowerment:

- People have enough problems of their own. They are not bothered about your or the agency's 'mission', 'programme', or 'targets'.
- Use interactive methods so people can express their understanding or concerns about problems they consider to be important. The principle is to move the discussion from a problem towards possible solutions. This looks simple and obvious but it can be difficult in practice for development

"Getting the sequence of steps right does not necessarily mean lots of elaborate planning and implementation. It means people first, development agency second"

workers who have agency agendas and targets to fulfil.

- Encourage people to look for examples from within the village, where people have successfully dealt with similar problems.
- If local examples are not sufficient for the scale of application needed, explore with the local community successful examples in other villages. Closer examples are generally better, but the solutions have to be really good, even if they come from communities further away.
- Only after the local community and groups have considered various options to deal with problems they consider important should you bring in your own knowledge to supplement local knowledge.
- Any solution to a problem has cost implications. There may be costs incurred e.g. by the government, by the community group, or by individual beneficiaries. No benefit is free. It is only when the benefits become substantially more than the costs involved that the transaction becomes worth considering. In development work, costs are usually borne by public agency. The beneficiary usually derives a benefit that is greater than the cost. Since we want sustainable development, and as such transactions take place on a large scale, development agencies working in partnership with village groups need to ensure that the benefit/cost ratio is positive.

The steps that follow are not inviolable prescriptions. Instead, they are suggestions. They can be tried in an adaptive manner, depending on the nature of the programme, the local situation, your own relationship with the community, and local responses.

Getting the sequence of steps right does not necessarily mean lots of elaborate planning and implementation. It means people first, development agency second. So it is important to develop an understanding and to gain experience in handling this interactive sequencing.

An interactive sequence of steps

Imagine that as a development worker, you go to a new village. You have a mandate to introduce a new development programme. You want it to be both participatory and sustain-

Enabling communities to describe their problems in irrigation canal systems



Photo: DSC

able. You hope that the local community will consider it its own and that eventually they will manage it themselves.

Step one

Start meeting people in a casual manner to get ideas about e.g. who the local formal leaders are, the main communities/castes, or how many households there are in the village.

Step two

Meet the local leaders. Introduce yourself as a development agency worker interested in providing support to community-based groups and organisations. It is important not to go into details of the scheme. At the moment, you only assume that it will be relevant to that village's development.

Step three

At that or the next meeting, get an understanding of the local situation. Visit different parts of the village, especially

the areas where the poorer community members live, such as the tail end of irrigation canals, to learn about their problems.² Stop whenever you notice anything interesting: a crop, individuals or groups, or an unusual tree. Ask simple questions about what you are observing and listen intently to what people say.

Step four

Move on, and if you meet a large group, sit down. Ask questions about problems which might be related to your programme. For instance, if it is a watershed development, you could initiate some discussion about what crops they are raising, the yields, and why some have higher yields than others. Ask them to explain the differences by asking them to draw on the ground or on chart paper (which you always carry with you!). When the villagers start drawing their

² For more information, discussion and recommendations, see, 'The tail-enders and other deprived – a research study by Development Support Centre.' Ahmedabad, India: DSC.

Box 2: Watershed development example

In the community meeting, you can:

- Say you are interested in helping the village community to increase e.g. agricultural production, productivity, and income. So you want to understand the present level of agriculture productivity in the main crops of their village.
- On the chart paper, encourage people to draw village boundaries, slopes, streams, areas of forest, public land and common lands, and areas that have better irrigation facilities or a village well etc.
- Now you can discuss productivity of the main crop: which parts of the village or farms are **more** productive? Why do the farmers in these areas think this is so? Which farms are **less** productive? Why? What are the factors? What should these farmers do to reach a higher level of productivity?
- Some factors that may come up could include water facilities, land shaping and erosion, etc. You could ask: if such facilities are created in the village, where should they be located? What would be the likely benefit, in yield and in money?

You may now be tempted to mention that you have a watershed development programme that may assist with these problems. You will be itching to tell the community that your agency can provide large financial support provided the local community gives a small contribution. The villagers will also be wondering when you will unveil your scheme with pots of money. Resist the temptation! This is extremely difficult because the development worker has his/her own programme targets to achieve. It appears the community is ready to take up the watershed development programme. **This is not true.** The village community has only just begun to analyse its problems and think of possible solutions. It still does not know what the programme would mean for the community and the individual members – or what it can expect from the outside agency.

perceptions and understanding of the situation, you are already engaged in the process of empowerment. Your intense curiosity – reflected in your questions – has put the local community above you. **You are the learner.**

Step five

By now, you should have a general idea about the overall village situation related to your programme. However, you know that a village community is not one entity but consists of various groups, some better placed than others. It is essential to take the initiative and **go out and meet** such marginalised groups – perhaps marginal farmers or those of 'lower' castes. Visit where they live or the areas where they are likely to be, and talk with them. With intense curiosity, try to understand their situation and problems as they understand and perceive them. Again, bring out your chart paper and pass them the pen. This part of the process is about respecting

Box 3: Participatory irrigation management example

You have visited an irrigation canal. You met several farmers and, through PRA mapping, have learnt about various problems of water conveyance and distribution. You know the deprivation of the tail-enders. You hold a meeting with farmers affected by the irrigation system. But you need to proceed cautiously. Do not mention the Government's participatory irrigation management scheme. Using chart paper, help the villagers to delineate the entire canal system and indicate the problems. Again, you are tempted to say that under the PIM scheme, the Government would offer, say, 80% funds to fix the canal deficiencies – provided the farmers form a registered group and provide a 20% contribution. **Don't do it. It is premature.** Farmers have still not fully analysed their problem in terms of cost/benefit or worked out possible solutions.

Once they have located the canal system problems, ask which problems are most important and whether the problem affects the farmers who have their land in a particular area. The answer could be that they are not getting enough water. Ask, what is the consequence? The response would be less production. How much less? Say 200 kg per hectare. What does that mean in money terms? Maybe Rs 2000 per hectare. Work out the financial consequences of the deficiencies in various parts of the canal system and you may come up with a loss of Rs 2 lakh (1 lakh = Rs 100,000) per year. Mentally, you calculate that if the deficiencies were rectified, the additional income could be Rs 10 lakh over 5 years. This should be an extremely worthwhile investment. But hold back and keep this calculation in your mind.

Suggest that you know of villages that dealt with similar problems satisfactorily. Would they like to visit? Mention that the development agency has funds to contribute to learning visits with small contributions from the local groups. This would be the most worthwhile expenditure for a facilitating agency to promote sound development.

the disadvantaged. This has to be done cleverly without estranging the village leaders.

Step six

Now you should have a broad idea about the village situation, and the options available as solutions related to the programme that you want to promote. It is time to hold a meeting with the larger community. Since you have already established contact with disadvantaged groups, make sure that they know about and can attend the meeting to present their problems and views. You are already becoming a development worker who has special concern for the disadvantaged. You are not their spokesperson. You are trying to embolden them to present their views.

This is the occasion to review issues that have emerged – the general problems, as well as specific problems of the disadvantaged. You may present stories and audio-visuals of

Working with women after the earthquake in Kutch district in 2001, trying to understand what kind of houses they would like



Photo: DSC

other villages that have faced similar problems and dealt with them satisfactorily. Usually this arouses people's curiosity to know more about such successful villages. Boxes 2 and 3 give two examples of how community meetings might be conducted in different situations.

Step seven

Exposure/learning visits are a crucial stage in the process of empowerment. The villagers can see for themselves how the situation has been transformed by another village community which has faced problems similar to theirs. Let them find out from the villagers – men, women, leaders, and both dominant and disadvantaged groups – about how they have benefited from the development.

You accompany the visiting group. Again, restrain yourself from driving them to similar solutions of similar problems in their village. You have only to facilitate as much learning

as possible, not only what was done, but also how it was done. For example:

- who took responsibility for negotiating terms?
- how was the contributory fund (if required under a scheme) decided upon and collected?
- how were groups formed to do the work, to procure materials, and get designs approved?
- who did the account keeping and audits?
- who checked on quality?

Let the visiting group learn about the crucial issue of maintenance and operation, costs, fees, and collection, etc. This is never smooth. A core group is usually needed to take responsibility for handling disagreements over these issues. The learning group will have to do all this in its own village and may benefit from the experiences of a successful village. Encourage them to ask questions and, for those who are literate, ask them to make notes.

“It is now time to move carefully and steadily towards solutions. Not your solution, not your scheme – but their own solutions and decisions”

Step eight

You are back in the village with local groups. People are excited about the possibility of undertaking similar development in their own village.

During this visit, organise a meeting of the entire community. Make sure that those who took part in the learning visits also attend. Let them share their experience and ideas with the entire community, with as many people as possible, both men and women. They will be more articulate than you expect. This is the moment of elation and ferment in the village. It is now time to move carefully and steadily towards solutions. Not your solution, not your scheme – but their own solutions and decisions.

They would now like to deal with their problems in their own way by applying lessons from what they have seen. They may turn to you for advice. Is a similar scheme and funding available for their own village, as they have seen in the other village?

Now you can inform them about your scheme and the role and responsibilities expected from the village community. Now it is time to recall the information that you had collected about the ‘costs’ of the problem they were facing – such as the cost of foregoing production because of unreliable canal water supply. Now you can compare these financial losses to the small financial contribution needed from villagers to implement the scheme you have in mind.

Step nine

The development agency is lucky if the process proceeds as planned and the village chooses to go ahead with the scheme. They may not do so. In some cases, this may be due to economic, social, or political problems. The proposal may have to be dropped or postponed until more successful cases create a more favourable environment. If however the community response to undertaking the scheme is positive, you can now outline the conditions of responsibilities the village community has to take, e.g.

- attending training programmes;
- preparing plans and getting them approved;
- implementing plans;
- maintaining accounts;
- keeping records; and – very importantly –

- maintaining the system afterwards at their own cost.

Remind them that they will have to make regular maintenance contributions for using and maintaining structures and facilities. Now is an opportune moment to recall the costs of **not** having a good system in terms of loss or opportunity foregone. Proper maintenance and management are crucial for sustained development.

Step ten

At this stage you should get into the nitty-gritty of organising the community in developing, implementing and managing **its own scheme**. If the process has gone well, as a development worker, you will be excited that your crucial role is almost over. The village community is ready to advance swiftly and accept the responsibility for development. You have only to provide technical, administrative and financial support until the work is properly organised and implemented. Afterwards, you should have the satisfaction that the community has set up its own executive committee and other committees to look after and manage the scheme with efficiency, equity, and sustainability. The development agency's role is slowly but decisively diminishing. It has not withdrawn completely. Its services are always available for **new problems** and **new opportunities** that the community might yet face.

Step eleven

Through this process, the original agency scheme should firmly be the **community's scheme**. Others who want to learn from the community's experiences can now visit the village. The villagers should be able to explain enthusiastically how they developed **their** scheme and – in the process – create confidence in others to do the same. In fact, community members who have been actively involved in such successful villages – men and women, traditional leaders and new leaders – can become resource persons, addressing conferences, gatherings, workshops and seminars. They can proudly present **their** achievements. What more reward can a facilitating agency expect?

The final step: empowerment ‘not through *lobh* but *labh*’

In Indian language ‘not through *lobh* but *labh*’ means that it is not the lure of subsidy but the benefit of development that empowers.

This is the first stage of development, almost a confidence-building demonstration, that development benefits are much greater than the costs. However, as long as the cost is borne by government or other donors, there are restrictions and limitations on growth. Local community groups and

individuals cannot contribute to this amount, even if it would be highly beneficial. They cannot experiment with or explore innovative ideas. Local groups or enterprising individuals would always be trying new ideas at their own cost, drawing on whatever savings they have. But this could have small incremental benefits.

To break the barrier of subsidy-based development, community groups and enterprising individuals need access to large flexible funds with only one condition – the additional income should be high enough to cover the cost of paying loan instalments with interest. That will be the credit-based investment – a route that may open new vistas of locally preferred, appropriate development for which the groups and individuals are willing to take responsibility and risks. With successful experience of working together for

local development as their social capital, it should be possible for community groups that have satisfactorily developed and managed local programmes to access funds from organised sources on reasonable terms and set out on a journey of development, adequately empowered to realise the full potential of growth. This should be the starting of real empowerment emanating from the liberation from dependence on government/donor subsidy.

As a development worker, your last role is to facilitate the final step of accessing an enlightened credit agency and helping the local groups to negotiate terms for their first loan that will be reasonable to both parties. If you succeed in the first round, you may not be required in the second and subsequent rounds. Your partner has already graduated, adequately **empowered**.

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NOTE

Author Anil C Shah sadly passed away shortly before this article was published. Anil was Chairman (Emeritus) of the DSC and a valued member of the *Participatory Learning and Action* series International Editorial Board.

2

Moving forwards with participatory monitoring and evaluation

by KAREN HILLYER and SIMONE PUROHIT

Introduction

In 2001 a series of projects funded through the UK Department for International Development (DfID) Natural Resources Systems Programme was set up in six villages in Hubli Dharwad in Karnataka, India. The villages are at the so-called peri-urban interface, where rural and urban meet in an area of rapid change brought about by the growing demands of the urban. The projects aimed to identify and test strategies and processes that could increase the capacity of peri-urban communities to adapt their natural resource management and livelihoods strategies in response to the changes associated with living in peri-urban areas. Self-help groups (SHGs) were formed in all the villages that were involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring.

This article describes the process followed in establishing participation of self-help groups in monitoring and evaluation (referred to here as PM&E) and key lessons learnt from the experience. It shows in particular how barriers to progress were dealt with and what benefits were achieved.

Getting to grips with PM&E

The issue of participation in the process of monitoring and evaluation was considered in a meeting with most members of the multi-agency, multi-disciplinary project team. Although

“... to be truly participatory, the self-help groups had not only to define the indicators to be used, but also decide how to measure them, who would do this, and how frequently”

all were familiar to varying degrees with the concept of ‘participation’ and recognised the importance of collaborative processes, only a few had first-hand experience with PM&E.¹

Realising that the difference between the information needs of the self-help groups and the project made the outcomes from a process of PM&E uncertain. So surveys were planned and designed by the project team to ensure that they obtained the type of data necessary to respond to projective objectives. To establish a separate but complementary participatory monitoring and evaluation system, a PM&E

¹ BAIF Development and Research Foundation, Indian Development Service, Best Practices Foundation, (NGO sector) and University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, India, Centre for Arid Zones Studies and School of Agriculture and Forest Sciences of the University Wales, Bangor, UK and The Development Planning Unit, University College, London, UK (academic sector).

**SHG members
involved in
dairy activities
measuring
their indicators**



Photo: Simone Purohit

sub-team (of which the authors of this article were a part) was formed with members from each of the agencies involved. Two were subsequently sent on a three week participatory monitoring and evaluation course at the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in the Philippines.

Initial efforts at PM&E and lessons learnt

The team worked together with a couple of self-help groups to identify indicators of change. Although it was difficult to explain the concept of indicators to the self-help group members this process gave an interesting but expansive list. After indicators were collected from all the villages a more manageable number was short-listed. Indicators, methods or measures were modified accordingly and the process of trial and reflection was repeated. As they were based on indicators derived from discussions with the self-help group

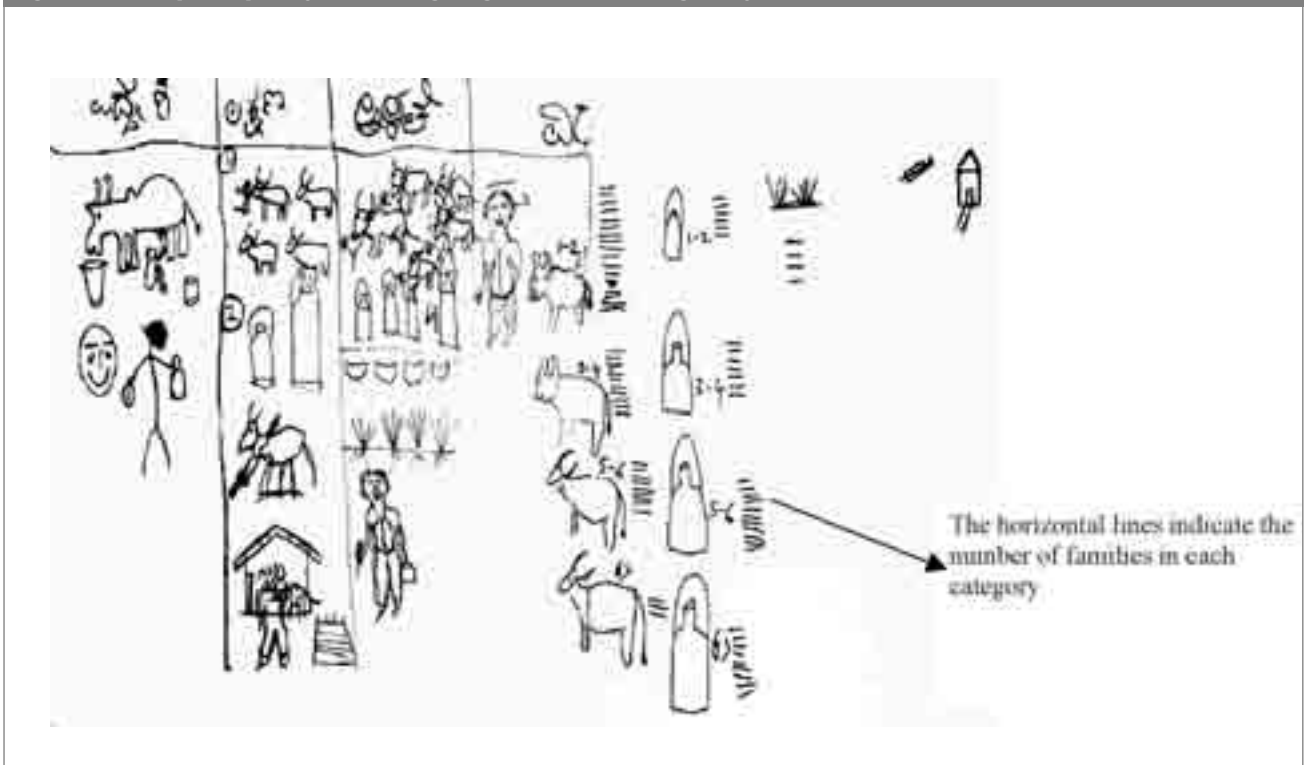
members, these indicators were known as participatory indicators (PIs).

Establishing higher levels of participation

With further reflection the team was dissatisfied with the level of participation, feeling that they were not being 'truly' participatory. The team realised that it dominated the process, despite the involvement of self-help groups in the identification of indicators in the early stages. To be truly participatory, the self-help groups had not only to define the indicators to be used, but also decide how to measure them, who would do this and how frequently.

As a result the team decided to experiment with higher levels of participation by following the approach proposed in the IIRR training. By this time the project was already two-thirds of the way through and the team realised that it could

Figure 1: Initial participatory monitoring diagram, Gabbur village, July 2004



not be sure of the outcomes of this approach. For this reason the team decided to continue using the participatory indicators and methods as described above, at the same time as trying out and developing a more inclusive procedure.

Developing a more inclusive process

The team worked with six self-help groups (one per village, each covering one of the six main strategies) to identify indicators for each of their objectives, how these would be measured, who would measure them and how frequently. These various aspects were indicated by the self-help group members pictorially (see Figure 1).

In most cases the participants adjusted the original plans themselves following their first experiences of using the monitoring approach. This gave them a better understanding of what would give useful information. Figure 2 shows how the method developed and how the measurements were recorded. The group worked out specific details, for example, the milk yield should be the quantity of pure milk and not the quantity sold, which is often watered down, and how to get complete information if some members were not present at the meetings.

Although this approach eventually led to the achievement of some effective PM&E plans, the team found the procedure very difficult to carry out. It was hard to grasp the differences between the objectives and indicators and between indicators and methods, and methods and measures, and the team's own lack of clarity frustrated attempts to facilitate the process with some of the self-help groups.

It was also time-consuming to complete a whole plan and was not enjoyable or rewarding, and therefore not likely to be continued after the end of the project. In one case, a clear plan had not yet been achieved despite several attempts to facilitate the process. It was clear the approach had been too arduous, so that it was difficult to get to a point where something had been learnt and activities modified by the self-help groups as a result of the monitoring.

The importance of completing a whole PM&E cycle

A breakthrough came when some of the results from data collected from each self-help group for a simple participatory indicator (numbers of meetings held) were analysed and represented graphically. When these were shown to the self-help groups they became very interested and could see the

Table 1: Numbers of loans taken and repaid and their uses (records taken from pictogram)

Name of member	Loans taken	Repaid	Production (number of loans taken)	Consumption (number of loans taken)
Kalavva	5	3	Mango saplings, buffalo, shop, fertiliser (4)	Hospital (1)
Kamalavva	4	3	Fertiliser, to plough the field (2)	Hospital, slate (2)
Gangavva	3	2		Vessel, groceries, wedding (3)
Basavva	2	2		
Sujata	3	2	Poultry, harvesting of grains (2)	Tiles for roof of house (1)
Vimalaxi	3	2		
Malavva	3	3	Goat and fertiliser (twice) (3)	
Iravva	2	1	Cow (1)	School fees (1)
Shantavva	3	3	Tailoring machine, to buy mango saplings (2)	Hospital (1)
Ansavva	1	0		A cupboard to give her daughter who got married (1)
Renavva	2	1	Fertiliser (twice) (2)	
Iravva H	1	1		Stones to build house (1)
Totals ¹	32	23	16	11

¹ Figures do not add up as 2 members were absent at this stage in the meeting.

implications of the patterns and how their own progress compared with that of other self-help groups, and wanted to discuss the differences.

Upon further reflection it was noted that if self-help groups were involved in completing the whole procedure quickly in one or two sessions, from identifying an indicator right through to the final stage of analysing the implications of the results, it would help them to understand the ultimate purpose of M&E. This was tried in the village where most difficulties had been faced.

The indicator 'capacity of the self-help group to develop and manage micro-credit for members' and its measure, 'the number of loans issued and repaid', was tried by the self-help group members. The method of measurement involved every member going up to a piece of flip-chart paper on the wall to draw circles against their names representing each loan they had taken. Then, if they had repaid the loan, they crossed through the circle. As one participant said, 'Our names are there and how many loans we have taken. Once we have repaid we will know and we get to know who has taken the loans'. Before, this had only been known by those able to keep the records in the record book. The members then divided the loans taken according to the purpose for which they were taken – production or consumption – and analysed them. After six months they did another round where they indicated any fresh loans they had taken, what they were for, and whether loans already taken out had been repaid.

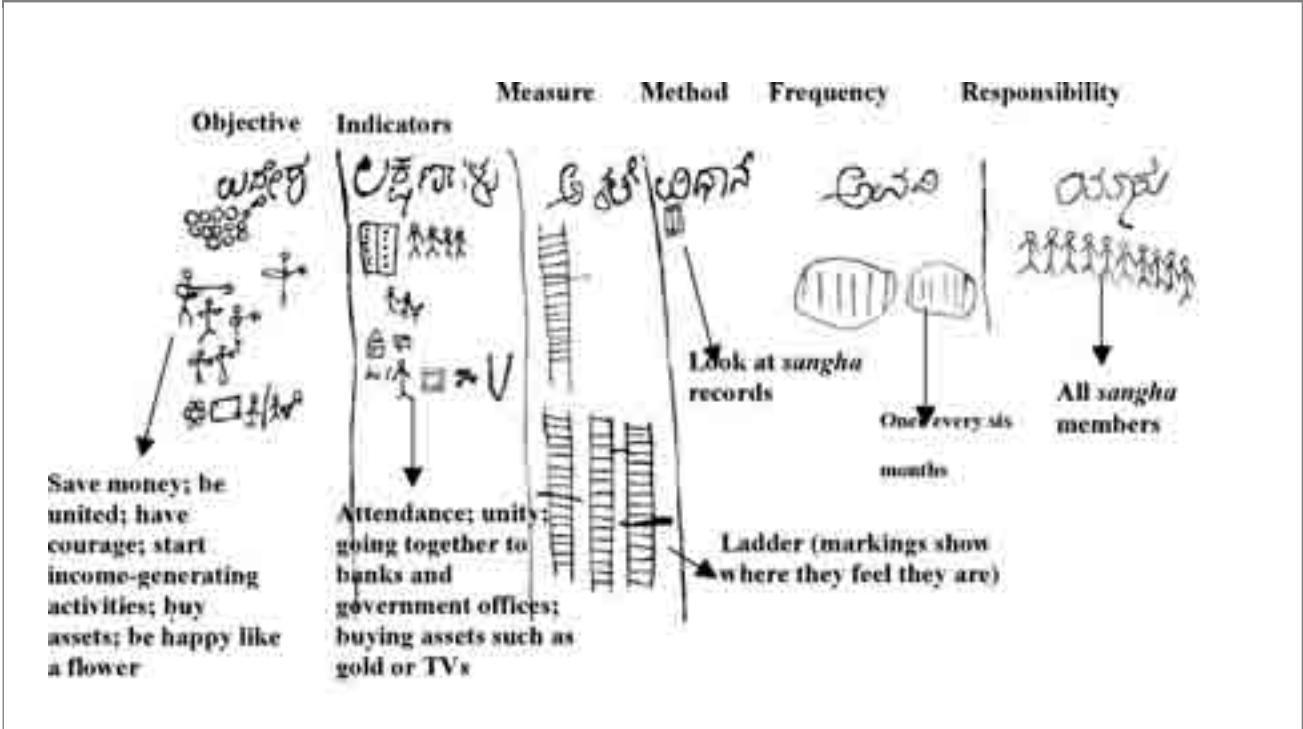
This modified approach begins with identifying one indicator instead of many, followed by working out how it should be measured, with suggestions from both team and self-help group members. The rest of the process was also fully collaborative, right to the point where self-help group members were interpreting information that was brought together and presented in a way that they could repeat independently. At this early stage in learning about monitoring and evaluating activities, it is helpful if the indicator and measure are simple and easily measurable to give quick results for immediate interpretation.

Collaboration improves quality

After considerable trial and error the team started to understand what methods and measures work best, and to recognise that identifying effective means of measuring indicators can influence the potential value of the indicator itself. In the end the team saw that the methods designed with the self-help groups were more useful than the methods that were developed by the team in isolation. An example of this is adoption of a ladder scale (Box 1).

The original method had been to count the number of members who had made visits to officials and calculate the difference every monitoring period (6 months). However this measure was considered weak in terms of sensitivity and validity. Members may not have needed to visit officials during that period, and some officials were easier to deal with than others. Using the ladder scale had several advan-

Box 1: Monitoring the development of Laxmi self-help group in Mugad

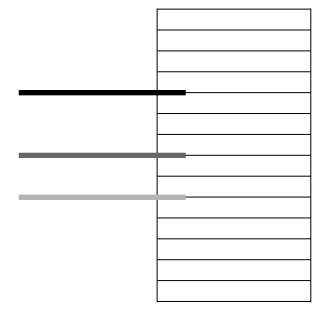


In the participatory monitoring diagram below, the measure used was a ladder. The ladder has 16 rungs (each rung representing one *anna*, an old form of currency where 16 *annas* made a rupee). Assuming that they were at the bottom of the ladder when they started the self-help group, group members marked off on the ladder where they were at the moment. They had discussions for each of the indicators and came to a consensus as to which rung they were at. Since the measurement involved only drawing a ladder and marking off against a rung of the ladder the women felt more confident of being able to go up to the chart and do it themselves.

For courage, they included going to the bank on their own, meeting government officials and being able to deal with the police. They gave themselves 12 *annas* (upper line) (equivalent to a 75% improvement).

For regularity and attendance of meetings they said that they were at 8 *annas* (middle line). This included regular meetings, held on time, which everyone attends (equivalent to a subjective 50% improvement)

For income-generating activities they felt that they had done as much as they could for now but there was a lot more that they could do. This is because they are poor and illiterate and are unwilling to take on big risks. They gave themselves 6 *annas* (lower line equivalent to a 37% improvement).



tages in that it was simple, more immediately completed and used the whole self-help group as unit of analysis, i.e., it looked at how they were able to tackle situations together when they needed official support. This kind of scale requires discussion and consensus, in which the real issues behind the score are raised each time it is reviewed, as well as being easy to do.

Conclusion: what was achieved?

Capacity-building of the team and the self-help groups

The experience and knowledge gained from the training was shared among the PM&E team during reflection meetings, which resulted in informal monitoring of the levels of participation in the various research efforts designed. It did not

An illiterate SHG woman drawing indicators to monitor their SHG functioning.



Photo: Simone Purohit

provide the team with answers to all of the 'how to' questions, but provided them with a starting point, the willingness to experiment, and a more thorough understanding of the ultimate objective of participation in monitoring and evaluation against which to monitor their own progress.

With the experience gained by the end of the project the team had overcome many difficulties associated with facilitating the participatory monitoring and evaluation process. Not least was knowing what of their own ideas they can contribute and when to intervene without dominating. The most significant lesson was the specific realisation that the **rapid completion** of a full cycle of design, collection, analysis and interpretation of a simple single indicator helps the participants to appreciate the purpose and ultimate value of

monitoring and evaluation and how they could do it themselves. It took a considerable amount of time, and perseverance to arrive at this stage. The project then came to an end, so there was little opportunity to see how well the self-help groups did with their participatory monitoring and evaluation plans after the first or second round of measurements, or to see how they could be improved or added to as capacity increased. However, the impression of the team was that further development would have been possible.

After project support has ended

Amongst the many identified, the only indicators, methods and measures likely to be sustained are the ones which incorporate:

- a tangible relevance to needs;
- ease of measurement and interpretation;
- ease of sharing and comparing results; and
- open discussion, reflection and hence immediate learning.

In this list there is an emphasis on the way the information is interpreted, including sharing, comparing and discussing results. This is where the real end product of PM&E is realised. It is at this point that self-help group members can see if the efforts put into M&E have been of sufficient value to motivate their continued use.

Considering the continuity of monitoring and evaluation practices amongst the self-help groups raises the issue of comparative analysis. With the assistance of the project some of the self-help groups were encouraged to compare visual presentations of data collected from their own and other self-help groups in the area, which they found useful. This coordinating function of the project would need to be taken on by a local institution, such as the federation of self-help groups set up as part of the leaving strategy of the project.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank the self-help groups in the six villages who struggled with us through the whole process and the community organisers without whose effort participation in monitoring and evaluation would not have been possible. We would also like to thank the rest of the team from BAIF Development and Research Foundation, Indian Development Service, Best Practice Foundation, University of Agricultural Sciences and Centre for Arid Zones Studies, University Wales Bangor and Development Planning Unit, London, for their collaboration.

NOTE

The views presented in this article are not necessarily those of DfID.

3

Holding service providers to account: community scorecards and district-level forums

by CLEMENT A. AKASOBA and LANCE W. ROBINSON

Introduction

In recent years there has been increasing interest in public accountability. 'Public accountability' implies that citizens have an input into government plans, policies and budgets, in tracking budgets and disbursements, and assessing the performance of government service providers.

One method for assessing the performance of service providers is the citizen report card. This uses the techniques of market research – particularly sample surveys of the 'consumers' of government services – and applies them to social (rather than commercial) ends. However, a limitation of this method is that it is essentially an extractive research approach. Researchers collect data from citizens, and take that data away to analyse and use it.

An alternative approach is the community scorecard method. Citizens are participants, providing the feedback on service providers themselves, analysing it, and directly expressing their concerns to service providers. The methodology is adapted from PRA and makes particular use of scoring techniques.

Since 2003, a number of civil society organisations in Ghana have begun applying the community scorecard methodology, helping communities to assess the performance of government service providers in sectors such as

"Since 2003, a number of civil society organisations in Ghana have begun applying the community scorecard methodology, helping communities to assess the performance of government service providers in sectors such as education, water and sanitation, and local government"

education, water and sanitation, and local government. A key component of the community scorecard methodology is the opportunities for dialogue that are created, especially when communities are brought together and assisted to express their concerns at higher levels such as the district level.

This article describes the community scorecard process used in the Information Flow, Accountability and Transparency (INFAT) project, managed by the Northern Ghana Network and three of its member organisations, with financial assistance from the Commonwealth Education Fund. It

Table 1: INFAT project stages

Project stage	Activities
Preparatory work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building awareness among service providers and other stakeholders. • Selecting participating communities. • Collecting supply-side information (enrolment rates, standard test results, infrastructure and learning materials provided to schools, etc.). • Project personnel train volunteer facilitators.
Community interventions: first meeting	<p>General meetings held in each of the 32 communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members informed about the project. • Community members select general themes about the service provider to be assessed and specific indicators for each theme. For example, under 'pupil-teacher ratio', community members would decide on criteria for scoring, e.g.: less than 30 to 1, good (a score of 3); between 30 and 40 to 1, fair (a score of 2); greater than 40 to 1, poor (a score of 1). • Division of community into focus groups (normally, three to five groups).
Community interventions: focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In each community, facilitators meet with focus groups (including one focus group of teachers). • Each group gives scores according to agreed indicators. • Participants give reasons for the scores and suggest possible solutions to problems identified. Facilitators record these.
Community interventions: interface meeting	<p>General meetings are held in each of the 32 communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of focus group scores. • Discussion of reasons for scores. • Reaction and feedback from service providers. • Discuss possible solutions. • Community members informed of the district-level multi-stakeholder forum and encouraged to attend.
Synthesis workshop	<p>In each district, a facilitation team meeting is held in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief each other. • Collate and compile results from the 16 communities in that district. • Plan the district-level multi-stakeholder forum.
District-level multi-stakeholder forum	<p>In each district, a public forum is held:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the scorecards by facilitators and/or community members. • Expression of concern by community members. • Reactions from the service providers. • General discussion, suggestions and recommendations. • Closing remarks.
Dissemination and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of scorecard results in a report. • Comparison of results from the two districts. • Dissemination of results through the media. • Scorecard results shared with relevant networks, coalitions, policy processes, etc.

focuses in particular on the use of district-level multi-stakeholder forums.

The INFAT project

The Northern Ghana Network for Development is an umbrella organisation for over 60 non-governmental and community-based organisations operating in the three regions of Ghana's north. In 2003, the INFAT project and

the network, together with three of its member organisations, and a team of volunteers, applied the community scorecard methodology to the education sector, in particular, primary schools.¹ The project assisted citizens from 16 communities in each of two districts to assess the performance of the primary school(s) in their communities and to

¹ The NGOs Amasachina Self-Help Association, Gub-Katimali Society, and PRIDE.

Table 2: An example of a scorecard for one community

Themes	Indicators/criteria	Community consensus score	Comments
Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)/School Management Committee (SMC) meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No meetings: poor • 1–2 meetings/year: fair • > 2 meetings/year with good attendance: good 	3 (good)	
Pupil-teacher ratio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • < 30 to 1: good • Between 30 and 40 to 1: fair • > 40 to 1: poor 	1 (poor)	The newest teacher has 51 pupils. SMC will lobby district Director of Education for more teachers
Drop-out rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • < 50% of pupils finish primary: poor • 50% to 80% of pupils finish primary: fair • > 80% of pupils finish primary: good 	3 (good)	
Teaching and learning materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbooks are shared between > 2 pupils: poor • 1 textbook per two pupils: fair • Every pupil has a textbook: good • Also, do teachers have a variety of teaching materials? Poor, fair or good 	3 (good)	SMC contributed
Teachers' accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No accommodation for teachers in the community: poor • Not all teachers have accommodation and/or quality is poor: fair • Accommodation available for all teachers, acceptable quality: good 	3 (good)	Teachers stay at the district capital and travel to the community. Funds for constructing teachers' housing was misspent.
Teacher-community relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers greet and participate in community activities: poor, fair or good 	2 (fair)	

express their concerns to the service providers (teachers, headmasters, and Ghana Education Service personnel) and to other stakeholders (especially district assemblies). The facilitation teams were made up of a mix of NGO personnel and volunteers from the participating communities. Volunteer community facilitators were selected by the NGOs and community leaders, most of them being people with some facilitation skills and with whom the NGOs had worked previously.

Primary education was selected as the focus of the project because it is a government service that is visible in, and relevant to, most rural communities in Ghana. Also, many of the member organisations of the Network have experience of the education sector. We felt that the Ministry of Education, being slightly more decentralised than most government ministries, might be more amenable to public influence from the grassroots.

The project went through three general stages of preparation, at community, district and national-level. The work was broken down into seven main activities (Table 1).

Community-level activities

During the community-level activities in the project, community members identified criteria for assessing the performance of their local school. These were added to five standard 'themes' used in all 16 communities (the first five 'themes' shown in Table 2).

Community members identified a number of indicators for each theme. Based on these indicators, interest/stakeholder groups in each community gave the school a score. Focus group scores were combined into each locality's community scorecard. The scorecard results from each community were then summarised for presentation at the district-level multi-stakeholder forum (Table 3).

Table 3: Summary of scorecard results in Bongo district

Community	Themes					Mean ²
	PTA/SMC Meetings	Pupil-teacher ratio	Pupil drop-out rate	Teaching and learning materials	Teachers' accommodation	
Kanga	2	2	1	3	1	1.8
Vea	3	1	2	3	1	2.0
Tarongo	1	1	1	3	1	1.4
Gambrongo	3	1	1	3	1	1.8
Anafobisi	3	1	3	3	1	2.2
Gowrie Central	3	1	3	3	2	2.4
Kunkua	2	1	3	3	1	2.0
Gowrie-Tingre	2	1	3	1	1	1.6
Gorogo	2	1	3	2	2	2.0
Dua	1	1	3	2	2	1.8
Salibga	2	1	3	2	2	2.0
Soe	3	1	3	2	1	2.0
Balungo	2	1	2	2	1	1.6
Lingo	3	1	2	1	2	1.8
Kadare	3	1	3	1	2	2.0
Goo	2	1	1	1	2	1.4
Mean	2.3	1.1	2.3	2.2	1.4	

Scores were given from 1 to 3: 3 = good, 2 = fair, 1 = poor.

District-level multi-stakeholder forums

The climax of the community scorecard process is the district-level multi-stakeholder forum. The main reason for having the district-level forum as well as the community-level interface meetings is that feedback and dialogue are needed at different levels. Some problems and concerns can be addressed at community level by headmasters and teachers. Other problems can only be solved by action at higher levels so giving community members a voice beyond the confines of their own community is important.

In the INFAT project, the district forums were very lively. The community-level activities helped prepare community members for these forums by encouraging them to learn more about, think about, and discuss the issues and concerns they had. This gave them the confidence to stand up in the district forum and tell the education authorities and district assembly personnel their thoughts.

Example: district forum in Bongo district

Participants in the forum included:

- community members

- district assembly co-ordinating director
- district Directorate of Education:
 - district director of education
 - director in charge of education
 - circuit supervisors
- traditional authority representatives (chiefs)
- head teachers of schools
- district assembly members from concerned communities
- Parent-Teacher Association/School Management Committee representatives of schools
- representative from Institute for Policy Analysis
- representatives from PRIDE
- observers
- representatives from Nicaragua's parliamentary select committee on education who were visiting Ghana at the time.

After introductory remarks, including an explanation of the project, the scorecard results for each community were

² It is recognised that it is not statistically valid to calculate a mean for an ordinal variable; nevertheless, the means are shown here for each community and for each indicator in order to give a general impression of community feelings on these issues.

A participant speaking at the Bongo district-level multi-stakeholder forum.



Photo: Gariba Development Associates

presented (Table 3). This immediately generated a buzz, as it became easy for community members and other stakeholders to compare between communities. Data on the specific indicators for each theme were also presented, and reasons for poor scores discussed. Some of the main issues of concern that arose included:

- teacher absenteeism and lateness, and lack of incentives for teachers;
- teachers' accommodation/teachers travelling each day to their post, and arriving late;
- a lack of teachers and improper distribution of teachers;
- only some schools benefit from pupil incentives given by the World Food Programme and World Vision;
- teachers going on study leave or transfer;
- alleged maltreatment of teachers by the district Directorate of Education;

- parents withdrawing their children on market days or for farm labour;
- teachers using instructional hours for games and other things;
- teenage pregnancy; and
- school infrastructure (185 students/classroom in one community).

Dialogue at the forum

It was as these issues were discussed that the forum became particularly lively. The district director of education responded to a number of the concerns, and in many cases was challenged by community members. However, the focus was on dialogue rather than lodging complaints. This was important for a number of reasons, including the fact that community members did not have all of the information on all of the

“Perhaps the greatest value of the district-level multi-stakeholder forums was the opportunity for dialogue they created. Groups that would normally never even meet each other had an opportunity to interact and understand the others’ point of view”

issues. For example, one of the main concerns was teacher absenteeism and lateness. Through discussion, community members realised that this is not always due to teachers being irresponsible. Teachers pointed out that often they are forced to deal with bureaucratic matters in the district capital, for example, chasing up paycheques. A few communities proudly reported that they had built teacher housing, helping to tackle the problem. They challenged other communities to solve some of their own problems and not expect the state to do everything for them.

Identifying solutions and recommendations, for example, timely payment of teachers’ salaries, improving the sense of responsibility of teachers and providing teacher accommodation in the communities, was an important part of the forum. However, people tended to identify actions others should take. There was no real action planning by stakeholder groups. This aspect of the district forum needs to be strengthened in future.

Impact, lessons learnt and ways forward

One positive outcome was the forum’s effect on community members’ level of understanding of the issues. They realised that it is possible for any community to have a dialogue with any perceived authority in order to seek solutions for their problems. They also realised that some problems are not beyond their own means of solving. There were also more tangible impacts. Following the district forum, one community in Tamale took the initiative and organised a radio programme to demand that the education authorities explain some of the problems that were found.

One lesson learnt from the forums conducted is that it is important to have all the relevant stakeholder groups represented. In the case of the Bongo forum, for example, the inclusion of a representative from the Ghana National Association of Teachers would have strengthened the forum, and increased the likelihood of useful information coming out. NGOs working in the education sector might also have

offered solutions to some of the problems identified. Efforts to engage the forum in serious action planning are likely to suffer unless all relevant stakeholders are present.

Perhaps the greatest value of the district-level multi-stakeholder forums was the opportunity for dialogue they created. Groups that would normally never even meet each other had an opportunity to interact and understand the others’ point of view. Communities were brought together, a wide variety of stakeholders interacted in serious dialogue, problems were identified and possible solutions discussed. By focusing on dialogue, the process was able to contribute to the education and to raising stakeholders’ awareness of the issues. A process based on lobbying, the lodging of official complaints, or legal empowerment would not have had the same potential for this kind of mutual education. This is not to say that more adversarial approaches do not have their place – one of the weaknesses of the INFAT project was that lobbying and follow-up after the district forums were poor. Linking the dialogue focus of the district forum more closely with other activities focused on advocacy and lobbying would likely have strengthened both aspects, and improved the overall impact of this project.

One way to do this would be to ensure that the entire community scorecard process – and the district forum within it – is treated as part of a larger, ongoing planning and policy process. The district forum itself could be broadened to include not only discussion and brainstorming, but also actual planning. Alternatively, other multi-stakeholder planning activities could be added after the district forum.

Another way to make a link to a larger, longer-term process would be to repeat the activities in the same districts and communities every year or two and begin doing comparisons over time. This would strengthen any advocacy initiatives that may emerge from the process, whether at the regional or national level by civil society organisations such as NGO networks, or at the district level by grassroots community members and their organisations. Being able to assess progress over time should also be useful for managers of service provider agencies. The Network and its member organisations are working to ensure that the process can be regularly repeated in the participating districts and communities. If this can happen, then the value of doing the assessments and being able to track progress will become readily apparent.

In the interests of financial sustainability, the Network has resisted the urge to include in the budget anything more than token amounts for facilitator honorariums. The Network has not (yet) obtained funds to allow the process to be repeated across all 32 communities. However, in Tamale, one of the

participating NGOs, Amasachina Self-Help Association, has raised funds to repeat the scorecard process in some of the same communities. The long-term vision is for PTAs/SMCs to take responsibility for implementation of scorecard activities, perhaps through an umbrella association, and for the North-

ern Ghana Network for Development and its member organisations to shift to the role of facilitating the process as consultants working at the behest of the PTAs/SMCs. In any case, some level of funds will still be needed and no permanent funding solution has yet been found.

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NOTE

For more information about the INFAT project or the community scorecard methodology in Ghana, contact the Northern Ghana Network for Development: ngndnet@hotmail.com. See also www.roboroz.ca/scorecard

4

The Most Significant Change: using participatory video for monitoring and evaluation

by **CHRIS LUNCH**

Insight is a UK/France-based organisation pioneering the use of participatory video (PV) as a tool for empowering individuals and communities. Insight has experimented with using PV for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in its own PV projects. Here I describe some of these experiments and what we have learnt from them, with a particular focus on our most recent experience of combining Rick Davies' Most Significant Change (MSC) ideas with PV.

What is participatory video?

Participatory video is an iterative process, whereby communities use video to document innovations and ideas or focus on issues affecting their environment and community (see Box 1). Local viewing of the material as the project progresses lies at the heart of the PV process and achieves a number of outcomes at the same time:

- opening communication channels locally;
- promoting dialogue and discussion; and
- setting in motion a dynamic exchange of ideas and solutions.

It also encourages others to get involved and it can help gauge trends and move towards building consensus in the community. It is the fire that keeps the cauldron bubbling!

Box 1: Participatory video in a nutshell

- Participants rapidly learn how to use video equipment through games and exercises.
- Facilitators help groups identify and analyse important issues in their community by adapting a range of PRA-type tools with participatory video techniques.
- Short videos and messages are directed and filmed by participants.
- Footage is shared with the wider community at daily screenings.
- A dynamic process of community-led learning, sharing and exchange is set in motion.
- Communities are involved to varying degrees in editing their films, but they always have full editorial control.
- Completed films can be used for horizontal and vertical communication.

Using PV for M&E

It could be argued that the PV methodology itself, which moves progressively from action to analysis, means M&E is ongoing and integral to the process, so it is not surprising that PV lends itself so well to participatory M&E.

Insight's experience of using PV for monitoring and evaluating our own participatory video projects can be divided into three categories:

Farmers documenting local innovation in Ghana during PV capacity building with network partners, Compas and Prolinnova



Photo: Insight

Monitoring and evaluating the participatory video process itself

Participatory video can be used to document any changes experienced by individuals and groups as they use the tools. If the participants are using the video camera every day, it is not difficult sometimes to shift the focus onto the participatory video process itself. In this way we can record feedback that can help us develop and improve the methodology, or which can be shared with future participants, trainees, donors or decision makers.

Monitoring and evaluating a project as it progresses

When used as the work progresses, participatory video can help strengthen local control over the direction and evolution of the project. Participatory video has been used to develop a feedback loop – community members are asked to react to short films made by other villagers, also on video. These reactions are then also screened, eliciting fresh discussions and new perspectives. In one case this process was vital to ensure that the women were fully involved in the development of an Insight renewable energy programme (see Box 2).

Monitoring and evaluating on completion of a participatory video project

Before any video is distributed the edited version needs to be viewed and approved by the community who made it. Any changes they suggest are made immediately using a laptop. This is usually a special event for the village and most of the population will turn up, since it is an opportunity for them to

Box 2: Solar power = community power programme

In this Insight project in Turkmenistan, community members are using video to document meetings. In this way, women, who traditionally do not attend such meetings, can watch the discussions in their own homes. The women then provide feedback and suggestions, also via video, and the films are played to the community at evening screenings, ensuring that their ideas and opinions are heard.



Turkmenistan participants conduct an interview

Photo: Insight

discuss in detail how they think the film should be used, who should see it and why, and so on. It is also a chance for us to ask what they think they have achieved, and to gauge their perceptions of the project in general.

As an obvious extension of our work in the community, these same participants are asked to lead the evaluation process. After working out three or four core questions, these individuals go out with a video camera and microphone, and interview groups and individuals around the village to record their responses to the final film and to the project in general. When community members are asked questions by other villagers, neighbours or relatives, with no project staff in sight, in the comfort of their own homes or backyards, their responses are always very frank and relaxed.

The feedback loop

Communication is an important aspect of evaluation. We have found that the videos produced during such M&E exercises can be used in various ways:

- to influence national and regional policy;
- as a means of communicating with donors and generating project funding;

Box 3: Completing the feedback loop: natural resource management in the mountain regions of Asia (NORMA)

In this EU-funded project, Insight worked with four high-altitude nomad and farming communities in the Karakoram-Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. Using PV techniques, the villagers were able to express their views on what they saw as the key areas for research to support natural resource management, and to communicate them directly to scientists, policy makers and donors at a workshop held to identify how to achieve these needs. A video of this workshop, with messages from scientists, was made and translated into local languages to be shown in the communities.

- as a way of helping to spread programmes to new areas and villages; and
- for sharing information with global networks of NGOs and researchers.

Videos containing the views, evaluations and descriptions of projects by the participants themselves are always the best and most transparent way of communicating project work.

The portability and accessibility of video as a medium mean that it is possible to show the material outside the community, and obtain useful video feedback from people in neighbouring villages, roadside cafes and markets, or policy makers in their city-based offices. Used in this way, the edited video made by the first community becomes a powerful tool for drawing out more experiences, reactions and evaluations. Ideally, community representatives should present their film to these different groups, in which case they can also help facilitate the video feedback. When played back to the community that made the original film, this feedback can be extremely useful. Seeing that their work has had an impact on other individuals and groups can be a deeply empowering and satisfying experience for these communities, many of which have a strong sense of their own marginalisation. They are given a glimpse into other worlds, and into how others perceive their ideas and achievements (see Box 3).

Improving participatory video as a tool for M&E

Our initial experiences with participatory video led us to consider how we could formalise its obvious potential as an M&E tool and develop a more systematic approach. Rick Davies' Most Significant Change (MSC) technique for M&E provided a way forward (Box 4).

We immediately saw the potential for participatory video within this innovative M&E technique. Participatory video, with its ability to convey 'a rich picture', could help the technique go even further and make the stories more accessible

Box 4: Most Significant Change technique

The MSC technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. The approach is akin to traditional forms of communication and storytelling, and is used to provide data on project impacts and outcomes so programmes can be assessed and managed in a more participatory way. It involves the collection and systematic, participatory interpretation of stories of significant change. Unlike conventional approaches to monitoring, MSC does not employ quantitative indicators, but is a qualitative approach.

For more information, see Davies, R. & J. Dart (2005) *The Most Significant Change Technique: a guide to its use*. Available online: www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.htm

to all kinds of audiences, and to all parts of the communities themselves, including children, the elderly and the non-literate. Video has great potential to enhance indigenous means of communication – which, like video, are primarily visual and verbal. Ultimately it can help to link the MSC stories more closely to the localities and to the communities they come from, as well as strengthen the communities' sense of ownership and control over the documentation and diffusion of the MSC stories.

Pens and notepads can create barriers. With minimal training anyone can learn how to use a video camera, allowing people to tell their MSC stories in a familiar context. The process itself is fun and direct, and the results can be played back and reviewed immediately. This also helps to avoid situations where project staff end up having to speak on behalf of communities, using media that are often incomprehensible to the people themselves.

Participants work together to plan short MSC films using the storyboard method (see photo).¹ The local screening of MSC stories encourages broader participation and could speed up the process of story collection as more people choose to get involved and contribute their own stories. Communities can be asked to vote on the stories, enabling us to move towards quantifying local consensus, and provide more valuable local evaluation. This process, and the reasons for selecting certain stories as most significant, could also be filmed, and the footage added to the end of the individual stories. This can occur at all stages in the MSC process, providing the community with accessible and engaging video feedback and a glimpse into the world of decision makers. Our experience has shown that this can contribute to local empowerment, as the people can see where their

¹ For more information about the exercises and games used in the process, see Insight's recent publication, *Insights into participatory video: a handbook for the field*. Available from Insight or as a free download (see details at end of article).

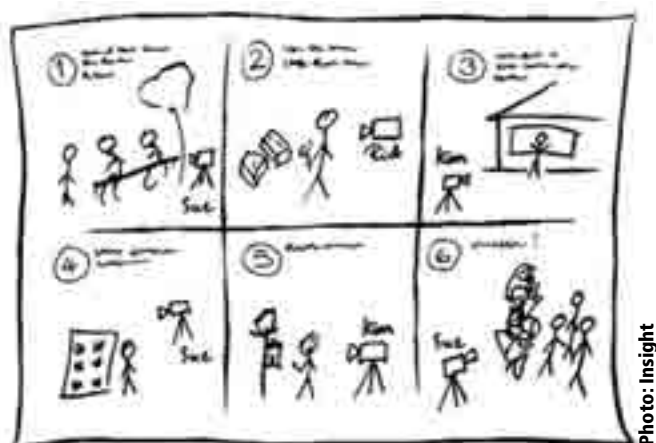
The storyboard method

Photo: Insight

films/stories have travelled, and the impacts they have had at the different levels.

The fact that MSC stories can be watched rather than read will also appeal to those project managers, administrators and decision makers who feel overburdened by paperwork. When the films are shown outside the community itself, subtitles or audio translations can be added, making the MSC video stories accessible to much wider audiences – local, regional and even global. As with stories, video helps to connect people to the reality on the ground. There is a human connection that comes from seeing someone speak, even if it is on video. If we can't bring the decision makers to the field, then we can try our best to bring the field to the decision makers!

Requirements for PV

Whilst special equipment is needed to make and show videos, a growing number of NGOs and even community-based organisations now have their own video players, and some also have video cameras. Video films can also be easily copied onto CD-ROMs and can then be viewed simply using a laptop computer or via the Internet. In this way, PV can bring local experiences and knowledge into a global network, allowing all relevant actors to learn from each other.

Combining PV and MSC: an example

In November–December 2005, Insight worked with the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (Citizenship DRC), an international network of researchers and practitioners from Angola, Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Nigeria, South Africa and the UK, to evaluate the work of the DRC over the past five years. We used a combined PV/MSV approach for the evaluation.

The process

Twelve DRC researchers took part in a two-day introductory participatory video training. They learnt how to use the video equipment through participatory games and exercises. We discussed the MSC approach and how to produce MSC video stories. The stories could reflect changes observed at the community level, the institutional level, the personal level or any other changes. The trainees then used their new PV skills to reach out to other delegates at the DRC conference, interviewing them about their own MSC stories. The material was edited in the evenings and presented to all the delegates at a planning meeting on the final day of the workshop. This was the point when delegates were given the chance to evaluate the different stories and decide which was most significant and why.

What was achieved?

The participants developed nine short MSC stories. These were all very individual and creative, and included role-play, drawings and photographs. The researchers who took part enjoyed filming and it generated a lot of laughter. The simplicity of the MSC approach combined well with our storyboard approach, helping individuals move from words to a more visual language and encouraging them to be creative and simplify their messages. As a creative and fun process it forced people to think and act a bit differently from the way they usually would in a formal conference context, and helped develop an open environment for sharing and exchange.

The films communicated aspects of the researchers' work in a very clear and accessible way. Delegates got to know each other's work better through the short films, and a number of key areas of change were highlighted.

Those who had the PV training wanted to use the methods in their wider DRC action research work. Many other delegates saw the value of PV in promoting broader participation in the process of knowledge generation and representing local views and knowledge. Insight was subsequently invited to provide PV capacity building to all seven DRC country partners.

Lessons learnt

During Insight's experiments combining the MSC technique and PV, many lessons have been learnt:

- MSC and PV can be integrated in very exciting and dynamic ways, which need to be developed further in the future.
- MSC stories can be documented by the project communities themselves, requiring little training and skill.
- PV tools can be used effectively to generate video feedback

from higher up the decision-making chain.

- Recording MSC stories on video means that the process of sorting and ranking them is much faster and simpler, and the accessibility of video as a medium means that the process can be opened up to far more people.
 - The storyboard method developed by Insight means that even without editing, good short MSC films can be easily produced and reviewed by key stakeholders.
- PV could be used to great effect in the MSC evaluation

process, with the following advantages:

- It encourages broad participation in the evaluation process.
- MSC stories can be easily shared, opening up new possibilities for wider communication/dissemination.
- Video can be used and understood by anyone, including the non-literate.
- It helps strengthen the participants' control over their stories.
- It has great potential for building broad consensus within a community.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The first part of this article was previously published as 'Participatory video in monitoring and evaluation' in the online journal *Capacity.org*, Issue 30, March 2007, and is reproduced here with the kind permission of the publishers.

FURTHER INFORMATION

To see examples of participatory videos and case studies from around the world, including the DRC MSC films, go to www.insightshare.org

Insight holds regular introductory and in-depth courses in PV facilitation. The next five-day introductory participatory video course takes place in Oxford, UK from 10–14 September 2007.

Insight's recent publication *Insights into Participatory Video: a handbook for the field* includes a CD-ROM with a selection of video films made by local people and a training film and is available to buy from their website (UK£15) or download as a PDF at: www.insightshare.org/training_book.html

From participatory systematisation to a regional network for policy change

by **FRANCES HANSFORD, VIRGINIA ARAÚJO LIMA SANTANA, and GÉRMAN HILARES REINOSO**

Introduction: systematisation as an action-learning methodology

To systematise means to 'arrange according to an organised system'.¹ A process of systematisation can be used to bring order and sense to an experience, which may otherwise seem chaotic. When done in a participatory mode, it can potentially promote dynamic processes of collective learning and action.

This article tells the story of a group of 20 NGOs from nine Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) countries which committed to learning and replicating a participatory systematisation methodology in their communities and organisations. All the NGOs were involved in strengthening local food and nutritional security and developing approaches to reducing hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity in the region. They used the systematisation process to generate information and knowledge about the different approaches used, with the aims of:

- sharing their knowledge with other audiences, helping to sustain local experience and to spread the approaches beyond the local level;
- capturing and articulating diverse community perspectives,

"... project leaders wanted to continue to learn together and share their accumulated experience with others. The idea emerged to train a group of leaders as facilitators of systematisation methodologies, allowing them to generate and disseminate information and learning about their project experiences"

- complementing the largely quantitative information generated by an externally-driven evaluation of the projects;
- increasing the voice of poor rural communities in the design of public policies and actions for food security and sustainable rural development;
- helping NGOs and communities to refine community-level strategies to improve livelihoods;
- develop and institutionalise the capacity for action-learning in the communities and organisations involved.

¹ Source: Compact Oxford English dictionary. See www.askoxford.com

Table 1: The capacity-building process

	Activities	Support	Actors	Results and outputs
Phase one July 01 – Feb 02 (7 months)	Three training workshops Two periods of practical application to undertake project systematisations	Online guidance from external consultants	Ten first-generation facilitators Two external consultants Project actors in each location	Development of systematisation skills Transfer of skills to other project actors Ten projects partially systematised
Phase two Feb 02 – May 03 (15 months)	Three training workshops Two periods of practical application to undertake project systematisations	Site visits and online guidance from first-generation facilitators Online guidance from external consultants	Ten first-generation facilitators Ten second-generation facilitators Two external consultants Project actors in each location	Development of systematisation skills Transfer of skills to other project actors 20 projects systematised
Final workshop May 03	Presentation of knowledge generated in 20 projects Discussion of dissemination of information	External consultants	Ten first-generation facilitators Ten second-generation facilitators Two external consultants	Socialisation of knowledge generated in 20 projects 20 systematisation documents Local and regional dissemination plans

Background

The 20 NGOs were part of a larger group of organisations working in the region between 1995 and 2002. They developed a number of projects which worked with farmers in diverse social and ecological settings, and aimed to increase local food production and improve nutrition by supporting small-scale sustainable agriculture. All the projects were partially funded by the Kellogg Foundation and the NGOs had participated in regular meetings to promote exchange and learning across projects.

As the funding drew to a close, project leaders wanted to continue to learn together and share their accumulated experience with others. The idea emerged to train a group of leaders as facilitators of systematisation methodologies, allowing them to generate and disseminate information and learning about their project experiences. The Kellogg Foundation agreed to provide financial support and technical

expertise. A sub-set of innovative projects was identified and project leaders were invited to take part in the systematisation process on a voluntary basis. The methodology described here is illustrated by examples from two NGOs involved: APAEB – Association for the Sustainable and Supportive Development of the Sisal Region (Bahia, Brazil) and CEPROM – Centre for the Advancement of Women (Huancayo, Peru).

The capacity-building process

We used a two-phase process to build capacity and undertake the project systematisations (Table 1).

In phase one, ten facilitators were trained by two external consultants with expertise in systematisation and social communications. An action-learning approach was used, combining three face-to-face workshops with periods of three to four months of practical application. The first workshop presented the concepts and methodological

**CEPROM/Huancayo:
community meeting
for project
systematisation,
Huancayo, Peru**



Photo: German Hilares

approaches of systematisation and considered how the information generated could be used. The second workshop reviewed progress in how the methodology was applied. This helped to equip facilitators to deal with difficulties they had encountered, and provided further input on information analysis, documentation and dissemination. The third workshop reflected on the facilitators' experiences. It prepared them to replicate the methodology with a second set of projects. The external consultants supported the facilitators with online guidance during the application periods. This phase lasted for seven months.

In phase two, a further ten facilitators were trained by both the external consultants and the first generation of facilitators. Again, they used an action-learning approach. The first workshop was for all 20 facilitators. They discussed the systematisation methodology and planned how to replicate it

in the second set of projects. The second and third workshops reviewed progress and discussed difficulties, and continued to think about dissemination strategies. The first generation assisted the second generation of facilitators through site visits and online support. The external consultants were also available to provide online support throughout this second phase. Next, a prolonged nine-month application period allowed all the facilitators to complete their project systematisations. This phase lasted for 15 months.

A final workshop was held to present and discuss the knowledge generated in each of the 20 projects and to plan local and regional dissemination strategies.

Methods used in project systematisations

Each facilitator formed a core local research team of three to five people, generally composed of NGO staff. The facilita-

Box 1: APAEB and CEPROM approaches to systemisation

The APAEB and CEPROM teams both devised ways to build systematisation activities into regular community meetings and events, minimising the extra time and effort required of community residents.

The APAEB team made the ambitious choice to systematise three lines of work: rural micro-finance, technical assistance and the Family Agriculture School. One of its central concerns was to include the widest possible variety of perspectives and opinions. This included all age groups, from young people to the elderly, students and parents, and women of all positions. To do so, they employed a broad array of methods suited to different participants.

The core CEPROM team consisted of three NGO staff. It was augmented by 30 women from the communities, who were directly involved in outreach activities, formulating key questions, and facilitating participatory activities with their peers to reflect upon project experiences. The core team was responsible for analysis and writing up results. The involvement of the local women was crucial to engaging the local population: the women explained the concepts, purposes and practical steps of the systematisation in their own words, eliminating technical terms, and illustrating their points with analogies from their everyday lives.

tors shared knowledge acquired in the workshops. Then the teams drew up basic work plans. The plans varied considerably, according to local conditions and objectives, but usually contained nine basic steps:

Step 1: outreach to project actors – farmers, community groups, local leaders, extension workers, local politicians, NGO staff etc. – to explain the concept and purposes of the systematisation and motivate people to get involved.

Step 2: selecting a particular theme or work to systematise (e.g. rural micro-finance, nutrition programme, rural education programme) to keep the exercise focused and manageable.

Step 3: formulating basic questions for the systematisation to address. These questions should be about:

- reconstructing the original project idea (theoretical framework, principles and strategies);
- problems and challenges encountered in translating the idea into practice;
- what actions were taken and their degree of success in achieving the original idea; and
- rethinking the idea based on what had happened.

Step 4: using a variety of participatory exercises and techniques to reflect upon and interpret the meaning of actions

and experiences. Methods included open discussions and other classic ‘participatory’ visualisation techniques (brainstorming, mapping, timelines, flow diagrams, calendars etc.) in community forums, focus groups, and individual interviews. A desk review of relevant documentation was often also done.

Step 5: the core team do a first-level analysis of the information. Organising and analysing large amounts of information meant:

- classifying it into relevant themes or categories;
- reducing and synthesising;
- analysing and interpreting; and
- drawing lessons and conclusions.

Step 6: discussing the analysis with project actors to get their reactions and further insights.

Step 7: the core team do a second-level analysis on the basis of participants’ reactions, and prepare a written document containing the systematised information.

Step 8: a written document is presented to project actors. Then the knowledge and learning generated is used to refine strategies and plan new actions at the community level.

Step 9: communication and dissemination plans are designed to share information with other audiences according to community and NGO change objectives.

Box 1 summarises the approaches used by APAEB and CEPROM.

Local and regional outcomes: towards policy change

At the local level there were a number of tangible outcomes:

- Communities and organisations gained socially constructed knowledge and recognition of what worked (and what didn’t) in their projects. This gave them renewed motivation to act based on their learning.
- Lessons learnt were documented from the 20 projects. This can be used as a database from which to draw information for specific audiences.
- A body of trained facilitators now exists, able to institutionalise action-learning-oriented methodologies by building systematisation approaches into regular activities. They also gained enhanced capacity and confidence to articulate their stories to other audiences.

Box 2: Local outcomes: APAEB and CEPROM

The systematisation process allowed APAEB staff and community participants to recognise what they had achieved. This increased their confidence to continue to disseminate innovative approaches. Key elements of their micro-finance and technical assistance programmes have been incorporated into national policies to strengthen small-scale farming in semi-arid regions. APAEB also participates in a government-sponsored network for technical assistance in the north-east of Brazil. The federal government now channels some of its resources to develop technical assistance suited to the agro-ecological conditions of the semi-arid north-east through APAEB. Technical assistance has increased and improved. So has the availability of federal microfinance. These factors have allowed small-scale producers to increase and diversify food production, improving local food security through subsistence and supply to local markets. In addition, the systematisation process awakened participants' awareness of the importance of public policy as an instrument for local change – and the shortcomings in existing public policy. They have since invested in preparing their own community leaders to lobby local political offices.

CEPROM staff witnessed improvements in local people's capacity to question how things happen, formulate new proposals, express themselves in verbal and written format, and manage information and communications. These skills have brought greater confidence – particularly amongst women and youth – to speak out about their experiences and opinions in public forums, including district-level negotiations to formulate local public policies. CEPROM has become well known for its expertise in small-scale rural agro-industrial development. Its members participate in the Regional Agro-industry Board and are frequently consulted about the government's National Agro-industry Plan and the National Programme for Water Basin Management. The municipal government has used information from CEPROM's systematisation to promote its own rural community-based micro-businesses with innovative approaches to technical assistance and technology transfer. It now funds rural youth job skills training in a CEPROM-run training centre. Adopting CEPROM's approaches in local and national policies and practice has ensured that such approaches have spread beyond the original geographical scope covered by CEPROM. This has allowed more small-scale producers to experience the benefits of agro-industrial development, such as:

- the value added to food products;
- the diversified use of food products;
- nutritional improvements;
- the generation of additional incomes; and
- using incomes to invest in health, education, and other welfare goods.

“At regional level, the process culminated in a group of leaders with a collective vision for the future of the region, in terms of local food security and sustainable development.”

- There is increased awareness of the potential of policy change as an instrument to improve livelihoods.

Some of the communities and NGOs have successfully used the knowledge and learning generated to:

- influence public policies and practices that condition local food security;
- improve rural livelihoods by institutionalising their project approaches;
- appropriate public resources for their initiatives; and/or
- scale-up experiences to cover broader geographical areas.

Box 2 gives some examples from APAEB and CEPROM.

At regional level, the process culminated in a group of leaders with a collective vision for the future of the region in terms of local food security and sustainable development. They have an enhanced capacity to articulate their vision and experience to wider audiences. The group undertook a further exercise to elaborate a 'regional synthesis' of the knowledge generated at local level. This resulted in more generalised, regionally relevant principles and lessons for general use across diverse contexts (RedLayc, 2004a). They also prepared a methodological guide to project systematisation (RedLayc, 2004b). Establishing a region-wide network, RedLayc, to promote conditions favourable to local food security was a direct outcome of the regional vision of this group and of its members' recognition of the power of collective – rather than isolated – efforts.² The network provides support for local and national-level initiatives to promote policy change.

Power dynamics and the politics of participation

The systematisation process was sponsored and funded by the Kellogg Foundation. This created the potential to impose demands on NGOs largely dependent on external funding. But NGO leaders welcomed it as a way to continue to learn together and generate impact beyond the local level. The Foundation made it clear that participation was voluntary,

² Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Seguridad Alimentaria y Desarrollo Sustentable

APAEB/Valente: Group celebration to mark the end of one phase of the systematisation process, Valente, Bahia, Brazil



Photo: Virginia Araújo

and that systematisation results would not influence future funding since none would be available for the projects. Most participants understood that the benefits of participation lay in the potential to create broader impacts based on their project experiences. However, a few had hoped that participation might bring future funding, approaching the exercise as a necessary additional burden rather than an opportunity to generate learning for their own ends. This is an unfortunate consequence of the inequitable power relations between funders and NGOs.

There is no denying that the systematisation process was initially imposed on communities by NGOs. They needed to discuss the purposes and process of systematisation at

length with community residents to demonstrate the benefits they could derive from the process. Even where community residents were willing to participate, there was scope for unequal power relations between NGO and community participants. The core research team had a central role in shaping the process, formulating basic questions, and determining the subjective selection of information. This meant that NGO staff had a larger role in shaping the content of the stories that emerged, as well as the priorities established for future action. But the process motivated new actions by community residents. This suggests that they did appropriate and act upon the knowledge that surfaced, and that some had perhaps embraced the methods as useful for their

Box 3: Power dynamics experienced in APAEB and CEPROM

APAEB was a second-generation project. Staff were quick to recognise the benefits of the systematisation explained to them by the first generation facilitator assigned to their project. CEPROM was one of the first generation projects. Its staff had hired an external facilitator to systematise and document project experiences in 1998. But it had reaped none of the potential learning outcomes associated with the methodology, given the non-participatory nature of the exercise. So its staff were glad of the opportunity to learn how to undertake a participatory systematisation themselves.

Both APAEB and CEPROM staff created a fairly good balance between their own participation and that of community members. They involved a number of interested community residents to facilitate systematisation activities. These community-based facilitators used home visits and individual interviews to incorporate the voices of residents who did not appear in community forums, because they did not have the time or energy, or because they did not feel comfortable voicing their opinions in public.

own goals.

Internal inequities in the community also impacted the outcomes of the systematisation process. The perspectives of those community members who could be present at community and group events or in interviews – and had the confidence to voice their opinions – shaped the knowledge generated. The voices of the most marginalised sectors of the community – some women and ethnic groups, the poorest – may have remained unheard, even though facilitators took efforts to include their perspectives.

Some last reflections on the process

We believe a number of factors contributed to the success of the process. The two-phase training process and the action-learning approach were effective in preparing well-trained facilitators able to motivate participation and keep sight of the central concept and purposes of the systematisation. The first generation facilitators' roles in preparing the second generation reinforced their own learning, and the second generation benefited from the fresh experience of the first in learning and applying the approach. The transfer of learning to others in each location ensured that skills, and the workload, were shared. Rather than using a uniform approach, the context-specific adaptation of the methodology allowed facilitators to take into account local socio-political inequities. This increased the chances of local ownership and sustainability of the methodology.

Anyone thinking of embarking on a systematisation process should be aware of the inherent challenges. The

most important challenges that we faced were:

- Reflection, orderly analysis and written documentation are not everyone's 'thing' in terms of interest or ability. This is especially true in the fast-moving, practice-oriented worlds of development practitioners and community leaders. It was important to bring together people who were interested in, and had the capacity to develop, these kinds of skills.
- The systematisation was sometimes confounded with evaluation approaches. This led to overly mechanical methods to collect data and focus on a tangible **product** – a written document – rather than the more important **process** of the social construction of knowledge. Much effort was needed to clarify the purpose and concepts of systematisation.
- Collectively reconstructing and interpreting activities can generate conflict about the meaning of past and present events, as well as the priorities for future actions, in communities and organisations. Facilitators needed adequate preparation to handle potential conflict.
- The quality of participation in each location affected the quality of the outcomes – collective learning, dissemination strategies and products, and policy change. It depended largely on each facilitator's ability to explain the benefits of the process, as well as the strength of community-NGO relations and the history of local community organisation.
- Participatory approaches are not immune to local social and political inequities. It was important to ask questions at every stage. Who was setting the agenda? Who was benefiting from the process? Who was bearing the costs of participation (time, energy and financial)?
- Inherent power inequities between funder and recipients needed to be addressed explicitly. For instance, by clarifying the terms and conditions of the exercise, in order to minimise their impact on the process, outcomes and long-term sustainability of the effort.
- Institutionalising reflection and systematisation approaches in everyday organisational practices was usually low priority, as 'one more thing to be done', until the benefits of such approaches were clearly recognised.

Conclusion

Three years after completing the collective systematisation process, the NGO and community leaders involved have remained key actors in the RedLayc network. They have been active in a number of local and regional initiatives to improve policy environments. And in some locations, the impact on local food security can already be seen.

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See also page 56 (Tips for trainers): 'Reflective learning: building capacity in systematisation methodologies'.

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To obtain copies of these documents and examples of other project systematisations, please see the RedLayc website: www.redlayc.net

6

Wholistic worldview analysis: understanding community realities

by RAVI JAYAKARAN

Introduction

Worldview analysis is a participatory tool for understanding a community's perception of what it does to survive and continue with life processes. It collates important participatory learning and action (PLA) information collected in the community. It is used for carrying out a participatory needs analysis for development interventions that will impact the community.

Through several workshops and discussion groups, this technique has been shared with NGO representatives from several counties in Asia and Eastern Europe. Judging from extensive feedback following training, the technique is fairly well refined for wider use in the field. It is easy to learn, and practical, and does not require facilitators to be highly skilled or technical. This article introduces the technique in a simple and straightforward way, with details of what is required to get things started. There is also a detailed description of a field exercise where it was used recently, with photographs of the process showing the close involvement of the community right through. I hope that field practitioners will feel inspired to find out more about the technique.

Specific advantages of the tool

I first researched the wholistic worldview analysis tool

A WWVA exercise being facilitated in a community in China



Photo: R. Jayakaran

(WWVA) in India in 1997. I subsequently developed and modified it in Cambodia, Lao PDR and PR China. The findings from this initial study were shared in a series of workshops. Feedback was collected from the participants on the different type of 'field' needs they had for planning, and the tool was then further modified to make it more user friendly and practical.

“To achieve sustainable development it is necessary for interventions to be compatible – and in resonance – with the community’s worldview”

The tool can be used to gather base information for facilitating a participatory village-level development plan. In the past, field staff have usually faced two major problems when using participatory tools. They not only have to bring together all the findings of the exercises and analyse the information so that it can be used as a planning tool where the community continues to remain an active partner. They must also create a collated and analysed depiction of the survival strategy of the community. The survival strategy of a community is the combination of strategies that it employs to survive and thrive in its environment. I believe the uniqueness of the WWVA is that it fulfils both these tasks. As far as I know, this approach/tool is the only one that measures and creates a diagram of a worldview in measurable terms.

The worldview analysis tool brings together the information collected using PLA exercises. Then it can be analysed to see what type of development interventions are appropriate for that community. In addition, the tool enables the creation of a wholistic baseline for the community.

How community survival strategies develop

When a new community is established, it develops a survival strategy using the resources it has available to generate a sustainable livelihood.¹ These resources are:

- natural capital (e.g. land, water, forests, animals);
- social capital (e.g. social networks, social services);
- physical capital (infrastructure and constructions to aid use of natural resources);
- financial capital (money and assets); and,
- human capital (e.g. simple skills, acquired skills, technical skills, entrepreneurial skills, education).

The initial survival strategy is a very simple one. The main dependence is only upon what existing capital the community already has. In time, the community interacts with those outside, e.g. to sell products, or to import new skills and services. These interactions are soon integrated into the community’s survival strategy, which gets more complex. Some of these linkages are tangible/visible. But there are other linkages that are also made. The supernatural world of gods,

spirits and ancestors are as real to the community as their linkages with outsiders. All these together compose the overall survival strategy of the community and this is what reflects their worldview (how they perceive their world).

Analysing a community’s worldview is one way of understanding how the community sees itself and the rest of the world. Analysing worldviews has never been easy. When the analysed information is required for development interventions, it becomes even more complicated. To achieve sustainable development it is necessary for interventions to be compatible – and in resonance – with the community’s worldview.

This prompted me to develop a simplified tool for worldview analysis. Once finalised, the methodology was also used in Vietnam, Myanmar, and the Kingdoms of Thailand and Cambodia. It is integrated with a tool called the ten seed technique (TST), and it has also become possible to create a diagram that measures the integration process of the various components and dimensions of the survival strategy.

How the WWVA and community survival strategy are connected

The WWVA profile of the community shows how the community perceives itself – and therefore is a profile of the survival strategy of the community. By studying the WWVA, we can understand what the community does to survive in its environment, and the type of challenges, problems and uncertainties it faces and its ability to cope with these.

Getting started

Initial analysis exercises

Carry out some initial PLA exercises to gain a general understanding of the community. These should include e.g. livelihood analysis, problem analysis and uncertainty analysis (uncertainties that the community faces).

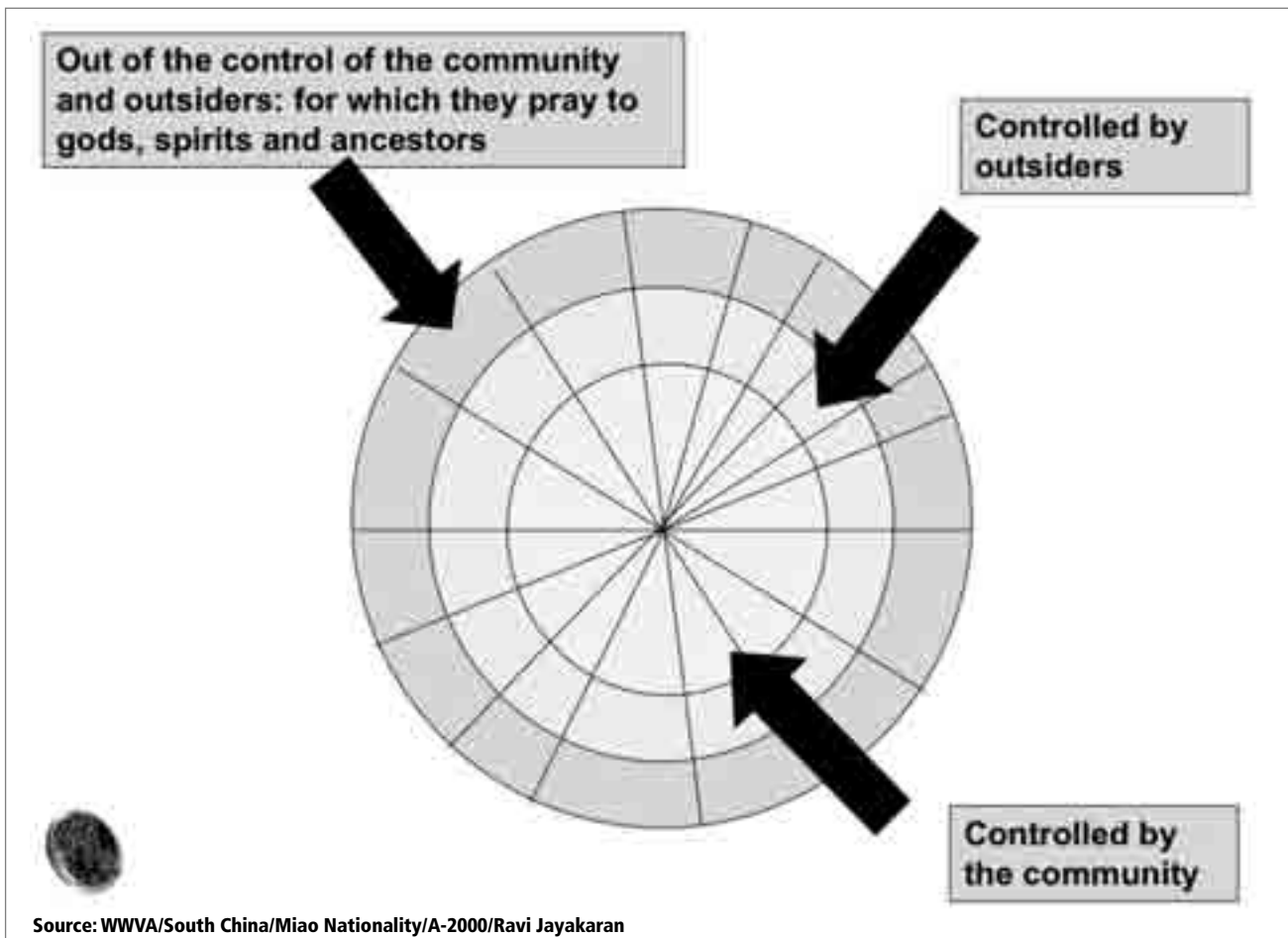
The information collected from the various exercises is shared with the community to get their feedback and for triangulation of any errors. The information will help authenticate the validity of the other exercises.

Creating the WWVA diagram

This information can now be added to the WWVA diagram. First, prepare the outline of the diagram by making three concentric circles as shown in Figure 1 on a large sheet of paper:

- the innermost circle represents areas where the community exerts its influence and has control;

¹ See e.g. the IDS/DFID sustainable livelihoods framework: www.fao.org/docrep/006/ad688e/ad688e03.htm



- the middle circle shows areas that outsiders associated with the community exert influence over and control; and
- finally, the outermost circle represents areas that are outside of the control of both the community or outsiders.

The circles are now divided into segments (like spokes). Each segment represents a particular issue raised during the different analysis exercises.

The number of issues determines the total numbers of segments. The segments might represent e.g. sources of livelihood, problems faced by the community, or uncertainties they encounter as a group. To make it easier to see which issues are related to which analysis, the issues are colour-coordinated in the diagram.

Once this format is ready, you can explain the rest of the process to the community. Using a method called the ten seed technique (TST), ask participants to begin placing seeds into each segment.

The ten seed technique

The ten seed technique involves asking the participants to distribute ten seeds into each segment allotted to an issue, to show which aspects were:

- within the control of the community;
- dependent on outsiders; and,
- totally out of everyone's control (see Box 1).

The segments in which these appear show which particular issue the community's capacities and vulnerabilities are related to:

- the seeds in the outer circle show the vulnerabilities of the community;
- the seeds in the inner circle shows the capacities of the community.

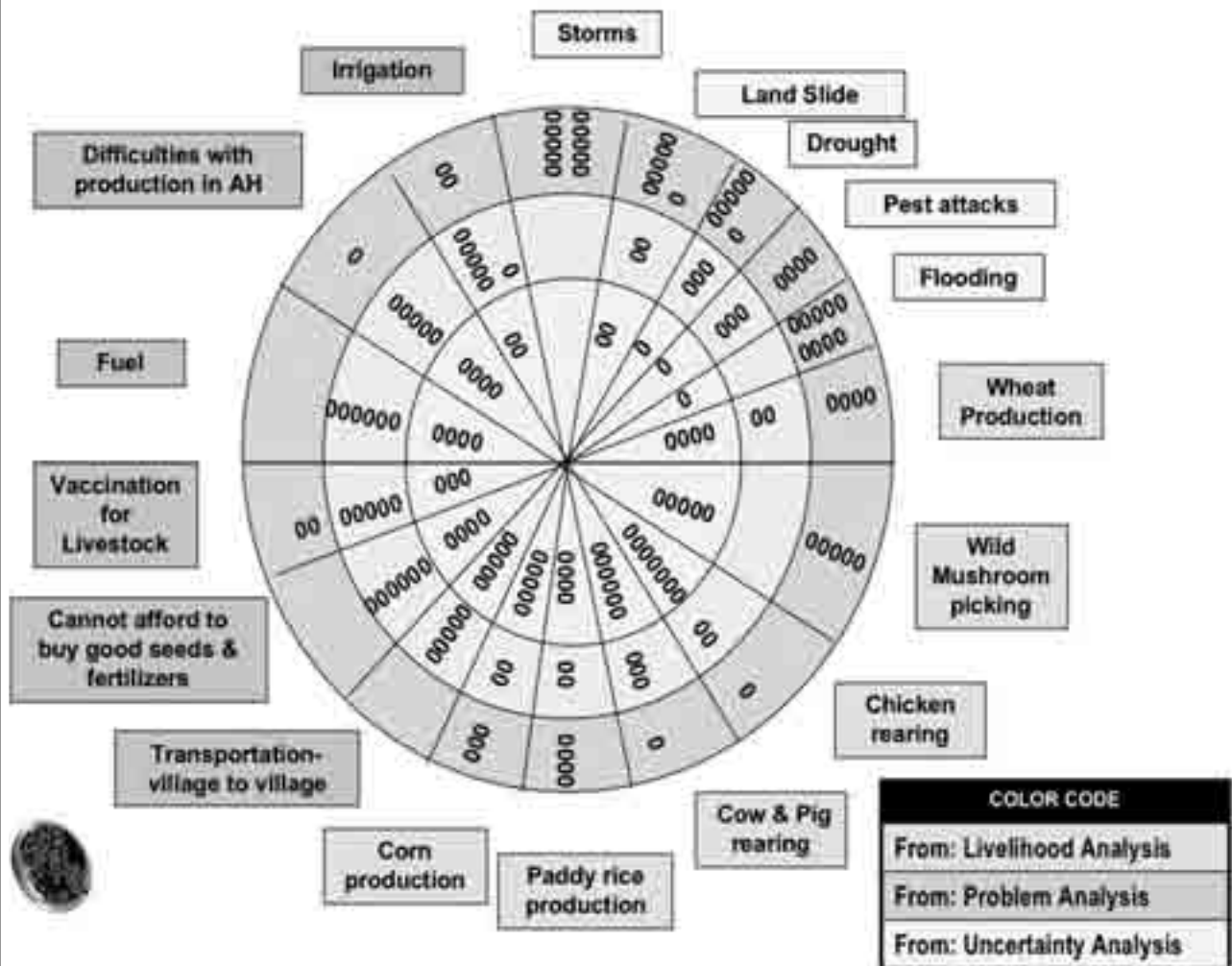
After the community understands how to use the ten seed technique, the facilitator can step aside and watch the intensive discussion and interaction as the ratios are

Box 1: An example of using the ten seed technique

We held a workshop in south China. For one segment, we asked participants to consider the factors that determine the successful cultivation of corn. They had already selected this as an important issue concerning the livelihood of the village.

The participants placed five seeds in the inner circle, two seeds in the middle circle and finally three seeds in the outer circle. When asked, they explained that some factors they and outsiders could control. But the three seeds in the outer circle represented the uncertainty they experienced due to both a lack of rain at the right time and pest attacks. As a result, they prayed to their ancestors to control what they could not! Further exploratory discussions revealed an option for providing 'back up' irrigation through a small lift irrigation programme and appropriate use of pesticides. The emerging reality was, that through these facilitated discussions, the community discovered that what they thought was impossible to address before, could be provided for with an appropriate intervention.

Wholistic Worldview Analysis-WWVA



An example from a community in South China Miao Nationality, April 2004.

Participants watch closely as the WWVA diagram emerges during the south China workshop



Photos: R. Jayakaran

discussed, debated, re-assigned and finalised!

While facilitating workshops on the use of the exercise, I have sometimes encountered doubts among the external participants on whether the community will understand what 'appears' to be a complicated technique. However, at every location whether in Lao PDR, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Philippines, China or Thailand, irrespective of how remote the village was, the community's excitement was unprecedented! They understood immediately after the first example, and got so excited about proceeding from one segment to the next that it was sometimes very difficult for us as facilitators to get close enough to watch them distribute the seeds. This is because the technique enables them to discuss a topic that is extremely relevant to their world and intimately connected with their overall survival strategy. It is good to allow at least two hours for this exercise, because there is sometimes a lot of discussion and debate.

Facilitate everyone's input

The facilitator has to be available to seek triangulation to ensure that the perspective of a small group is not mistaken for being the perspective of the larger group. All this requires is to be observant and see if there is a display of body language (or even murmuring) when the rest don't agree. At the beginning of the exercise, remind the group that what is being sought is a portrayal of the situation as it relates to the whole community in the present circumstances, not merely a small group of individuals.

It is important to remember that participants display different types of reactions. Some people respond more to specific issues, while others become observers. On other issues, these same people may become active in the discus-

sion. However, silence doesn't mean non-involvement. The safeguard is to ensure that no particular individual or group of individuals dominates or overrules the inputs from others. Each person finds their own way of ensuring that their inputs figure in the emergence of the WWVA diagram.

Once the final diagram emerges, there are plenty of noisy discussions and laughter, reflecting satisfaction and compliance with the community's perspective. At several locations, participants got so involved placing seeds that some actually got on the paper. There are often many footprints on the final output!

Analysis: interviewing the diagram

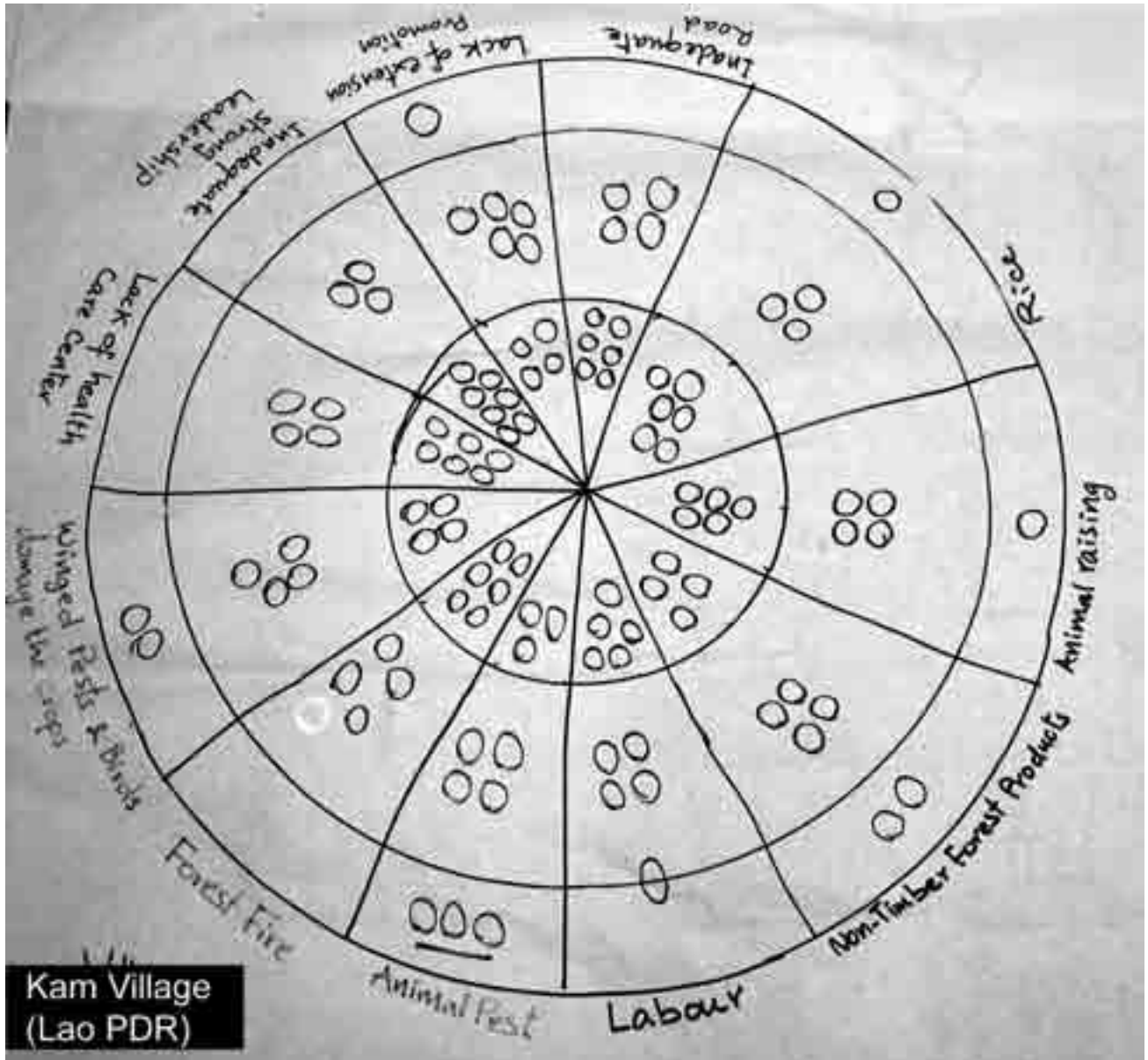
When the last segment is completed, there is usually an increase in the volume of discussion, followed by silence as the group waits expectantly to see what will happen next. This is the stage for analysis of the survival strategy.

The next step is to 'interview' the diagram. This involves seeking clarification from the community on seed allocation to a particular location that may not be clearly evident. Then, the facilitator marks out the community's:

- greatest vulnerabilities (outer circle); and
- greatest capacities (inner circle).

An important point to remember is that **at this stage** the seeds in the middle circle are not considered. It is assumed that outsiders are constructively associated with the community. However, after making progress with community development, this 'external' dependence must also be considered as a vulnerability to be overcome. When this is done, the community's development will move towards long-term sustainability.

The WWVA of 'Kam' village in Lao PDR



Kam Village (Lao PDR)

Photo: R. Jayakaran

Using the information

After the WWVA has been carried out and analysed, the next stage is to work on reducing vulnerabilities and building the capacities of the community's survival strategy. Some simple important principles to follow are:

- Just building capacities without reducing vulnerabilities will result in frustration for the community, because the vulnerabilities will remain and continue to be a hindrance.
- But, just removing vulnerabilities without building capaci-

ties will result in the community becoming dependent on the development agency.

- The first steps are to identify the greatest vulnerabilities that the community encounters. The vulnerability with the highest number of seeds should be the first development priority followed by the next highest, and so on.

After preparing the development priority list, carry out a stakeholder analysis for each issue within the community. After identifying the main stakeholders involved, look at the

capacities and vulnerabilities of each of them. Then identify the interventions required for 'building capacity' and 'reducing vulnerability' for each stakeholder in helping to overcome that vulnerability.

These become programme activities, which can then be combined under the 'outputs' they will generate. These in turn can be grouped together under the impact that they will produce. This information can be put on a logframe, and will be entirely community planned, and community owned. Planning using the WWVA tool can be done at a village level, commune level, district level, provincial level or country level. The composition of the planning group will change to include those familiar with the area at that particular level.

The WWVA tool is used to find out the current wholistic worldview of the community at a given point in time (i.e. before any development plans are implemented). This becomes the focal point around which the participatory community/village development plan unfolds. With the intervention will come changes in attitude (e.g. to pest attacks/disease incidence). Hopefully, these will no longer be seen as being beyond control (provided the intervention is effective!). For example, in India, a community believed that a *devi mata* was causing sickness amongst the children.² By building awareness and successfully vaccinating children against measles, the project was able to change the community's attitude.

At a later point in time, the worldview analysis will be different from what it was in the beginning. Hopefully, the differences will show and track progress over time. In this way, the WWVA can also be used as an evaluation tool. A good example of this is a village in Cambodia which was experiencing recurrent drought. After identifying this vulnerability, a water gate (a dam with a sluice gate) was built with support from an NGO. On reassessing the situation after the water gate was fully operational, the community was able to see that it had increased its area of control and was no longer vulnerable. Its capacity increased and its vulnerability was reduced!

The following related information can also be generated from the WWVA exercise:

- consolidated community survival strategies;
- capacity/vulnerability analysis of the community's survival strategy;
- areas where the community depends on outsiders for survival;

"By studying the WWVA, we can understand what the community does to survive in its environment, and the type of challenges, problems and uncertainties it faces and its ability to cope with these"

- comparative community poverty profile for comparison with other communities for prioritising for development;
- basic foundation for developing a participatory community (level) development plan; and,
- a wholistic baseline profile of the community.

Final thoughts

In this article I have sought to highlight aspects of the analysis that relate to the wholistic baseline of the community and the wholistic integration of their worldview. Communities (like individuals) often seek help from 'god' in the areas of their greatest needs (vulnerability). The WWVA picture helps to illustrate that the areas of greatest need are often issues where the community seeks help from the supernatural, their gods, spirits, and ancestors. The community perceives this dependence as a very concrete component of their survival strategy. Outsiders, who are not sensitive to this, may see it mainly as a 'vulnerability' that needs to be countered and overcome through the process of development. The community sees it as an area for which they have 'handed over' to their 'supernatural helpers' on whom they are 'dependant' as much as they are on the outsiders they interact with as a community. This dependence is manifest in the community in the form of sacred places and temples.

In fact if one were to carry out a rapid vulnerability profile, these sacred spots and structures often show the greater vulnerability being represented by a greater structure. This is why when new programmes are introduced in a village to overcome 'vulnerabilities' the community initially resists them. The action is seen as breaking loyalty with one of their supernatural helpers to seek help elsewhere! Community development workers can often either be insensitive to this dimension or proceed 'as if it doesn't exist'. There is a need to address a community's worldviews wholistically, because that is the way their worldview is, and address their concerns in each area. So development organisations need to understand these realities before seeking to change – or even challenge – their worldviews.

² *Devi mata* is a generic term for a Hindu female deity.

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NOTES

The photographs in this article are from actual field situations in South China where the wholistic worldview analysis exercise was conducted. All photographs were taken by the author Dr Ravi Jayakaran.

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Children in the driver's seat

by P. J. LOLICHEN with ANURADHA SHETTY, JYOTI SHENOY and CHRISTIE NASH

Introduction

We missed our playtime, free time and even marriage celebrations! But we are very proud that we were able to do something for our village. We have identified our problems, we know the solutions and also how to get them solved... Child researcher at a process documentation workshop, Bangalore, 1–3 April 2005

The Concerned for Working Children (CWC) has been working with children, especially the most marginalised, for over 25 years in India.¹ Our objective is to empower children to enable their participation in processes of governance and in the formulation of plans, solutions and strategies on matters that affect them. We believe that all groups, including children, should participate in decisions concerning them. This belief, carried over from our involvement with the informal sector and unorganised workers, has been one of the primary principles underlying our work with children since the late 1970s, well before the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991.

The study of access and mobility conducted by the children of Kundapura Taluk, which is described in this article, was born of a needs assessment these children had done in their villages.² They completed a very complex exercise of developing five-year plans as part of the tenth national five-year planning of the government of India. Issues related to access and mobility, especially transport, had been flagged as a priority. So when the University of Durham, UK approached CWC in November 2004 with a proposal to carry out a study in three countries (Ghana, South Africa and India) on Children's Mobility and Access, in consultation with children, we accepted as it matched a need already identified by children.

The children themselves conducted the study and CWC developed the capacity of partner organisations to enable this. The study had the following principal objectives:

- to enable children to access, obtain and manage information appropriately, in order to empower them to become researchers in their own right;
- to enable children to identify problems, access and analyse data, and use the resulting information to take control of

¹ CWC is a secular, democratic, national, private development agency working in partnership with working children, their communities and local governments to implement viable, comprehensive, sustainable and appropriate solutions. See www.workingchild.org for more details of our work.

² Kundapura Taluk is a revenue division consisting of 56 panchayats on the West Coast of India in the state of Karnataka.

the issues they face and develop solutions to overcome them; and

- to demonstrate that children are capable of participating effectively in all democratic processes and that their participation can bring about structural changes in the community.

Context of the study

The study aimed to understand the transport, mobility and access issues of children from diverse backgrounds and situations.

The child research protagonists

The researchers were boys and girls aged nine to 18 years, from socially and economically marginalised groups. Eighty-five percent were school-going and the remainder were working children. One hundred and forty-nine children conducted the study.

The respondents

The respondents were aged six to 18 years, with equal numbers of boys and girls, including working and school-going children, and children who are differently abled. Over 300 children participated as respondents in the study.

Location

The study was conducted in three *gram panchayats* of southern Karnataka, each with different characteristics.³ Each *panchayat* had between 950 and 1200 households and a population of between 5500 and 6500. The three *panchayats* were underdeveloped, poor and lacking transport and mobility facilities, especially for children. They were also new to CWC, as we wanted to demonstrate to partners anew how children could be facilitated to do their own research.

Time frame

The study was conducted over a period of seven months, from October 2004 to April 2005. This period was intensely hectic for the researchers. It was a big challenge for the children to find time to conduct such an extensive research exercise amidst all their domestic responsibilities and work/school pressures. They managed this by conducting the study either during holidays or in the early morning or late evenings, outside school and working hours. Despite the time constraints, all the children who participated enjoyed the process and were proud of their achievements.

³ *Gram panchayats* (often shortened to '*panchayats*') are village councils which take decisions on every important decision in village political life.

Box 1: A participant's reflections on the inception workshop

The project got off to a great start with a participatory, child-centred workshop organised by CWC in Karnataka, India.... In the space of the five-day workshop, the children used their knowledge of their transport problems to develop a research framework, and pilot test three tools for conducting research into these problems....

For the adults the children's perspectives were revealing. Children engaged in a range of transport activities.... Their transport responsibility results in late attendance in school and tires them out, making it difficult for them to concentrate. It also takes up a lot of their time. They face very different hazards to adults: they cross busy roads; they climb over rocks or big roots of trees; jump over gullies; ford streams; and walk on slippery bridges.

Working with CWC ... made the project team realise that if the project is to do more than pay lip service to children's participation, it needs to widen its scope. Children must be empowered to use the information generated by the research to advocate on their own behalf, to be in control, and to be a part of decision-making processes and interventions. This is their right to participation, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Children....

Source: Priyanthi Fernando, then Secretary of the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD), UK

The process

The project started with an inception workshop designed and facilitated by CWC (Box 1). The participants were researchers from the UK, Ghana and South Africa, some of CWC's field facilitators and 29 children from the selected panchayats.

Additional sessions were held with adults throughout the five days to provide in-depth understanding of the concepts and principles of children's rights, participation and empowerment, as well as acquiring skills of facilitation. The children, besides understanding the significance of 'information management by children' for their active and effective participation, designed the methodology and developed appropriate tools to conduct the study. The methodology and the tools were field tested and fine-tuned. Subsequently the children went back to their villages with a specific action plan for conducting the research.

The children identified more child researchers to help conduct the study based on criteria developed by them, which reflected principles of non-discrimination, respect, sustainability and equality. This was followed by continuous fieldwork by the children, with intermittent training workshops conducted by CWC. On completion of the study, representative child researchers met at a workshop to consolidate the findings, document the process of the study and

Children arriving at a framework for their research



Researchers doing an extensive mobility PRA



Photos: The Concerned for Working Children, India

develop advocacy strategies to find appropriate solutions to the problems they raised.

Simultaneously, on request from the Ghana partner, CWC trained a group of 13 children and four adults to conduct the study in Ghana. During this process, children were facilitated to design the process and methodology, develop appropriate tools and materials, and field-test their study.

When the studies in all three countries were completed, CWC and the project initiators organised a workshop with child researchers from India, Ghana and South Africa and adult partners to consolidate the findings and develop advocacy strategies in Cape Coast, Ghana. The programme concluded with a meeting with the minister of transport in Ghana in which he assured the child researchers that he

Box 2: Excerpt from PRA Exercise, Aajri panchayat, November 2005

There is a small bridge from Aajri to Jangsale, which is in bad condition. Fifty to sixty children and 200 to 300 adults use this route. At present, as the bridge is broken, they have to walk 6 to 7 kilometres. People are finding it very difficult, especially children who go to school. The bridge should be repaired for easy transport.

Box 3: Excerpt from observation map, Gujjadi panchayat, March 3, 2005

In Hebbarbail-Manki area in Gujjadi panchayat there is a stream that runs across the footpath leading to Nayakwadi village. During the rainy season, it is impossible to cross this stream and children are forced to walk around it on either side. However, there are many cashew trees along these paths, which make it difficult to walk along. Children worry about getting their clothes and belongings caught and torn on the branches of the trees. Anganwadi-aged children (pre-schoolers, aged three to five) are not able to take this route at all.

would integrate their findings and demands into the country's transport policy.

The methodology

The methodology and the tools for conducting the study were developed and designed by the children themselves through numerous workshops. They used multiple methods to conduct the study to make sure their findings were accurate.

Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA)

The objective of the PRA was to help children identify and map resources as well as list problems and issues related to them in each panchayat (Box 2). It also helped them to understand the socio-cultural, political and economic conditions of their panchayat. The PRA consisted of studying secondary information, walkathon and mapping, and focus group discussions. On completion of the activity, the map of the panchayat was recreated in a large open space and the information collected was presented and discussed with the community, facilitating their inputs into finding solutions.

Observation mapping

Children developed observation maps along the routes which they found most difficult to use, as identified during the PRA. Their list of indicators for mapping included: potholes, trees, drainage, bridges, culverts, school, crèche, houses, agricultural fields, wells, ration shop, mud road and black-topped road. They documented in detail any problems with any of the indicators demarcated on their maps (see Box 3 for an example).

Map of mobility problems related to road



Box 4: Interview with Manjula, 6 February 2005

Manjula, a 13-year-old working child from Nayakwadi, is able to walk to the shop as it is close by. However, in order to get to the market or the ration store, she needs to take the bus. It is a problem for her to go to these places because it takes a long time and she has a lot of work to do at home. It is also a problem for her to carry heavy loads, since there are many ups and downs and small stones along the route. There are forests on either side of the route Manjula takes to get to the hospital, temple, and to fetch water. She also has to pass a cemetery, which frightens her. There is a water facility close to her house but it does not supply water regularly.

Box 5: A sample flash card profile: Raghavendra, February 2005

Raghavendra is a 14-year-old school-going boy. In order to get to school, he has to walk 35 minutes along a mud road and then a tar road, both full of potholes. During the rainy season, when the potholes fill with water, vehicles splash the muddy water all over him, soiling his clothes. There is also a very steep incline along this route, which is difficult for him to climb when he is carrying a heavy load, and during the rainy season he worries that he may slip. Raghavendra also has to pass by a graveyard, which frightens him. He must also take this route when he goes to his friend's house, the ration shop, the hospital, the town, the hotel, the milk dairy and the provision store. Raghavendra has suggested that the potholes be filled and the road levelled and paved.

Child researchers conducting an interview



Compiling findings from their FGD



Photos: The Concerned for Working Children, India

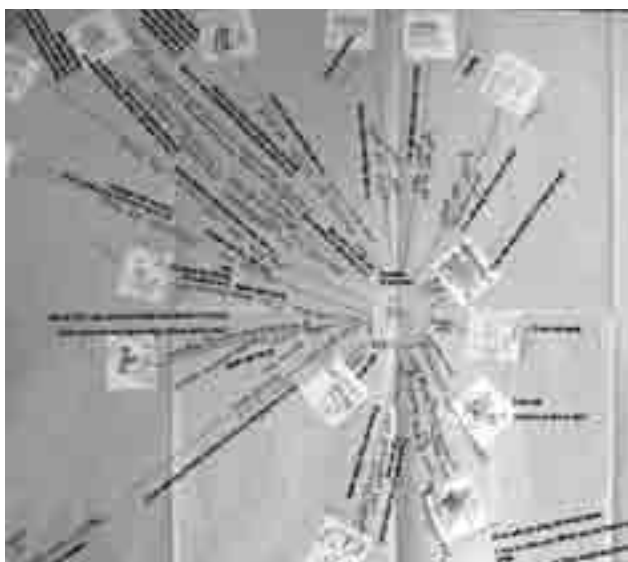
Interviews

Interviews were conducted to collect information from children living along routes identified as difficult or risky for children during the PRA (Box 4). Prior to the interviews, the child researchers developed an interview schedule.

Flash card exercise

The purpose of this exercise was to understand the different resources children access and the mode of transport used and distances/time taken to reach those resources. This was done by developing flash cards with illustrations or

Photos: The Concerned for Working Children, India



**Mobility
profile of
a child
informant**

pictures to represent the respondent, the resources that the respondent accesses, the various modes of transportation used by children, the obstacles children face in accessing those resources, and 'seasons' cards representing various seasons of the year. The respondent picked each of the cards applicable to her/him and discussed them with the researcher, having placed them on a large sheet of paper. This provided the researcher with a detailed mobility profile of the respondent.

Traffic count

The traffic count exercise was designed to develop a clear idea of:

- the kinds of loads children carry;
- the modes of transport they use to carry these loads;
- frequency of carrying loads;
- weight of the loads;
- the distances loads are carried; and
- the difficulties children face along the way while carrying loads.

The child researchers positioned themselves in teams of two or three, dressed as traffic inspectors with banners publicising their study, at the main places children frequent, e.g. school, ration shop, milk dairy and factories. They weighed the loads children carried and filled in a questionnaire that they had earlier developed. This provided them with a detailed profile of the loads children carry. These include milk, groceries, cattle feed, firewood, agricultural products for sale, and kerosene, and are mostly carried whilst going to or from

Box 6: More reflections on the inception workshop

I did not expect such a marvellous experience and it was totally different from what I thought before coming here. The kids sitting here have been marvellous. They have taught me things that I have never known before. I have been doing research in transport for the last 24 years and I have learnt more in these five days than those 24 years from you children. I have also realised that I had ignored a very significant group of people in all my research, that is children....

Something interesting is going on here that we have not seen before – children planning their own life. I will leave a promise with you that I will do my best to uphold what you are doing here in Ghana as well, which some day you could come and see.

Source: Professor Albert Abane, Head of the Department of Geography, Transport and Tourism, University of Cape Coast

school. The most frequent mode of transport was head load. It was found that children carry loads weighing up to 25 kilogrammes.

Focus group discussions

The children used focus group discussions to fill in gaps and make clarifications. In each *panchayat* they held three to four group discussions, with school-going children and working children meeting separately.

Benefits and challenges

The ultimate objective of this research process was to empower children by facilitating them to acquire new skills and information and enabling them to use this information to change their lives for the better. The process of the research has equipped the children with skills and expertise in information management, including applying methods, developing appropriate tools, discussing with children and other stakeholders confidently, putting over their points with appropriate data, advocating their cause nationally and internationally, and finding appropriate solutions to their problems. The children who participated in the research now have an identity and are highly recognised in the villages involved. They have become highly aware of their right to know and the need to participate and are exploring various fora for making their voices heard. The adult researchers involved also learnt a great deal from the process (Box 6).

The children faced immense challenges in carrying out the research. They found juggling their regular schooling/work, domestic chores and work on the research very difficult. They also faced a certain amount of ridicule from

Doing a Traffic enumeration and load assessment



Photo: The Concerned for Working Children, India

friends and relatives. However, the children said they had gained more than they lost.

Sustaining the process

Research by children has enabled them to gain control over the research process as well as to have ownership of the information they have collected. The researchers have formed their own organisations with other children and are working with various stakeholders in the community to address the problems identified, such as getting footbridges, starting crèches, filling potholes, and blacktopping roads. They are also negotiating with key stakeholders such as the *gram panchayats* and school authorities to institutionalise children's participation. They are in the process of setting up *makkala panchayats* (children's village councils) in each of the panchayats. They want to ensure that children's participation in decision-making and governance is permanent and official.

Conclusion

Children's participation in research and social planning is not an end in itself, but rather it is a process that continuously needs to be re-evaluated and to evolve according to their needs. Research and advocacy by children has successfully enabled active participation of children in democratic processes. They are leading the way in making governments accountable. Children have started a revolution for change and the adult world is yet to catch up with them and respond adequately.

some quarters of the community, who doubted the value of the children's work. Some were even offensive saying, 'They are keenly involved in the project because girls and boys can meet up!' In some cases they were turned away by adults when they went to collect information from children and some parents were unwilling to let the researchers participate in the research. Not many children gave into their parents' demands as they recognised the benefit of being part of the process. The children also lost their playtime, missed marriage parties, holidays, and opportunities to visit

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NOTE

The author is currently preparing another article for publication in *Participatory Learning and Action* on ethical guidelines for child-led research.

FURTHER READING

For further information about child-led research, see:
Lolichen, P. J. (2002) *Children and their Research: a process document*. Bangalore: The Concerned for Working Children.
Lolichen, P.J. (2006) *Taking a Right Turn: children lead the way in research*. Bangalore: The Concerned for Working Children.

regular features

Tips for trainers

Reflective action-learning: building capacity in systematisation methodologies

by **FRANCES HANSFORD**
and **MANUEL LLANOS**

Systematisation and the production of useful knowledge

Systematisation methodologies allow the participants of a shared experience (a project, for example) to:

- reflect collectively upon their experience; and
- understand and learn from the successes, difficulties and failures of their shared experience.

The process relies heavily on techniques to encourage dialogue among participants so that they share and compare their perspectives and construct knowledge that is useful for future action. It facilitates the democratic production, dissemination and use of knowledge by bringing together people from diverse backgrounds to reflect and learn together.

The capacity-building process

We trained 20 NGO leaders from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) between 2001 and 2003 so that they could systematise their own project experiences (see 'From participatory systematisation to a regional network for policy change', this issue). The NGOs had undertaken demonstration projects in local food security and sovereignty designed to overcome hunger and malnutrition in

rural communities. The findings were intended to:

- influence public policies;
- promote local learning and refinement of community-level strategies; and
- disseminate and exchange experiences and lessons.

The capacity-building process was undertaken in two phases, organised in a 'cascade':

- A first group of ten facilitators was trained by two consultants with expertise in systematisation and social communications, using a reflective 'action-learning' approach. Learning and reflection took place during face-to-face workshops; the 'trainee' facilitators then put their learning into action in their own projects with online assistance from the consultants. They were also oriented in basic training skills so that they could support the learning process of the second cohort of facilitators.
- A second group of ten facilitators was trained to systematise its own projects by way of workshops and on-site assistance from the first generation of facilitators. First and second generation facilitators were matched according to geographical proximity as well as thematic and/or strategic affinity. All the facilitators received ongoing online support from the consultants.

The facilitators were trained to conduct four core systematisation activities:

- the selection and careful delineation of a theme or line of work (this may be some element of work which will help participants to overcome a current challenge in their joint work);
- the collection and organisation of information from a wide variety of participants through dialogue and participatory activities;
- the analysis of the information, designed to take into account contextual and external factors as well as project activities; and
- the opportune and targeted dissemination of findings according to the participants' objectives.¹

Lessons and reflections from our experience

Benefits of the 'cascade' capacity-building approach

The 'cascade' capacity-building approach was an effective way to replicate and multiply the action-learning process among a relatively large group of facilitators (from nine countries of the LAC region) with limited external 'expertise'. Recently trained facilitators (the 'first genera-

¹ For a more complete explanation of the steps involved see our article in this issue.

tion') shared their learning with new 'trainees' (the 'second generation'). This was done with minimal input and support from the external consultants. The freshness of the 'first generation' facilitators' learning and practical experience made them especially effective trainers. This approach can potentially be applied to extend the reach of capacity building in many different settings. A similar approach at the local level – the transfer of learning and the institutionalisation of action-learning approaches within NGOs and communities – ensured the replication of skills at the local level.

Resistance to active learning methods

Some of the trainee facilitators wanted to receive precise, step-by-step instructions to apply in their project systematisations rather than experimenting, reflecting and discovering the most effective approaches in their context. This is largely due to traditional educational methods, which encourage passive learning, based on copying and memorisation. As a general rule, discovery leads to more effective and sustained learning. In the specific case of learning to apply systematisation methodologies, approaches need to be context-specific and developed in situ to be effective.

The consultants' role

The role of the consultants was to help trainee facilitators to understand the

logic and principles that guide the systematisation process. They also helped them gain skills in the methods and techniques that can be used in its application. We resisted the use of set formulas. Instead, we encouraged the facilitators to explore how to apply a set of broad guidelines to the specific conditions of each project context through in situ experimentation and learning.

Systematisation is not the same as evaluation

Systematisation is easily confused with qualitative evaluation. But the distinction cannot be over-emphasised. It was some time before the facilitators fully understood that their task was not to assess or 'judge' the value of their project experience. Instead, their task was to understand and explain the experience from diverse viewpoints, and to generate knowledge for multiple uses on that basis. We re-emphasised the distinction at the beginning of the second phase of capacity building so that the 'second generation' facilitators did not fear that their project experiences would be evaluated by the 'first generation' of facilitators.

Systematising 'unsuccessful' projects

On this occasion we chose to train facilitators from 'successful' projects (the definition of 'successful', in this instance, was a project that gener-

ated positive results by innovative approaches). However, it is just as valuable to systematise 'unsuccessful' experiences from which equally useful lessons can be learnt.

Networking as a complementary strategy

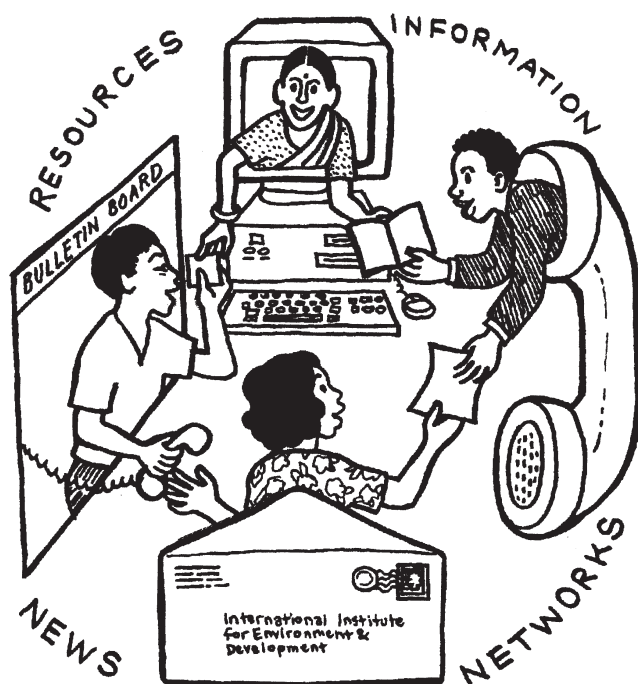
We have discovered that systematisation and networking function as complementary strategies to achieve common ends. In our case, the systematisation process produced local knowledge and valuable learning which could be disseminated and exchanged among local actors. Networking at the regional level (Latin America and the Caribbean) has facilitated the political projection of that knowledge beyond the local level. This can be used as a means to influence public policy at national and regional levels and to replicate or scale up successful approaches beyond the initial geographic scope of the project.

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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,
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Email: pla.notes@iied.org

Book reviews



**All together now!
Community
mobilisation for
HIV/AIDS**

● International
HIV/AIDS Alliance,
2006
ISBN: 1 905055 15 3

**Tools together
now! 100 participatory tools to
mobilise communities for HIV/AIDS**

● International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 2006
ISBN: 1 905055 11 0

All together now! is a practical and accessible resource book for facilitators working with communities on HIV/AIDS programmes. It describes the process of community mobilisation, using tried and tested approaches to help facilitators encourage communities to become actively involved in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and scaling up of HIV/AIDS projects and programmes.

The resource book takes the facilitator through each stage of community mobilisation, suggesting appropriate tools and resources to be used at each stage, and is to be used alongside *Tools Together Now!* The resource book contains many diagrams, drawings and figures and includes a foreword by Robert Chambers.

Tools together now! provides a selection of 100 participatory learning and action tools to be used for HIV/AIDS programmes, enabling communities and organisations to learn together about HIV/AIDS in their community, develop a plan, act on it and evaluate and reflect on how it went. The toolkit is easy to use and uses very clear language. It begins

with an introduction to PLA, which includes the roles of the PLA facilitator, their skills, attitudes and behaviour, and how to plan a PLA session. Each tool is numbered and each includes diagrams and/or figures. Some of the tools included are community mapping, community drama, participatory video, storytelling, matrix scoring, force field analysis, transect walks and problem trees.

Used together, these two resources provide a powerful way for organisations and communities to work more effectively together to address HIV/AIDS.

■ Available from the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Queensberry House, 104-106 Queens Road, Brighton BN1 3XF, UK. Email: publications@aidsalliance.org. Also downloadable at www.aidsalliance.org

Beyond Article 12: Essential readings in children's participation

● Compiled and edited by Henk van Beers, Antonella Invernizzi, Brian Milne
Black on White Publications, 2006

This is part of the Black on White Publications 'Essential Readings' series, which provides basic texts and references to build a personal or institutional knowledge base. The series provides an overview of legal, philosophical and practical texts on the broad debate of children's participation. *Beyond Article 12* aims to influence the process of implementing children's rights to participate and in particular by contributing to the discussions on Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which gives children a voice in judicial proceedings.

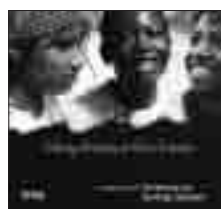
This is not a manual or toolkit, nor a record of children's experiences, but

a collection of statements and theories, some legal information and as well as some practical examples, edited by experts from the field. It provides excerpts from key works of established writers and is divided into three sections:

- what does participation mean?
- are children citizens? and
- children's participation in practice.

This resource is aimed at policy makers, planners, project workers and researchers, and advocates for children's participation and professionals working with children.

■ Available from: Knowing Children, Room 3084, Siam Court, 130 Soi Sukhumvit 4, Bangkok 10110, Thailand. Website: www.knowingchildren.org



Taking destiny in their hands

● The Concerned for Working Children, 2005

This is one of many DVDs produced by CWC on children's rights and participation. The film documents the relevance of the International Movement of Working Children and provides an overview of the long process that organised working children's movements of Africa, Asia and Latin America have undergone to create their own national and regional movements and then a united international movement. The film highlights their struggles and successes in the international policy arena. Spanning three continents and three decades, the film depicts the similarities of the movements and highlights the diversities that bring rich nuances to their struggle. It provides a children's analysis of global problems, their strategies to overcome them and their

call to adults and policy makers to give them due recognition as social actors.



The Media Code of Conduct to realise children's rights

● The Concerned for Working Children, 2006

There are a few existing guidelines and codes of conduct for the media that refer to children and seek to regulate their coverage in the media, but several gaps still remain. These codes focus only on children's right to privacy and confidentiality. Significantly, none of the charters or codes focuses on the rights of children to be 'producers' of media in society.

The Media Code of Conduct aims to fill this existing gap. It is intended to be a tool with which children can demand their space in the media – it is dynamic in that it will continuously evolve through a process of debate and discussion.

This Code aims to create a paradigm shift in the media's approach to children – from that of being recipients of adult benevolence to being viewed as full partners in society.

■ Available from: The Concerned for Working Children, 303/2, L.B. Shastry Nagar, Vimanapura Post, Bangalore, 560 075, India. Email: cwc@pobox.com; Website: www.workingchild.org



Decentralised governance and participatory development: issues, constraints and prospects

● B. Mohan
Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi,

India, 2005
ISBN: 81 8069 162 4

This book analyses the constraints and possibilities in participatory planning and democratic decentralisation, with special reference to Kerala. Examining various aspects of the concept of people's participation, it presents an overview of a people's campaign for decentralised planning in the State. Also, it presents a report on decentralised planning based on two field studies at two of Kerala's Gram Panchayats, and discusses the political process at the grassroots level. This book is aimed at researchers, policy

makers and development workers.
■ Concept Publishing Company, A/15 and 16, Commercial Block, Mohan Garden, New Delhi, 110 059, India. Tel: +91 11 2535 1460; Fax: +91 11 2535 7103; Email: publishing@conceptpub.com



Learning to share: experiences and reflections on participatory approaches, Vol III

● Neela Mukherjee and Rupa Dasgupta
Published for the Indrani Foundation,

New Delhi, India by Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, India, 2004 ISBN: 81 8069 176 4

This book is the third volume in a collection of 12 papers and field notes in the area of community participation a PRA/PLA-type methodological innovations. This edited volume is a sequel to two other volumes in the series, *Learning*

to Share with contributions from PRA practitioners. The book contains eight topical papers on participatory approaches, with topics including: measuring social capital to livestock assessment, women's worldview on HIV/AIDS, institutional processes in watershed management, rural weavers' livelihoods, integrated human development, stakeholders in Grameen bank, and livelihoods-based conservation activities. The four papers based on methodological innovations relate to resource mapping, mobility and well-being, ownership/empowerment chapatti, and participatory technology. The book is aimed at development practitioners, project managers, extension agencies, field workers, field researchers, policy makers, donor agencies and students.

■ Concept Publishing Company, A/15 and 16, Commercial Block, Mohan Garden, New Delhi, 110 059, India. Tel: +91 11 2535 1460; Fax: +91 11 2535 7103; Email: publishing@conceptpub.com

Events and training

MSc Course: Governance and spatial information management

● September 2007, ITC, The Netherlands
ITC have just established a new MSc course together with the University of Twente, called Governance and Spatial Information Management. The first course will be run for a small number of participants but the intention is to increase intake as of September 2007. For more details of this course please contact Johan de Meijere. Email: meijere@itc.nl

Connecting people, participation and place: an international conference of participatory geographies

● 14th and 15th January 2008, University College, Durham University, UK
Organised by the Social Well-Being and Spatial Justice research cluster at Durham and the Participatory Geographies Working Group of the RGS/IBG. Participatory approaches to research, learning, action and change have in some ways become a new orthodoxy in social and environmental science disciplines, voluntary sectors, statutory agencies and community-led organisations across the world. The development of conceptual insights, creative techniques and radical

practices is exploding. At the same time participatory approaches are highly contested and debated, and are profoundly affected by environments, settings and institutional webs they occupy. This conference will showcase original and collaboratively produced contributions to theory, practice and social change, which focus on the relations between people and places. The conference will coincide with the publication of a Routledge text of the same name (eds Sara Kindon, Rachel Pain and Mike Kesby). The themes are:
● the difference participation makes to understanding, investigating and acting upon issues connecting people and places; and

- charting the geographies of participation: settings, scales and spatialities.

The conference aims to:

- be open to anyone with an interest in participatory methods and approaches for research, learning, action and change;
- encourage discussion and debates around the conference themes between academics, practitioners, and all those in between;
- include a range of different forms of participation, papers, workshops, performances and technologies; and
- consist of invited papers and workshops (Day 1), and an open space format (Day 2) where content and format are decided by participants through email/web/live discussions before and during the conference.

■ A small fee will be payable to cover registration, tea, coffee and lunch over the two days. For more information please contact: Dr Rachel Pain, Department of Geography, University of Durham, Durham DH1 3LE, UK. Tel: +44 191 334 1876; Email: rachel.pain@durham.ac.uk; Conference website: www.geography.dur.ac.uk/Conf/Default.aspx?alias=www.geography.dur.ac.uk/conf/cppp

Training by ICA:UK Participation and Partnership:

Introduction to Group Facilitation

● 18th September 2007, Belfast, Ireland
This one-day course explores the role and skills of the facilitator. This is an entry-level course and has no pre-requisite. It is recommended as a first course for newcomers to facilitation, and for those with some prior experience of facilitation but little previous training. It is suitable for all those who want to be able to facilitate groups more confidently

and effectively, including team leaders and managers within organisations, those working with partners and external stakeholders, youth and community workers and independent facilitators. This course introduces key facilitation skills, their uses and practical considerations. It offers an opportunity for participants to develop and practice some of these skills in a supportive, learning environment. It provides an invaluable foundation for further training and development in our approach, and indeed any approach, to facilitation.

The course uses a combination of short interactive presentations, practical exercises and supported facilitation skills practice with guided reflection and feedback.

Group Facilitation Methods

● 19th–20th September 2007, Belfast, Ireland
● 25th–26th September 2007, London, UK
● 9th–10th October 2007, Manchester, UK
Introducing the foundations of ICA:UK's Technology of Participation (ToP) approach – a two-day course. This course has no pre-requisite, but is the pre-requisite for all our intermediate and advanced courses. It is recommended both to newcomers to facilitation, and to experienced facilitators who are new to our approach. It is suitable for all those who want to be able to facilitate groups more confidently and effectively, including team leaders and managers within organisations, those working with partners and external stakeholders, youth and community workers and independent facilitators. This is our most popular course. This course provides a structured introduction to

the Focused Conversation and Consensus Workshop methods, which form the foundations of the Action Planning method, Participatory Strategic Planning and other applications.

■ Download a case study of how the Focused Conversation method and Consensus Workshop method were used in developing a mission and values statement: www.ica-uk.org.uk/images/downloads/ToP_case_study_-_Salvation_Army.pdf

Action Planning

● 21st–22nd November 2007, Manchester, UK

Participatory planning for short-term projects and events. This new one-day course introduces a structured, participatory process to enable the successful implementation of a group project or event. It has no pre-requisite, but Group Facilitation Methods or some prior experience of facilitation or participatory planning is recommended. It is suitable for all those who want to be able to involve people more effectively in planning and implementing short to medium term projects together, including team leaders and project managers within organisations, those working collaboratively with partners and external stakeholders, youth and community workers and independent facilitators.

The course presents the method in a practical and participatory way. The method is first demonstrated, using a scenario with which participants can identify without having to role-play. It is then analysed and discussed, and then elements of the method are practiced individually or in small groups. Finally, participants plan how they will apply the method in their own situations.

Group Facilitation Methods Refresher

● 23rd October 2007, London, UK
 ● 20th November 2007, Manchester, UK
 Refresh and advance your understanding and practice of ToP – one-day course. Group Facilitation Methods is a pre-requisite for this course. This course is scheduled directly before Participatory Strategic Planning and Designing Participatory Events to allow from one to three days of training at once.

Designing Participatory Events

● 24th–25th October 2007, London, UK
 The course is suitable for all those who want to make the best of the skills and methods they have by improving their process design and event planning to best meet the needs of a group and its task. This might include team leaders and managers within organisations, those working with Boards, management teams, partnerships and external stakeholders, youth and community workers and independent facilitators.

This course introduces some powerful tools for planning and designing participatory events, to enable participants to apply the skills and methods they have to best meet the needs of their own particular groups and situations. It offers an opportunity to work individually or small teams, with support from experienced facilitators, to design a facilitation solution of your own.

The course uses a combination of short interactive presentations and practical exercises, with facilitated group reflection and discussion. Group Facilitation Methods is a pre-requisite for this course, and prior facilitation experience is recommended.

Participatory Strategic Planning

● 21st–22nd November 2007, Manchester, UK
 Bring people together to create strategies for action – two-day course. Group Facilitation Methods is a pre-requisite for this course, and Action Planning is recommended. The course is suitable for all those who want to be able to involve people more effectively in planning and implementing medium to long-term strategies together, including team leaders and managers within organisations, those working with Boards, management teams, partnerships and external stakeholders, youth and community workers and independent facilitators.

The course presents a structured long-range planning process, which incorporates the Consensus Workshop method for building consensus, the Focused Conversation method for effective group communication and an implementation process for turning ideas into productive action and concrete accomplishments.

■ To download the Participatory Strategic Planning Method overview visit:

www.ica-uk.org.uk/images/downloads/ToP_PSP_method_overview.pdf

■ Download a case study of how this method was used in community planning in North London: www.ica-uk.org.uk/images/downloads/ToP_case_study_Ponders_End.pdf

Participation Paradigm

● 29th–30th November 2007, Manchester, UK
 This two-day course is a guest course of ICA Canada. It is suitable for those who would like to dig beneath the surface for an in-depth

understanding of ToP processes, and particularly for those who intend to make ToP methods a central component of their facilitation practice. This might include team leaders and project managers within organisations, those working collaboratively with partners and external stakeholders, youth and community workers and independent facilitators. By the end of the course, you will have

- enhanced your capacity to use and adapt ToP methods to specific challenging situations
- developed your ability to respond appropriately to individual and group struggles
- deepened your understanding of the compelling nature of the ToP processes
- seen through the techniques of facilitation to grasp the human drama of participatory processes

The course is structured into four sessions, each drawing on a chapter of the ICA Canada book *The Courage to Lead* (a copy of the book is included in the cost of the course and mailed in advance, on receipt of your booking): www.ica-uk.org.uk/facilitation/publications.htm#courage

The course combines participatory study and reflection of each chapter of the book, with individual and small group exercises. Group Facilitation Methods is a pre-requisite for this course, and prior facilitation experience is recommended.

■ For full details of these and other training courses by ICA:UK, and online bookings, please contact: ICA UK, PO Box 171, Manchester, M15 5BE, UK. Tel: +44 845 450 0305 or +44 28 4277 2671; Website at www.ica-uk.org.uk; Email: top@ica-uk.org.uk

Training courses offered by Mosaic International:

Stakeholder participation in planning, needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation using PRA/PLA tools

● 9th–14th July 2007, Ottawa, Canada

This workshop focuses on core participatory concepts, tools and their application. This is an intensive six-day workshop set in the community to maximise learning, group interaction and networking. Topics include the origins of participatory development, learning and application of PRA/PLA tools, the application of participation to project design, monitoring and evaluation, developing effective facilitation skills, building action plans and team-building. Two-day community assignments proposed by community-based organisations in the Ottawa region will allow participants to apply tools learned in the workshop to real-life situations. This is also a great opportunity to network with other practitioners, NGOs, donors, and action researchers from all over the world.

Results-based management, appreciative inquiry and open space technology

● 16th–20th July 2007, Ottawa, Canada

This new workshop introduces participants to results-based management, appreciative inquiry and open space technology. Demonstrate the effectiveness of your programmes with results-based management. Master what we mean by results, develop programme/organizational plans, which are results-based and design performance monitoring systems based on indicators and participatory methods. You will also expand your repertoire of tools to also

learn about appreciative inquiry and open space and how they can be applied to your organization, programme and/or project. These approaches are increasingly being used around the world to tap into new ways to do our work in ways that are more results-oriented, more appreciative and less problem-focused and more self-organised versus top down.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation

● 23rd–28th July 2007, Ottawa, Canada

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) involves a different approach to project monitoring and evaluation by involving local people, project stakeholders, and development agencies deciding together about how to measure results and what actions should follow once this information has been collected and analysed. This intensive six-day experiential workshop is practically focused with daily excursions into the community and a three-day community assignment. Topics covered at the workshop include: origins of PM&E, skills and attributes of a PM&E facilitator, learning PM&E tools, designing a monitoring and evaluation framework, quantitative and qualitative indicators and building actions plan.

All workshops organised by Mosaic are sensitive to issues of gender, ethnicity, race, class and sexuality and how these can influence outcomes and how we see the world if they are absent from our assumptions, direct participation, our analysis and conclusions.

■ For further information, please contact: Francoise Coupal, Founder of Mosaic.net International, Inc. Email: wkshop05@mosaic-net-intl.ca; Website: www.mosaic-net-intl.ca. Send us your full mailing address and we will send you a brochure.

■ From the Communication Initiative Partnership Drum Beat Classifieds <http://www.comminit.com>

■ To find out more about courses advertised in the Drum Beat, or to submit details of a course that you would like to advertise, visit: www.comminit.com/training2007.html

Summer School: Advocacy Plus

● 2nd–13th July 2007, Oxford, UK

This year INTRAC is holding a two-week residential Summer School on advocacy. The aim of this new learning event is to introduce and integrate diverse aspects of advocacy and to offer perspectives on global trends and best practices. The Summer School will enable participants to study this popular subject more in depth in an atmosphere conducive to reflection, analysis and synthesis. It will be facilitated by international experts on advocacy. There will also be guest speakers from international non-governmental organisations.

■ www.comminit.com/events_calendar/2007-events/events-4724.html
Contact: training@intrac.org

Global Course: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Poverty Reduction, Reproductive Health and Health Sector Reform

● 20th–31st August 2007, Bangkok, Thailand

Organised by the World Bank Institute, this course explores key elements in designing efficient, equitable and financially sustainable population policies and reproductive health programmes in the context of health sector reform and the Millennium Development Goals.

■ www.comminit.com/events_calendar/2007-events/events-4733.html
Contact ljoo@worldbank.org

Balkan Kids For Kids Festival 2007

● 21st–24 September 2007, Belgrade, Serbia

This event is a regional festival of films made by and for children (from Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey). The deadline to submit films is June 30th.

■ www.comminit.com/events_calendar/2007-events/events-4718.html

Contact please see individual post page for details

DB Classifieds – Training, Materials Events (TME)

● First Wednesday of each month
Organisations can now post training and events related to international

development in the classifieds section of the CI website as well as within the DB Classifieds – TME.

■ For more information on posting training and events within the Classifieds section of The CI, please visit <http://www.comminit.com/classifiedsservices/dbclassifieds/sld-2553.html>

■ To promote training, books, events, and consultant services through The DB Classifieds – TME, contact Jennifer Savidge. Email: jsavidge@comminit.com

The Workshop 07: 11th Praxis Annual Commune on Participatory Development

● 11th to 22nd September 2007
National Institute of Small Industry Extension and Training (NISJET)
Yusufguda, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India

This year the following modules will be covered:

1. Community Led Monitoring and Evaluation
2. Community Led Local Level Planning
3. Participatory Methods and Approaches
4. Facilitating Participation-Training of Trainers
5. Community Participation In Corporate Social Responsibility
6. Community Led Disaster Preparedness and Management
7. Participatory Research
8. Community Led Broadcasting

■ For more details on cost and logistics please visit www.theworkshop.in or write to info@theworkshop.in



e-participation

The LearningForSustainability Website <http://learningforsustainability.net>

Designed for government and agency staff, NGOs, researchers and other community leaders working to support multi-stakeholder learning processes in sustainable development arenas. This guide to on-line resources highlights a number of activity areas or strands that are prerequisites for social learning, and points to how these strands are woven together in practice. These strands include networking, dialogue, adaptive management, knowledge management and evaluation. The growing role of the Internet is treated as a separate section. A short introduction to each section outlines the nature of the resource links provided, and provides pointers to other topic areas which are closely related in use. A separate section links to key manuals and guides on the Internet for facilitating participation and engagement.

The research methods and approaches section has links to action research resources, material on doing integrated and interdisciplinary research, a listing of on-line journals in these areas, and it hosts the IntSci (Integrated Science for sustainability) discussion network.

This new site will replace the NRM-changelinks site which has provided links in this area since 1998. The new Learning for Sustainability website is designed to provide agency staff and community leaders with improved layout and easier navigation. The change is not just cosmetic – you will find significantly new content, and a new structure guides the site content and navigation.

Feedback on the site is welcomed. If you have particular guides on the Internet that you find useful in practice please suggest them as a future resource to add and share with others.

Public Participation/Participatory Geographic Information Systems Custom Search Engine

www.ppgis.org

The PGIS/PPGIS custom search engine project is ongoing. The interface has been improved and new participants are welcome. The objective is to develop a highly specialised Custom Search Engine reflecting knowledge and interests in PGIS/PPGIS practice and science. Researchers and practitioners are invited to contribute to its development.

Community Mapping: The Community Planning Website

www.communitymaps.wordpress.com

Post resources and tools on community mapping, profile your community or project. Discuss perceptions, aspirations, preferences and develop plans for action. Not restricted to planning issues.

African Religious Health Assets Programme

www.arhap.uct.ac.za/research_who.php

An African Religious Health Assets Programme/World Health Organisation collaboration has resulted in a fascinating case study of the use of PGIS for health in Zambia and Lesotho. See Chapter 2: Mapping Religious Health Assets. The project facilitates a community-based response to HIV/AIDS. Of interest to all involved in health applications of PGIS, this effort maps elements of religious communities in Africa that work to improve health.

A Periodic Table of Visualisation Methods

www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.html

A reference guide in the form of a periodic table of various methods of presenting data visually. A pop up gives an example of each method, such as timelines, bar charts, process event chain, mindmaps.

Capacity Development Consultants (CADECO)

www.cadeco.mw

CADECO is a development organisation dedicated to helping NGOs improve their performance. CADECO's interventions are based on the African philosophy of ubuntu (the essence of being human). CADECO seeks to contribute towards organisational health by using and promoting indigenous wisdom found in African Proverbs and stories as a tool for development. The website includes a monthly African proverb with insights on organisational performance improvement, explanations on how to use indigenous wisdom in organisational performance improvement efforts, and CADECO's publications on indigenous wisdom as a tool for (organisational) Development.

The Communication Initiative: The Drum Beat – Issue 381 – Participatory Communication: The Case for Quantitative Assessment

www.cominit.com/drum_beat_381.html

This Drum Beat is one of a series of commentary and analysis pieces. In this piece, Tom Jacobson examines the issue of assessing participatory communication programmes and strategies. He suggests a method of quantitative assessment through measuring participatory dialogue based on Habermas' theory of communicative action. Jacobson here asserts that such assessments could provide the kind of hard data that donors need to justify their support.

The Drum Beat continues to feature a range of critical analysis commentaries of the communication for change field. These appear regularly on the first Monday of most months to inspire dialogue throughout the month. To contribute contact Deborah Heimann dheimann@cominit.com Subscribe at www.cominit.com/subscribe_drumbeat.html

RCPLA Network

In this section, we 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 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 and North Africa & Middle East Region:

Ali Mokhtar, Near East Foundation – Middle East Region, Center for Development Services (CDS), 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, 10th Floor, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +20 2 794 7278; Email: cds.prog@neareast.org; amokhtar@nefdev.org; Website: www.neareast.org/main/cds/default.aspx

Asia Region: Tom Thomas, 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; www.praxisindia.org
Jayatissa Samaranayake, Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID), 591 Havelock Road, Colombo 06, Sri Lanka.

News from the RCPLA Network Coordinator

E-forum in June

This year the network is focusing on providing RCPLA members with multiple opportunities to present individual and institutional work and to share knowledge and experiences in international spheres. We encourage those interested in the participatory approach to join RCPLA and be part of the network activities for 2007. The initial activity, starting in June, will be an e-forum. To join this forum and participate in the process of choosing the topic of discussion, send an email to pisaak@nefdev.org.

Membership

The network coordinator has given a significant focus to promoting the

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West Africa Region: Awa Faly Ba, IIED-Afrique, B.P. 5579, Dakar, Sénégal. Tel: +221 867 10 58; Fax: +221 867 10 59; Email: iedafrique.org

European Region: Jane Stevens, Participation, Power and Social Change Group, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK.

Tel: + 44 1273 678690; Fax: + 44 1273 21202; Email: participation@ids.ac.uk; Website: www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip

Participatory Learning and Action Editorial Team, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK. Tel: +44 207 388 2117; Fax: +44 207 388 2826; Email: planotes@iied.org; Website: www.planotes.org

Latin American Region: Jordi Surkin Beneria, CBC Andes, Conservacion Internacional, La Paz, Bolivia. Tel/fax: +591-2-2114528/2114496; Email: jsurkin@conservation.org; Website: www.conservation.org

Southern and Eastern Africa Region: Eliud Wakwabubi, Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK), Jabavu Road, PCEA Jitegemea Flats, Flat No. D3, PO Box 2645, KNH Post Office, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel/Fax: +254 2 716609; Email: pamfork@nbnet.co.ke

RCPLA Network and encouraging new members to join RCPLA. This year, the RCPLA witnessed a remarkable expansion in its membership and now has 19 members from India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, Kenya, Egypt, Bolivia, United Kingdom, and Canada. We have pleasure in welcoming on board two new members who joined the network in the past few months: Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) in Nepal and Khanya-African Institute for Community Driven Development (Khanya-aicdd) in South Africa.

Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) is a member-based organisation established in January 1995 by a group of like-minded development practitioners in Nepal. NEPAN envisages a situation in Nepal

where the poor and underprivileged people become the main focus for sustained, equitable and humanistic development. It promotes and facilitates participatory development approaches for the empowerment of the people through research, advocacy, lobbying and capacity-building activities. It believes in sharing skills and experiences without any boundaries. NEPAN is affiliated with the Social Welfare Council of Nepal. Currently, its members include 330 individual members and 40 institutional members. The key programmes they are currently implementing include promoting and strengthening participatory approaches, good governance, social inclusion, peace and development. To learn more about NEPAN please visit www.nepan.org.np

Khanya-African Institute for Community Driven Development (Khanya-aicdd) is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1998 to promote sustainable livelihoods and community-driven development for the poor in Africa. To carry out its mission, Khanya-aicdd works in action-learning processes linking government, civil society and business. The approach used by Khanya-aicdd is based on the belief that development is about learning – learning from one's own experience and that of others to improve policy and practice. In this process they have succeeded in building long-term relationships with organisations and individuals across Africa, with international centres of expertise in the South and North, as well as a wide range of donors. This approach underlies the key services which they offer: action-research/learning in Africa; facilitation and consultancy on poverty and change internationally; building capacity to promote the development of livelihoods approaches and local governance, primarily in South Africa; implementing innovations (primarily in the Free State and focus provinces of South Africa); sharing experience internationally and building coalitions. To find out more about Khanya-aicdd please visit www.khanya-aicdd.org.

News from the Asian Regional Coordinator

Praxis – Institute for Participatory Practices

The road to development has no simple answers. The only way to take the right one is to ask the stakeholders for directions. Participatory development today is

not a buzzword, it is the blueprint of a true democracy. Every year at Praxis, we hold an international workshop where we invite participants from NGOs, INGOs, government bodies and corporates to acquaint themselves with the latest in participatory development. Over the last decade more than a thousand participants, from more than thirty countries have benefitted from this initiative. Many have chosen to come back repeatedly in order to refresh their skills. In September of this year we are holding Workshop 07, the 11th Praxis Annual Commune on Participatory Development. See page 64 of Events and Training in this section for more details.

News from the Participation Group at IDS

Activities

The Participation, Power and Social Change Team at IDS has been busy, with members of our team involved with a number of events and initiatives around the world. We were delighted to attend the 25th anniversary of PRIA in India, an international centre for learning and promotion of participation and democratic governance, as well as the World Social Forum in Nairobi in January.

Furthering our work on participatory communications we are currently contributing to the organisation of the Our Media Conference in Australia which is focusing on sustainable futures: roles and challenges for community, alternative and citizens' media in the 21st century. More details at www.ourmedia07.net/?page_id=4. In December we co-facilitated a training workshop, organised by

Equalinrights and OxfamNovib, on participatory video for voice, reflection and exchange on human rights-based development in Somaliland. We have also been using participatory video and theatre in our work on transformative learning, running a training workshop with young people in Kenya on HIV/Aids.

We have recently been commissioned by Plan International to carry out independent research on the development impact of child sponsorship. Although widely used by organisations, there has been little research on the effects of this form of fundraising. Research is currently underway, taking place in both donor organisations and recipient countries – more details on our website at www.ids.ac.uk/ids/Part/proj/childsponsorship.html

Much of our work involves researching and understanding how power shapes our lives and relationships: *Exploring Power for Change* is a recent IDS bulletin that draws together some of the latest thinking from our team. Our Pathways of Women's Empowerment Programme, looking at how global policy processes act as pathways for women's empowerment, has also been very active, launching three publications in March: more details at www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/. In addition, *Feminisms in Development: Contradictions, Contestations and Challenges*, edited by Andrea Cornwall, Elizabeth Harrison and Ann Whitehead was recently published by Zed Books. Also by Zed, *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*, is a recent collection of case studies predominantly from the South edited by Peter Newell and Joanna Wheeler, and is part of the Claiming

Citizenship series of the Citizenship DRC (see www.drc-citizenship.org/ for details).

Books can be ordered from www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/ and more details of all of the above can be found on our website www.ids.ac.uk/ppsc/ or email ppsc@ids.ac.uk.

Staff news

Sammy Musyoki, networking and capacity building coordinator in the Participation Group and member of the *PLA* strategic editorial board, has just taken up a new job with Plan International. He will be based in Kenya as their strategic programme support manager, helping programme teams with planning, monitoring and evaluation and shaping the strategic direction of the overall country programme. Sammy was instrumental in bringing *PLA* 51 on Civil Society and Poverty Reduction to fruition and the *PLA* team is delighted that Sammy will continue to remain on the *PLA* editorial board. We wish him success in his new role.

News from IIED

Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Programme, Natural Resources Group

Food sovereignty in Mali

In February, two international events took place in Mali where farmers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and others joined forces to reshape the world food system. The first was the

farmers' exchange on the privatisation of seeds, held in Bamako, and the second was the *Nyéleni* World Forum on Food Sovereignty in Sélingué, named *Nyéleni* as a tribute to a legendary Malian peasant woman. These gatherings reaffirmed the right to food sovereignty. This includes the right of producers to dignified livelihoods and the right of all consumers to nutritious, sustainably and locally grown food. It also includes the right of nations to protect and regulate domestic production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development.

The Bamako event was designed as a 'farmer exchange for mutual learning' and was facilitated by IIED and its partners from India, Peru, Indonesia and Iran. It was set up prior to the *Nyéleni* event to raise awareness and inform West African farmers about the threats and impacts of the privatisation of knowledge, seeds and livestock genes on food sovereignty and independence, and to share their own local experience.

The main outcomes, which were taken to the *Nyéleni* World Forum, are outlined in the Bamako Declaration on the Privatisation of Seeds and Farmer Knowledge:

- to support the use of traditional seeds and animal breeds for food sovereignty;
- to stop the privatisation of seeds and biopiracy;
- to ban GMOs in Africa; and
- to support farmer exchanges and innovations.

The *Nyéleni* Forum was attended by President Amadou Toumani Toure as well as more than 500 people, including small-scale farmers and fishermen, indigenous peoples, landless migrant workers, pastoralists and NGOs. The *Nyéleni* Declaration outlines a collective and global strategy to ensure people's right to food sovereignty. See www.nyeleni2007.org

For more information visit www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/ag_liv_projects/Farmers_Exchange.html

Forestry and Land Use Programme, Natural Resources Group

Making the law work better for social justice in forestry

The international Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG) met at the end of 2006 to explore notions of social justice in forestry. Country team members, representing a wide variety of institutional backgrounds (including local and regional NGOs,

parliament, forestry authorities and academia), came together from Cameroon, Ghana, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, India, Indonesia and Vietnam. Participants exchanged news of how they have sought to influence and change legal systems for the advancement of social justice and local benefits in their countries. For further details on the FGLG and the workshop report please visit www.iied.org/NR/forestry/projects/forest.html





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Issue 42:	Oct 2001	US\$32.00	9113	IIED	Children's participation – evaluating effectiveness
Issue 41:	June 2001	US\$32.00	9034	IIED	General issue
Issue 40:	Feb 2001	US\$32.00	6345	IIED	Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment
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Issue 27:	Oct 1996	US\$25.00	6114	IIED	Participation, policy and institutionalisation
Issue 26:	June 1996	US\$25.00	6095	IIED	General issue
Issue 25:	Feb 1996	US\$25.00	6099	IIED	Children's participation
Issue 24:	Oct 1995	US\$25.00	6093	IIED	Critical reflections from practice

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- **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 learnt 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 or by email to: **The Editors, *Participatory Learning and Action***, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1 0DD, UK.
Fax: +44 20 7388 2826
Email: pla.notes@iied.org
Website: www.planotes.org

Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network

Since June 2002, the IIED Resource Centre for Participatory Learning and Action has

now housed by the Institute of 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.

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 the network coordinator: Ali Mokhtar, CDS, Near East Foundation, 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, 10th Floor, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +2 2 794 7278; Email: amokhtar@nefdev.org

Participation at IDS

Participatory approaches and methodologies are also a focus for the Participation, Power and Social Change Group at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This group of researchers and practitioners is 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.

ISBN: 978-1-84369-665-0
ISSN: 1357-938X
Order no: 14540IIED

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