

Editorial

- **Theme issue**

Most of the articles in this issue of *PLA Notes* draw on a workshop on 'Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation' which was held in the Philippines in November 1997¹. The slight delay in disseminating this issue stems from an ambitious publication timetable, which allowed only 8 weeks (including the Christmas season) for the workshop papers to be edited and formatted for the *PLA Notes*. We hope, however, that the wait has been worthwhile as this issue explores a topic in which there is great interest and increasing demand for information.

In spite of the time challenges, Mae Arevalo, Irene Guijt and Kiko Saladores have brought together a reflective theme issue that explores some of the opportunities and challenges of moving towards a monitoring and evaluation process that has greater local value. In their overview, they highlight some of the diverse approaches and methodological innovations that have occurred under the banner of 'Participatory monitoring and evaluation' (PM&E). But amidst the growing number of exciting experiences, many fundamental questions and challenges have appeared, some of which are explored in this issue.

¹ The workshop was hosted and organised by the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), Philippines. The International Steering Committee comprised representatives from IIRR, Institute for Development Studies (UK), UPWARD (The Philippines), KAISAHAN (The Philippines), Oxfam Hong Kong, Sikiliza International (Uganda), and IIED (UK). The workshop was funded by the International Development Research Centre (Canada) and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), with additional support from IDS and the Department for International Development (UK).

One of the findings from the workshop was the lack of documentation which is "a key obstacle to more innovative and wider use of all that PM&E appears to offer" (Guijt *et al.*, this issue). We hope that readers will be inspired by this issue to document their experiences and share them within the *PLA Notes* network. Furthermore, because of the great interest in participatory monitoring and evaluation, we welcome feedback from readers on any of the issues raised by this theme issue.

- **In this issue**

As always, this issue opens with a suite of more general articles. The first two articles present the innovative use of two very familiar PRA methods: transects and chapati (Venn) diagrams (see also the *Extracts* section). In the opening article, Ishmail Mahiri reflects on the learnings provided by undertaking transects separately with 'experts' and local people. His article explores the boundaries to, and complementarities between, local and 'expert' knowledge. This is followed by an article by Cathy Farnworth who describes the process of undertaking chapati diagrams and reflects on how the outcome is determined by group boundaries and dynamics.

The next two papers explore the use of participatory approaches to planning. Sharon Truelove describes some of the challenges of scaling-up participatory approaches in the decentralisation process in the Gambia, in particular how local plans can be integrated into regional and national planning. Kamal Bhattacharyya and Ajay Kumar highlight that not all participatory planning processes have a lead role for the community in all stages. They describe how their 'alternative approach' tries to enable communities to drive the process.

In the final article in the general section, Marion Gibbon and Gopal Shrestha reflect on the mechanistic way in which participatory approaches have been applied in Nepal. They

describe a workshop process with local NGOs which has attempted to institutionalise appropriate behaviour and attitudes in the training and use of participatory approaches (see also *Tips for Trainers*, this issue, and Somesh Kumar, ABC of PRA: Attitude and Behaviour Change, *PLA Notes* 27, October 1996)

Regular features

The *Extracts* section in this issue draws on a longer article by Somesh Kumar and describes the use of 3D Venn Diagrams. He shows how 3D Venn diagramming enables complex issues to be examined in a visual way.

In the *Feedback* section, C U Okoye describes some of the trade-offs and challenges in undertaking PRA sessions in homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. Where there are high levels of conflict, groups differentiated, by for example gender or age, can help to build consensus and enable minority views to be heard. In a thoughtful response, Somesh Kumar comments that all too often communities are considered as an homogeneous group. Breaking into different interest groups can enable diverse perspectives to be heard. However, mixed groups can be useful when facilitators are trying to promote common action. The context should determine what approach is appropriate, but where stratification of groups is required, Somesh notes that the criteria for grouping should come from the community themselves.

For trainers in participatory learning, the serialisation of the *Trainers Guide to Participatory Learning and Action* describes the basic principles of participatory learning. It outlines the concepts central to participatory learning and action, together with training suggestions for how to share these ideas with trainees. The *Tips for Trainers* section has been prepared by Irene Guijt and describes a card game that enables participants to discern the false promises from the potentials of community participation.

The *In Touch* pages (at the back of the issue) share experiences and publicise new materials and training events. The *RCPLA Pages* in the *In Touch* section describe the on-going activities of the RCPLA network.

As always, we welcome your comments and contributions for any of the sections in *PLA Notes*. We hope you enjoy this issue.

UP AND COMING THEME ISSUES

We have planned the remaining theme issues for *PLA Notes* in 1998. The June issue is being developed in collaboration with Action Aid and will explore issues of Participation, Literacy and Empowerment. For the October issue, we hope to draw from a recent workshop on Conservation and Development and compile a theme issue on Participation in Natural Resource Management.

1

Comparing transect walks with experts and local people

Ishmail Mahiri

• Introduction

A transect walk in PRA is normally conducted by a mixed group of local people and visiting professionals. As part of a study of the interface between 'locals' and 'experts', I walked the same two transects on different occasions with a 'local' group and an 'expert' group, recording their reactions to the same walks and similar questions. Such an approach can illuminate areas of agreement, disagreement and conflict. This paper compares the transects with 'experts' and local people.

My study concerns fuelwood use in Nyando Division, Kisumu District, Kenya, and the interface between rural people and local advisory services. I organised two separate transects with an interdisciplinary team of 'experts' and a group of local people in September 1996. The 'expert' team consisted of three foresters, including the District Forest Officer (D.F.O.), one soil conservation officer, one agricultural officer, one rural sociologist and myself, as the team leader and convenor. Also in the team were three forestry college students (including two women) on field attachment to the D.F.O.'s Station.

The two transects with local people each comprised a group of three men from each of the two villages. The teams were chosen for their interest in the environment, their long-term residence in the villages and for their availability. The transects were undertaken on bicycles. I failed to find any women who either owned or knew how to ride a bicycle, so these teams, sadly, were all male. However, I hope that the in-depth interviews and focus

groups which I conducted subsequently with women will redress this imbalance in my final study.

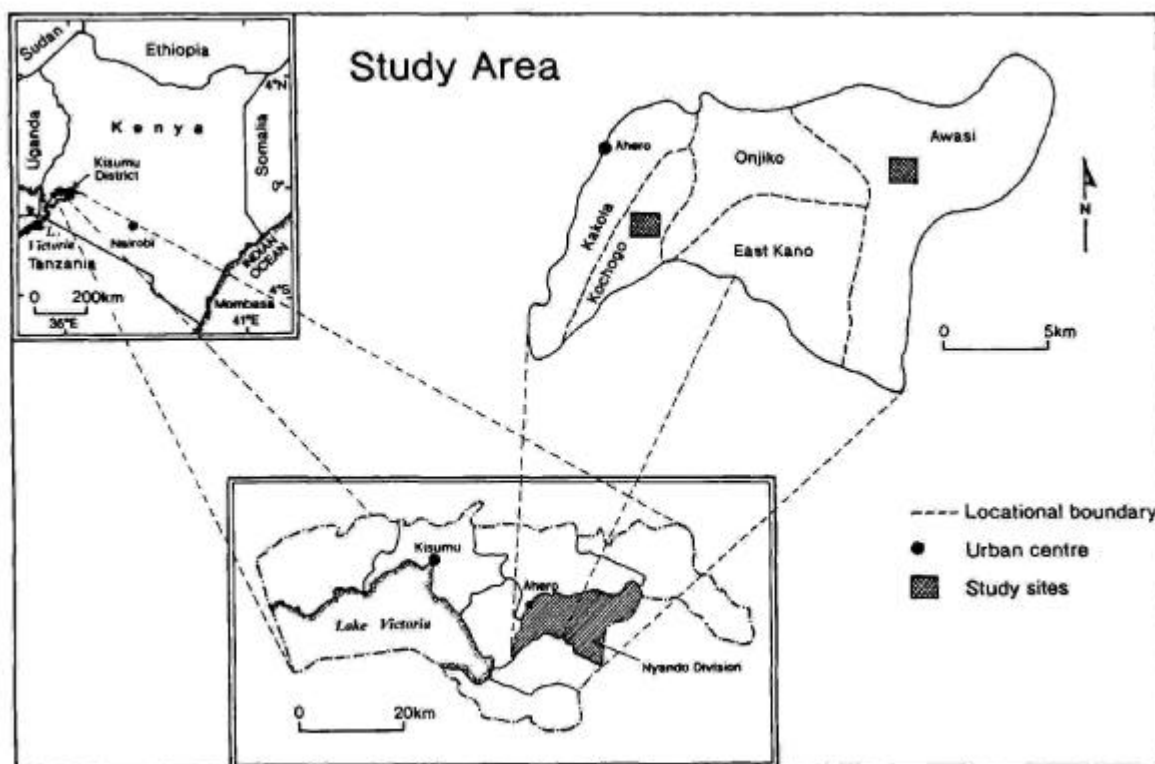
The transect with 'experts'

The transects with 'experts' were arranged to take one full day. We set off from Kisumu Town using a borrowed government vehicle. The first transect was to cross Awasi Location in the Eastern edge of Nyando Division, and the second was to cross Kochogo Location. Each transect measured a distance of about 8 km. The two transect sites were about 12 km apart (Figure 1). Altogether, there were four stops along each transect, the stops being about 2½ - 3 km apart.

I used the transects both to gather basic evaluations of the environment, and as a forum to elicit 'expert' opinion on a range of issues. At each stop, we left the vehicle and walked across the surrounding area for between 45 minutes and 1 hour. We noted features, such as soil type, trees, landuse and vegetation, while I asked questions on policy and practice. I tape recorded the discussion, to ease the pressure of taking notes. However, both note taking and recording were difficult because there were arguments, often with more than one person speaking at once.

During the walks, the 'experts' posed questions to each other, to iron out disciplinary assumptions which each held in their own fields of expertise, or to clarify specific viewpoints. This sometimes generated such heated debate that I had to intervene and cool tempers!

Figure 1. Location of the study area [Source: Author 1996]



The transects with local people

The transect with local people took a slightly different format. We cycled, made stops and walked along the same routes I had taken with the 'experts'. I adopted the same approach and line of questioning with the local people as with the 'experts', except for language: these discussions were conducted in Dholuo (the local dialect). At some points, I was lost in their use of certain terminologies to refer to particular environmental concepts. On the other hand, I learnt, to my greatest surprise, that I could not find suitable words in the local dialect of my childhood to explain key research concepts, such as 'environment', 'sustainable management' and 'conservation'. The reason was that these words in Dholuo had multiple meanings, some of which would not convey the message I desired. I was, therefore, forced to go through the ordeal of long-winded explanations.

The local people displayed great enthusiasm in discussing their environment and were most

often in agreement with each other's opinions. They also seemed to have many plans regarding various environmental issues, but further probing revealed that most of these ideas were not being practised because of inadequate finance and poor organisation among themselves. For instance, local people in one village identified a type of soil which they said could be used to make bricks. They emphasised that the sale of bricks could generate substantial finances for local self-help development groups, as well as help improve the building standards of houses within the locality, yet no one explored this potentially lucrative opportunity.

Local people showed how various resources serve multifunctional, but often little recognised, purposes. For example, one group of local people said that Luos (the local tribe) use trees such as *Euphorbia tirucalli* for live fences around homesteads and that these serve as a wind-break and boundary marker, and are traditionally planted as a sign of a new homestead. They provide a handy fuelwood source when there are many visitors (such as

during funerals) because of their proximity and fast drying capability. This had been discussed earlier by two foresters during the transects with 'experts', with one stating that 'The Euphorbia makes a very good hedge. But we have a lot of problems with it customarily...if my father did not have it as a hedge around his home, then I cannot have it'. The other forester stated that, 'Foresters do not consider *Euphorbia tirucalli* highly as fuelwood species because it has low calorific value'.

Knowledge interface and policy implications

The walks revealed that 'experts' have limited knowledge on the land management practices adopted by local people. Because of their highly specialised scientific knowledge, with limited practical application, the experts' approach to the environment stems from a technical and an intellectual standpoint. For example, the foresters attached no special importance to scattered bushes and thickets. Yet, as was established during the walk with 'locals', bushes serve as reservoirs for wood which can be used for firewood, boundary markers, and as places left for small ruminants, such as goats or sheep, to browse (see Box 1). These uses may not be recognised by foresters.

The policy of transforming traditional subsistence farming to mechanised cash-cropping, by clearing such bushes to create large farms, results in changes in the environment and distortion of traditional practices. The D.F.O. narrated one incidence in Kenya's Bura Irrigation Scheme, for large-scale cotton farming, where bushes were cleared to create space for cotton farms. Later, when the villagers were consulted, it was realised that those bushes had served as their source of fuelwood. The project ended up changing the livelihood system of the local people, resulting in increased inward migration to the irrigation water points. This increased pressure on the natural resources, such as fuelwood and water, as well as on public services, such as health. These hardships may have been avoided if the policy makers tried to understand the local community, their needs and value systems.

The apparent monopoly of knowledge by 'experts' has often led to local people being reticent to freely express their knowledge and viewpoints, particularly in the presence of 'experts'. The issue of knowledge and power came up many times during interviews.

BOX 1 KNOWLEDGE INTERFACE	
<u>'EXPERTS'</u>	<u>'LOCALS'</u>
1. Clear the bushes and plant trees to get fuelwood and wood for timber and building poles.	1. Retain the bushes to get fuelwood, sticks for building granaries, frameworks for walls and roofs of huts, and browse for goats and sheep.
2. Plant two trees where you cut one.	2. Manage coppice growth from stumps of trees that have been felled.
3. Working on the fuelwood problem.	3. Use wood from farm trees, e.g. Euphorbia hedges, sticks from bushes, dry sisal leaves, crop residues, cow dung etc.
4. Scientific naming of trees, e.g. 'Thevetia peruviana'	4. Derivative naming based on function, e.g. 'Mafua' (Luo name for Thevetia peruviana), meaning 'flower', because the tree is used as ornamental hedge.
5. Soil lacks nitrogen.	5. Soil lacks manure.
6. Working on irrigation plans.	6. Harvest rain water through diversion into farms by digging trenches and ponds.
7. Researching on chemical weed control of Striga weed.	7. Using cultural method of uprooting the Striga weed before flowering: burn or place on footpaths to be trodden on.

Note: The interface may be a 'gap', conflict or agreement in their own terms

Whenever I asked questions concerning what local people could do to tackle certain problems, they threw the same question back to me and said 'You experts should tell us what to do'. This suggested to me that rural people believe that environmental knowledge is an exclusive preserve of 'experts'. Such 'received wisdom' obscures a plurality of alternative and legitimate knowledge about the environment (Leach and Mearns, 1996). Organising separate transects for 'experts' and 'locals' was a deliberate move to counteract these prejudices. The local false respect and dependency on 'experts' is dangerous as it may lead to forced consensus in discussions.

On many occasions, 'experts' play an advisory role in the development and sustainable use of land resources. But in practice, there may be a dearth of applied knowledge among 'experts' of local activities in managing the environment. By contrast, rural people have developed a broad-based knowledge of the environment and its management which is an accumulation of practical experience and experimentation. Nonetheless, I established during the transect with 'locals' that local knowledge is not common knowledge between and among local people. Local knowledge is uniquely innovative and dynamic, exhibiting differences which are locality-specific, depending on ecological variabilities and existing local circumstances.

It is my firm opinion that the complementarity between 'expert' knowledge and local knowledge is a potential avenue to overthrow the myth of the superiority and dominance of scientific (read 'expert') knowledge. I would argue that it is not the exclusive knowledge held by 'experts' that holds the key to understanding the environment, but the interface and mutual interdependence of both expert and indigenous knowledge bases.

The challenges

I had to confront several challenges in making the transects take place. These included:

- logistical challenge, in planning and organising the transects and finding a day that suited everyone. It took me two weeks to mobilise the team of 'experts' and get them out in the field.
- Explaining the objective of the approach to the participants, particularly the 'experts', presented an enormous challenge, since most PRA transects are conducted with local people in attendance. The 'experts' seemed uneasy. The question 'why' could be seen on their faces the moment I said that local people were not coming on the team. For the local people, who apparently were not well versed with the technique, it was only a matter of explaining.
- For comparability, a systematic and consistent line of questioning was necessary for both 'experts' and local people. This was the advantage of making a tape recording of the proceedings. Following the transects with 'experts', I listened to the tape and was able to follow the same line of questioning with local people. This provided a fair means of evaluating the knowledge interface between the two groups.
- The final transcription of the tapes for further analysis presented a daunting, yet vital task. This is not a 'quick and dirty' method.
- Last, I had to buy lunch for 12 people on the 'expert' team and provide honoraria for the local people. In addition, I had to contend with the cycling prowess of the local people!

Lessons learned

- Mobilising and getting professionals out of their offices and into the field is a difficult task. It requires zeal, determination and lots of patience. With the local people, a pragmatic approach to who is available on the day to complete the task is required.
- Rural people express great enthusiasm in sharing their knowledge about their environment. There is also a sense of competition amongst local people and a desire to prove who knows most about the topic. The transect provided them with an opportunity to display their knowledge about environmental issues.
- The 'expert' transects provided a forum for the various government and non-governmental officers to interact, discuss, analyse, and exchange views on diverse environmental issues. The 'experts' sometimes held different views despite

being of the same profession, for example foresters.

- The transect was a forum for the 'experts' to learn from each other, including the four forestry college students. For the local people, the transect created a point of contact with fellow villagers and an opportunity to learn about what others do to tackle various issues.
- The presence of the women students provided a more gender balanced transect for the 'experts'. It enabled women's perspectives to be gained, for example, during the discussion on fuelwood issues. Cycling was the only practicable option with local people, but it excluded women.
- The presence of government agents at the district and divisional levels created an arena conducive to discussing matters of policy and their impact on local people. By contrast, the absence of government officers afforded the local people a less threatening environment to comment freely on matters of policy and its impact on them.

• Conclusion

PRA approaches are useful and effective tools for exploring rural issues in a rapid and more cost-effective manner. The transects described here, which were conducted separately with the 'experts' and local people, were a novel departure from conventional participatory transects and provided a fresh means of evaluating the knowledge interface between 'experts' and 'locals'. The local transects created an open and free atmosphere for people to express their knowledge and views without the influence of, or intimidation from professionals.

The local people displayed an impressive repertoire of environmental knowledge. It is not, however, the aim of this paper to portray local knowledge as mutually exclusive from, or preferable to, 'expert' knowledge. On the contrary, the paper seeks to address the prevailing general assumption that 'expert' knowledge holds the key to environmental matters. The dominance and inappropriate 'mandate' given to the 'experts' regarding all issues pertaining to the environment needs re-examining (Chambers, 1997). Local

knowledge should share the platform, and have a place in policy formulation.

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2

Musings on the use of chapati diagrams

Cathy Rozel Farnworth

• Introduction

The account that follows represents my understanding of what happened, and what was discussed, during a PRA exercise using chapati (Venn) diagrams at a Community Centre in Norwich, UK. I explain the 'Reasoning' behind the use of chapati diagrams and then detail 'What Happened' in three parts: (1) the chapati diagram, (2) the discussion and (3) group dynamics. In the second part: 'Thinking About What Happened' I use the same three headings to discuss my main observations.

Reasoning

My colleague, Faisa Loyon and I worked with the Community Centre for several weeks. We decided to use chapati diagrams at a mid-point in our research project with two groups at the Community Centre. The first was the 'Parents and Toddlers Group'. This group meets one morning a week. Parents chat with one another, children play together and a health visitor is usually available for queries from parents regarding their own, or their children's, well being. The second group, the 'Management Committee', is responsible for running the Community Centre. It is composed of local volunteers. Both of these groups have been in existence for several years.

The timing of the activity resulted from our sense that a degree of rapport was needed with both groups before doing the exercise. We hoped this would ensure co-operation and complex, 'honest' (as opposed to normative) answers.

The choice of activity arose from our rather organic (theoretically non-top-down) research

approach which attempted to allow issues to 'emerge' from our informal discussions with groups and individuals. It became clear that *access to decision-making processes* in the Community Centre was, for differing reasons, a central concern to both groups. We also noticed that the parents were accustomed to carrying out a group activity upon arrival at the Community Centre and thought they would be open to carrying out such an activity.

Our aim was to ascertain how each group *perceived* their own degree of access (vis-à-vis that of other groups) to decision-making processes. Based on our observations of the Management Committee and the Parents and Toddlers Group, we anticipated that major differences in perception would emerge.

We thought the activity - by identifying present institutional shortcomings, blockages and boundaries - could provoke discussion between the groups, leading to a mutually better understanding. The use of chapati diagrams therefore tied in neatly with our original objective: to identify ways in which the Community Centre can better serve the community.

• Part one: what happened

The chapati diagram

I facilitated the Chapati diagramming with the Parents and Toddlers Group whilst Faisa facilitated the work with the Management Committee.

Parents and toddlers group

Six women gathered. I explained we wanted to find out different perceptions of the

Community Centre and that we would feed back information to them in a couple of weeks. I described the procedure for chapati diagramming. The women understood immediately what to do and one woman in the group took the pens. The participants listed the decision-making bodies collectively. Much of the diagram was completed by the woman 'holding the pen' in conjunction with the group organiser, but a heated discussion took place amongst all present about the Community Centre, the Management Committee and their own decision-making powers.

Management committee

Five Management Committee members were present, as well as the Area Community Worker (all women). The Area Community Worker took the pens. The participants listed the decision-making bodies collectively. They came up with a much greater range of actors than the Parents and Toddlers Group (e.g. Norwich City Council, various legal bodies). The actual diagram was completed by the woman who had the pens but she carefully cross-checked and sought compromises regarding the size and positioning of circles.

The discussion

Parents and toddlers group

The participants felt they had little input into the running of the Community Centre and so did not draw a circle for themselves. They personalised the circles by allocating individuals' names to them, rather than seeing these people as representatives of particular institutions/posts. They did not link any of the circles with each other as they thought there was no communication between each individual/post.

Management committee

The participants discussed the impact of 'external actors' (e.g. legal constraints) upon their work. They were unsure as to how community centre users could get involved, but linked them to group leaders. They deliberated carefully on the size of circles and the interactions between each actor. They did

not personalise any of the discussion or allocate the names of individuals to circles. They saw the Community Centre as bounded by legal requirements.

Group dynamics

Parents and toddlers group

Six out of eight adults took part. The only man said he was too busy and hence excluded himself. Another woman did not join the group. I asked why this was so. The woman holding the pens said this individual never spoke to anyone else, though she came each week. All those who participated in the diagramming contributed verbally to the activity.

Management committee

No place was made for the only man present, who sat at his own desk. The woman with the pens controlled the discussion by eliciting opinions from the other women.

- **Part two: Thinking about what happened**

The chapati diagram

A chapati diagram can be thought of as a collective mental map in which a particular group/institution locates itself in relation to other groups/institutions with regard to a particular entity - in this case the Community Centre. A chapati diagram presents - and represents - knowledge in a very specific way. Although it is a visual product, a chapati diagram is the outcome of a verbal social process. A chapati diagram is orientated towards output. This places constraints as well as openings upon a group.

Openings

A chapati diagram can be a powerful way to indicate *exclusion*. This was quickly recognised by the Parents and Toddlers Group who resolutely refused to place themselves on the diagram.

The process of *negotiation* over 'reality' may be expressed in the form of corrections to the

diagram. This happened with the Management Committee as they discussed the precise place of the users.

Since people are asked to represent what they know and not what they *see* (Robinson-Pant 1995) there is no correct way to draw the map (though there are guidelines). The lack of rules regarding perspective that might constrain a drawing of the exterior world (e.g. roads, shops, boxes) theoretically allows participants more control over the process. The visual representation of a group's 'reality' can provide a trigger for later discussion. This is particularly the case when a group's self-perception seems quite at odds with how they have been represented by another.

Constraints

The two-dimensional visual format demands consensus - particularly because it is impossible for it to be altered later without leaving tracks of the changes. Unequal power relations therefore determine what does and does not get represented. Such relations are particularly acute because of the public nature of this activity: both the *process of making it* and *the knowledge that it can be displayed to others*. The tendency is to suppress the multiple realities of individual actors in the group in favour of a single view. Mosse (1995) notes that active participants are socially prominent and articulate. This was true for both groups. The implications are:

- highly individual opinions - by virtue of being represented on the diagram - can become identified as a collective representation of a particular group's 'reality' by people who did not observe the discussion process. In the long-term this could result in sustained inter-group misconceptions.
- the realities of weaker actors are likely to be submerged. The effect of 'mutedness' (Ardener 1975, in Mosse 1993) can mean that women (typically) are unable to contribute at all - or in the way required - to an activity. Since perceptions of reality are gendered, the implications for policy-makers are significant. At the Community Centre men were excluded - as a minority gender (in both groups), for thematic

reasons (Parents and Toddlers Group) and personality reasons (Management Committee).

The discussion

A chapati diagram is silent on the discussion that created it. It is a snap shot of a group without including all the actors. As researchers, our presence was highly significant. Discussion was undoubtedly skewed by our presence: we were the audience to which the groups played. On one occasion someone was searching for a word. I supplied one. This was entered on the diagram. In many ways we had only technically 'handed over the stick'.

At the same time there is no doubt that each group - and individuals within them - used the activity to draw us into their own projects. For instance, one woman spoke bitterly about the Management Committee. It was extremely hard not to get drawn into her account and her demonising of the other group, particularly because she seemed to hold the sympathy of the group and because our agenda was to find out '*what people really thought*'. It was easier to distrust the 'normative' approach of the Management Committee - since their discussion had the appearance of being less 'real' and 'gutsy'. Upon reflection it is clear that both 'sides' expressed an equally narrow range of views and were aligned towards the needs of the strongest people in the group. Now I appreciate that we were probably used as messengers between groups, able to cross boundaries that participants could or would not cross. We were given the role of change agents, particularly by the less powerful group: the Parents and Toddlers Group.

Group dynamics

A chapati diagram is predicated upon the existence of boundaries, whether pre-set or specially created. This has implications for inclusion and exclusion at several levels. We set up the activity on the basis of an externally imposed boundary: that between the Parents and Toddlers Group and the Management Committee. I assumed that their shared experiences, parenthood and management, (the groups' *raison d'être*) would be unifying and that opinions would be relatively

homogeneous. However, each group created inner boundaries by excluding certain people from group 'membership'. Thus internal power relations set the conditions for participation. Once boundaries had been set, I believe that an unconscious group dynamic was set into operation, which helped suppress alternative views in the interests of maintaining group cohesion. Furthermore, since an oppositional framework was established from the outset, the discussions were steered and contained by this dichotomy. The 'us' and 'them' result we achieved was almost inevitable.

In reality, of course, multiple levels of interaction and alliances exist. For example, one member of the Parents and Toddlers Group had run a weekly activity and the group co-ordinator was a member of the Management Committee. These are the simplest and crudest interactions to identify - relationship webs would undoubtedly be extraordinarily complex to construct.

• Endnotes

Certain moments spent watching the groups create chapati diagrams provided me with windows into group dynamics and power relations. This was exhilarating. Most of the time, however, the process was a confusing and complex experience, requiring considerable post-facilitation 'disentanglement' and reflection. I believe it was also a semi-understood and complex activity for the groups taking part. To take each group through a reflective process on how they created the diagrams might be the best use of such diagrams. For people who did not witness the process, the chapati diagrams appear as provocative statements. They graphically portray different understandings, however imperfect, and can thus focus discussion.

We presented the Chapati Diagram made by the Parents and Toddlers Group to the Management Committee within a week of completing the research. The way the Parents and Toddlers Group had omitted themselves shocked the Management Committee deeply. I think everyone was quite hurt. Much discussion followed on how to include the Parents and Toddlers Group more effectively

in decision-making processes. Sadly, and inexcusably, we failed to present the Chapati Diagram made by the Management Committee to the Parents and Toddlers Group, even though this had been planned. Somehow we got caught up in other events and time swept us on.

On reflection, I would recommend that other practitioners wishing to present chapati diagrams from one group to another consider how to channel reactions positively, so that the new understanding results in a concrete action plan for change. Practitioners would also need to consider carefully how, and at what point, the different groups should be brought into direct contact.

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3

Participatory community planning: some unresolved challenges from The Gambia

Sharon Truelove

• Introduction

Since the early 1990s, The Gambia has been developing a decentralised community planning process. The key to this process has been the belief that rural people should be defining their own development needs, be at the centre of development planning decisions and translate development plans into action. This paper describes the approach and some of its strengths and shortcomings, with the aim of raising some debate about this type of participatory development, and the methodological issues arising from the transition to a more participatory community planning process.

The decentralised approach is being promoted by a multi-lateral government agency, henceforth referred to as the NGO, in partnership with the Community Development Department of the Gambian government. This central partnership is also co-operating with other government departments and local, national and international NGOs.

In summary, the NGO/Government Programme referred to in this paper involves outside funding and personnel aimed at stimulating a villager-led development planning process. This involves villagers, in close consultation with government and non-government agencies, choosing and planning appropriate, self-sustaining projects. As a Community Development Facilitator, my role was to train and support new teams of government and NGO fieldworkers to use participatory methodologies. These helped the teams to identify village problems and proposed solutions and integrate them into

Community Development Plans within the new Community Development approach.

In this paper, I consider the integration of PRA into national or regional planning strategies and tackle the following issues:

- Can PRA act as a bridge between research and development? Can it reconcile the traditional function of researchers (production of knowledge) with that of developers (implementing development action)?
- How can we deal with the problem of scale in PRA? PRA is often locality specific whereas development planning requires data aggregation at higher levels. How do we integrate PRA into development planning?

But first it is important to take a closer look at the administrative set-up in the Gambia.

Administration in The Gambia

In the Gambia, each region is subdivided into *wards*, each ward comprises around thirty villages. Wards represent the administrative unit which work with government departments and NGOs. Each village should be represented at ward level by two Village Representatives, preferably one man and one woman. Representatives should be selected from village meetings focused on the development needs in each village. This is not always achieved, but the general principal is clear: villagers discuss their development needs, select representatives to communicate these to the ward committee (see below), who then take these needs to the NGO for funding.

The Ward Committee consists of a chairperson, treasurer, secretary, monitor etc., and is the communicator of development ideas from the village level to ward level and onwards to regional level. It is responsible for drawing up detailed project plans and budgets. Committee members are selected from village representatives and inevitably tend to come from the more powerful families who are better educated and more vocal. The NGO/Government programme has attempted to ensure an even geographical spread of committee members from the villages in each ward, and has tried to encourage the selection of women. This is one of the main challenges for the new Community Planning approach.

Development of the community planning approach

Over the last five years an innovative community planning approach has been evolving in The Gambia. This draws on an approach that began in the late 1980s called 'Village Initiated Support Activities' or VISA (an NGO-led activity). VISA supported and implemented the ideas that communities had about their own development.

Under VISA, each village identified and prioritised potential development projects, largely using outside technical support and personnel to assist with the selection process. The villagers compiled a list of three or more potential projects which village representatives would present to a ward level meeting comprising ward committee members and government and NGO representatives. At the meeting, individual village priorities would be compiled and their relative merits discussed. This resulted in a ward level re-prioritisation, in order to reduce the number of projects going forward for consideration at regional level.

The next step in the prioritisation process was a ward committee and NGO workshop. This discussed: the funds available to each ward from the NGO budget, the types of project that the NGO are able to fund within their mandate and the potential of communities to pay their contribution to their proposed projects (generally, villagers contribute 10-25% of project costs). At this workshop, a final shortlist of projects is drawn up.

Implementation and monitoring

When projects are approved, the ward committees and villagers take on responsibility for implementing the project. This involves purchasing materials and equipment, providing unskilled labour and hiring skilled labour where necessary. This has been achieved with only very limited intervention from the NGO representative and some government departments in an advisory and technical role (e.g., building plans, field demarcation etc.).

On the financial side, the ward committees, with the help of traditional village leaders (*alkalos*, who are also signatories to project agreements), are responsible for: collecting the village contribution, accounting for the NGO contribution to project funds, and keeping receipts and records. A more limited monitoring role is undertaken by the NGO representative in partnership with a local council official.

A résumé of problems encountered

This process had proved something of a success, in that locally appropriate projects have been developed that are fully owned and maintained by the communities. More recently, however, programme staff have been attempting to tackle one of the main shortcomings of the approach, that projects were not always being chosen by the whole community, but by 'benefit captors'¹.

In some instances, villages were not having in-depth discussions of their development needs. Instead projects were selected by village leaders and other 'benefit captors'. This has led to projects being selected that are not backed by the whole community and villagers have become unwilling to participate in the projects by contributing labour or payments. In

¹ 'Benefit captors' are those members of the community involved in liaison with donors, who are able, through their education, influence and power, to propose projects and plans, without the agreement of the community, which are predominantly in their own interest, and for their own personal benefit. An example of this might be a village leader who pays the community's contribution to a well in order to 'capture' the 'benefit' of a donor-funded well for his family.

extreme instances, benefit captors may have paid the village contribution in order to gain a livestock well or a domestic hand pump for their personal purposes.

The operation of the Ward Committees has suffered similar problems, with members themselves becoming benefit captors. Many members are unsure of their proper roles within the development process and thus committees have tended to be dominated by their chairperson, sometimes to the detriment of the project, its sustainability and genuine community participation.

Transition to participatory community planning approach

Recognition of some of the deficiencies in the VISA approach led to a review of the programme in 1995. The underlying problem was identified as a lack of genuine participation by all villagers in the discussion of village problems and development needs. Because of this, a number of changes are being instituted and the programme is in transition to a new 'Community Planning' approach. This enables communities to undertake the planning process for themselves, with support provided from government departments and NGO staff.

The strategy

The new approach of the NGO has been to employ Community Development Facilitators, as an institution building measure, to work within the government's Community Development Department. The facilitators' role is to establish a more participatory approach at village level, through the formation and encouragement of Village Development Committees (VDCs). VDCs are comprised of 35 individuals selected by the community to ensure that chosen projects reflect collective needs. Their role is to discuss development problems with all sectors of the community, including young and old, men and women, wealthy and poor, all ethnic groups etc..

Under this new structure, two VDC members in each village are also the village representatives who take the prioritised list of village projects to ward level. The VDC is also

main actor in the implementation and monitoring of projects.

The facilitator also assists in the training of VDC members in how to perform their roles, in particular how to conduct and facilitate a village meeting and use PRA tools. This has required the formation of multidisciplinary teams of ward level facilitators from different government departments (education, health, agriculture, livestock, water and rural development) and field level staff from interested NGOs and local development organisations. The multidisciplinary facilitation teams assist VDCs to use PRA tools to discuss and prioritise their development problems.

Priorities

Through the VDCs, changes are being instituted to try to build the capacity of villagers to prioritise in a more participatory way. Attempts are being made to improve the selection, degree of representation and functioning of the Ward Committees, who translate individual village priorities into a small list of ward level priorities that will hopefully go on to gain donor support. It is a step at which many of the problems associated with participatory development planning have arisen.

In essence, Ward Committees, or in some cases, individual Ward Committee members, begin to perform a filtration process, where smaller, less common projects, often those that are deemed less likely to gain donor support, are weeded out. This is not always a deliberate act, rather Ward Committee members have experience that certain types of projects have been unsuccessful at gaining donor support in the past.

Imagine the consequences of this scenario where a village identifies a need for adult literacy, but this is an area in which the biggest NGO donor does not work. One, the literacy need is likely to be filtered out in the ward level re-prioritisation process, as the Ward Committee has come to realise that the main donor does not fund literacy projects. Two, other agencies or government departments currently running adult literacy campaigns or willing to support such an activity, may never

get to hear of the need, because the village level information is not shared and because no clear pathway exists for village needs to be communicated to partner agencies.

Currently the Community Planning approach is trying to ensure that the village prioritised lists of problems remain intact. In this way, villagers, Ward Committees and village based development organisations can 'shop around' amongst local development organisations and government departments, as well as outside donors, to find suitable development funding providers and assistance. Thus, a link needs to be established between the villages and alternative development providers. Achieving this would involve training and empowering villagers and their ward level representatives to look for development providers. This is not an easy task.

Strengths and shortcomings

What has begun is a strong people-centred development planning process, which is an effective method of identifying genuine village needs. Identified projects are likely to reflect real needs as the village contributes, in terms of both labour and finance. This helps to establish a sense of local ownership of the project: the more that villagers are involved in the implementation of their own projects, the more likely they are to be able to maintain or replicate their successes. The knowledge gained in the successful completion of other projects also empowers villagers to tackle their own development challenges, either with or without the support of others. Not all development problems can be satisfied by outside finance alone. Often it is important to first recognise and gain community consensus on the solutions to village problems, and then find a combined and co-operative approach to solving it.

The Community Planning approach has revealed the potential for, and value of, communities being involved in the monitoring of their own projects. Self-monitoring could become a future participatory and empowerment tool, enabling villagers to control, closely observe and instil positions of trust and authority in their own people.

Issues arising

Planning strategies differ in different regions of the Gambia. In one region, the use of problem and solution ranking methods are envisaged, and in another, transects and village resource mapping are planned. It is evident the programme is in the experimentation stage particularly in terms of how to translate the results of the PRAs into development plans. When information begins to emerge from the villagers, how is this going to be used by the system of ward committees? Will the re-prioritisation at ward level provide an effective and representative short list of projects from the many suggested by individual villages? How will the criteria for the re-prioritisation of projects be defined? What methods, if any, will the Ward Committees use?

Other problems exist in the establishment of a procedure for collating village level development problems, prioritising them in a participatory way and translating them into development plans at regional and national level. Some discussion has centred on the compilation of village level plans into regional plans and onwards to national development plans. The national backing for such a decentralised approach is unknown in a country in political transition, and the practicalities of how such a planning strategy would be organised have not yet been considered. In addition, ways to establish stronger links between villagers and development providers are sought and the modality for sharing village level information emanating from PRA for the benefit of development as a whole remains unsolved.

The broad approach to decentralisation may well be right, but discussion as to the answers to some of the key questions concerning outcomes and detailed strategies is lacking. Many of these are questions that have not begun to be tackled, but for which others with experiences elsewhere may well be able to assist.

• Conclusion

The Gambia provides an example of a country where PRA is being used to bridge the gap between research and development. The challenge is to make use of the information

provided in participatory village meetings to produce development action, in the form of Community Plans, which are then aggregated and filtered to produce Regional Plans. The initial progress has been good and positive plans have been established, but some problems still remain and some difficult questions remain unanswered.

The Community Planning approach is a comparatively new and still evolving process in The Gambia. Little information is available concerning its application elsewhere. Dialogue is sought with those who may have ideas, or experience of similar approaches elsewhere, particularly in West Africa, in order to begin to tackle some of the methodological issues arising from integrating local participation into development planning. This paper has not provided many conclusions. But it has hopefully provided a starting point for discussing key challenges in community planning.

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4

Beauty is in the process and not in the name: an alternative approach for participatory planning

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Summary

From our experiences in practising participatory approaches for promoting sustainable agriculture, we have realised that some approaches for planning that claim to be bottom-up are not participatory. Furthermore, some approaches are not logically sequenced, while others are difficult to follow by grassroots level workers. Consequently, the planning becomes top-down instead of bottom-up. An alternative approach (AAA) for participatory planning was first used with an NGO, in Bihar, India and has since been expanded to several other NGOs. AAA is easy to follow for grassroots level development workers. By revisiting the stages in participatory planning, we have tried to enhance village participation. This has resulted in plans which are more grounded in reality.

• Introduction

Development projects often start with situational analysis, including problem identification and prioritisation. This is followed by planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In many cases, people are involved in problem identification and problem ranking, but real participation may not be taking place. Therefore, it has become important to analyse why planning processes are not truly participatory.

On reflection, it is clear that development workers, at least on one level, want to follow participatory approaches. But it is partly the 'mind set' of practitioners and partly the sequence of events used in planning that make the process more top-down even though it is supposed to be bottom-up. First, most planners

are the products of a conventional top-down system. Unlearning can be more difficult for them than learning. Second, and more importantly, a few common approaches that are being used for planning, especially in agricultural development, are far from being fully participatory.

Three common approaches to participatory planning include agro-ecosystem analysis (AEA), the system diagram and a systematic approach (ASA). In all these approaches, it is only the problems that are identified through participatory methods. But subsequently, a more top-down approach is used for project planning. Thus in the formulation of aims, objectives and hypotheses, villagers find it difficult to be involved and follow the suggested steps. It can be difficult to determine whose aims and objectives are being prioritised. This is problematic because the concerns raised by outsiders may not be the same as for those whom the development plans are targeted. Further problems can arise where planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are not built into the approach.

Finally, in most approaches to planning, the normal procedure is to start with aims and objectives. These are often donor driven priorities, such as gender or sustainable agriculture. Yet if the aims and objectives are fixed, it follows that the problems and possible solutions are limited in scope. This can lead to a clash of interests such that a compromised project plan is imposed on a community under the auspices of participatory project planning. We feel that a shift in the approaches being used for project planning is necessary to enhance local participation. Furthermore, the approach must recognise the capability of the

community and the availability of local resources. This makes people self reliant.

An alternative approach (AAA)

In the proposed alternative approach, AAA, people plan the activities they wish to achieve before narrowing their focus to donor-driven aims and objectives. This approach attempts to overcome the defects of other approaches to project planning.

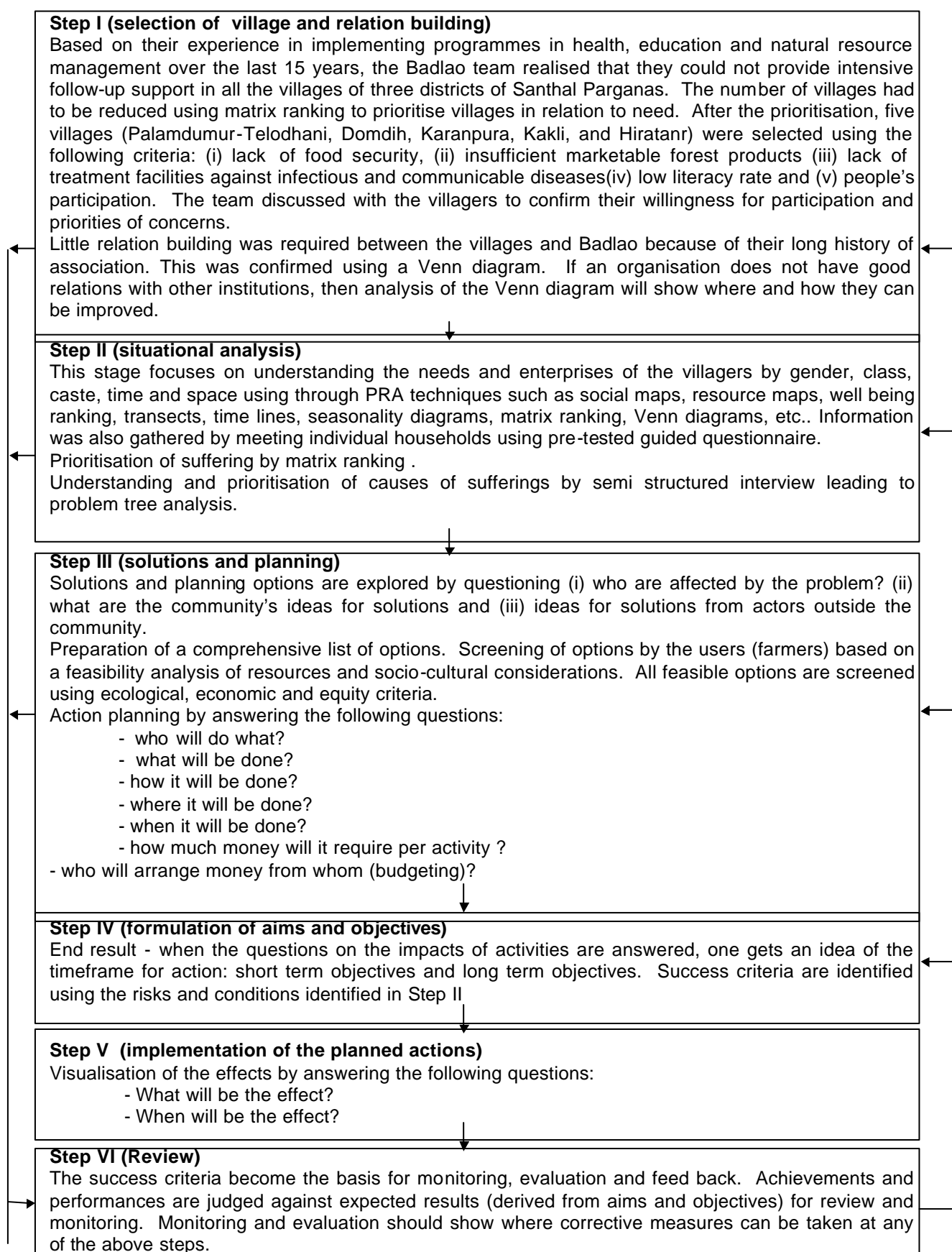
To pilot the participatory planning process, we used AAA in Badlao, a rural development organisation in Mihijam, Bihar (India). Badlao started in 1982 with the vision of participatory development aimed at upgrading the quality of life of two ethnic groups, the Paharis and Santhals, and other poor communities, living in the Division of Santhal Parganas. Activities were initiated in education, health and food security, including ecological agriculture. This last component is supported by NOVIB, a Netherlands based co-funding agency. NOVIB provided funds and Badlao hired us to help them in preparing the project plan in a participatory way. We followed the process shown in Figure 1.

In the participatory planning process a local development organisation (NGO) was involved. They helped us to arrange the logistics of the planning and provided follow up support. Their familiarity with the area also helped us in the initial 'rapport building' stage with the community. The second stage of the process, situational analysis, included transects, social mapping and resource mapping. These activities were undertaken with the whole community and the information was transferred onto charts and into pictorial form. The situational analysis can span over several sessions, but can be completed in a long day (about 12 hours). What is most important, is that the pace of activities matches that of the community.

In a follow-up session, the findings from the social maps, resource maps and transects were presented to the villagers. This provided an opportunity for villagers to voice any questions or concerns. They then prioritised their problems. This required special attention to ensure that the affected group or groups were represented and consulted first. Later on, the priorities were verified with the entire village. The villagers were then asked to identify the most important two, three or four problems they would like to tackle first.

Sometimes, recent incidents can influence the prioritisation and as a PRA practitioner, it is important to enable the villagers to distinguish between temporary and long term problems. For example, in Karra village, Ambikapur, a few cattle had died of foot and mouth disease a week before the planning exercise. Naturally, the control of this disease became the most important problem. To ensure that the priorities were not just a reaction to recent events, we allowed a time gap of three to four months and repeated the problem prioritisation exercise. When the priorities identified were consistent, it indicated that the problems were chronic, that is long term in nature. The reconfirmation of problem prioritisation took about three hours.

Step III involved searching for solution(s) for each prioritised problem. A problem tree was prepared to enable the causes(s) of the problems to be identified. In most cases there were multiple causes. For each cause, possible solution options were identified by villagers. Here again the affected group(s) were consulted first and their findings subsequently verified by the larger mixed group of villagers. For example in the case of fuelwood and drinking water, women were consulted first; for ploughing, men were consulted before discussing the issues with the larger group.

Figure 1. Key stages in 'An alternative approach' to planning

Out of the possible solutions, feasible options were identified and prioritised by the villagers particularly affected the problem. This is Step IV, and involved introducing new concepts, such as objectives, to the villagers. Each feasible option was called an activity. It was explained that when these activities are pursued for a period for time, it is hoped that sustained positive change(s) will occur. These changes are actually the objectives of the project. This stage took about three to four hours to complete for each activity.

Each activity was sub-divided into logical steps. For instance, if a person wanted to start a dairy unit, he or she would have to collect information on: the availability of a particular breed, fodder, where to keep the cattle, regulate cleaning, health care, insurance, milking, marketing, loan, repayment, savings, etc. Each of these steps is a sub-activity. For each sub-activity, success criteria can be fixed by asking questions about what the effects of the sub-activity will be and when they will happen (Step V). The planning of subactivities took three to four hours.

Obviously during the discussions there were differences of opinion. To resolve these differences, we facilitated the discussion in such a way that each party understood the view point of the other party. This allowed everybody to speak and listen. This was a long process but, finally, we succeeded in reaching a consensus.

For any (sub)activity to be successful, a number of factors must be considered, including time, budgets, environment, ethical/equity issues. Interestingly most of these parameters were identified by the villagers themselves. For example, in Vardapura village, the timely repayment of loans was considered by the women's group as the most important criterion for success. This would enable the group to revolve the fund among the other members. In Kakimadgu village, Andhra Pradesh, the success of a soil fertility management activity was linked by the farmers' group to higher fodder availability and tree plantation on field bunds. These activities are associated with increased organic manure availability and are therefore potential indicators of the success of increasing soil fertility in the area. The linking of success

criteria to objectives provides a basis for reviewing the programme and assessing its performance (Step VI).

Since September 1995 we have used this method in several places in both North and South India. With different partners, the group size has varied according to who is affected by the prioritised problems. In some cases the group size has been very large, up to 300 people. The larger the group, the more challenging the facilitation role and the longer the facilitation process.

• Case study

As an example of implementing AAA, we describe briefly Varadapura village, Karnataka where CRUES, a local NGO, is working with poor people in a food security programme. The average landholding size of the programme beneficiaries is less than 3 acres. The land quality is also poor, with low fertility and no irrigation. The land is not sufficient to support the farming family. For alternative sources of income, the men in the household migrate to the nearby city, Bangalore. But this has introduced problems, including alcoholism and domestic violence, which have had negative impacts on the family, particularly the women.

To try and improve the situation CRUES facilitated the formation of a women's group, *Mahila Sangha*, which introduced savings and credit activities amongst its members. Through this group, CRUES has undertaken a number of activities, including vegetable gardening, tree planting etc.. When AAA to participatory planning was conducted with the group, there were about 40 members. The problems contributing to food insecurity were identified as poor soil fertility and low income. The women's group identified animal (buffalo) rearing as an activity which could tackle both these challenges together. Fortunately, fodder was available in plenty locally.

Previously, when activities are initiated, the group members have obtained grants from either the NGO, CRUES, or the government. This has raised their expectations. But a buffalo unit costs about Rs.7,500/- (UK£125) which was a sum that the group didn't have and too large for the CRUES to support. In a

group meeting, CRUES disclosed that it would not be able to provide financial support for the venture and that the money had to be raised by the group or borrowed from other sources. However, CRUES expressed its willingness to provide any other support needed to successfully implement the activity. This announcement, we feel, was necessary for improving the real participation of the villagers and to increase their stake in the development.

Before applying this approach, the CRUES team were concerned that the beneficiaries (selected women farmers) might continue to ask for financial assistance to implement the buffalo rearing activities. But after the exercise it surprised them because none of the women asked for financial support. Instead, the women asked CRUES to establish contact with an insurance company which could repay the group if the animal died. This was a role that the women were not confident to play as few of them can read or write. Moreover, the insurance agent is situated in the town, and CRUES was therefore better placed to make contact.

By themselves, the Sangha members decided upon how to raise money for the buffalo activity and decided upon the beneficiaries, the amount of loan to be granted, the mode of repayment, the rates of interest, etc.. During a half day session, the women planned all the subactivities and determined their success criteria. Planned sub-activities related to buffalo rearing, such as information collection (breed, milk yield, cost, availability), arranging money, veterinary check-ups, purchase, insurance, housing, feeding, management, breeding, milking, preparation of milk product, home consumption, marketing, repayment of loan and savings. Their ability to plan has opened the eyes of the CRUES team.

• Conclusion

AAA is an evolving process. Several formats (like sub-activity planning) for improving the levels of participation are being developed. But the main challenge concerns the development of appropriate skills for the facilitators regarding their behaviour and

attitudes. The following key skills are required:

- an ability to listen;
- ensuring everyone gets an opportunity to participate and share their experiences; and,
- allowing people to talk.

Our experiences suggest that AAA is practicable even for grassroots level practitioners. Thus, the system is participatory at all levels of planning. This helps villagers to plan activities, with their aims and objectives intact, and to think about how to solve their problems using local resources.

The NGOs apply this process with the villagers, which gives us confidences that the villagers have understood the process and internalised it. For example, in Patathanpatty village, the villagers even commented that the process was easy and that they could replicate its implementation. They joked that they would follow the same procedure and one day compete with the facilitators. This reflects the level of confidence they have in the process. When asked, they told us clearly that they had never previously been involved in the planning process. Now they were not only involved but they themselves drove the process.

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Reflections on institutionalising participatory approaches in local NGOs in Eastern Nepal

Marion Gibbon and Gopal Shrestha

• Summary

This paper reflects on an 8-day training workshop held in Eastern Nepal for local non-government organisations. The aim of the workshop was to bring together a group of people committed to a community empowering process. The workshop involved developing appropriate attitudes and behaviour for community participation, practical work in the communities and preparation of an action plan at two levels, in the community and for developing a participatory climate for Dhankuta NGOs to work together. A follow-up was planned and implemented to allow for further sharing and deepened reflection.

• Background

This paper describes a process of needs assessment and action planning adopted in a workshop environment in Nepal. The workshop brought together people from local NGOs in Dhankuta committed to a community empowering process. Twenty four people attended the workshop with two external facilitators from Kathmandu. The workshop was conducted in Nepali.

One of the objectives of the workshop was that participants should understand how to work with communities. It was felt that to do this effectively, they need to be aware of the ABC of community participation, i.e. of right Attitude, be aware of their Behaviour and show a willingness to Change (ACTIONAID 1996). It was felt that the ABC of community participation needed to be considered because of the mechanistic way that PRA can and has been used in Nepal.

A second objective of the workshop was to ensure that the process adopted moved beyond needs assessment to develop action plans and commitment. PRA has been criticised where it does not go beyond appraisal (White 1994), to enable analysis, planning, prioritisation of possible options, and finally a commitment to act.

A final objective for the workshop was to ensure that the processes agreed on for needs assessment were socially inclusive. Projects that purport to be participatory and involve all sectors of society can fail to produce a collective plan owned and shared by all.

Often PRA takes place in public spaces and in the presence of outsiders. This is particularly pertinent to the case of Nepal, as in much of South Asia, where 'Women are typically (explicitly or implicitly) excluded from public spaces and activities' (Mosse 1995). This means that the approach to participatory analysis must be modified in terms of social context, timing and techniques, so that women's views can be heeded. There should be a place to involve women that is non-public with space for non-formal interaction.

To help achieve the above objectives, an approach was developed to take on the challenges of going beyond appraisal, to enable analysis, planning, prioritisation of possible solutions, and finally a commitment to act. The approach is called Participatory Appraisal of Needs and the Development of Action (PANDA) and incorporates tools from management sciences and operational research.

What PANDA does

PANDA pays attention to group issues, is an inclusive approach and aims to move beyond appraisal and help participants to develop action plans and build commitment. Specifically, it:

- Allows sharing of knowledge;
- Encourages analysis of needs by the community;
- Develops a prioritised list of concerns;
- Facilitates understanding of concerns enabling solutions to be determined;
- Develops a plan of action that incorporates a commitment package;
- Allows time for implementation of plan; and,
- Encourages the community to analyse its own achievements.

PANDA was developed and used in the trainings because of some of the limitations in using PRA, including:

- Doesn't always take into account the power relations within society;
- The approach often takes place in public places when women aren't always free to attend;
- If there is no sense of ownership very little sustainable change takes place; and,
- Doesn't always take into account the skills, attitude and behaviour of the facilitator.

Workshop approach

To enable participants to focus on attitudes and behaviour, the facilitator encouraged the group to consider the different types of development worker. They then individually reflected on which type of worker they perceived themselves to be and shared this with the larger group. They set themselves the challenge to be a development worker who is trying to bring about radical change in their communities.

A further exercise used in the workshop was an 'animal attributes' game. This allowed participants to consider their own personal attributes in a non discriminating manner. It also allowed them to consider the importance of being socially inclusive. Society in Nepal is hierarchical, and there are divisions on the basis of caste, ethnicity and gender. Other activities used to develop reflections on attitude were Johari's window and games to improve teamwork (Pretty et al. 1996).

Field practical of PANDA training workshop

The practical part of the workshop was carried out from Day 4. The first visit to the five chosen villages was an attempt to build rapport. The team went to a central meeting point and chatted to people. They then went from house to house in the village requesting some of the villagers to come to the central meeting point. This exercise allowed the team to explain their presence, that they would be returning to carry out a series of exercises and that the products from these exercises would be given to the village. In the general village meeting the team discussed a suitable time to come to the village to carry out the activities.

Although we used several methodologies, in this article we describe the semi-structured interviews and pair-wise ranking of village priorities (see Figure 1). Symbols were used so that literate as well as non-literate people could be included. This exercise highlights the different priorities of different sectors of the community. Ten people were involved in preparing this diagram. One of the members of the group was a displaced woman. There was a balanced gender representation. Although there were some representatives from the dominant castes (Brahmin and Chettri) there were also representatives from the disadvantaged groups.

Figure 1. Photograph showing result of pair-wise ranking in village



The results of the pair-wise ranking showed village priorities to be firstly the provision of drinking water, followed by schools, health posts, police posts and finally, telecommunications.

Dealing with difference

Pair-wise ranking showed that for many in the village, the main priority was to obtain a close source of drinking water. They had a stream running close by, but said that it was dirty and

that they could only use it for washing but not for drinking. The nearest drinking water source involved a three hour round trip on foot. UNDP had put three taps in the village but none were operational as the source of water had dried up.

The high caste Brahmin families in the village didn't consider water to be the main problem as they had their own personal water supplies, which weren't for general use. They felt the main problem was a lack of communication

facilities and that the village needed telecommunications. Not everyone in the village considered this a priority however, There were several different interest groups within the village. A police post was mentioned as an issue by some, but not everyone was concerned with this issue either (Figure 1).

As mentioned previously there were representatives from different social groups within the village during this exercise. Everybody was able to voice their opinion as to which priority should receive most attention. The facilitator ensured that there was consensus amongst all the participants and tried to get the villagers to focus on what could be solved within the village. The villagers realised they could not solve the water problem themselves, but that they could seek help from the government drinking water office in Dhankuta.

One of the local NGOs involved in the workshop suggested in a reflections session that they could seek support for the project through a donor funded programme. This provided the basis for village follow-up and action and ensured that the village visits were more than a 'training ground' for the workshop participants. The NGO did follow this up. However, they were unable to solve this problem as the feasibility study found the water source to be unreliable and the nearest reliable water source was too far from the village to make it financially viable.

New learnings

Ranking in the village helped the workshop participants to understand community priorities and how the community could plan and act themselves without external help. The follow-up workshop allowed for more sharing with the community members. The women wanting community literacy and schooling for their children went to the District Education Office and the Nepal Family Planning Association agreed to help them run a literacy class. The UNDP building has been converted to a school for those too small to walk the three hours to the nearest school. The village elder went to the Ministry of Health and they agreed to run an outreach clinic twice a month. He also put forward a request to the

Telecommunication office for a telephone, which is now functional.

Through these community actions the NGO participants were able to see that a small external stimulus can bring about change by the community members themselves. They found this quite challenging to their present mode of working.

Reflections

On the last day the team handed over to the village a pictorial copy of all the activities that had been carried out in the village. The village was impressed with the approach. One comment made was; 'This is the first time we have been given something, previously people have only come to take information away and give us nothing in return'. It was decided in the reflection session that five NGOs would follow-up the activities initiated in the villages. An action plan was devised and responsibilities and time-scales for implementation and follow-up decided upon.

Fourteen local NGOs were involved in the first training which was held in Dhankuta in January 1997. During the final action planning, the participants requested a follow-up workshop. This was to involve sharing of the experience gained from the implementation of the action plans developed in the workshop and enable them to learn other participatory tools that they could use in their work. This follow-up training took place in April and allowed the NGOs to discuss their achievements and learn some new tools

Relations between theory and practice

It is important that groups have a conceptual understanding of a participatory approach so that the activities are not just carried out mechanically. In Nepal, PRA has become almost a 'fashion' and as a result it has been used unreflectively. It was felt that a basic understanding of attitudinal and behavioural aspects of development workers was essential and this would help to engender reflection into their behaviour. The workshop facilitators enabled the participants to reflect on their own behaviour and approach to development, to carry out work in the villages where their NGOs are working in partnership *with* local

people rather than *for* local people. All practitioners need to think continuously about how to bring about socially inclusive participation through reflection on their commitment to community development.

We would like to consider some of the implications of PANDA and PRA, in particular to reflect on the similarities and differences between them. The similarities consist in the commonality of methods and the participatory approaches that they use, and more importantly how the methods are used for development work.

Where PANDA differs is that it is more concerned about dealing with the barriers to effective action and to see the results of participant involvement taken up and institutionalised. Thus it pays considerable attention to group issues. PANDA helps with this by getting the group and outside facilitator to make a formal commitment as to what each party agrees to do and when they will do it. One of the outputs of the workshop was an action plan where organisations stated their commitment to carrying out a set of activities that would be revisited in the follow-up workshop.

The process continues and equally important are the learnings from the experience of working with different local NGOs. There have been further developments, one of which is a self-evaluation by the NGOs involved. The results of this will be shared with all concerned and other interested parties in a day workshop to be held in February 1998.

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Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Tracking change together

Irene Guijt, Mae Arevalo and Kiko Saladores

• Introduction

Monitoring progress and evaluating impacts have long been considered important to ensure that money is well spent and that objectives are met. Besides this conventional focus on being accountable to funding agencies, organisations are increasingly using monitoring and evaluation for internal learning and to improve their work. They see that, for maximum benefits, learning needs to happen collectively with diverse groups and people. Many of these organisations already work with participatory appraisal and planning, making it a logical step for them to also make their monitoring and evaluation processes more participatory (Estrella and Gaventa, 1997).

Much is already being claimed of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E): it is 'empowering', 'cost-effective', 'more accurate', 'more relevant', etc. However, too little is known about PM&E to confirm these claims (Abbot and Guijt, 1998) and it is clear that many challenges are appearing. How do we make monitoring and evaluation (M&E) more participatory - and maintain high levels of involvement? How does participation of diverse groups influence the selection of what we monitor or evaluate? What methods are feasible in which contexts? How do we use PM&E in hierarchical organisations and in conflict situations?

Despite such questions, many fascinating experiences exist that use innovative methods with enormously diverse groups of people to obtain very worthwhile results. A recent international workshop on PM&E in the Philippines brought together dozens of inspiring examples from NGOs, government agencies, donors, community-based

organisations, and research institutions. This issue of *PLA Notes* shares six experiences from the workshop, representing a range of purposes, organisational contexts, approaches, and methods. Our overview draws on the discussions at the workshop and other literature, and aims to share key innovations, issues, and challenges.

What is PM&E?

As with other areas of participatory work, PM&E has a huge range of interpretations. Quite surprisingly, even the difference between monitoring and evaluation remains unclear. Participants at the Philippines workshop were keen to reach a consensus on definitions but had to settle for more loose descriptions. *Monitoring* was associated with words such as: 'observing change'; 'knowing where we are now'; 'a kilometre check'; and 'regular, on-going assessment of activities and trends'. By comparison *evaluation* was described in terms of: 'valuing'; 'understanding'; 'periodic performance review'; 'reflection process to look back and foresee' and 'assessment of strategic issues, changes, achievements, and of impact (efficiency of programmes)'. In most contexts, both processes are linked and, as long as they are defined clearly by the organisation, there is no problem in having varying definitions throughout the world.

A key part of understanding PM&E depends on how 'participation' is interpreted. This also has many different interpretations as each process, with its unique purpose and context, will involve different groups of people to varying degrees. Who participates and to what extent depends partly on the level of monitoring and evaluation. PM&E is not only related to community-based or 'farmer-driven'

processes. In some cases, including junior staff in designing a monitoring form is making a process previously dominated by senior management a more participatory one.

For some, 'participatory' means involving *all* relevant groups in designing the entire M&E approach (Torres, this issue). It can mean having villagers help refine methods, as Rai discusses within his forestry work in Nepal, or define the main evaluation/monitoring objectives, as Bandre describes happened in the evaluation of a World Neighbors programme. In other examples, villagers participate by collecting data and helping to analyse the information. Despite the possible diversity, in many cases participation still means doing M&E with participatory methods within a standard project cycle, which remains extractive. There are far fewer cases of PM&E, in which all parts of the process are opened up to greater participation.

That PM&E can have many different purposes is also clear. Some use it as a research tool, for example, with farmers monitoring their own experiments and sharing the data with researchers. Others use it more as a project management activity, to assess how development objectives are being met (Rai, this issue), or for learning and organisational change (Symes and Jasser, this issue). Others again see it as a strategy for community empowerment (Torres and Bandre, this issue). In Australia, over 200 community groups are involved in participatory monitoring of birds, water, soil, etc., and use the information to advocate for better environmental regulation (Alexandra et al, 1995). Whether organisational self-assessment, citizen monitoring of government programmes, villagers monitoring externally driven projects, or resource users monitoring the state of their own environment, most experiences combine different purposes. Nevertheless, PM&E to date appears to have met the information needs of organisations and institutions far more than those of communities. And most of the documented experiences are initiated by

organisations, although many examples of indigenous monitoring exist (Abbot and Guijt 1998).

Given all this diversity, it is tempting to want to define the 'non-negotiable' core of PM&E. Estrella and Gaventa (1997) limit themselves to four core principles: participation, learning, negotiation, and flexibility. Being more specific is difficult due to the great variation of circumstances in which PM&E is used. For example, how much community members want to be involved, or get the chance to be involved, will vary between more and less politically free countries and more or less hierarchical organisations (see Box 1). If we knew what the heart of PM&E was, it would help to identify best practice and set standards. However, having no common definitions as yet and given that each situation is unique, the non-negotiable principles of PM&E are likely to be left general.

• Innovations galore

Participatory monitoring and evaluation is a methodological frontier, so it is not surprising that the workshop revealed many innovative experiences. The contributors to this issue show the exciting potential of PM&E in many contexts. Rai discusses its use in joint forest management, Ara describes PM&E within a disaster relief programme in Bangladesh, while Symes and Jasser share their experience of how it can help rebuild Palestinian civil society after conflict. Torres describes its use for assessing municipal level development projects in Ecuador and Bandre explains his experience with a district-wide NGO programme evaluation in Burkina Faso. Specific topics have been examined, such as assessing the impact of leadership training programmes (Abes this issue). Innovations have been also been made in the purpose and methods of PM&E.

BOX 1

WHAT INFLUENCES PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION?

- perceived benefits (and partial or short-term costs) of PM&E
- relevance of PM&E to the priorities of participating groups
- quick and relevant feedback of findings
- flexibility of the PM&E process to deal with diverse and changing information needs
- meeting expectations that arise from PM&E, such as acting on any recommendations that are made
- degree of maturity, capabilities, leadership, and identity of the groups involved, including their openness to sharing power
- local political history, as this influences society's openness to stakeholders' initiatives
- whether short term needs of participants are dealt with, while considering the longer term information needs of PM&E (especially in natural resource management)
- incentives to make the PM&E possible (e.g. pens, books, etc.)

New purposes

Besides fulfilling the conventional functions of monitoring and evaluation for project impact assessment and management/planning, more innovative use of PM&E includes managing and resolving conflicts. Specific innovations include using PM&E:

- to help ensure that project and programme impacts influence and reorient policy (see Torres, this issue);
- to strengthen self-development initiatives in villages (Bandre, this issue);
- for organisational strengthening and learning (Symes and Jasser; Rai, this issue);
- to provide public accountability of local and national government programmes to communities (Torres, this issue);
- to encourage institutional reform towards more participatory structures (Symes and Jasser, this issue);
- to encourage funding agencies to re-assess their objectives and attitudes by understanding and negotiating stakeholders' perspectives through PM&E (Torres; Bandre, this issue);
- in the government sector (Rai this issue), as it has been mainly focused on the NGO sector to date; and,
- to build theories and check/adapt our understanding of society and development (Abes this issue).

New methods

Monitoring and evaluation by definition compares 'before and after' or 'with and without-project' situations. Therefore, to be able to make a meaningful comparison over time, a baseline of information needs to exist which describes the situation before any project or programme starts. This information is often collected in appraisal and planning stages (see Box 2).

To be able to make comparisons, existing appraisal or planning methods, which often simply describe one moment in time, need to be adapted or new methods need to be created. For example, imagine doing a transect walk to help assess what resources exist. For it to be useful to monitor changes in the amount or quality of resources, the transect diagram that is made should be able to store information from repeated transect walks over a six month period and therefore should be recorded on quite a large piece of paper. Alternatively, if each walk is to be recorded on a different sheet of paper, then these should be similar enough to make comparisons easy.

Problems arise when different kinds of information are collected during each walk, for example, if one focuses on the different types of pests that might be found while the next one looks at the extent of soil erosion. This is why most monitoring systems decide ahead of time what information, or 'indicators' will be observed or measured each time. In some cases, new methods need to be developed (see Box 3) for the different tasks of PM&E. Monitoring and evaluation consists of many

different tasks: data must be collected, registered, compiled, analysed and then shared again with those who are to use it. While the methods for collection may be similar to those used in appraisal and planning, as the transect example shows, much more thought has to go into finding the appropriate methods for each

of these tasks (see Box 3). And when a monitoring and evaluation process becomes more participatory this usually means discussing and negotiating until agreement is reached, thus often leading to new methods!

BOX 2

APPRAISALS TO FIND THE BASELINE FOR COMPARISON

The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) is an Indian NGO that support local village institutions (VIs) to use their natural resources in a sustainable and equitable manner. AKRSP helps these VIs to carry out their own appraisals and plan their development priorities. As part of the pre-project appraisal, local people prepare detailed maps of their village which incorporates their analysis about the available resources, how these are used, ownership, problems and constraints. These detailed maps represent an inventory of resource-related issues and are used as the basis for planning village projects. All the proposed activities are depicted on the maps, and include: soil and water conservation, minor irrigation, forest plantation and protection, etc. These maps are kept in the villages and are displayed in a convenient location that is accessible for all members of the VI. During meetings and project reviews, these maps are used to monitor the project activities and resolve problems.

Source: Kaul Shah, 1995.

BOX 3

ADAPTING METHODS THROUGH PARTICIPATION

In central Brazil, farmers, NGO staff, farmers union representatives, and university academics are working on more sustainable forms of agriculture. They had chosen 'the percentage of vegetation cover' as one indicator for monitoring an agroforestry activity, and were identifying which method to use. Quite quickly they agreed on using a wooden frame to estimate visually the surface area covered by vegetation. But problems arose when deciding how that information should be recorded for easy comparison. The farmers rejected several forms suggested by the academics as too complicated. Finally, they all agreed on the use of a wooden ruler, on which the farmer would scratch a mark to indicate the estimated percentage of vegetation cover in terms of a certain segment of the ruler. Each farmer would get the same length stick twice a year, one for each time the vegetation cover would be monitored. To compile and analyse the information, the farmers involved in agroforestry would bring their marked rulers to a meeting, register the findings on paper, and discuss the findings and their significance for their agroforestry plots. By using a new stick for each measurement and recording the marks, they would be able to easily keep track of changes in vegetation cover.

Source: Guijt and Netto 1997, in Abbot and Guijt 1998.

In other cases, non-participatory monitoring and evaluation methodologies already exist or are imposed by funding agencies but may need to be adapted to become more relevant for local information needs and learning. A good example is Logframe Analysis (LFA) which is used by many funding agencies who require the organisations they fund to use it but has been found inappropriate and too rigid for village use (see Symes and Jasser, this issue). LFA is slowly being adapted for use by communities for both planning and monitoring (Sewagudde et al, 1997). To do this, the stages are simplified, words are changed, and participatory methods are incorporated. Other methodological innovations include:

- merging different approaches, including social auditing; computer-based Geographic Information Systems (Torres, this issue); and psychological assessments (Abes, this issue);
- new applications of existing appraisal methods, for example wealth ranking for before and after project situations (Bandre, this issue); visualisation techniques for planning and review (Ara, this issue);
- entirely new methods, for example the Barometer of Sustainability used with villagers in India as part of an IUCN/IDRC approach for assessing progress towards sustainability (Chatterjee, 1997);
- methodologies not based on pre-determined indicators but instead on open-ended questions (see Box 4);
- methods that consciously seek the unexpected (see Box 5), for example, impact flow diagrams that allow all kinds of impacts to be identified; and,
- building on culturally valid (not just culturally sensitive) frameworks, ways of monitoring and data collection (Abes this issue).

BOX 4

MONITORING WITHOUT INDICATORS?

A particularly innovative example has been developed within the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (Davies, 1995). Each credit group funded by CCDB report, on a monthly basis, the single most significant change that occurred amongst the group members related to: people's well-being, sustainability of people's institutions, and people's participation, and one other open-ended change, if they wish. The report asks for the 'facts' (what, when, where, with whom) and an explanation of why that change is the most significant one of all the changes that have occurred. This last aspect ensures a process of reflection and learning by the group members, an aspect that is missing from most M&E systems that seek numeric data without any interpretation of the numbers. So instead of pre-determined questions, CCDB's monitoring aims to find significant examples related to its long-term development objectives.

BOX 5

UNEXPECTED SUCCESSES!

Villagers in the drought prone areas of Gujarat have, with AKRSP's support, constructed percolation tanks to recharge the water level in the wells. Unfortunately, the area experienced three consecutive drought years just as the first percolation tanks were finished in the late 1980s. Using the pre-determined indicators, the village men concluded that the project had no impact at all: water levels in wells had not risen, cropping patterns had not changed and crop productivity had not increased. However, the women concluded that the project had been a lifeline, as the people living in the areas with percolation tanks had not run short of drinking water and had suffered no cattle mortality even in the worst drought conditions. While people from neighbouring villages had to migrate out in search of water, they were able to stay put and to bathe and wash their clothes regularly - a luxury at that time.

Sources: Kaul Shah, 1995

- **Issues emerging**

There is great diversity of PM&E experiences, and the current rate of innovations will only add to that diversity. Nevertheless, four common themes stand out as needing attention: participation, methodologies, institutionalisation and scaling-up, and documentation.

Participation

Some questions related to participation have been mentioned but there are many others that remain unresolved. How do we decide who gets involved - and on what basis are people invited to join PM&E processes? What degree of involvement is expected - and what is realistic? How can decision-making power be shared - and negotiated? Under what conditions can PM&E help achieve expectations of empowerment? What are gender needs and implications of PM&E, and how do we build them into the process?

Participatory M&E is a social, cultural and political process. As more and different stakeholder groups co-operate to keep track of change together, they will need to make compromises on whose indicators count more, what methods are feasible and considered valid, who is involved in which way, etc. One particularly important question is that of who interprets the information and uses the findings (Bandre, this issue). If PM&E is used as a strategy for empowering marginalised groups and people, revealing problems, gaps, and errors will not necessarily be viewed kindly by those with more power. It is inevitable that not all the different perspectives will merge smoothly or can even be reconciled.

Furthermore, seeking greater participation in M&E is essentially a strategy for making decision-making a more democratic process. Therefore PM&E is a social process of bringing people together in new ways, a cultural process of coming to understand different views, and a political process of sharing decisions. As greater stakeholder involvement in M&E brings together those with more and less power, it also requires a look at the ethics of coping with unpredictable

outcomes that do not necessary please the stakeholder group(s) with power over others. What preconditions for PM&E can help it achieve expectations of empowerment?

Methodologies

Innovations with methods, sequences, and combinations of methodologies are also forcing new questions. For example, what is needed to combine the need for participation, flexibility and a learning agenda with scientific rigour? When do we use more conventional forms of monitoring and evaluation, and more participatory forms - and how can we combine them? In the absence of set standards and definitions, how can we identify examples of best practice from which to learn? How do we guarantee not falling into the trap of developing an overly complex approach that demands too much time and gathers irrelevant information?

Many methodological questions relate to the use of indicators. The literature on monitoring and evaluation emphasises the importance of selecting precise indicators carefully as it is easy to identify too many, and choose ambiguous or irrelevant ones. However, the growing experiences with participatory M&E, which involve more and different groups of people, are also stressing the importance of ensuring that indicators meet the different information requirements of those involved. Furthermore, indicators should ideally look at short and longer term changes; local and broader scale changes; the general development process and concrete initiatives; quantitative and qualitative information; and tangible and intangible impacts (Torres; Abes this issue).

With so many information needs, selecting indicators becomes a difficult task. How do we guide this process? Rai (this issue) offers one example of how forestry management indicators were determined by collectively looking at the objectives of joint forest management, and Abes (this issue) discusses a similar approach. Who should/can be involved and for whom is the information? If one group decides on what should be collected, will other groups also find that relevant or credible evidence of change? Torres describes that bringing the different perspectives on what

should be monitored and evaluated together is an essential process that helps build consensus about the vision for development. However, flexibility about the methods is required because development visions change, information needs shift, and therefore indicators will also change.

Institutionalisation

Many of the more complex challenges of PM&E arise when organisations decide to adopt the principles and practices and find that this has widespread repercussions. As mentioned above, the interest in PM&E is growing as organisations are realising that they need to learn more about internal processes and external impacts if they want to perform better (Bandre; Symes and Jasser, this issue).

Yet opening up a development programme or project to comments from a wider group of people can be threatening and provoke resistance to change, and may well only be possible under certain conditions (see Box 6). How can flexible and context-specific PM&E processes be integrated with rigid and

standardised project cycles? And how can it be replicated? How do we reconcile learning-driven PM&E with M&E that is dominated by upward-accountability and 'bean-counters' (especially economists and accountants)? What strategies can we use to overcome organisational resistance to letting go of controlling the process? What are the real costs of PM&E - and can this investment of time and money be sustained? How can we build capacity when this is new for everyone? How do we deal with frequent changes in complex institutional linkages?

Transferring responsibilities (Rai, this issue) and creating new understanding that arises from different people using a wider range of indicators can provoke an entire restructuring of some organisations. Such changes are only possible if time is allocated for reflection within organisations and between partners. Also critical is the importance of linking monitoring and evaluation into the whole project or programme cycle, so that new plans are built on findings from M&E (Bandre; Torres, this issue).

BOX 6

FACTORS THAT HELP PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Participatory M&E is easier if the context....

- accepts evaluation as an internal need and responsibility, and not threatening
- accepts learning through experience - or 'failing forward' (Chambers, 1997)
- understands the need for partnerships between sectors and disciplines, especially openness towards involving social sciences
- works in decentralised institutions
- is open to using qualitative indicators
- includes funding agencies willing to experiment, and 'champions' (or advocates) for PM&E in the right places and levels
- includes those with some skills in conflict resolution
- understands participation as a democratic, not extractive, process
- includes high-level people who have the political will to see PM&E as an empowerment process
- includes a process of carefully defining who 'the community' is, to avoid missing key people
- has established community awareness of the PM&E process
- is set within supportive legal/constitutional frameworks (so not in politically repressive situations)
- includes people's organisations who trust and have confidence in people's potential
- has access to positive examples and skilled facilitators
- includes a local community co-ordinator or other liaison person/institution
- allows enough time to develop the PM&E process
- ensures prompt feedback/use of PM&E findings

Unfortunately, many working with PM&E have been hindered by non-participatory aspects of their organisations or contexts (Symes and Jasser, this issue). Clearly, wide-reaching participatory processes are more likely in less hierarchical organisations/cultures. Other institutional issues to consider include how donor policies, such as their insistence on cost-effectiveness within social development projects/programmes, can hinder PM&E; and how imposing PM&E can be counter-productive. In countries with policies of participatory planning or decentralisation (for example Bolivia and Uganda), PM&E may be more acceptable.

Participatory M&E can only spread with trained people and trainers. Yet there are few able to take on this new task. Capacities need to be built at different levels, to raise general awareness and train skills. But skills have to be developed not only in the use of PM&E methods but the process in general. Many of the PM&E experiences so far have been initiated by external organisations and individuals. Unless skills and interest take root locally, sustainable PM&E is out of the question. As information needs will continually change, and even partners will be changing, capacity building also means that the different stakeholder groups need to be able to adapt PM&E over time.

Rai and Torres (this issue) describe how, in both Nepal and Ecuador, encouraging continual adaptation is crucial to enable people who have been drawn into monitoring and evaluation to make it their own. Capacities are needed to help organisations deal with changes (Symes and Jasser, this issue); to motivate users to update and innovate (Rai, this issue); to understand concepts, principles, methods and working relationships (Bandre, Abes this issue). Capacity building is about sustaining processes, which means clarity about what 'sustainable PM&E' means. Is it the indicators, the methods, the feedback process, the capacity to implement, or the ability to continue evolving the system that is sustained? Each requires a different focus of capacity building.

Documentation

The current lack of documentation is a key obstacle to more innovative and wider use of all that PM&E appears to offer. Who should do this documentation - and who will benefit from it? Why is there such little documentation of PM&E processes - and most in a project context? In what form should information be shared - visual, written, through drama?

Some of these gaps will be filled by several initiatives related to the Philippines workshop. The workshop proceedings will be available by the end of February from IIRR¹. These will include a section on Priority Action Plans which describe concrete steps to be taken in these specific areas, and identify the lead people/organisations. A book on PM&E will be published this year (to be announced in the *PLA Notes*), and a Resource Guide on PM&E Methods is being planned. Various training initiatives are in the pipeline, as are several research projects that look at methodological and institutional 'best practice' and how to merge or adapt other methodologies (included in the workshop proceedings).

• Moving forward

Now that many agencies, organisations, and individuals are settling into participatory forms of appraisal and planning, all eyes seem to be looking towards participatory monitoring and evaluation as the next area of methodological innovation. But amidst the growing number of exciting experiences, many fundamental questions and challenges have appeared. We need to monitor and evaluate these PM&E processes as they mature to learn more. So far we know that the image of PM&E as a neat toolbox of indicators and methods, a simple calendar, and clear tasks hides what is a dynamic and political process. As contexts change, so does the process of participatory monitoring and evaluation. New stakeholder groups emerge and some disappear, objectives change and therefore indicators change, methods continually evolve, and the timing of monitoring is always being re-negotiated.

¹ Contact Mae S. Arevalo/Angie Ibus, PME Workshop Secretariat, IIRR, Silang, Cavite, Philippines. Fax: +63-46-414 2420.

At the workshop, one person commented: 'PM&E is a journey, not a destination. It is a process, not an activity.' We hope that this issue of the *PLA Notes* is one source of information to inspire that journey.

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NOTES

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7

Monitoring and evaluating in the Nepal-UK community forestry project

Raj Kumar Rai

• Background

The Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project works with fifteen hundred Forest Users Groups (FUGs) in seven of the hill districts of Nepal. It aims to improve the living conditions of local people by supporting FUGs to manage community forests more effectively, sustainably and equitably. It is part of the government policy of transferring national forests to community management and works with the Department of Forests and other district level organisations. The objective of working with FUGs is to help them strengthen their planning, monitoring and reporting activities.

To give the best support possible, the project team (composed of Department for International Development and His Majesty's Government of Nepal employees) are encouraging the FUGs to share their experiences and ideas through a cycle of action-reflection-learning. However, the FUGs tend to be dominated by the more literate and resource rich elites in the communities. They capture the resources as they sit on the committees, receive information, and make the decisions. For all forest users to perform their management responsibilities and to function in the FUG, they need to be aware of the different decision-making fora within community forestry and have enough confidence, which they can gain through practical and management skills and knowledge.

To assist the less advantaged forest users in the FUGs, the project team sought ways to improve communication within the many FUGs of the project area. Participatory

monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) was considered an important element of an effective communication strategy. However, while FUGs play a leading role in planning, monitoring and evaluation have been largely extractive and carried out by the Department of Forests. But, with the ever increasing number of FUGs, the Department found it had insufficient resources to continue supporting the FUGs in this centralised manner. They felt that by ensuring the FUGs learn to monitor and evaluate themselves, the process would also be more relevant and effective.

In this context, the Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project is experimenting with a number of participatory monitoring methods. These methods are based on pictures to allow for greater ease of understanding amongst less literate FUG members. In this way and by emphasising the building of the forest users' and the committee's understanding of the process, PM&E becomes a strategy for empowering less literate forest users.

Four methods are described below, the FUG 'Health Check', one that builds on a pictorial literacy methodology, one using PLA techniques to situate the PM&E in a planning cycle and most recently, one based on the health check with user generated indicators.

The FUG health check

The main purpose of the FUG 'Health Check' is to help committees and forest users develop a better understanding of the forest management process by encouraging them to reflect on existing resources and their institution. The discussions are facilitated by the Department of Forests field staff, who have

included the views of the users to make this method more effective.

Pictorial formats have been developed to ensure equal involvement of non-literates, semi-literates and literates in the monitoring and evaluation process. The pictures have been very effective at provoking discussion within and between the groups. Four broad categories of indicators are covered in discussions provoked by these pictures (see Box 1). For each of these categories, different aspects are represented and discussed, and then assessed along a three point scale, such as poor, fair or good (see Figure 1).

For example, in forest resource management, the presence of a 'forest silvicultural system', a 'forest protection system', and a 'forest product distribution system' is assessed. Under the category 'Social and Institutional Development', indicators include 'fund mobilisation' and 'gender and equity', while 'Learning and Skill Development' includes the presence of 'innovative ideas for community forestry' and 'new skills for community forestry'.

Two aspects have needed special attention in the use of the Health Check. First, good facilitation of the discussions is essential. Second, preliminary discussions with the FUGs require a process of decoding or interpreting the pictures so there is a common understanding of which conceptual issues they represent. The FUGs continue to add to, and adapt, the Health Check, to enable more detailed reflections and more self-sustained use.

This Health Check has been taken up by the District Offices to identify the best FUGs for the annual district competition - thus all FUGs are exposed to it annually. FUGs are adapting the idea: the diagrams are seen as resource materials which can be used at different time for different purposes. FUGs reflect on the diagrams during their assemblies, annual harvesting period (once in a year) and even in their committee meetings.

BOX 1.

FOUR THEMES OF THE FUG 'HEALTH CHECK'

1. Forest resource management

The forest user groups can use the 'Health Check' to monitor the impact of their management plans on forest condition. They assess indicators like canopy density, condition of regeneration, and tree ages. With this information they then prioritise their silvicultural management plans.

2. Social and institutional development

The Health Check helps to build users' confidence in analysing their own social and institutional development and encouraging more participatory decision-making. Forest users reflect on indicators such as: current decision-making processes in the FUG; the role of disadvantaged groups and whether they are benefiting; and who implements the decisions made by which group members. Ideas are shared about conflict management and prevention.

















3. Awareness and flow of information

There is much room for improvement in the flow of information and communication in FUGs, and the Health Check aims to draw attention to ways in which communication fora can be improved. Users reflect on their roles and responsibilities in bi-annual assemblies and in monthly committee meetings. These fora provide feedback from the members, and allow for a review of the implementation of the group plan and of the group's constitution. In these meetings, members also discuss forest policy, and their own process for planning, monitoring and evaluation. Indicators include 'feeling ownership in community forestry' and 'awareness of legal status'.

4. Skill development and learning processes

By sharing information within and amongst the groups, the forest users develop their skills. They organise networking fora from time to time to share ideas. They prioritise their needs and assess what resources are available to initiate new activities like forest-based income generation activities.

Figure 1 Pictorial self-monitoring and assessment of FUG - learning and skill development

			
Innovative Ideas for CF management	Absent	Starting	Many
			
New skills of CF	Absent	Starting	Many
			
Income Generation Activities	Absent	Starting	Many
			
Innovative ideas for CF	Absent	Starting	Many

User-generated pictorial decision-making M&E

Another PM&E method was developed to increase women's participation by encouraging them to assess their involvement in forest use and group activities. This method was tried in two FUGs where women had been attending a literacy class using REFLECT techniques¹. By the end of the literacy class, the women had become skilled in developing pictorial formats to assess their involvement in household and community level activities, such as who makes the major decisions in, for example, buying and selling livestock.

Similarly in forest-related activities, women use the visual formats to assess their involvement at the community and household level in activities such as: who makes decisions about harvesting different forest products and who does the actual work (see

¹ REFLECT stands for Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques which combines PRA methods and Freirean Literacy principles. It was developed by Action Aid. (See David Archer in *PLA Notes* 23 and forthcoming issue of *PLA Notes* in June 1998).

Figure 2). This process is helping women to see more clearly their level of participation in different aspects of forest management. With careful facilitation to make the link between literacy classes and forest management, women can develop their own monitoring and evaluation system and change their role in decision-making. Of course it not easy to separate the effects of developing the monitoring tool and of the literacy classes. However the women have become considerably more vocal in the FUG. They have also established a group to give them greater autonomy over their income generation and savings activities. They are considering further development of their M&E tool to cover more that just decision making. But they have not yet used it to reassess their situation.

PM&E in information management

The project team soon realised that simply providing tools and methods in a project context was unlikely to work. They recognised that monitoring and evaluation had to be linked to the present situation, to goals, and to action plans. Therefore, interactive workshops became a key strategy for effective PM&E. The main purpose of the workshops was to

develop the users' understanding about participatory monitoring and evaluation based on linking PRA methods to collective action. Through repeating this workshop annually, we are able to compare the current condition of forest resources and forest product needs against the goals that were set. To date, this is a pilot process within one district.








Analysis of the current situation is the first step. This is achieved by creating a resource and social map. The forest users completed this task, also identifying scarce resources, resource-rich, and resource-poor households. Then they discussed what the ideal situation would look like and made another resource map based on this ideal scenario. The two maps were compared by considering:

- How are resources distributed in the community?
- What new resources need to be developed to fulfil demands?

- What activities need to be performed to generate resources in the community and to reach the ideal situation?

This activity helped users to reflect on their existing resources, and to make a list of activities needed to reach their goals. Prioritising the many identified needs then followed, using pair-wise ranking. During this process, the users analysed each activity, old and new, in terms of how they were affecting, or would make an impact on, resource availability. This process also helped forest users to identify where outsider support would be needed. For example, if forest users prioritised the plantation of fodder trees to fulfil the demand for fodder, they can contribute with the provision of labour and even seedlings, but they might require technical support in determining the correct spacing between the trees.

Figure 2. Users generated pictorial decision making monitoring and evaluation

	 Household head	 Male	 Male/Female	 Female
 Collection of Grass				
 Collection of Fuelwood				
 Collection of Poles				

Venn diagrams were used next to help the users reflect on the nature of co-ordination between user groups and other organisations. These helped them to identify which organisations would be able to help them. Again the 'ideal scenario' concept was used so that the group could develop guidelines as to what they wished to achieve institutionally. The idea with the PM&E process is that they return to the Venn diagrams periodically and reflect on trends in the changing relationships. As the workshop only occurred recently this is yet to happen.

Finally, a seasonal calendar is used as the basis for the operational forest management plan. The user group members depict their activities throughout the year pictorially in a calendar, alongside the seasonal availability of various forest products. Pictures of the various activities are also placed on the map, in the appropriate forest block. This helps reinforce the idea of how forest management plans will differ for different forest conditions and for the provision of different products.

The user generated self monitoring system

The latest development within the project area uses the basic format of the health check, whilst incorporating learning from the other processes. The process was developed through joint discussion and planning by the project team with a FUG. To ensure the fullest incorporation of perspectives in developing the monitoring system, the FUG was divided by *toles* (or neighbourhoods according to castes), with each tole initially developing their own indicators and assessing the FUG's current status as described below.

The toles initially consider what the 'ideal' FUG would be, or where they should be in 10 years time. These goals form the basis for indicators for their monitoring system. The indicators are then coded as pictures by the users. Illiterate users proved to be as adept as their literate neighbours in producing pictures to represent the indicators. Discussion arises on how to capture the real issue as the picture is shown to the other users and adaptations are made. Using pictures allows full participation of the users, and, as they develop the pictures themselves, they become the owners of the

system and refine the indicators as discussions proceed.

The indicators are then arranged in a matrix to be scored on a four point scale of moons. Through using phases of the moon rather than sad, content and happy faces, there is less implicit criticism of the FUG; i.e. a crescent moon implies the indicator is currently absent rather than the users are unhappy. Furthermore, a four points scale forces discussion beyond a compromise middle score which is often allocated in a three score system.

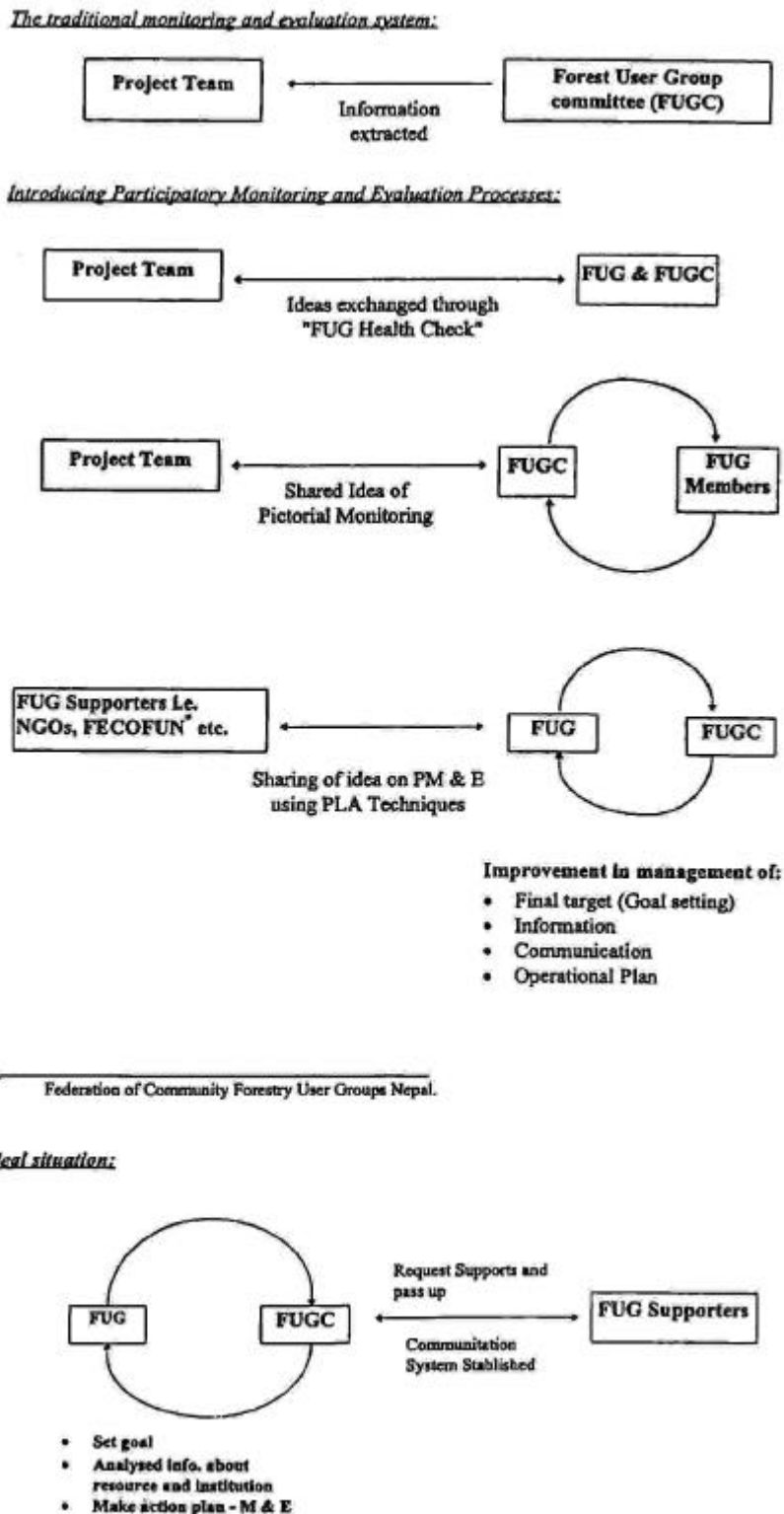
The indicators from the different toles were combined and categorised by the facilitators, with exact repetitions being removed and gaps identified. The categories identified were: forest management and condition; forest products; group management; communication; community development activities and income generating activities. The tole assessments were then compiled for each category.

This was presented to a forum of the FUG committee and representatives from each tole. Under each category, the indicators were reviewed and negotiations took place over the exact meaning for each picture and whether new ones should be added where gaps had been identified by the facilitation team. Overall, however, it was striking that the list of indicators was so complete.

By contrasting the tole assessments, different perspectives became apparent. In future the indicators need to be ranked to strengthen the link into planning and the apparent differences between toles need to be addressed. As the FUG uses their monitoring system, they may need to begin to quantify some of the indicators to make them more sensitive to change and less open to bias during assessment.

The strength of this process was in the high level of ownership and self realisation that it developed within all households. The disadvantaged groups had as strong a voice as the elites. Due to the simplicity of the process it takes little time to develop confidence in facilitation. In the final meeting, the process was evaluated very positively and the FUG is keen to share their experience widely.

Figure 3. Implication of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) process in the role of different actors



- **Lessons learnt from the process so far**

The project team are clear that the developing PM&E process is an important strategy for making forest users more aware of their situation, and for encouraging learning-oriented FUGs and thus more sustainable institutions. This will in turn help them to manage better their forest resources. By being involved in designing and adapting their own monitoring and evaluation systems, the users develop a stronger sense of ownership over it.

Monitoring and evaluation should not be separate from other aspects of identifying and implementing a development process. We have linked the M&E to goal development, analysis of local resources and institutions and action plan formulation. This integration will, we expect, also allow the users to change and adapt the methods as they monitor and evaluate.

Finally, we have found that the roles of different actors involved in the Nepal-UK Community Forestry project are shifting in the monitoring and evaluation process as a result of greater participation (see Figure 3). Initially M&E focused on performance evaluation and was an extractive process with no direct involvement of FUG members. As community forestry workers came to value local forest knowledge, monitoring and evaluation aimed more at combining outsiders' knowledge with that of local forest users.

Ultimately, forest users are, in fact, the evaluators of a project's success and failure. We are now seeing stronger links within the FUGs and more sharing of information between different groups. Ideally we would like to see the FUG committee and its members operate independent PM&E systems, and only seek advice from others, like ourselves, when necessary.

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8

Participatory self-evaluation of World Neighbors, Burkina Faso

Paul Bandre

• Introduction

World Neighbors (WN) is an international grassroots development organisation working in Asia, Africa and Latin America to help marginalised communities address their needs. World Neighbours (WN) in West Africa works in Mali, Togo, Ghana and Burkina Faso. Key areas of work are in accordance with community expressed needs, however program priorities include: sustainable agriculture, environmental regeneration, and community health. WN aims to strengthen the capacities of marginalised communities so that they can pursue more autonomous sustainable development. To achieve this, key capacities have been identified by villagers and the WN staff as prerequisites for a sustainable self-promotion process. These are: the capacity to plan, monitor and evaluate, mobilise financial and material resources locally, and negotiate with technical and financial partners.

After several years of working to strengthen these capacities, WN saw growth in autonomous initiatives and a progressive phasing out of WN in community efforts. From an externally-initiated programme, the programme had become a collaboratively managed effort, including joint planning and budgeting, and self-evaluation. In the transition, roles and responsibilities have shifted from WN to local people and local organisations. The self evaluation, which is the focus of this article, was motivated by concerns as to whether programmes and activities are implemented in ways that improve the livelihoods of the target population.

This article discusses the participatory self-evaluation process in Liptougou, which is part of one of the most remote and deprived districts where WN has been working for the last 10 years. The evaluation process was undertaken with an association 'TORIM-MANI', which encompasses 14 villages in the Liptougou Department. It shows how monitoring, evaluation and participatory programming can be integrated into the overall intervention strategy of the Liptougou WN Programme. The self-evaluation coincided with the end of the 1994 - 1997 three year programme. This article describes briefly our annual evaluation process and the more recent tri-annual evaluation process which coincides with the end of each three year programme.

The annual self-evaluation process in Liptougou

Liptougou is a dry zone that often experiences food deficits. The WN programme therefore started by distributing improved seed adapted to the low local rainfall. But before using these seeds on a large scale, farmers tested them on small plots of land to see how they would perform when compared with local varieties. Village organisations set up experimentation and dissemination committees, which received technical training to conduct the trials efficiently. From this small beginning, other committees have developed to include a range of development initiatives, including maternal and child health, literacy, etc..

At the end of each year, the villagers who are part of the different committees, hold local and inter-village meetings to assess the extent to which plans have been implemented and make a programme for the following year. At the

village level, each Activity Committee presents its results, more or less as follows:

- summary of annual objectives pursued;
- degree of satisfaction with objectives;
- summary of planned activities;
- degree to which activities were implemented;
- difficulties and constraints encountered; and,
- suggestions.

The summary of objectives and activities are usually presented by the secretaries of the different committees, who are all literate and have access to the related documentation. The assessment of the extent to which activities and objectives have been realised is based on indicators that have been identified and formulated by the villagers. For example, indicators related to the ‘strengthening of agricultural systems’ include ‘increase in number of families who have adopted new technologies’, ‘increase in income’, and ‘reduction in number of households affected by hunger’.

Villagers use a simple matrix, and a scale of 1 to 5, to indicate the extent to which activities have been achieved (see Figure 1). They choose their own way to symbolise the score, so that it is understood by all, irrespective of their degree of literacy. For example, in the village of Bambilaré, villagers chose to use bricks of different sizes: the heaviest brick represents 5 and the smallest, lightest brick represents a score of 1. Before allocating a score, villagers discuss each indicator for each

activity. The higher the score, the more the plans have been carried out. Then they discuss the overall findings using several questions:

- Why have they attributed that value?
- Is it satisfactory?
- If not, why not?
- What were the constraints and what could be done to improve the score?

The debate that is provoked by the questions is intense and demonstrates an extraordinary capacity amongst the villagers for making a rational judgement of progress and elaborating the next year’s development programme. At the end of the matrix, the villagers identify which activities were unsatisfactorily implemented, or not implemented, and set themselves new scores to aim for in the next year. This then leads to a plan of action to achieve better results.

Another aspect of the evaluation takes place at an inter-village session, organised in a rotation system by a host village. In addition to the committee members, each village sends two representatives, who present a summary of the results for their village derived from the matrix described above. The villagers nominate their two representatives depending on their dynamism and involvement in, and commitment to, programme activities. They must, however, be literate. This process encourages wider participation of villagers in evaluating and planning village activities, thereby allowing the views of different social groups to be incorporated in the plans.

Figure 1. Villagers’ matrix showing extent to which activities have been achieved

Planned Activities	Indicators (related to each activity)	1	2	3	4	5
A1	A1.1 A1.2 A1.3					
A2	A2.1 A2.2 A2.3					
A3	etc.					

Large-scale participatory evaluation of programme impact

In 1997 the annual evaluations were complemented by a participatory evaluation of the tri-annual plan that aims to measure the programme's impact in improving the level of villagers' well-being. This process involved the villagers, village and inter-village association leaders, technical WN staff, and external resource people. The process lasted about two months and was organised as follows:

- Technical preparation - elaboration of terms of references, selection of village samples, taking steps to ensure data reliability (1 week);
- Data collection and piloting (4 weeks);
- Analysis/Synthesis of data (2 weeks); and,
- General process management (1 week).

Terms of reference (TORs)

The technical team discussed with the villagers what the main focus of the evaluation should be and the themes with which it should deal. This took place during a meeting of the village association leaders. These views were then used by WN staff to draft the TOR, which were then presented back to the village leaders for amendments before final approval. The TORs included: objectives, sequence of different stages, expected results, and time frame for implementation. The different needs of the various parties were taken into consideration, resulting in a common vision for the evaluation methodology.

Establishing the village sample

As the Liptougou programme covers 14 villages, a sample was chosen for the evaluation. This was based on criteria of self-promotion established by the committees in village meetings, enabling the evaluation to incorporate local perceptions of 'self-promotion'. The villages were divided into two groups based on the level of self-promotion:

A. Villages strong in self-promotion

- self-sufficiency in household food requirements;

- presence of a spirit of collective initiative in the village;
- agreement between families and social cohesion;
- access to innovations (agriculture, health, literacy etc.);
- existence of a functioning local organisation; and,
- mobilisation and participation of different social groups (women, men, worse-off, better-off, etc.) in the implementation of village development activities.

B. Villages weak in self-promotion

- absence of mobilisation of human and financial resources;
- tendency to focus on individual interests and work;
- lack of energy and community consensus caused by a mentality of continual dependence;
- little openness to innovations and progress; and,
- lack of community activities.

Four villages were chosen, two that were strong in self-promotion and two that were weak. For selecting these villages, the representatives of TORIM-MANI ranked all fourteen villages using the above criteria and chose the two strongest and two weakest villages.

Ensuring reliability of findings

As the merits of any evaluation depend strongly on the reliability of the collected information, the team considered various ways to minimise sources of bias and ensure good quality data. First, the choice of data collectors in the villages was critical as they were responsible for ensuring that the necessary information was collected. These people were chosen by the village leaders based on the type of information required, and comprised groups of 5 to 15 people representing women and men, different neighbourhoods and different households. To have reliable data, it was crucial to include local resource people with expertise on or skills related to the issues being evaluated and with a certain local status/responsibility.

Second, working with external resource people allowed WN to achieve greater objectivity in

data collection and analysis. The resource people had the advantage of an 'outsiders' view' and the impartiality of being outside the process. The resource people came from other NGOs, projects, and government agencies operating in the programme zone, and therefore have knowledge of local realities.

Third, the results were repeatedly triangulated throughout the process. This involved ensuring that the same type of information was collected from different sources, and that different methods were used to collect the same type of information. This allowed a comparison of the findings from different sources and enabled the reliability of the data to be verified.

Where data were contradictory, discrepancies were discussed publicly to allow the villagers themselves to decide which view best reflected their reality. For example, to assess the impact of the WN programme on improving agricultural production, focus groups of women, men, and youth were conducted separately. Each group presented their findings in public. Where conclusions were not unanimously supported, intense debates ensued. This allowed for the correction and addition of information until a consensus view was reached.

In other cases, several methods were used with the same focus group to verify the information. For example, to assess the role of WN in disseminating a specific health innovation, the first method used was a Venn diagram that analysed which external organisations worked in the village and how they interacted. If the innovation was not mentioned in this exercise, yet it appeared as a significant change in semi-structured interviews about the village health situation, then this contradiction became the focus of other complementary exercises and discussions until the situation was clarified.

Collecting and preliminary analysis of field data

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a range of well known participatory methods. These were devised and tested by the technical team. Village leaders were trained during preparatory sessions to conduct their own evaluation with support

from the evaluation facilitators. From the first preparatory sessions, village leaders formed focus groups that were used throughout for discussions. The villagers themselves used the methods, thus reinforcing their analytical capacity and active participation in the evaluation process.

One of the methods used was a household census which assessed the demographic composition of households and formed the basis for assessing the extent of dissemination of different innovations promoted via the WN programme. For each household, knowledgeable villagers indicated the number of members in terms of age and sex. This gave village leaders an update of village population, according to sex and neighbourhood, before assessing who were direct and indirect beneficiaries of the development programme. It was also useful to estimate the amount of available household labour and how this influenced a household's capacity to adopt specific innovations.

Another method used was matrix scoring of the level of participation of various social groups (women, men, worse-off, better-off, etc.) in each activity. Conducting their own survey about innovation adoption enabled the villagers to identify technologies newly introduced into the village and why these were accepted or rejected. By also identifying the source of the innovation, they were able to assess the specific contributions of different organisations and their overall impact on the village.

More qualitative evaluation methods included the 'history of self-promotion', which is an analysis of the changes in local institutions and village organisation that generated activities addressing communal interests. This involved listing all the activities, initiatives or salient events that describe the history of local action in self-promotion. These were then classified according to whether they were a result of local initiatives or driven by external organisations. During the discussions, villagers were able to analyse the weaknesses and strengths of their own efforts.

Feeding back and further analysis of field data

Feedback sessions were held immediately after each exercise. However, an overall feedback session was organised for different groups to explain their findings. The results of each exercise and discussion were presented in plenary to the rest of the village. This was facilitated by a village leader. Each evaluation method was also explained. This feedback session provoked long discussions and exchanges between the villagers, allowing further analysis of the initial findings and amendment and additions to the information that was considered incorrect or incomplete.

Synthesis and interpretation of findings

Analysis and interpretation was carried out at different levels to involve all the social groups in the WN programme area, including both village and inter-village sessions. In the village sessions, the whole village (men, women, the youth, the old, children) gathered for one day. For the inter-village sessions, representatives from the different villages (according to geographic area, gender ethnicity) attended a one day meeting. Both sessions had similar formats, with TORIM-MANI leaders presenting the results in both village and inter-village sessions.

First, the general context was presented: the physical environment and socio-cultural and organisational characteristics, followed by a summary of problems and programme aims. To determine whether programme interventions had resolved identified problems, each activity was analysed in terms of positive or negative impacts on local living conditions. Several variables were used to assess programme impact: types of changes in agricultural production, level of gender equity amongst programme beneficiaries, strengthening of local technical capacity, degree of participation of various social groups in programme implementation, etc..

Following a presentation of general trends, a series of questions guided these discussions:

- What are the main findings?
- What are the highlights and weaknesses of these results?

- What are the causes of this?
- What can be done to improve the limitations?

These questions enabled the groups to assess the overall results critically and link them to activities that would need to be included in a new development plan.

General feedback

An overall feedback was organised by the leaders of the inter-village association TORIM-MANI for all the villagers in the intervention area. Village representatives gathered in feedback sessions which were organised per geographic zone. The presentation was carried out by the TORIM-MANI leaders. However, the WN technical team first chose the key results that would allow trends in the programme's impact to be assessed. These results were first presented by the TORIM-MANI leaders, using visual aids. This stage allowed the leaders to familiarise themselves with different visual aids and with ways of presenting the results, such as percentages and rates of adoption of technical innovation.

This session provoked considerable discussion, enriched the analysis and provide a means to check, once again, whether findings were reliable. The discussions ended with recommendations by the communities for improving the WN programme. These are serving as the basis for the new activity programme.

• Lessons and prospects

The findings of the WN evaluation show how its development approach has increased local self-confidence, leading to greater self-initiated development based on local strengths. For example, villagers are doing research on drought-resistant seeds for government agricultural departments and other neighbouring villages. Other initiatives related to health no longer require intense inputs from the WN team. Also, due to the transfer of tasks and responsibilities by the WN team, through technical training and study trips, TORIM-MANI has become more autonomous financially, administratively, and technically. Literacy has enabled some leaders to develop

their own programme of activities, report on various meetings, and monitor activities.

However, we encountered several problems with this participatory evaluation process. High levels of illiteracy, while partly overcome by the extensive use of visual methods, were still an issue as some writing was necessary. Also, the translation into local languages of certain fundamental concepts of participatory monitoring and evaluation was difficult. This sometimes hampered communication between villagers and the evaluation team, who did not always speak the local language.

For example, at the beginning, several meetings of the WN team were necessary to find good translations for terms such as 'objective', 'aim', 'indicator', 'matrix' and 'adoption rate'. If these key terms are not clarified, then data biases can occur raising doubts about the reliability of the findings.

Nevertheless, the participatory evaluation process met its objectives, which can be partly attributed to the overall participatory development strategy of WN but also to the interest of village organisations and members in investing in this process. Participatory monitoring and evaluation of the Liptougou programme was a dynamic process of reflection and analysis that started simply, and slowly developed more elaborate methods of collection and analysis. It gave responsibility to local people to identify and analyse their potential and limitations, and to plan and implement their own development. It contributed to increasing the capacity of local village organisations to define and carry out their own evaluations, thus reinforcing WN's self-help approach to development.

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9

Institutional issues for monitoring local development in Ecuador

Victor Hugo Torres D.

• Introduction

COMUNIDEC is a national Ecuadorian NGO that develops and promotes participatory methodologies that help empower local communities. It has developed a participatory monitoring and evaluation, known as SISDEL (*Sistema de Desarrollo Local*, or Local Development System). SISDEL is part of a local development programme that focuses on building human capacities in small rural municipalities marked by poverty and an indigenous population. This programme is working directly in 5 municipalities, (and indirectly in another 10), each of which has experienced more than 10 years of systematic development interventions through NGOs, government programmes, churches, development aid agencies, community-based organisations, and in some cases private enterprise.

The development of SISDEL has been possible due to two trends in Ecuador that are the result of 30 years of agricultural policies. First is an emphasis on development priorities in rural areas, rather than towns. This has revived some municipalities and stimulated municipal leaders to develop more decentralised strategic planning processes. Second is the rise of a diverse range of rural organisations and coalitions that represent the 'social capital' needed for sustainable development (notwithstanding internal management and leadership problems). These two trends have created much demand for participatory methodologies that can help build local institutional capacity. This has resulted in the development of SISDEL and this article

describes how SISDEL is being used to integrate planning, monitoring and evaluation of social development projects.

What is SISDEL?

SISDEL is a young evolving methodology, with just two years of use. It is being used by municipal-level rural extension workers, leaders and promoters of rural organisations, NGO staff and government extension staff. It is based on another self-evaluation methodology used since 1994 by the Inter American Fund (IAF), 'Marco de Desarrollo de Base', that analyses the impact of social development projects. We used the IAF methodology in 30 projects over a three year period during which we realised the importance of doing monitoring and evaluation within the project cycle, and not just adding participatory reporting of impacts at the end.

Basically, SISDEL stimulates collaboration between different groups in project formulation, encourages agreements based on expected impacts, helps those who are implementing projects to make better decisions through monitoring, and systematically evaluates the impacts to encourage learning. Methodologically it involves training the teams that manage local development projects to link existing resources with opportunities and promote those synergies that enable sustained change.

For this to work, three aspects are crucial:

- Existing social organisations are the main factors that determine the quality of expected impacts. Their vitality and their ability to mobilise is essential. They must

have active members with clear interests. It is not necessary for them to be formal organisations but they must be able to bring together different groups in society and be credible enough for local people to get involved.

- The project must be clearly formulated and build on local capacities and forms of interaction. SISDEL values local culture by using methods that are compatible with local customs and socio-economic conditions. Incorporating local forms of participation, co-operation and solidarity is crucial, as is using existing expertise and adopting forms of management used by local organisations.
- Good social engineering (adapted from Kottak 1995) is possible only when local people drive the project cycle, as this allows for valuable collective learning. The timing of project cycles cannot be imposed and driven by external agents. Instead, local legitimacy and learning are central to the process. It also means that the implementing-evaluating team must be linked to local organisations and institutions throughout the project cycle. The cycle is a continuous process of collecting and systematising information to solve management problems, that links local leaders and authorities with residents, and technicians with management staff.

• The structure of SISDEL

In practice, SISDEL is a collaborative process of self-reflection between organisations and institutions in one geographic area. By discussing problems and ranking proposed solutions, action is undertaken and the impacts are compared against expected results.

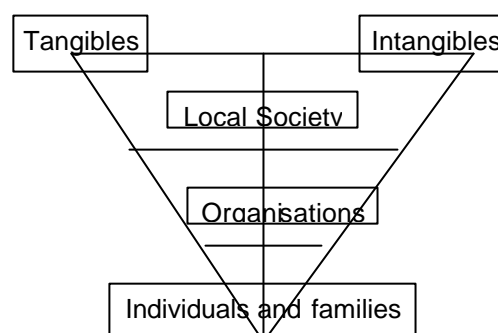
Levels and types of desired impacts

SISDEL emphasises impacts more than activities. It recognises that local action can provoke three levels of impacts, each being equally important. The first level involves the immediate impacts for individuals and families. Second are the impacts that affect organisations (or social capital), such as

empowerment and representation. The third level of impacts affect local society in general.

In the SISDEL methodology we have also distinguished three different types of impacts: material, human and spiritual. These are seen as a continuum of tangible and intangible impacts. Tangible impacts are changes that are perceived directly, events that can be observed, counted, measured and documented quickly. Intangible impacts are more subtle, internal changes that can also be registered and documented but only indirectly. Figure 1 shows how these different levels and types of impacts interact.

Figure 1. Levels and types of impacts of the SISDEL methodology



Categories, variables and indicators

The combination of three levels and two types (tangible and intangible) of impacts means there are six main categories of impacts that strategically guide local development activities through the project cycle:

1. At the individual or family level, the more tangible impacts relate to *Quality of Life*. These identify changes in people's environment and their livelihood strategies. The less tangible impacts relate to *Personal Capacities*, and describe changes in expectations, motivation and individual interventions in the project.
2. At the organisational (or social capital) level, the more tangible impacts deal with *Local Management*, i.e. changes in the capacity of organisations and municipalities to affect change. The

intangible impacts concern *Collaborative Disposition* and describe changes in the development values and behaviours of local leadership.

3. The local society level of impacts assesses tangible changes in *Civil Society Opportunities*, or impacts related to institutional democracy. The less tangible impacts relate to *Popular Culture*, identifying collective changes towards more tolerance and respect of social and cultural diversity.

Within each category, various variables can be assessed. For our own use of SISDEL in Ecuador, we identified 20 impacts that were particularly relevant (see Figure 2). These variables can be adapted to focus on specific development issues, such as improvements in gender relations, productivity, the environment, or culture.

Each variable can be broken down into several indicators. However, to avoid falling victim to the tyranny of indicators, we limited ourselves to two indicators per variable, focusing on those best able to inform us about project impacts (see Table 1).

As the indicators simply describe some concrete aspects of local realities, they should not be seen as absolute and comprehensive interpretations of change. The monitoring involves using the indicators to collect data and comparing changes over time against a simple baseline situation. Our baseline is described in terms of the six categories and 20

variables. The indicators can register positive and negative impacts and can be numbers or opinions, reflecting quantitative and qualitative information.

To be effective, it is not necessary to use all the categories or levels of impacts. SISDEL is not a rigid framework. On the contrary, it is adaptable to whatever level or category, with different combinations and different indicators. This depends on the context, objectives, and project characteristics.

Applying SISDEL in the project cycle

SISDEL can be used at all four stages of the project cycle. It offers techniques for consultation and self-evaluation during project formulation, supports negotiations when the project application is submitted, produces statistical tables and frequency diagrams to facilitate monitoring during project implementation, and uses interviews and workshops to evaluate the impact and compare it to local expectations.

The whole cycle is held together by the project management system, a set of procedures and instruments for bringing objectives to fruition. Project management includes decision-making mechanisms, actions for directing project work, and technologies used by the team during implementation to channel energy and activities along the lines established by the organisations.

Figure 2: Our SISDEL variables

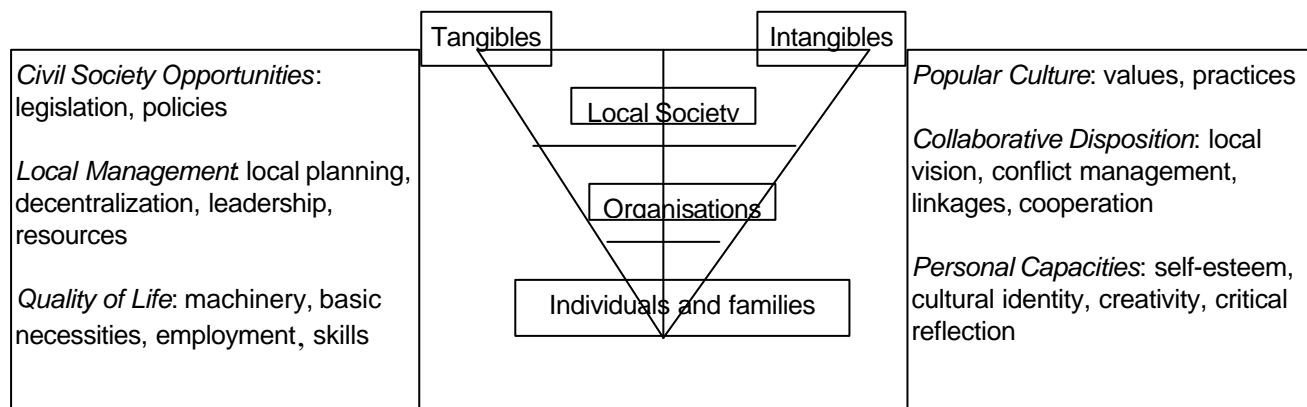
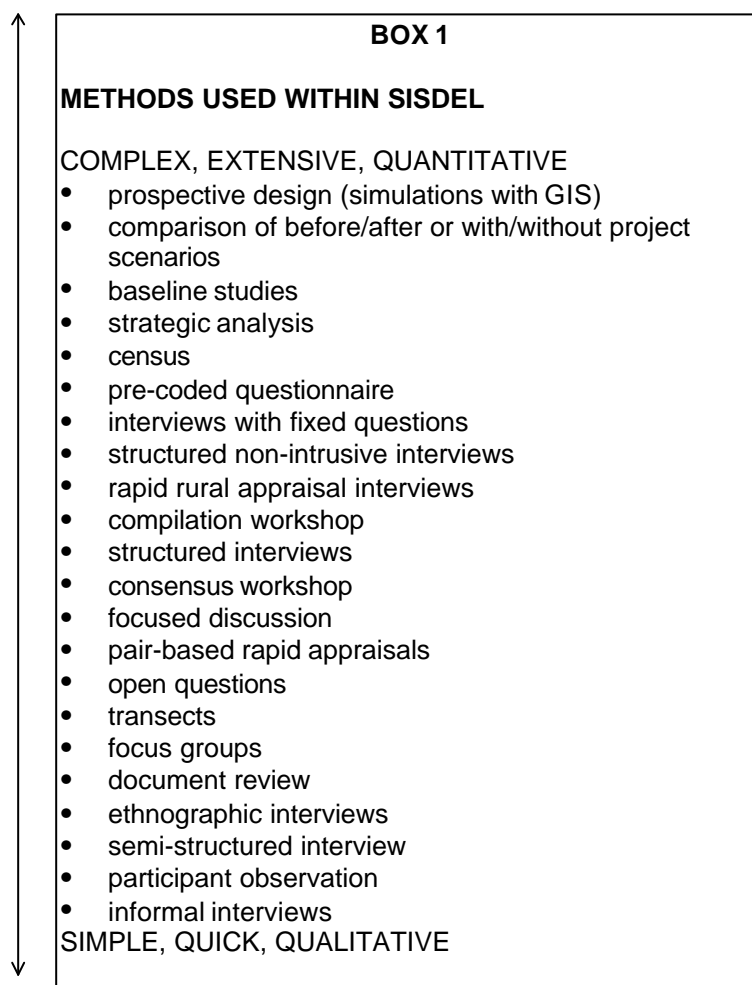


Table 1. SISDEL-related indicators identified as used by COMUNIDEC and partners

TANGIBLE INDICATORS	INTANGIBLE INDICATORS
<i>Civil Society Opportunities</i> Laws Enactment, amendment or revocation of legal measures Application of legal capacities Policies Influence to change local interests into public actions implementation of public policy	<i>Popular Culture</i> Values Degree of civil and social responsibility Action in a setting of local socio-cultural diversity Practices Response to the scale of alternatives Dissemination of results
<i>Local Management</i> Decentralisation Autonomy in political decisions Local responsibility for expenditure Planning Incorporation in plans of local demands Degree of flexibility to adjust plans Leadership Degree of local participation in strategic decisions Capacity to facilitate local processes Resources Proportion of locally-mobilised resources Percentage of self-management	<i>Collaborative Tendencies</i> Local vision Identification of opportunities for action Capacity to assess consequences and modify to local context Conflict management Capacity to recognise incompatibilities Capacity to reach agreements Linkages Extent of participation in networks and forums Local problems leading to networks/links Co-operation Recognising multiple interests Management of negotiation mechanisms
<i>Quality of Life</i> Basic Necessities Satisfaction of housing, education, health needs Changes in quality of life perceived by local people Machinery Type of communal equipment Collective services rendered Employment Number of jobs created or maintained Annual average income Skills Type of local knowledge incorporated Events during which local knowledge was used	<i>Personal Capacities</i> Self-esteem Number of people who changed their self-perceptions Types of new roles/tasks that people assumed Cultural identity Extent to which local customs and traditions were valued Creativity Openness to innovation Application of innovative solutions Critical reflection Capacity to explain reality Recognising and learning from errors

In practice, SISDEL makes use of many different methods to collect information and systematise the findings. These methods range between two extremes: those that are simple and quick and those that are complex and extensive (see Box 1). When choosing which method was most appropriate, we aimed to strike a balance between responding to different expectations while communicating the results to different local audiences. For example, the local development team needs to prove tangible impacts to funding agencies ('agencias auspiciantes') while at the same time stimulating the local population to develop ownership over the project, or adding project monitoring within the long term strategic planning processes of local

government while responding to the daily needs of farmers. The choice of methods will depend on various factors: the degree of education of those implementing the project; their skill with different methods; their interest in specific methods; and how the impacts will be analysed and findings used. The main challenge is to ensure that the methods allow different audiences/groups to discuss the impacts and allow the implementing team to learn.



Different roles and methods

COMUNIDEC's use of SISDEL in the five municipalities involved building the capacity of local facilitators to use the methodology. 'Learning by doing' was the main principle. In each case, we started with a workshop about the project cycle for the local project team as these people were also responsible for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the projects.

The composition of the 'teams' varied. For example, in the municipality of Bolivar, it was mainly municipal extension agents, while in Guamote it was a combination of municipal officials and indigenous extension agents of a community organisation and in Cotacahi and Suscal the team also included NGO staff. All the teams were managed by local leaders and authorities. COMUNIDEC facilitators supported the local teams only in the first

project cycle to help them integrate SISDEL-related skills and activities.

We first started with project formulation, clarifying who had committed themselves to what action in the implementation phase. The local teams were then able to update this information at each phase of the project as a type of accountability. Project formulation itself was carried out during a three-day workshop on 'Self-Evaluation of Resources and Opportunities'¹. It is an event that is open to anyone and to which all the local organisations and institutions are invited. A type of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA, or *sondeo*) is carried out in pairs, using semi-structured interviews. The proposed solutions are clustered and documented and the baseline information is collated.

¹ Autoevaluación de Recursos y Oportunidades (TARO).

During the monitoring phase, three activities are undertaken: (1) monitoring the achievement of inter-institutional agreements; (2) measuring the baseline to register how implemented activities are achieving the expected impacts; and (3) collecting information to help make management decisions. Data is collected in groups using transects, semi-structured interviews, maps, and sometimes focus groups. The information is compiled in tables and histograms that graphically show the change in indicators over time. These graphs are public information and are displayed in the municipal headquarters of the project.

Monitoring activities are fitted in alongside other project activities and therefore the amount of time committed to them varies. However, each project tries to collect information and report on the findings twice a year. The monitoring schedule is adapted continually as other methodologies are integrated. For example, in the municipality of Suscal, the local management team of the 'Strategic Planning of the Canton' is beginning to set up a Prospective Simulation with the support of a GIS, that is based on the indicator data collected through the RRA transects and interviews. In Otavalo, the team managing the project 'Integrated Management of the San Pablo Lake Watershed' is using cultural models from pre-Incan times to show impacts.

In the evaluation phase at the end of the project, there is no attempt to attribute clear causal relationships between the project and perceived impacts. Instead, it involves recognising the synergy between different local groups and how their participation has contributed to impacts. Methods used include individual interviews with organisations, institutions and key individuals using a questionnaire based on some of the indicators. There is also a 'consensus workshop' at which the different groups interpret the findings, using triangulation and strategic analysis.

The process of training in the SISDEL methodology varied from one context to the next. In Bolivar, where planning is institutionalised, SISDEL was used as part of project implementation to integrate health, education, and natural resource management. In Guacamote municipality, where there is no

planning and little related knowledge amongst the leaders, it was a more systematic process to strengthen natural resource management in the long term, based on joint (municipality and community organisations) forestry enterprises.

The compilation and dissemination of impacts in the monitoring and evaluation stages is carried out by the local team with support from COMUNIDEC facilitators. This process aims to identify the main project management lessons and documents these for further learning. Two methods were used for dissemination: publications co-ordinated by an Ecuadorian network, '*Grupo Democracia y Desarrollo Local*', and ongoing higher-level training based on documentation for leaders, technical staff and other people involved in local development.

• **Lessons learnt**

Our experiences with SISDEL have given us three main insights about the preconditions necessary for successful participatory monitoring and evaluation of local collaborative development.

First, assuming that a local leader/facilitator drives the collaborative process, it is crucial that local authorities make a clear commitment for the entire project cycle. The more innovative municipal councils recognise very well the strategic value of participatory monitoring and evaluation methods, as it can help them make timely assessments of their activities and share this with different local audiences. Where these local institutions or municipalities do not exist, then SISDEL can stimulate local development and help strengthen local institutions. In either case, it is essential to identify which organisations have the greatest capacity to lead, monitor and evaluate collaborative local development projects.

Second, we recommend that, where possible, projects take place within a development strategy that builds on existing public policies. If a project is proposed without a clear strategy, action can remain very local and of short duration. Monitoring and evaluation of a project that has no strategic direction can fail to fit in with local resources and needs.

Building on an existing strategy can shorten the project formulation phase. Yet where it is absent, project formulation might well prove an effective way to argue for a strategic plan.

Third, collective learning is the foundation of people's adoption of a new methodology. Within this type of monitoring and evaluation approach, separating experts, organisations, and local people simply hinders the exchange of information and experiences, and prevents the creation of a common understanding that is the root of learning. Further, methodological innovation will only happen if different disciplines are brought together, and a continual exchange between outsiders' and local experiences throughout the project cycle is encouraged.

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10

Growing from the grassroots: building participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation methods in PARC

Janet Symes and Sa'ed Jasser

• Introduction

The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees, PARC, is a Palestinian NGO with almost two decades of experience working in agriculture in rural areas of the West Bank and Gaza. PARC targets poor and marginalised farmers - both men and women - and works with them to improve their ability to make a living from farming and to develop a strong Palestinian agricultural sector.

The Palestinian context - the people's struggle

Since 1967, the West Bank and Gaza have remained under Israeli military occupation. As a result, the economy has become almost totally dependent on Israel. It has suffered from a lack of development with poor infrastructure, a negative investment climate and the restrictions imposed by the military administration. During the *intifada* (the popular uprising against the occupation) in the late 1980s and early 1990s curfews were imposed and movement within or between towns, villages or refugee camps was prevented for extended periods of time.

Contrary to expectations there has been little 'peace dividend'. Since the 1993 signing of the Oslo Accords, a closure has been in force which restricts movement. Total closure was in place for most of 1996. The West Bank and Gaza is now a complex patchwork of zones with different degrees of autonomy. The closures, curfews and blockades have had a huge impact on marketing of agricultural produce. These circumstances have many

implications for agricultural development and the use of participatory methods. This article discusses how, within PARC, we are slowly developing a more participatory approach to monitor our rural work.

Participation under occupation

The occupation severely limits the control people have over their lives leading to a 'culture of occupation' in which people feel powerless to promote change. On the other hand, the *intifada* saw a huge mobilisation of popular power. Men, women and children alike struggled together to promote their Palestinian identity and tried to build a Palestinian nation that would give them back control over their own future.

It is within this context that PARC built its close ties with the rural people, through day-to-day support during the *intifada* and efforts to counter Israeli policies that were destroying Palestinian agriculture. Voluntary committees were set up in villages which were responsible for local decision making. As a result the work was in direct response to the identified needs and priorities of the rural communities and was carried out by them.

• PM&E in PARC

The need for PM&E

The concentration on emergency work during the *intifada* led to a limited focus on the development process and the project cycle. The extremely unpredictable and volatile situation meant that planning was very difficult. The combination of these factors did

little to encourage the development of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E).

The more stable situation of the peace process encouraged a longer term outlook. PARC began to focus on programmes and project with longer term goals, re-emphasised its agricultural extension work and concentrated on building a sustainable and viable agricultural sector. PARC also shifted from voluntary work, and expanded its employment of professional field workers.

The voluntary committees were separated from PARC's organisational structure and became the basis for establishing an independent farmers' union. Although this was seen as an essential move, both for PARC to move forward and for the farmers to have an independent voice, this meant that PARC's decision making process was now one step removed from the rural communities. PARC had to develop new ways of working and, as a result, began to develop participatory techniques. It also became increasingly interested in measuring and understanding the impact of its work, both from a desire to learn from its experiences and ensure that it maintained its relevance to the community, but also because of an increasing interest by PARC's donors in the impact of its work.

- **Building an organisational commitment to PM&E**

Although people were very much involved in PARC, many of its methods, and particularly those of planning, monitoring and evaluation, saw participation in terms of 'consultation'. In general, the community was seen as an information source, but not as key actors playing a central role in the decision-making processes of the organisation. Much of the early monitoring and evaluation work centred on the collection of data through questionnaires. However, PARC quickly realised the limitations of these methods, and began to introduce more participatory techniques.

The Consultancy Unit was set up with the specific task to develop PM&E. The Unit has been working to support the use of participatory techniques and to build an

understanding of the concepts involved. This process involved several aspects, which are described below.

Interactive methods

We needed to make the communication process between our staff and the communities more effective. We found that community or interest group workshops were a particularly useful way of working because they gave people the opportunity to discuss and formulate ideas about the projects and work. In particular they enabled women to gain an equal voice.

Due to the conservative nature of rural Palestine, women and men meet separately. In the evaluation of an integrated programme in one village, men had decided what the women could do, but the women redefined their activities for themselves. The men then realised how women had asserted their views, and concluded that it had been the women who had accomplished the most: they had been innovative and successful in getting their ideas off the ground. They appreciated the women's involvement in the evaluation, and even started discussing how women could become involved in the all-male village co-ordinating committee.

The techniques used in workshops were designed to encourage in depth analysis and to develop future directions for the work. We often use variants on SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Objectives, Threats), but mostly designed group activities specifically for each workshop using a range of tools, such as key points on cards and ranking for prioritisation. We are aware that consensus can actually cover up dispute, so try to build in opportunities for individual expression of ideas through various media, as well as group discussion.

Our experience shows that we can develop PM&E more easily in programmes that incorporate some degree of individual focus. For example, in a women's programme that incorporates leadership and administrative training for women who set up new businesses with small scale credit, the women have the incentive to develop their own monitoring and evaluation processes. But in village- or group-

wide projects this has been a more difficult process.

Team work: sharing experiences is sharing lessons

When we carry out evaluations of specific programmes and projects, a team is set up to lead the process. The team usually comprises at least one person each from the Consultancy Unit, programme, field staff and the community. Outside evaluators are only used if there is a specific reason (e.g. at the request of a donor or if a specific issue would benefit from an alternative or mediating perspective).

The importance of community involvement is illustrated in an evaluation undertaken with the Farmer's Union. The initial idea for an evaluation came from PARC, but once the Farmer's Union joined the team, it became clear that what they wanted was very different to PARC's aims. So we redefined the aims to cover both requirements. New working relations between PARC and the Union developed and the farmers who had participated in the evaluation team went on to lead a planning process for the Union.

From number crunchers to listeners: developing the skills of our staff

Successful PM&E requires much more than using different methods, it can only work with an understanding of what participation means, and this often means developing the skills of those involved. In PARC, monitoring was initially understood as a process of collecting quantitative data on projects, such as how many trees were planted. The methods used tended to encourage this approach and reinforced the idea that 'scientifically' calculated data were the only valid information. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation was seen as simply bureaucratic procedures required by management.

In Arabic, the word most commonly used for monitoring conveys a meaning related to 'controlling'. This, among other factors, has contributed to a general feeling that monitoring is a negative process, designed to 'check whether we are working to the rules.' This is aggravated by perception that monitoring and evaluation is the work of a

separate unit within PARC. By introducing participatory methods, the staff started to see the benefits of alternative monitoring approaches for both themselves and their projects. We also ensured that programme and field staff are fully involved in all stages in monitoring and evaluation.

This involvement enables them to take on responsibility for the PM&E work and to see it as an essential part of the project process. The Women's Unit of PARC in Gaza decided to use some of the participatory techniques to evaluate their unit's work in more detail after participating in an organisational self-evaluation. Currently, the role of the Consultancy Unit is often just to provide support and advice to the staff's own initiatives and not be the sole driver of the process.

By using participatory techniques with senior management, we were able to encourage greater involvement of all staff. For example, during an organisational evaluation, there was an initial reluctance for all the staff to be involved, despite a willingness to encourage the participation of the target group. Now many of the ideas developed in the staff workshops are forming a key part of PARC's on-going strategic planning.

- **Moving forward: linking planning to PM&E**

M & E in the project cycle

The project cycle is usually presented as a circle linking planning, monitoring and evaluation. This depiction often leads to the unfortunate image of projects going round in circles! Unfortunately the crucial link planning and monitoring and evaluation is often not that easy to achieve. In our experience, monitoring and evaluation are seen as ways of measuring how a plan (and by implication a project) is implemented. If they are perceived to come after implementation, then the vital step of moving to the next phase of development is overlooked.

The 'learning loop'

We find that simply providing recommendations for future actions in an evaluation is simply not sufficient. The learning loop must extend to include clear plans about what to do next. It is important to include discussions and decisions about how to move forward after a PM&E activity, and to clearly identify the roles of each of the groups involved. We found that the strongest push for clarity of plans often comes from the community themselves. They are rarely content to allow the process to only look at 'impact' without including the question of 'what next?'

A process approach, rather than a project by project approach, is essential. In this way planning, monitoring and evaluation become part of a continual learning process. The trajectory may shift, but the momentum should be forward. By using a participatory approach, the engine for this momentum becomes the community, and they can control its direction.

Linking levels

We are setting up a participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation (PPME) system within PARC that will help us to ensure that planning, monitoring and evaluation are seen as intrinsically linked as one process. An essential part of this system is the linking of different levels of planning, monitoring and evaluation. This helps us to ensure that participation is not limited to the project level, but features in all levels in PARC's work.

Breaking free of the illogical framework

One of the difficulties we face in developing a PPME system for PARC is building a suitable framework. Much of the work on PPME systems has been developed by donor agencies and designed with their own reporting and monitoring in mind. However, this concentration on organisational needs is not just confined to the donors; in PARC, the main incentive for developing a PPME system stems from the need to administer money well and to meet our donor's reporting and monitoring requirements. Consequently, although participation is recognised as important, and the donors we work with encourage this in our

work, the frameworks used are based more on organisational aspects, and, in reality, tend not to promote participatory techniques.

This is partly due to the predominance of logical framework analysis (LFA) as a tool that links planning, monitoring and evaluation. The logical framework may be useful in some situations, and certainly emphasises the need to have clear objectives and indicators. However, we have found that it is not a useful tool when working from a participatory premise. In most practical applications we came across, people find it far from logical. Consequently, the framework is developed by programme managers; the field staff and programme participants are alienated from the planning process and control is concentrated in the hands of the 'LFA Expert'. This discourages participation in - and community ownership over - the development process.

LFA also implicitly encourages those who use it to fall into the trap of seeing M&E as a mechanism for checking planning, rather than a process of learning from experience. People tend to focus on whether they have fully implemented each step of the plan. The aim becomes fulfilling the plan, not promoting participatory development.

Flexibility is discouraged and the need for introducing change into a programme is considered negatively rather than being viewed as a positive outcome of a progressive monitoring process. In the real world, it is very rare that a plan is implemented with no changes, however carefully conceived. Indeed we often found that projects implemented exactly as planned had more to do with a lack of M&E than them being exceptionally well planned. This lack of flexibility is a particular problem in the present Palestinian context, where circumstances can change very rapidly. There are so many aspects that can affect a plan over which people have no control. In such circumstances, planning needs to have a degree of fluidity and responsiveness. If PM&E techniques are adopted within such a rigid framework, the alienation of the participants can become a real problem.

By offering people the tools, and encouraging their understanding of the concepts involved, they can build their own framework. Part of

this involves finding out what other people's (including the donors) PM&E needs are, ensuring that these are met and that the system is both relevant and practical. This can be achieved by encouraging a participatory approach and cultivating the communities' ability to control the development process.

• **Conclusions**

The transition from working in emergency relief during a conflict situation to an increased focus on building civil society and the development process provided a stimulus for PARC to develop its PM&E. But we still have a long way to go before we can be confident that the community is really playing the central role in PPME and that they are defining the work of PARC. We need to strengthen and widen the scope of participatory methods used, continue to develop organisational commitment to 'participation'; and create a framework that encourages participation.

There are several points that emerged from our experience in developing and using PM&E:

- Despite a background as a grassroots organisation and working with rural people as part of a popular struggle it is still vital to work with participatory techniques. The process of organisational 'scaling up' does not invalidate the use of participatory techniques, but reinforces the need for them.
- Monitoring and evaluation cannot be separated from planning since all are an intrinsic part of the development process. The linkages are crucial in establishing a learning process that can enable the development process to move forward.
- The nature of the PPME is key. The framework and methods used must have the ability to encourage real participation and give control to the community.

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11

ELF three-year impact evaluation: experiences and insights

Roy Abes

• Background

The Education for Life Foundation (ELF) is a non-governmental organisation working to strengthen grassroots groups for greater participation of citizens in democratisation. The aim is to create a dynamic civil society that is actively and effectively participating in public affairs and negotiating with local government, and other powerful players, to ensure they are more accountable to community needs.

ELF's main project is the Philippine-Danish folkschool (*Paaralang Bayan*). This carries out different leadership formation programmes for community-based grassroots leaders, through working in partnership with field-based NGOs, People's Organisations, and in some cases, local government units. The key principles that shape the programme reflect ELF's focus on democracy and local governance, agrarian and asset reform, sustainable development, gender equality, and environmental protection. Participants for the leadership programmes are selected on recommendations made by ELF's field-based partners.

Paaralang Bayan has five main activities:

- Life History Workshops: a five-day sharing of lessons from prospective participants' lives prior to a residential course. This serves to assess training needs and to screen and integrate prospective participants.
- General Leadership Course (GLC): a six-week residential course covering topics on communication, negotiation, conflict management, organisational development,

project development, culture, Filipino Psychology (see below), gender, ecology, popular economics, politics, health, leadership, and empowerment.

- Special Leadership Course: for continuing educational needs of graduates of the GLC (called leader graduates).
- Short Courses on specific needs identified by communities, groups or organisations, and which are open to anyone.
- A new program, Distance Education, has also been developed, initially for ELF-trained leaders.

ELF also supports graduates of the GLC with a program on popular economics and another on participatory evaluation and research.

Since 1992, a total of 709 community-based leaders located in 41 provinces, 174 municipalities and 412 *barangays* (villages) in the Philippines have participated in the GLC. This article describes a process of participatory evaluation that we undertook to assess the effects of the ELF leadership program.

• PME methodology

ELF recognises the importance of evaluation both as a learning tool for participants and as a means of ensuring appropriateness of trainings. Yet making sure that an evaluation adequately measures how much difference our program has made locally was not an easy task.

Our initial efforts in evaluation remained largely undocumented and lacked systematic measurement. Attempts at evaluation occurred immediately after trainings, during staff visits or reunions and provided anecdotes describing

the positive impact of ELF leader-graduates on their organisations and communities. The stories were elating and encouraging but we had no way of determining how widespread these impacts were and if they were valid.

Besides this informal evaluation, we undertook a more systematic evaluation of the first phase of the program. The Phase 1 evaluation was implemented in collaboration with funding partners, the Philippine Psychological Research and Training House (PPRTH), ELF staff, and several leader-graduates. The results showed that ELF leadership formation activities, such as the GLCs, influenced the individual leaders positively, who in turn were able to more effectively serve their organisations and communities. While the studies provided positive feedback, we had no baseline against which to compare them and so could not easily learn what difference ELF had made on leader graduates and their organisations and communities. Therefore, we sought to improve upon these evaluations in terms of baseline data, comparison areas, and developing research skills among the leader graduates, who would become key players in subsequent evaluations.

In parallel with our second project cycle phase, we started a three-year longitudinal impact evaluation, spanning 1996 to 1998. By involving our leader graduates, we were moving towards making evaluation a more participatory process. We also helped enhance their leadership capabilities as the evaluation methodology can be used in their own organisations and communities. The evaluation process had the following objectives:

- to determine the impact of ELF's courses on its leader graduates;
- to determine the impact of leader graduates on their respective communities;
- to involve researchers from among the leader graduates and further build their competencies;
- to popularise and further develop indigenous methods and instruments of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino psychology, see below);
- to help individual leader graduates to be aware of their own development through involving them in the study and sharing the results with them; and,
- to contribute to theory-building on grassroots leadership in the Philippines.

• Stages of the impact evaluation

We are now in our second year of the three year process. In the first year, ELF worked closely with PPRTH to look at the design, indicators and sample size, identify and train leader researchers, develop data gathering methods, and gather the baseline data with the leader researchers. In the second year, the leader researchers have worked on community validation of the baseline data, follow-up training, and the second round of data gathering. The third and final year will be similar to the second year, with the additional activity of comparing the final round of findings with data from the first and second years.

1. Preparatory stage

The first stage required careful planning, training of leader researchers, and design of the process with them. We were unable to involve the many hundreds of graduates, instead we selected a sample of 24 leader graduates and their communities from two GLC courses conducted in 1996. The leaders came from four provinces (Pampanga, Bataan, Zambales, and Mindoro). All the leader graduates were eager to participate, as they wanted to reflect on their own progress and possible areas for improving their leadership skills. A further 24 community leaders, who had not participated in any ELF course, were selected as a comparison group. By comparing baseline data with the findings after three years of the programme, we hoped to be able to assess what impact our program has had on the ELF-trained leaders, both personally and in the community.

Seven groups of people have been involved in the evaluation process, in many different ways (see Table 1). The table shows the level of participation of different groups at different stages of the research. ELF is now working to enhance the role that all groups can play in the entire evaluation process.

Table 1. Level of participation, to date, of the different groups involved in the evaluation process:

Stages	ELF staff	PPRTH	LRs	LGs	LG Communities	Non LGs	Communities of non LGs
Planning	H	H	M	/	/	/	/
Training of LR	H	H	H	/	/	/	/
Design	H	H	M	/	/	/	/
Data collection	M	M	H	L	L	L	L
Data collection/ analysis and validation	M	H	H	L	/	L	L
Data presentation/ report writing	M	H	L	/	/	/	/
Use of the evaluation findings	H	M	H	H	M	M	M
Assessment of the impact evaluation	H	H	H	M	L	L	L

Key to table: LR = leaders researchers; LG = leader graduates; non LG = non ELF trained leader. Level of participation: H-High, M-Medium, L-Low, /-not involved.

During the preparatory stage, both leader researchers and ELF staff underwent a training on participatory principles and tools and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. As we will explain below, the Filipino cultural context was vital to the evaluation and therefore, awareness of the concepts and methods of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, was an important prerequisite. The leader researchers were also trained in qualitative data gathering, documentation, and analysis. They helped formulate key questions and were the main actors in data collection, collation, and validation.

PRA techniques will be used with the leader graduates in the latter part of the evaluation process. We believe that the PRA techniques will not only serve as a validation tool, but will also allow us to plan future activities with the graduates that may help them to further enhance their capability.

In the preparation stage, indicators at the individual LG and at the community levels were identified and developed by ELF staff and leader researchers. Two different types of indicators were chosen: those that assess personal changes at the individual level, and those that look at community level changes (see Table 2). Each of these indicators is being assessed annually between 1996 and 1998.

2. Linking data gathering to Filipino psychology

The data gathering methods were developed by PPRTH and the Psychological Association of the Philippines (*Pambansang Samahan ng Sikolohiyang Pilipino/PSSP*). They include: guided discussions, story telling, asking questions, observation, psychological assessments, surveys, and interviews. These methods, and the norms of validity of information used by the leader researchers, take into account the Filipino local culture and language.

Filipino psychology distinguishes eight levels of relationship between Filipinos and non-Filipinos which centre around the concept of insiders and outsiders. The relationships range from 'respectful civility' to 'oneness'. To gather valid and reliable data, researchers have to cultivate at least the sixth relationship level for mutual trust and rapport. Moreover, researchers are required to become insiders through staying and integrating themselves into the community: participating and being part of the natural flow and rhythm of life in the locality; being sensitive to and respectful of the values, traditions, norms, and taboos;

and being truthful about the purpose of her/his stay.

Thus, researchers initially required a contact person, a 'bridge', who could make the necessary introductions in the community and find a place for the researcher to stay. Once the researcher had been integrated into the community, discussion groups were organised or the researcher would sit in on one of the natural/regular discussions or storytelling sessions that are part of the oral tradition of information exchange in the villages.

3. Data collation and analysis

Tape recorded sessions were transcribed and the Key Judges method was used for content analysis and categorisation of the information generated. This methods clusters and labels the data provided there is consensus by at least three people. All the statements were sorted

according to the set of indicators in Table 2. The leader graduates have been trained to do qualitative data gathering, documentation and analysis. All the results are being shared with the people involved in the monitoring project.

4. Data validation

After collating the data, meetings were held to discuss the findings with the ELF trained leaders and their communities and the comparison groups, who had not had ELF training. These were facilitated by the leader graduates. The results of the discussions have shown that leaders, even in comparison areas, found the evaluation a positive learning process. One participant said "It is good to know these things. We had no time and opportunity to discuss these in the past because we were busy at work. But now, we are here and have a deeper understanding of our community".

Table 2. Indicators for ELF's participatory evaluation of leadership training

<i>Individual level indicators</i>	<i>Community level indicators</i>
their notions and practices of "democracy, citizenship, gender roles, community development, environmental protection, active and effective participation of community members in public affairs" their capacity to manage projects their livelihood their household income their self/perceptions in terms of being a leader selected personality characteristics including self/esteem.	community member's notions and practices of "democracy, citizenship, gender roles, community development, environmental protection, active and effective participation of community members in public affairs" livelihood and household income level and quality of participation of community members in public affairs level of government services provided in response to community action capacity of grassroots organisation to manage projects community members' perceptions of leader's capacity to manage projects community members' perceptions of leadership qualities in their leader community members' perceptions of their leader's personality characteristics, including self-esteem

5. Report writing

Report writing for each year is being carried out by PPRTH.

- **Lessons and insights**

ELF expects to learn about the effectiveness of its program for training leaders for democratisation and development. More importantly, it hopes that the leaders and graduates will become more aware of their own progress and can identify areas for improvement. It plans to bring the lessons and experiences from the evaluation to exchanges with grassroots leadership practitioners and researchers from other NGOs, POs, and academics. One important forum is the annual Conference on Grassroots Leadership that encourages more understanding of leadership in the Philippines context.

For the leader researchers, leadership qualities have taken an added dimension. Leader researchers view their new competencies as directly contributing to their development as individuals, and as leaders of their organisations and communities. The leaders have learnt from each other. During a presentation at a Grassroots Leadership Conference, organised by ELF, the leader researchers said the experience of looking into the lives of other leaders was like looking into themselves: *“We understand ourselves as leaders, our organisation and community more now. It is just like ‘researching’ on ourselves”*. For the communities, the evaluation provided them opportunities to discuss issues like democracy and gender which they had not discussed in the past.

Methodologically, the project is significant as it is the first longitudinal study to use the orientation and methods of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. This makes explicit the link between the quality of data gathered and the relationship between researcher and participants, and implies that there are no short-cuts to good quality data.

An important and positive factor was the participation of leader researchers in the evaluation process, because they have a grounded grasp of realities at the grassroots.

Even though they come from different areas in the Philippines, they are easily integrated into new communities and can understand the issues, concerns, and opinions shared. The leader researchers are able to gather data from fellow leader researchers who could otherwise be uncomfortable with ELF staff or unfamiliar researchers. This further enhances the validity of data gathered.

Constraints

We have, of course, also experienced a number of constraints related to data collection, collation, and analysis. For example, due to the sensitivity of the Filipino culture, discussions, conversations, and storytelling often took different directions in different contexts. The leader researchers had to be creative in focusing the discussions to gain relevant information, without appearing discourteous to their hosts.

The tape recorded discussions had to be transcribed manually which was a laborious process. For fear of losing relevant information, the researchers included data almost word by word. This led to an enormous mountain of field data that had to be sifted. We learned that it is a skill to be able to summarise data into appropriate units for content analysis.

As our data handling and analysis process had many steps (e.g. transcribing, coding, writing codes onto paper and sorting, grouping together for the ‘key judges’ method) and involved many people, some data loss was inevitable. This was mainly caused by processing the voluminous data through a not so systematic computerisation procedure within limited time.

In the future, we plan to minimise the constraints in data collection by providing additional trainings for leader researchers on facilitation, small group discussion and exercises on writing, summary, and synthesis. To address constraints of data collation and analyses, a full time data encoder and a systematic approach to data handling will be needed.

The participatory evaluation process is an important step for ELF's learning and sharing program. ELF recognises that the ongoing

evaluation is focused on assessing the effectiveness of training activities but further research is needed to evaluate the efficiency of these activities.

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Participatory monitoring and evaluation in flood proofing pilot project, CARE-Bangladesh

Shawkat Ara

• Introduction

In 1996 CARE Bangladesh initiated a three-year community based Flood Proofing Pilot (FPP) Project. This article discusses how it has pursued its aims, and how monitoring and evaluation fits in alongside planning and testing various flood proofing measures with villagers.

After the devastating floods of 1987 and 1988, the Bangladesh Government launched a series of Flood Action Plan (FAP) studies to formulate and implement technically, financially, economically and environmentally sound solutions to the adverse effects of floods in Bangladesh. This is known as 'flood proofing' - the provision of long term non-structural or minor structural measures that can be undertaken by individual, families or communities to mitigate the effects of Flood. In one of the studies, FAP-23¹, current flood proofing activities were reviewed and evaluated to determine the overall requirement of flood proofing in Bangladesh.

CARE's FPP plans are based on the recommendations written in FAP-23. The project is funded by USAID and jointly implemented by CARE, partner NGOs and the Local Government Engineering Department of the Bangladesh Government. CARE's FPP project aims to promote flood proofing as an integral requirement of all development

activities in flood prone areas and to show how flood proofing can improve the social and economic well being of individuals, families and communities. The FPP seeks to reduce the disruption of normal social and economic activities during and after floods. Specifically it aims to:

- conserve household and community resources during floods;
- maintain individual and household physical well being during floods; and,
- motivate individuals, families and communities, through participatory learning and action techniques, to enable them to sustain improvements in their economic and social livelihood in flood prone environments.

As flood proofing requirements depend on the flood environment, this pilot project phase involves the testing and implementing of various flood proofing measures in 115 villages in two districts with different flood environments. One is an active flood plain in the major river channel in the north-west of Bangladesh where flooding is more frequent. The other is situated in the south-east, an area that remains deeply flooded for four to six months.

• FPP and participatory planning, monitoring & evaluation

1. Planning

To ensure people's participation and ownership of flood proofing activities and to enable clear monitoring and evaluation, good

¹ The Bangladesh Government launched 26 FAP studies. FAP-23 is one of the studies which aims to identify and implement effective flood proofing measures. The study was launched in 1992 and was sponsored by USAID.

planning is essential. CARE FPP used the principles and methods of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) to learn from the community, about their problems, possible measures to overcome the problems, to identify effective interventions and take actions accordingly. The Project used the following PRA methods for the initial planning of flood proofing measures: transect walks, social mapping, wealth ranking, seasonal diagram, time-line, historical matrix, problem prioritisation and semi-structured interview. During this phase the project staff stayed in the villages for five days to build rapport and develop an appropriate plan with the villagers. In the PRA sessions, both CARE and their counterpart staff facilitated the sessions.

In 1997 PRA was facilitated in both the flood environments. Four teams of three staff (including where possible one woman) were established to facilitate PRA in 15 villages. Each team spent five days in each village identifying the flood related problems and the flood proofing measures or interventions required to alleviate them.

Community dialogues were conducted in every village where the flood proofing activities were to be implemented. During the community dialogue, CARE FPP staff and villagers reviewed the outcome of participatory analysis, identified the flood proofing interventions, and determined the prospective beneficiaries of various measures. Participants considered the economic status of individuals, flood vulnerability, erosion, inundation etc. in identifying the interventions and beneficiaries. Community contributions and external resources required were also determined in the sessions.

Each village had different needs, so a wide range of flood proofing interventions were identified in the various villages. The following were implemented:

- homestead raising (improving the plinth level of homesteads above flood level);
- raising grounds of communal places;
- flood shelter;
- provision of an evacuation boat;
- flood proofed water and sanitation system;
- plant based erosion protection;

- social forestry;
- homestead gardening;
- CAGES - aquaculture for alternative income generation during floods; and
- flood preparedness and health education.

Each village also formed their own village committee called the Local Project Society (LPS) that works for the villages as a whole. The committee is comprised of seven villagers, including, where possible, a community leader, a teacher or religious leader, a local social worker and a landless person (defined as having less than 1 acre of land and required to sell his/her labour). At least two members of the committee should be women.

The LPS has a range of tasks and responsibilities. Besides assisting in implementing community decisions, they contribute in the identification of FPP interventions, identify local resources and take initiatives to use them for the project. They encourage and ensure homestead gardening, and assist landless households to obtain long term tenancy certificates (at least four years) from land owners. They help the community, CARE and partner NGOs to acquire land for communal interventions, such as schools, shelters, mosques and management of boats. They help resolve any disputes related to the project. They monitor the quality of the work, such as for example, compactor work and turfing, and ensure that labour payment proceeds as planned. The LPS also assists households to collect earth for homestead raising and helps maintain saplings for plantation activities.

After identifying the interventions and the beneficiaries per intervention, the LPS and other community members draw visual village plans that depict the flood proofing activities, clearly identifying who is responsible, what the community will contribute and do, and when it will be implemented. The plan is visualised so that all the stakeholders can read the plan and monitor the progress of implementation

2. Implementation

The implementation periods extends from January to June each year. During implementation, the society supervises,

monitors payment and makes decisions about hiring labour and the process in general. The society and villagers meet to review and share the visual plan and take initiatives accordingly.

3. Monitoring and evaluation

There are three different sessions of monitoring and evaluation in each intervention session:

- first session - monitor the implementation process
- second session - indicator identification;
- third session - impact assessment and planning.

The first session involves the ongoing monitoring of the implementation process that each LPS carries out itself. The second session took place in May 1997. Three teams of three people carried out a five day PM&E session in each of the 11 villages involved in the implementation process.

In each village, the villagers and the LPS determined the indicators and discussed how they wished to evaluate the project. The social map from the planning phase and one key question guided the session: 'How will we, as villagers, evaluate the project?' CARE staff noted the indicators which the villagers and LPS identified. Over the next two days CARE staff, with assistance from the LPS, drew pictures of the indicators and tested them with the villagers (see Table 1).

The third session, participatory impact assessment, was held in November 1997. The two day session assessed the impact of the project during 1997, which was a fairly normal year in terms of monsoon floods. The session was held in two sample villages: Aftabganj (population of 264) and Jalangarkuthi (population of 353). This was because the previous year was the first implementation year of the Flood Proofing Project and it was also the first time that PM&E was introduced.

In Aftabganj 25 (8 men, 15 women and 3 children) participated, while in Jalangerkuthi, 19 villagers (4 men and 15 women) attended the session. In Aftabganj and Jalangerkuthi, 64 and 46 households respectively had been raised (increasing the plinth level above normal flood level) by CARE FPP projects.

To understand the villagers' experiences of the floods, we tried to ensure the participation of people from different sections of the village rather than emphasising total numbers involved. The LPS committee used the social map compiled in the planning phase to check whether participants represented all sections of the villages. They were good at reading the map and ensuring that participants came from all sections of the village. In the impact assessment sessions, participation from raised households (i.e. improved plinth level households) was encouraged.

Focus group discussions were held to share experiences of floods using these visual indicators. This provided a means of assessing the progress of villages towards meeting their indicator objectives. It was planned that village sessions would be facilitated by project staff but in one of the villages an LPS member spontaneously took over the facilitation. His facilitation was good and he maintained the sequence of the process. Results of the second session are shown in Table 2.

Besides evaluating progress to date with the plans, the village sessions led to the identification of new flood proofing measures. Participants expressed a need for credit support, supply of seed and creation of employment opportunities. Jalangerkuthi village had seen the arrival of nine new households and the villagers requested that their houses also be raised. The results and outcomes of the sessions were shared with the villagers and with the project managers, so that these needs be included in the project cycle.

Table 1 Indicators used to assess the impact of CARE-supported village initiatives

Health related indicators	Household related indicators	General indicators
Access to safe water during Flood; Reduce incidence of diarrhoea; Delivery in dry place; Reduce incidence of skin infection for humans and animals (cows).	Inundation of households; Damage of households; Storage of food, fuel wood, fodder, seed; Cooking in safe dry place; Homestead gardening, plantation; Income generating activity; Less emergency selling/ distress selling of properties; Less physical suffering.	Reduce loss of human life, livestock, poultry; Shelter in raised households by the neighbours; More places for children to play; Loss of life due to new ditches.

Table 2. Example of some of the results from the impact assessment session

Indicators	Aftabgonj village	Jalangerkuti village
Health		
Access to safe water during flood	All the raised households had access to safe drinking water through flood proofed tubewells.	All the raised households had access to safe drinking water through flood proofed tubewells.
Reduce incidences of diarrhoeal disease	1 out of 64 households reported diarrhoeal disease during flood.	3 out of 46 households reported the incidence of diarrhoeal disease.
General		
Reduce loss of human life	No loss of life occurred during flood.	No loss of life.
Shelter in raised households	4 neighbouring households took shelter in the raised households.	The villagers did not report incidences of this.
More places for children to move around and play	The households reported that their children had enough dry places to move around and play.	The households reported that their children had enough dry places to move around and play.
Loss of life due to new ditches	No such incidents occurred . At the time of indicator identification the villagers were suspicious about the ditches that were created due to earth cutting. They said that the ditches might cause loss of life during flood.	In this village one child fell into the water but was rescued immediately and no sad incident took place.

• Conclusion

The FPP Project is part of the Rural Infrastructural Sector but an integrated approach was developed because of the participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation. Findings from the PM&E activities helped to develop replicable and cost-effective methodologies for flood proofing. The participatory monitoring and evaluation activities guaranteed the project's relevance to the needs of flood prone areas of Bangladesh. From the participatory process, it has been found that:

- it gives people a voice (for many women, it was the first time they had attended public meeting and expressed their opinions);
- communities could identify their priority issues/needs;
- communities possess good skills of facilitation;
- it is easy to generate and analyse information.

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Can stratified PRA platforms improve dialogue and build consensus?

Author by C. U. Okoye

with a response from Somesh Kumar

Feedback is a forum for discussion in *PLA Notes*. It features articles which raise common concerns in fieldwork or training, together with a response from another PRA practitioner. Letters and articles are welcomed for this section, as are your comments on any of the issues raised by **Feedback**.

• Background

The evolving concept and practice of PRA has meant that new difficulties and concerns arise continuously. Village composition varies considerably and, as a result, PRA approaches have to be flexible. We constantly have to review the process of PRA in order to better facilitate the greater process of community dialoguing, collective planning and development.

Differentiating PRA sessions by grouping people by, for example interests and gender, has been used to empower the poor, to gain different perspectives, to build the confidence of individual groups to confront others and argue their case and negotiate a consensus in the wider grouping. While the idea of stratification is not new, the criteria and approach to delineating strata, and establishing an interface between the various groups and interests, may present new ideas for planning and executing PRA and for articulating a body of practices that may begin to frame PRA methodologies. A key aim of this paper, however, is to focus on the lessons that such an approach teaches us and to identify some points of departure for the refinement of PRA approaches.

• Heterogeneity and dissent

This article draws on the experiences of a team of resource people during a series of UNDP-sponsored rural development workshops among fisherfolk and farmers in four riverine communities of Anambra State, South Eastern Nigeria. In order to avoid the deadlock that can arise from inter-group conflicts, separate PRA sessions ('subsessions') were held with various groups of the population to accommodate minority views, eliciting underlying causes of conflict and increasing participation.

We recognise that the heterogeneity of participants in a PRA session can be advantageous in that it enhances sharing of experiences and improves the quality of debate. As we discovered, however, such hopes are only realisable where consensus on critical issues is high and already prevails. Where there is little agreement, heterogeneity among the participants can complicate the consensus building process and make it difficult to identify the key concerns of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

This was exactly what happened at the end of the first day in Atani village where the team discovered that it was considerably slowed by inter-group schisms. The diversity of the participants, which was not obvious initially, became apparent during the session. The participants included youths, women and men of various age groups, people from different parts of the village, various trade and product interests, producers, sellers, representatives of

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religious NGOs, and government extension agents, as well as other less discernible interests. The key sources of friction among these participants were:

- the venue of the meeting was not a comfortable location for some of the participants;
- there were obvious attitudinal reactions to village realities, such as politics, power, control and authority; and,
- concerns and expectations, largely defined by age, level of education and exposure, varied widely among the participants. While some of the participants were interested in the technical aspects of primary farm production, others only wanted to discuss processing equipment or credit.

Because of the conflicts, tensions, heckling and lengthy disputes among the villagers, it became obvious that, if not properly handled, the PRA session would achieve little or nothing. The question was, how could these disagreements be better understood, reduced, eliminated or suppressed, so that participation could be improved?

Stratifying the PRA platform: criteria and approach

Day two in Atani was a big learning experience for the team. Strong emphasis was placed on process observation and that enabled us to gather information with which to decide on the criteria for stratification. Although there were many difference between the participants, four divisions were considered the most serious and used as the basis for stratification: age, occupation, gender and social organisation. Considerable differences existed between kinship groupings, but we were advised, and took heed, that making it a basis for stratification could be very dangerous.

In the end, we had six groups: youth, women, the elderly, farmers, fisherfolk and members of co-operative societies, who we invited to separate evening sub-sessions. Other considerations we used for selecting individuals to invite to sub-sessions included:

- how vocal and aggressive they appeared to be;
- how articulate they appeared to be;
- whether an individual appeared to be handicapped or unable to express him or herself; and,
- individuals who had headed organised groups in the past.

Facilitating roles and lessons of the approach

A combination of difference, fear and apathy can lead to ineffective participation in diverse groups through the suppression of views, concerns and comments at an open PRA meeting. For instance, women in their own sub-sessions complained bitterly about being made to sit with the men (and their husbands) in the same PRA session.

A major cause of conflict, not identifiable during the plenary PRA sessions, was historical factors. These became clear only during the sub-sessions and related mainly to the presence within the groups of key players who were perceived to have been culpable in past community development efforts and community organisations that were unsuccessful. To some participants, the fact that we allowed these people into the forum meant our workshops had lower credibility.

Participants' perspectives and understanding of the rationale of the team's visit varied considerably. For example, some participants believed that people who asked too many questions were delaying what they thought was the ultimate purpose of the workshop - the distribution of funds and fishing equipment. Allied to this was the fact that some participants took the workshop to be 'another workshop' and that it was just one of the usual exercises that would not produce tangible benefits. The sub-sessions offered us an opportunity to correct some of these views.

Stratified groups helped the team to identify areas of shared interests, areas of partially shared interests and areas of disagreement and of unique interest among the groups. Insights gained from the stratified PRA sub-sessions were useful during facilitation, enabling us to present alternative view points during

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discussions within the larger, heterogeneous group sessions. This allowed team members to understand and even predict the reactions of individuals during the main workshop sessions and to ask more conciliatory questions, which helped mediate and negotiate compromise. Through this 'backstopping', existing and potential deadlocks and communication gaps between various groups were reduced and, in some cases, even eliminated.

Strengths and weaknesses of the approach

Stratification successfully prevents the sequestering of ideas that are perceived to be inferior. It permits people with a commonality of interests, concerns and worries to explore them with greater enthusiasm and rigour in a trusting atmosphere. It creates opportunities for those that are more effective in smaller groups to operate. Therefore, stratification improves participation.

On the other hand, stratification can be objected to on a number of grounds. Determination of who to include in any of the strata was somewhat arbitrary, based on a very rapid appraisal of the characteristics of the participants. It is possible that the 'most qualified' representatives in each stratum were left out.

We found that running sub-sessions can be very demanding on the expertise of facilitators and resource persons. When conducting a sub-session, they have to present the views of groups not represented, so that they can effectively stimulate the other side's reactions and excite the participants on relevant issues for discussion. Sometimes, facilitators may have overplayed this role and forgotten to give neutral reactions, as a third party, which is a crucial element in PRA facilitation. Stratification of meetings was done without the knowledge of the other relevant groups. This might have worked against fuller dialoguing.

Another important limitation of this approach is that there is rarely enough time to hold consultations with representatives of all identified groups. We could only talk with at most three of the six identified groups per

village. Finally there is the risk that participants in the sub-sessions might forge alliances and come to the main PRA session armed with sub-agendas, the assertion of which could be done in a manner considered unacceptable to other groups.

• Conclusion

Stratification of PRA sessions may not be a perfect tool, but it is worthy of deeper examination. Its application, if managed well, can certainly benefit PRA in conflict-ridden settings. Rather than focus on its undemocratic properties, we ought to appreciate its potentials for eliciting views and perspectives that would ordinarily be suppressed in general interactive situations. A key challenge for the future lies in identifying and developing methods and approaches for stratification, that are non-repetitive and at the same time, seen to be democratic and transparent. Stratification demonstrates sensitivity to diversity and can, depending on the context, provide a key to understanding more precisely the way in which the power relations of the community work. In the words of Robert Chambers, we should learn to see processes and to facilitate them. Stratification should therefore complement, not overthrow, the main sessions.

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Stratified PRA platforms: a response from Somesh Kumar

There has been a common tendency to treat communities as homogeneous. It is assumed that whoever has come forward and interacted with the outsiders, represents the community. Differences in people's perceptions and priorities can therefore go unnoticed. Sometimes, and depending upon local people's perceptions about the possible outcome of these PRA exercises, they express their different priorities and interests. There are instances of such exercises leading to such quarrels and conflict that the exercises have to be abandoned. Okoye here has raised the important issues of dealing with diversity of interest groups during PRA exercises. He also shares with us his

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attempts in terms of 'stratified PRA' to deal with heterogeneity and reflects on the implications of such an approach.

PRA practitioners are generally conscious of ensuring that the 'voiceless' express themselves. Special efforts are made to ensure the participation of the marginalised. Women generally find it difficult to express themselves in the presence of men and outsiders. Now, it is a common practice to try and understand women's perspectives in separate fora. Experience has shown that using the same methods with men and women separately, and then comparing the outputs, not only enhances the outsider's understanding but also leads to gender sensitization in the community.

In certain situations, there are groups whose interests conflict. Many practitioners have found it useful to go for a PRA approach that brings together the different interest groups. One of the strengths of PRA has been its suitability for recognising and supporting diversity, complexity and empowering the weaker and marginalised.

Breaking into interest groups provides valuable insights into individual perspectives. However, special effort needs to be made by the facilitators for the divergent perspectives to converge so that some common analysis and action can take place. As PRA practitioners, our aim is not just to understand different perspectives but to facilitate the process of analysis and action at the local level. If not handled properly, the PRA process can lead to increased conflict among and between the various groups. Who should decide the criteria for stratification? Should there be stratification for all issues or just a few? The answers seems obvious. The local people should decide the criteria for stratification and only for issues where perspectives of different interest groups are required. 'Stratified PRA' sub-sessions should be clearly and strategically directed towards bridging the gaps amongst various interest groups.

Heterogeneity becomes a problem with training groups as well. At times officials of different departments are trained together. Groups can be formed to work on different tasks either randomly or based on special characteristics,

needs, interests etc. Homogenous groups are often formed when the aim is to get different perspectives for the problems. Random groups are generally preferred when the focus is on commonality of action. The random group provides opportunity for sharing varied experiences. The specialised interest groups can lead to hardening of prejudices if not facilitated well.

As Okuye notes, PRA practitioners have always strived to use some sort of 'stratified PRA'. Robert Chambers calls it 'purposive sampling in non-statistical sense' (Whose Reality Counts?, p152). Okoye has given it a name and initiated debate on an important methodological concern. This can be a helpful tool in certain circumstances. However, a lot will depend on the context, culture and issues concerned. Above all, it should be remembered that practitioners are the best judge at all times.

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14

Extracts

- **3D Venn diagram in PRA: a methodological innovation**

Venn diagrams are one of the commonly used methods in PRA to study institutional relationships. Popularly known as 'chapati diagrams' ('chapati' means round bread in the Hindi language), this method uses circles of various sizes to represent institutions or individuals. The bigger the circle, the more important is the institution or individual. The distance between circles represents, for example, the degree of influence or contact between institutions or individuals. Overlapping circles indicate interactions, and the extent of overlap can indicate the level of interaction.

Material used

Paper circles are the most frequently used material in Venn diagrams. Drawings on the paper and ground are also used, although this does not allow the size or location of circles to be changed. Sometimes, after the circles are drawn, participants discuss the diagrams and want to change the size or location. They hesitate to do so where the Venn diagram is drawn, but if the circles are cut from paper, they are encouraged to make corrections.

Usage of Venn diagrams

The Venn diagram method in PRA is very useful to study and understand local people's perceptions about institutions, individuals and programmes. The method provides valuable insights into power structures and decision making processes. The extent to which community institutions need to be strengthened can be ascertained. The relative importance of services and programmes can also be studied.

Disease perception

I conducted a training programme in 'Tigeri' slum of New Delhi for the voluntary organisation MAMTA in September, 1996. A Venn diagram was used to study locals' perception of diseases and their prevalence. The steps, as in any other Venn diagram process, included :

- listing of diseases by the locals;
- writing the names of diseases/or symbols for different diseases on small cards;
- putting the cards in descending order of perceived danger of diseases;
- asking people to allot different sizes of cut paper circles to the diseases, such that the greater the perceived danger, the bigger the circle; and,
- drawing a circle representing Tigeri and asking people to place the circles, such that the closer the circle to Tigeri, the more prevalent is the disease.

2D to 3D Venn diagramming

How can we study the cost of treatment in this diagram? This raises the question as to how more than two variables can be studied using a Venn diagram. Normally in a Venn diagram one dimension, the size of the circle, represents the importance of the institution, influence, perceived danger of disease etc. The second dimension, distance from the village or individual, represents proximity, psychological distance, prevalence of disease, etc.

The use of 3D Venn diagram provides an opportunity to add one more dimension to our study. Using the example of disease perception in Tigeri, the perceived danger of the disease has been represented by the circle size and the prevalence of the disease represented by the distance from the village circle. Now suppose that we are interested in studying the locals'

perception of the cost of treatment of the disease. This is where a 3D Venn diagram can help us. Any flat object can be stacked up to represent the cost: the higher the pile of objects, the higher the cost of treatment (see Table 1). The material used for the third dimension may vary. For example, in a tribal village, Ashabani of Dumka in Bihar, the villagers used broken flat tiles. In another tribal village, D. Mallavaram of East Godavari, the villagers preferred using currency notes and coins to depict the cost of treatment (see Figure 1).

Thus, the 3D-Venn diagramming provides a valuable tool for local people to express themselves in three dimensions and for the outsider to understand complex relationships.

Figure 1. 3D Venn Diagram for disease perception in D. Mallavaram of East Godavari



Table 1. 3D Venn diagram: disease perception in Tigeri dam

Venn diagram	Dimension	Represented by	Studied variable
1D	Width	Size of the circle	<i>Perceived danger</i> - the bigger the circle, the more dangerous the disease
2D	Length	Distance from the village	<i>Prevalence</i> - the closer the circle to the village, the more prevalent the disease
3D	Height	Coins/flat tiles	<i>Cost of treatment</i> - the higher the pile of coins/tiles, the more expensive is the treatment

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15

A brief guide to the principles of PLA (I)

This section of the *Notes* provides training materials for participatory learning, exploring a different theme in each issue¹. This issue examines how to ensure that training in participation covers more than the methodologies, but includes some theoretical and organisational issues.

A key concern for trainers is that trainees should be aware that participation does not simply imply the mechanical application of a 'technique' or method, but is instead part of a process of dialogue, action, analysis and change. The roots of participatory methods and approaches can be traced to many sources. Diversity is part of their strength. This section provides a brief outline of the concepts central to participatory learning and action, together with training suggestions for how to share these ideas with trainees. It highlights the emerging dangers and limitations, drawing out the key challenges that you, as a trainer, will need to bring to the attention of trainees.

You may be tempted to present issues of institutional context, history, key principles, theory and limitations in the form of lectures. Although lectures are an important element of any training course, they do have their limitations (see *Trainers ... PLA Notes x*). Remember to use buzz sessions and brainstorming techniques to enliven the debate and to enhance trainees' learning.

- **The development of participatory approaches**

A brief history

In recent years there has been a rapid expansion of new participatory methods and approaches in the context of sustainable development. These have drawn on many well-established traditions (such as activist participatory research, agroecosystem analysis, applied anthropology, field research on farming systems, rapid rural appraisal) that have put participation, action research and adult education at the forefront of attempts to emancipate disempowered people. Make a brief presentation of the history of participatory approaches to trainees² to emphasise the diversity of approaches. Stress that in a growing number of government and non-government institutions, extractive research is being complemented, or even replaced, by investigation and analysis by local people themselves.

Common principles

The interactive involvement of many people in developing participatory approaches in different institutional contexts has promoted innovation. There are many variations in the way that systems of interaction have been put together. For example, Participatory Rural Appraisal is one of the better-known approaches and it is practised in over 130 countries. However, there are many different approaches: this diversity and complexity is a strength.

¹ Taken from a *Trainers Guide for Participatory Learning and Action*. Published by IIED. Price £14.95, plus p&p (25% UK and Europe, 35% airmail). See inside cover for details on how to order publications.

² See Chambers, R. (1992). *Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory*. IDS Discussion Paper 311, IDS, Brighton, UK for a review.

Despite the different ways in which these approaches are used, most share common principles:

- *A defined methodology and systematic learning process*: the focus is on cumulative learning by all the participants;
- *Multiple perspectives*: a central objective is to seek diversity, rather than simplify complexity;
- *Group learning process*: all involve the recognition that the complexity of the world will only be revealed through group analysis and interaction;
- *Context specific*: the approaches are flexible enough to be adapted to suit each new set of conditions and actors;
- *Facilitating experts and stakeholders*: the methodology is concerned with the transformation of existing activities to try to improve people's situation; and,
- *Leading to change*: the process of joint analysis and dialogue helps to define changes which would bring about improvement and seeks to motivate people to take action to implement defined changes.

Training suggestions:

1. *Encourage trainees to think of themselves as facilitators of other people's learning*, particularly when they get to the village or urban neighbourhood.
2. *Brainstorm on participation*.
What does participation mean to you?
What are the advantages and disadvantages of participation?
3. *Show a video of participatory methods in use*.
Discuss positive issues and ways to improve the approach shown.

Criteria for trustworthiness

It is common for trainers to be asked by sceptical participants a question such as 'but how does it compare with the real data?'. Many people assert that participatory methods are 'undisciplined' and 'sloppy', and that their 'subjective' nature means that it is possible only to respond to selected members of communities.

In response to this, it is important that trainees reflect on the data collection process and the data themselves. Introduce the idea of

triangulation by multiple sources, methods and investigators, and the need for prolonged and/or intense engagement between various (groups) of people to build rapport and trust, and keep the investigator open to multiple influences. Use of participatory methods without, for example, triangulation and participant checking of constructed outputs, should be judged as untrustworthy.

Training suggestions:

1. *Brainstorm on what makes information and data trustworthy*
How do we normally ensure trustworthiness?
What criteria do we use to establish whether something is to be trusted or rejected?
2. *Small group discussions on participants' own experiences of trustworthiness criteria*.
Which criteria are most relevant or important?
3. *Use a case study and/or video to analyse other organisations' experiences with establishing trustworthiness*.

Types of 'participation' in development

The term 'participation' has different meanings for different people. The term has been used to build local capacity and self reliance, but also to justify the extension of state control. It has been used to devolve power and decision making away from external agencies, but also to justify external decisions. It has been used for data collection and also for interactive analysis. There are basically seven ways that development organisations interpret and use the term 'participation' (see Box 1). However, if the objective is to achieve sustainable development, then nothing less than functional participation will suffice.



BOX 1
A TYPOLOGY OF PARTICIPATION

1. *Passive participation.* People participate by being told what is going to happen or what has already happened.
2. *Participation in Information Gathering.* People participate by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings.
3. *Participation by consultation.* External people listen to the views of local people. External professionals define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of people's responses.
4. *Participation for material incentives.* People participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. People have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.
5. *Functional participation.* People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement tends to occur after major decisions have been made. These institutions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may become self-reliant.
6. *Interactive participation.* People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. Groups take over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
7. *Self-Mobilisation.* People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external organisations for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used.

Training suggestions:

1. *Ask participants to give examples from their own work of different types of participation. Why were they different? What happened as a result?*
2. *One particularly important challenge for trainers is to find ways of moving institutions from the top half of the typology in Box 1 towards the bottom. Photocopy the typology and hand it out.*
Ask participants to brainstorm on the types of processes that could help this transition. What is needed? Who should be involved? How long will it take? Which elements are needed now, and which later?

It should always be qualified by reference to the type of participation, as most types will threaten rather than support the goals of sustainable development. What is important is to ensure that those using the term both clarify their specific application and define better ways of shifting from the more common passive, consultative and incentive-driven participation towards the interactive end of the spectrum.

The dilemma for authorities is that they both need and fear people's participation. They need people's agreement and support, but they fear that this wider involvement is less controllable, less precise and so likely to slow down planning processes. But if this fear permits only stage managed forms of participation, then distrust and alienation are the likely outcomes. This makes it all the more crucial that judgements can be made about the type of participation in use.

TRAINERS' CHECKLIST

- How will you draw out and build upon the existing knowledge and experience of the participants?
- How long to you plan to lecture before breaking up for buzz or brainstorm sessions, or for an energiser?
- Have you prepared any handouts ahead of time?
- How will you encourage participants to develop a deeper understanding of the word 'participation'?

Next issue: Principles of PLA (II)

Great care must therefore be taken with both using and interpreting the term participation.

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Tips for trainers: participation ‘poker’

- **Objectives**

- to enable you to discern the false promises from the potential of community participation in natural resource management (NRM);
- to enable you to understand the simplicity of some assumptions behind participation in NRM; and,
- to help you understand the most likely benefits from increased participation in NRM.

- **Materials**

A sufficient number of pre-designed playing cards for the number of players and number of rounds that are to be played. Each card should contain one statement completing the phrase ‘Community participation in natural resource management is good because...’ (see the examples given below, following the description of the game).

- **Steps**

- Form groups of 6 people. Choose one dealer who will deal the rounds and keep score.
- The dealer should shuffle the cards and deal so that each player receives five cards. Five rounds will be played.
- Once the cards have been dealt, look at your hand and think about whether each statement is more or less correct. Decide whether you think they are strong completions of the statement ‘Community participation in natural resource management is good because...’ or whether they are weak endings.
- Place one card face down in front of you, declaring whether it is IN - a strong ending

for the statement, or OUT - a weak ending for the statement.

- When everyone has one card in front of her/him in the same sequence, all the players who declared OUT turn up their card and explain her/his decision.
- The group debates the decision. If the group accepts the player’s decision about the card being an OUT card - a weak ending, the player receives 1 point. If the group rejects the decision, the player loses a point and the card is placed in the centre.
- After all the OUT cards have been discussed and decisions taken, the process is repeated with the cards which players declared IN. If the group agrees with the decision, the card is placed in the centre. If they disagree, the player loses a point.
- At the end of the round, one card is chosen from all those played in that round and placed in the centre after discussion. This card represents the group’s view of the most accurate reason for the benefits of community participation in natural resource management. The player who selected the card gains two points. If a card originally declared OUT is chosen, the player who declared it OUT loses two points and all others in the round gain a point (see Table 1).
- Repeat steps 4 to 8 for each round.
- If there is time, the teams should present their five top cards to the other teams who are playing and defend their choice, challenging the choice of others, until agreement is reached between all the teams about the three statements that best describe the benefits of community participation in natural resource management.

Table 1. Summary of scoring system

Decision made by player	Points for player if group agrees	Points for player if group disagrees	Points if selected as top card for that round
OUT	+1	-1, card placed in centre	-2 for player, +1 for all others
IN	0, card placed in centre	-1	+2 points

• Comments

The original version was based on 24 people playing in 4 teams of 6 (5 players and the dealer not playing) and had 8 rounds. The mathematics is variable and does not influence the exercise much. I have used it with 24 people for 3 rounds and with 45 for 5 rounds and have not found it makes a difference. Just make sure you have enough decks of cards, enough statements for the number of rounds you want and enough time. The most tricky thing is to get the teams to end more or less on time. And as some will debate less and others more, this can be more complicated with more groups. Time keeping is important and that is the role of the dealer. Although the dealer may play if she/he wishes, their most important role is keeping time and making the final decision if there is no consensus.



Remember you can vary your statements depending on your training objective. You might want to make your own set which starts with the words 'Government support for community-based planning is important because....' or 'Researchers' involvement in participatory research is good because...'. I have also used it to discuss forest policy myths and just selected about 30 common assumptions - more and less correct ones - without them starting off with the same opening words. This worked just as well. The essence is to encourage discussion about fact and fiction related to the topic at hand! Have fun!

- **Thirty statements (for 5 rounds with 6 players, or 6 rounds with 5 players)**

'Community participation in natural resource management is good because.....'

1. local people know best;
2. if observant, local people will have a greater natural history of the area than those that do not live in the resource area;
3. resource related conflicts can always be resolved that way;
4. it is cost-effective for governments;
5. it ensures community representation in resource management debates;
6. it is cost-effective for communities;
7. it is a right of those who are affected by the state of the natural resource;

8. the outcome will be more acceptable to all those involved and, therefore sustainable;
9. it allows different interest groups to understand each other's views and priorities better;
10. there is not a good alternative;
11. it is the only way to ensure a positive outcome;
12. the scale the some natural resource management problems require collective action, and therefore collective decisions;
13. it will ensure the inclusion of unbiased information into decision-making;
14. it will avoid mistakes by creating opportunities for more informed choices/plans/projects;
15. it will empower the community to undertake further resource management action in future;
16. most natural resource management problems will need solving at a local level;
17. government agencies and their staff are ignorant about local resource issues;
18. it is appropriate for all contexts;
19. it will ensure better accountability of government spending;
20. it will raise awareness in the community about resource management problems;
21. it is relatively cheap in the long term;
22. it will ensure that the relatively socially/economically marginalised groups are included in decisions that will affect their lives;
23. it will achieve greater transparency in decision-making;
24. it is being demanded by local communities;
25. refusing it is a recipe for disaster when it comes to implementing a local resource management plan;
26. it avoids the need for an elaborate bureaucracy to deal with natural resource management;
27. the iterative discussion and negotiation means that wiser decisions are likely to be made;
28. it will prevent a loss of faith in the political process related to decisions about resource issue;
29. the government simply does not have the capacity to make decisions and implement resource management in all cases; and,
30. it allows for better identification of those likely to be affected by decisions about the resource being considered.

NOTE

Source: developed by Irene Guijt, based on Feminist Poker invented by Dr. Karina Constantinou-David and her colleagues in the Philippines. For a full description, see The Oxfam Gender Training Manual. Oxfam, UK and Ireland, 1994.