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# pla notes

## General issue

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International
Institute for
Environment and
Development

*PLANotes* is the world's leading informal journal on participatory approaches and methods. It draws on the expertise of guest editors to provide up-to-the minute accounts of the development and use of participatory methods in specific fields. Since its first issue in 1987, *PLANotes* has provided a forum for those engaged in participatory work – community workers, activists, and researchers – to share their experiences, conceptual reflections and methodological innovations with others, providing a genuine 'voice from the field'. It is a vital resource for those working to enhance the participation of ordinary people in local, regional, national, and international decision making, in both South and North.

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# pla notes

**Number 47**
**August 2003**

**Adapting the Methodology for Participatory Assessment (MPA) in Nepal – see article 2. Credit: Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH)**

# editorial

## Welcome and news

Welcome to issue 47 of *PLA Notes*.

This issue is a 'general' one, allowing space for articles sent in by readers on a wide range of themes, contexts, and countries. We really value hearing about these rich experiences and the diversity of ways in which participatory approaches are being used, and would like to encourage more readers to write up their experiences and send them to us. Author guidelines are on the inside back cover of this issue and are also available on our website www.planotes.org, or email me and I'll send you a copy. We can offer editorial support and advice on request. Remember also that each issue of *PLA Notes*, even the themed ones, includes a selection of general articles so there is always a slot for interesting articles.

Before I come onto the articles in this issue, a quick update on what's new at *PLA Notes*.

## Thanks to Holly

I'd like to start by giving a big thanks to Holly Ashley for minding *PLA Notes* whilst I've been on maternity leave (for the baby-minded, I had a beautiful daughter, Matilda). Holly finished off *PLA Notes* 44 on Local Government and edited issue 45 on Community-based Animal Health Care, and issue 46 on Participatory Processes for Policy Change. She has done a fantastic job on these issues, as well as overseeing the launch of the *PLA Notes* website. Her hard work has made my return to editing *PLA Notes* very straightforward and easy, and I'm pleased that she will continue to be a part of the PLA Notes team in the future (see below).

## Goodbye to Cristina

Cristina Zorat, our Editorial Assistant for the past two years, left IIED in June. She has gone to work for a commercial company that develops and manages web sites for a range of clients, and will have the chance to acquire web design skills herself. Many of you who have written articles for *PLA Notes* will have communicated with Cristina, and will know that she was always calm, courteous and unflappable – despite the pressure of *PLA Notes* deadlines. She also did a fine job in supporting Holly whilst I was on maternity leave. We will all miss her at IIED. Holly will take over her role as Editorial Assistant, as well as continuing to oversee subscriptions and take the main responsibility for marketing *PLA Notes*.

## Back issues on-line

Good news for those of you who want to access back issues of *PLA Notes* electronically – issues 1 to 40 of *PLA Notes* will soon be available on-line through the *PLA Notes* website. Go to the back issues pages, where you'll find a full list of contents for each issue and you'll then be able to click to a PDF of each article. You'll also be able to search for particular themes or subjects through the web site search engine. Unfortunately, we're not able to make the search function quite as sophisticated as we'd like. For better search facilities, the *PLA Notes* CD-ROM is still the best option, and that brings me to...

## Free CD-ROM offer

Whilst stocks last, paying subscribers will receive a free copy of the *PLA Notes* CD-ROM if they take out a two-year subscription next time their subscription comes up for renewal. The CD-ROM is fully searchable, contains over 500 articles, and is a fantastic resource for practitioners, trainers, and researchers. New subscribers (paying and non-paying) who subscribe for two years will also receive a free copy of the CD-ROM, so pass on the subscription form in this issue to someone else who might be interested so that they can take advantage of this offer.

## Forthcoming issues

We have been trying for some time now to plan our special theme issues well ahead and publish our plans in *PLA Notes*, giving you the chance to get in touch with us if you're interested in contributing. Below is a list of some of the themes we expect to cover over the next three years. If any of them are of special interest to you, or if you'd like to contribute to a particular issue, let us know. This will help us judge the level of interest in a theme issue in that area.

## In this issue

We start with a 'mini-theme' for this issue (reflected in our front cover): the generation of numbers through participatory approaches – and in particular aggregating and using those numbers beyond the community level, an area in which there is growing interest. As **Robert Chambers** points out in our opening article on participation and numbers ('parti numbers', as they are sometimes called), participatory

**Triangulating the findings of a participatory exercise in Nepal**
Credit: Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH)

methods have often produced numbers: what is different is finding ways of standardising the data so that it becomes possible to compare the findings and to aggregate the numbers for higher level planning and policy purposes. This raises questions of ethics, not least of which is whether using participatory methods in this way is necessarily 'extractive' or whether there can be something in it for communities. Chambers believes there is scope for learning and empowerment of communities – much depends on good practice, and he sets out his own shortlist for good professional practice. Unusually for *PLA Notes*, there is an extensive list of references accompanying this article, providing a rich variety of examples in this

developing area of participation.

**Leonie Postma**, **Christine wan Wijk**, and **Corine Otte** describe an example of generating numbers from qualitative information using a standardised scoring system developed to assess the sustainability of community-managed water and sanitation projects. After working through a participatory assessment using tools such as social maps and welfare grouping, communities score themselves against a standard set of indicators. The indicators and scales are fixed so that the results can be analysed statistically. The scores produced can be used by the communities themselves to monitor their progress towards, for example, greater representation of women and the poor in decision making about

water and sanitation, or greater equity in payments systems for water, but they are also useful at district and national level. If carried out as part of on-going work with communities, this approach can be a source of learning and empowerment for communities, as well as providing other decision makers with the numbers they need.

**Sarah Levy** writes from her experience in Malawi about the difficulty of using relative measures of poverty – which is the commonest approach in participatory wealth grouping and ranking – in projects and programmes that try to reach the poor. When communities come up with different categories and groupings, how can we know how the poorest in one village compare

with those in another, and whether or not we are reaching the poorest overall? In this case, researchers defined simple, meaningful indicators of poverty, which can be used in participatory work with villages, but allow the results to be compared across villages, and enable decision makers to judge to what extent projects and programmes are reaching the poorest. Levy emphasises that indicators must be carefully defined in discussions with communities, and are likely to be specific to different parts of a country. She also raises ethical considerations in relation to parti numbers, and points to the need to find ways of involving participants in the analysis and use of data generated at village level.

Generating quantitative data is also an important part of a methodology for participatory assessment and action developed by **Vicky Johnson** and **Robert Nurick**, in partnership with disadvantaged communities and statutory organisations (e.g. local government) in the UK. A key part of the approach is to develop coding systems which allow the characteristics of each participant or contributor to be coded according to locally relevant axes of difference, for example gender, age, relative wealth, and ethnicity, which are defined during the research process. This information is used to ensure that different groups' interests and views are represented, and reveals where there is agreement and disagreement between groups. It also provides quantitative information about the numbers and characteristics of those consulted, which gives the research outcomes credibility with decision makers, and meets statutory monitoring requirements. The

communities themselves make use of the data in their negotiations with local bodies over the implementation of action plans developed during the participatory process.

**Sonia Blaney** and **Marc Thibault** focus on a very different kind of project – trying to protect areas of tropical rainforest in Gabon, Central Africa. The team used participatory approaches in their work with communities to demarcate *terroirs villageois*, or buffer zones, around the forest. They then recorded geographic coordinates for the *terroirs*, which could be fed into a geographic information system (GIS) and used to monitor changes in the *terroirs*. In this case, the PRA work did not itself produce numbers, but was combined with other methodologies to produce quantitative information.

Robert Chambers raises the issue of maintaining quality, both methodologically and ethically, in participatory approaches intended to produce numbers. However, concerns about maintaining quality as PLA spreads are not confined to parti numbers, nor are these concerns new. Drawing on a recent project, Pathways to Participation, which asked practitioners to take stock of PRA and its current status, **Andrea Cornwall** and **Garett Pratt** highlight the very different understandings practitioners have of what good PRA practice is and – more fundamentally – what PRA is really about or for, and what makes it distinctive. Whilst for some PRA is about visual sharing of knowledge, views, and ideas, for others, PRA is a 'way of life' and its underlying values should influence every activity practitioners undertake. Given the broad range of views on what PRA is, they question whether it is

possible to agree what is meant by 'good' PRA and therefore to develop broadly applicable guidelines or codes of conduct for good PRA practice. They place greater emphasis on the importance of practitioners having opportunities to reflect critically on their experience and share those experiences with others, as a means to learn and continually improve their practice.

An example of such reflection comes from the **SEDAWOG team** (Socio-Economic Data Working Group), who describe some of the early misunderstandings they faced when starting up participatory monitoring of Lake Victoria fisheries. They describe honestly the errors they made in their initial contact with one community and the lessons learned from this, which were applied in subsequent work with communities. Whilst one might question whether the monitoring was truly 'participatory', the communities involved do seem to have benefited from contact with the researchers and gained the confidence to take action to manage the fisheries more effectively as a result of the monitoring.

A quite different participatory process is described by **Kenneth Storen**, **Nthabeleng Lephoto** and **Colleen Dunst**, writing about orphaned children in rural Lesotho whose parents have died of AIDS. The focus here is very much on empowerment. The authors describe how they worked with a group of these children, and their carers, in one village, to build the children's self-confidence and ability to support each other, as well as to act as a unified body in the community. The children gradually built up their own skills and the strength of the group, becoming increasingly independent

of the external faciliators. These children have since supported children in other villages in developing similar kinds of groups. As the full effects of HIV/AIDS are felt in Lesotho, these kinds of support networks will have an important role in supporting the growing number of orphans in rural communities.

We return to the issue of whether or not programmes are reaching the poorest in **Dipankar Datta** and **Iqbal Hossein**'s article which looks at the success of a Concern programme in Dimla, Bangladesh in reaching the poor. Their participatory research showed that the programme was more effective in reaching the poor than the extremely poor. It also looked in more detail at those classified as 'extremely poor' through well-being ranking and found that, within this category, there were groups with quite different characteristics and that one of the groups identified could not really be regarded as 'extremely poor'. The article goes on to discuss the way in which the extreme poor can be inadvertently excluded from programmes without a good understanding of their situation, and advocates a specifically targeted 'pro-extreme poor strategy'. This study also produced quantified information in the form of tables and percentages of households, but in this case it is not clear whether absolute or relative measures of poverty were used.

**Almotalib Ibrahim**, **Sara Pantuliano**, **John Plastow**, **Wolfgang Bayer**, and **Ann Waters-Bayers** describe a participatory evaluation of the Red Sea Hills Programme (RSHP), which is working with pastoralists in Sudan. The evaluation was a joint exercise, involving external reviewers, members of the RHSP, and the pastoralist communities themselves, and analysis and feedback was carried out at all three levels. Analysis by the village development committees of their organisational capacity was a particularly important part of the evaluation and led to much learning and action by the community to strengthen the capacity of these organisations to manage development activities.

Our last article in this issue, by **Rajiv Saxena** and **Subir Prahdan**, describes some innovative participatory tools specifically developed for evaluating training provided under a World Bank-funded project. The tools enabled extension staff to analyse their jobs in real depth, which the authors regard as an important first step in evaluating the relevance and effectiveness of training. The article goes on to look at ways in which the effectiveness of training can be assessed, and how the training might be improved to increase the amount of learning from the training.

## Regular features

Tips for trainers this time comes from China. **Li Ou**, who works at the China Agricultural University, Beijing, draws on his experience of training in China to present 'tips' for conducting PRA training workshops. His feature provides some fascinating insights into the use of PRA in the Chinese context, where PRA is still very new, and we hope to have more from him in future issues.

There are no **RCPLA pages** in this issue of the *PLA Notes*. This is because the RCPLA is currently reviewing its objectives and membership. We hope to have a bumper RCPLA section in the next issue.

I hope you enjoy reading the articles in this issue as much as I have. Thanks to all the authors, especially Robert Chambers, Sarah Levy, Andrea Cornwall, Garett Pratt, Leonie Postma, Christine wan Wijk, and Corine Otte who produced articles at short notice. Special thanks go to John Thompson for his help with this issue and to Cristina Zorat for preparing the In Touch section before her departure.

Happy reading!

Angela Milligan, Editor

## Correction

In the last issue of *PLA Notes*, we published an article by Giacomo Rambaldi and Le Van Lanh entitled, 'The seventh helper: the vertical dimension. Feedback from a training exercise in Vietnam'. Giacomo has asked us to point out that the views expressed in the article do not necessarily reflect those of the Asian Development Bank, where he has been working since September 2002. The web address for the ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation, where Giacomo previously worked, is www.arcbc.org.ph

# 1

# Participation and numbers[1]

## by ROBERT CHAMBERS

Since the early 1990s, a quiet tide of innovation has developed a rich range of participatory ways by which local people can themselves produce numbers. The methodological pioneers have rarely recognised the full significance of what they have been doing. This paper seeks to explore some of the evidence, experience, and questions concerning the generation of numbers using participatory approaches and methods. It is in no way a comprehensive review.

### Ways of generating numbers
Participatory activities can generate numbers in different ways and for different purposes.

First, in a comparative research mode, there is the analysis of secondary data which have been generated in a participatory manner without pre-standardisation. Deciding categories and allocating to them can be difficult but the results can be significant and persuasive. Karen Brock (1999) gathered findings from participatory research on poverty, and analysed what had come from 58 groups and individuals in 12 countries who had been asked to identify key criteria for poverty, ill-being, or vulnerability. She then used a computer programme (NUDIST) to classify and count these by criteria, separated into urban and rural, and into men and women, and presented the results diagrammatically to show frequency of mention as percentages. One striking finding was that water was a much higher priority for poor people in urban than in rural areas.

In this mode, the numbers are 'ours', that is, they are derived and used by the outside analyst.

Second, in a more empowering mode, participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM & E) (Estrella & Gaventa, 1997; Guijt, 1998, 2000; MaGillivray et al., 1998; Estrella et al., 2000) can generate and use numbers. Local people identify their own indicators and then monitor them. The indicators can be numbers that are counted, qualities that are scored, quantities that are measured or estimated, and so on. To illustrate, in Somaliland, herders evaluated wells by scoring them before and after improvement according to their own 45 criteria (Joseph et al., 1994). There is a large, growing, and relevant literature on PM & E.[2]

In this mode, the numbers are more 'theirs', that is, they belong to and are used by local people.

Third, and the main focus of this note, is the generation of numbers from several or many sources using participatory

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[1] Edited extracts from 'Participatory Numbers: experience, questions and the future', which is a revised and updated version of 'The best of both worlds' in R. Kanbur (Ed.) ( 2003) *Q-Squared: qualitative and quantitative methods of poverty appraisal*, Permanent Black, Delhi, pp.35–45.

[2] For selected abstracts see www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip.

approaches, methods, and behaviours which are to some degree standardised and predetermined. This practice has evolved and spread quietly, almost unnoticed. Often the methods are visual (see e.g. Mukherjee, 1995 and 2001; Jones, 1996; Shah et al., 1999). The activities can be by individuals, but most often they take place in groups: different groups of people do similar things which provide numbers which can be added, averaged, compared, or used as a basis for various calculations. Local people can do calculations themselves at their own level, but it is usually the outside researcher/facilitators who aggregate and calculate beyond the group level.

In this mode, the ownership varies depending on context and facilitation.

### Participatory methods, applications, and activities

**Methods** often used to generate numbers include participatory mapping, modelling, pile sorting, pie diagramming, card writing, marking and sorting, matrix ranking and scoring, linkage diagramming, and pocket voting (for which see van Wijk-Sebesma, 2001). Their common **applications** include social and census mapping, household listing, wellbeing ranking, trend and change analysis, seasonal diagramming, preference ranking, causal-linkage analysis, and problem trees. The participatory **activities** which generate numbers include counting, calculating, measuring, estimating, valuing, ranking, and scoring. Comparing things is often involved, giving numbers or scores to indicate relative sizes or values.

Examples of **counting** are social and census maps. These tend to be very accurate for identifying and listing households, for headcounts and for household characteristics which are common knowledge (for seven cases see Chambers , 1997). Participants can 'see what is being said' and correct and add detail. An illustration is the community censuses with participatory mapping conducted in 54 representative villages in Malawi (Levy & Barahona, forthcoming). Applying strict statistical principles, the findings indicated a rural population of the order of 11.5 million, some 35 % higher than the official census figure of 8.5 million.

An example of **calculating** comes from Bangladesh where as part of the appraisal for community-led total sanitation local people work out the quantities (e.g. cartloads for the whole community) of faeces produced in a year (Kar, forthcoming).

Examples of **participatory measuring** can be found with timber stocks, water flows, arm circumferences, and land use areas from participatory GIS modelling (Rambaldi & Callosa-Tarr, 2000).

Examples of **estimating** are often associated with compar-

**'There is a case for methodological pluralism. Some questionnaires will surely always have a value… But with the evidence and experience we now have, should questionnaires be seen as a second best, to be used only if there is no participatory alternative?'**

ing and **relative proportions**, as in historical matrices (e.g. Freudenberger, 1995; PRAXIS, 2001) which indicate trends and changes; seasonal food calendars which show seasonal variations in things like amount and type of food consumed (e.g. Mukherjee & Jena, 2001) and health problems (Shah, 1999); and as in proportional piling for income and food sources (e.g. Watson, 1994; Eldridge, 2001a; and Stephen Devereux & Henry Lucas, pers. comms). There are many applications with variants of methods such as the Ten Seed Technique (Jayakaran, 2002) or the allocation of 100 seeds, stones, or other counters to give percentages.

Examples of **valuing** are preference ranking, matrix ranking and matrix scoring (Jones, 1995). Things compared range from crop varieties in Zambia (Drinkwater, 1993) and India (Manoharan et al., 1993) to contraceptive methods, from markets in Bangladesh (Kar & Datta, 1998) to political parties, from girls' preferences for sex-partners in Zambia (Shah, 1999) to wild plants collected for winter feeding of goats in Afghanistan (Leyland, 1994). Examples in the UK include health providers and candidates interviewed for a university post.

**Comparing** which combines **estimating** and **valuing** is also common. Perhaps the best known and most widespread example is wealth or wellbeing ranking, where analysts group households according to their judgements of personal or household conditions (see e.g. *RRA Notes* 15, 1992 for an introduction).

### Going to scale

Local people can generate numbers in all the above ways. In practice, this is usually with facilitation of individuals, or more usually groups, by one or more outsiders. Local people can also themselves be facilitators, but outsiders' skills are usually needed where participatory activities occur on a scale which requires later aggregation, with or without statistical analysis. In these situations, some degree of standardisation of process is common to assure comparability and enhance the validity of aggregation. The outcomes are often presented in

tables no different from those generated by questionnaire surveys. There are now numerous examples. A few illustrations can indicate the sort of thing that has been done and point to future potential.

- A pioneering effort in Kenya used wealth ranking to enable pastoralists to separate out three groups – rich, middle, and poor. A ranking game was then played for the relative importance of problems, and the results averaged for 24 rich, 17 middle and 27 poor groups. There were sharp differences between the groups in the priorities they identified. Livestock management scored 87 for the rich, for example, but only 7 for the poor (Swift & Umar, 1991).
- The earliest case of a large-scale survey with participatory visual analysis and no questionnaire may[3] have been the 1992 use by ActionAid of PRA-related methods, mainly mapping, classifying and, counting, in over 130 villages in Nepal (Action-Aid-Nepal, 1992). This was a survey of utilisation of services. It covered the whole population in the villages and generated 13 tables. The population summed to 35,414.
- An SCF (UK) study in 20 Districts in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe used pile sorting and other participatory methods for a retrospective study on how individual poor farmers coped with the 1992 drought (Eldridge, 1995, 1998 & 2001). The resulting tables were similar to those from a questionnaire survey.
- Aggregating from focus groups has been a feature of some Participatory Poverty Assessments, for example, the Kenya and Tanzania PPAs led by Deepa Narayan in the mid-1990s and the Bangladesh PPA (UNDP, 1996) where poor women's and poor men's priorities were elicited separately.
- Focus groups have undertaken participatory studies of urban violence in Jamaica, Guatemala, and Colombia with identification of different types of violence, their seriousness, and the importance, positive or negative, of different institutions (Moser & Holland, 1997; Moser & McIlwaine, 2000a; Moser & McIlwaine, 2000b; and Moser, 2003). In the Guatemala study this led, for example, to a table derived from 176 focus group listings which showed the frequency of mention of 22 different strategies for coping with violence (Moser & McIlwaine, 2000b)
- Aggregation from focus groups was also undertaken in the Voices of the Poor study (Narayan et al., 2000) in 23 countries. This involved aggregating the views of hundreds[4] of discussion groups in over 200 communities

on directions of change in violence against women and of characteristics of institutions, the results of which were then presented diagrammatically.
- A participatory study was undertaken in Malawi of the 'starter pack' (of seeds, fertiliser etc) programme and of small farmers' ideas of sustainability (Cromwell et al., 2001). In each of 30 villages, analysis by three focus groups, each of a different category of farmer, included pairwise ranking of the relative importance of 15 indicators of sustainability. The results were combined in a table of mean values across villages by region.
- Also in Malawi, policy-related research using participatory methods and following statistical principles has been used to investigate questions considered too complex for questionnaires, such as the proportion and distribution of the very food insecure and the proportions who should be targeted by an intervention (Levy & Barahona, forthcoming, and Levy, this issue)

## Methodological and research issues

In these approaches, process is sensitive to quality of facilitation. Good selection, training, and commitment of facilitators are vital, as are adequate time and resources devoted to training. Group characteristics and dynamics are another key area. Groups may be unrepresentative, or dominated by one or a few, or by one sort of person (for example, men in a mixed group of men and women). Care in selection, in judging size of group, and observation and facilitation of process can offset these dangers.

Some methodological questions concern applying statistical principles[5]. Others concern optimising trade-offs, for example:

- **Closed and commensurable versus open and diverse**: trade-offs between the rigidity of preset categories and the diversity of categories likely to result from open-ended participatory processes. David Booth has expressed concern that the exploratory, responsive, and reflexive nature of enquiries will be sacrificed through standardisation to permit aggregation upwards (Booth, 2003). The issue is serious and likely to be a perennial. To date, a partial solution has been progressive participatory piloting and evolution towards degrees of standardisation as in the Malawi starter pack study (Cromwell et al., 2001).
- **Standardised versus empowering**. The more standardised the process, the more extractive and less empowering and

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[3] I shall be grateful to anyone who can tell me of any earlier case.
[4] A precise figure cannot be given for two reasons: the total number of discussion groups was not recorded for every country though it was probably over 1,500 (Narayan et al., 2000:); and not all discussion groups produced relevant comparable data suitable for analysis.

[5] For a clear and authoritative statement of the application of statistical principles to these processes, see Levy & Barahona, forthcoming.

accommodating of local priorities and realities it is likely to be. The less standardised it is, the harder the outcomes will be to analyse.

- **Scale, quality, time, resources, and ethics:** The issues here are far from simple. Smaller scale, more time, and more resources can allow for higher quality and better ethics but losing on representativeness; and vice versa.

For research, there are many questions. Three which stand out are:

- **Relative costs**: assessments of relative costs of participatory approaches and questionnaires have tended to show that the participatory approaches are cheaper, but an up-to-date collation and analysis of evidence is needed.
- **Relative benefits**: assessments of validity, relevance, and utility comparing participatory approaches with questionnaires.
- **Comparative analysis**: comparing approaches, methods, and outcomes to learn about and be able to spread good practice.

## Potentials
Two potentials deserve special note.

### Alternatives to questionnaires.
The numbers generated are similar to those from questionnaires, but with advantages including better access to insights on topics which are sensitive, complex or unexpected, often greater accuracy and relevance, and the potential for 'the best of both worlds', namely qualitative as well as, or combined with, quantitative insights. To illustrate, a participatory study in India gave the caste-wise breakdown of number of families with addiction to alcohol (PRAXIS, 2001). Moser and McIlwaine's work in nine urban communities in Colombia elicited numerous types of violence, and (2000a) produced the unexpected finding that 54% of the types of violence identified were economic, as against only 14% political, contrary to the common belief that political violence was the bigger problem (Moser, 2003).

There is a case for methodological pluralism. Some questionnaires will surely always have a value, done well in some contexts (for example, perhaps, the National Sample Survey in India). But with the evidence and experience we now have, should questionnaires be seen as a second best, to be used only if there is no participatory alternative? There is a reversal here of mental set and reflex, with participatory approaches, methods, and behaviours replacing questionnaires as the first option considered when numbers are needed.

> **'Participatory numbers may be needed by outsiders, but gains by participants may be less improbable and difficult than appears at first. The insights and numbers can often be of interest and use to community members'**

### Empowerment
Participatory numbers can empower. The questions:

> *Whose research is it, and for whom?*
> *Whose monitoring and evaluation?*
> *Whose indicators and numbers?*
> *Analysed and used by whom?*
> *Who is empowered?*

can be asked of every process, and again and again. Participatory numbers may be needed by outsiders, but gains by participants may be less improbable and difficult than appears at first. The insights and numbers can often be of interest and use to community members. To an extent easily overlooked, people enjoy and learn from the processes of analysis and sharing of knowledge, values, and priorities, and feel good at discovering what they can show and express, and having their views heard. A typical observation is that, 'People participating in the groups seemed to enjoy the discussions and exercises and most stayed for the entire duration' (Adato & Nyasimi, 2002). In good PRA practice there is a tradition that the data – the maps, matrices and diagrams – should be retained by those who created them. There is no a priori reason why data from participatory numbers activities should not be shared. Efforts can be made throughout the piloting and design of the process to make the data of mutual benefit, and able to lead to and support local action.

Participatory numbers can also support decentralised and democratic governance. Examples from the Philippines stand out (Nierras, 2002). There, grassroots health workers have made their own classifications and disease maps, conducted their own analyses, and produced village figures at variance with official statistics, but which officials came to accept. Moreover, they identified priority actions which led in a matter of months to a sharp decrease in mortality. Or again, participatory investigation of land holdings in the Philippines led to revisions of figures which doubled local government takings from the land tax which was the principal source of

**Figure 1: Dimensions of interaction and outcome**
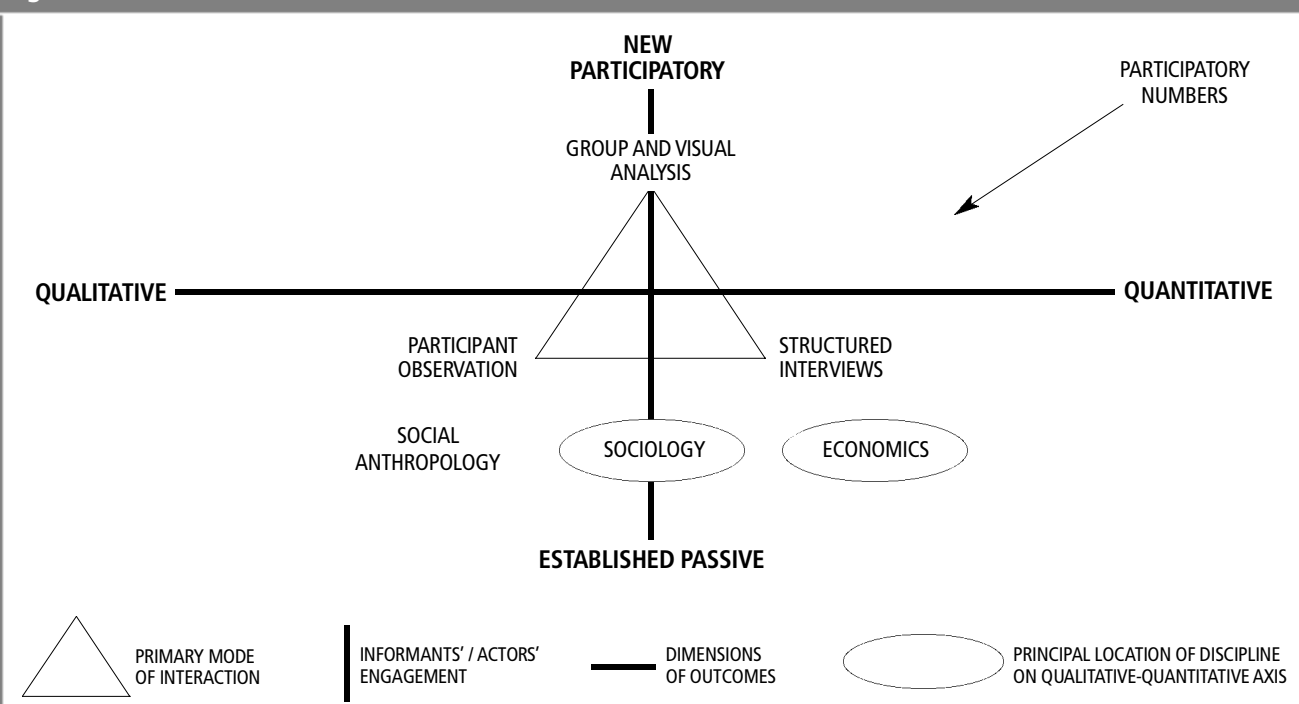


revenue. These compelling examples open one's eyes to what appears to be a widespread potential.

### Spread, good practice, and ethics

Despite much remarkable innovation, the potential of participatory approaches, methods, and behaviours has been little recognised by mainstream professionals. Several explanations can be suggested: innovators in NGOs have lacked time or interest to write up; questionnaires are embedded professionally and institutionally as the way to generate numbers in research;  rather few academics or other researchers have been interested in new approaches in research; and participatory approaches are regarded as qualitative not quantitative, as in the north-west quadrant of Figure 1. But all this is changing as the potential of the north-east quadrant is recognised. The question now is how with spread to establish good practices, both methodologically and ethically.

Conditions are like the early days of RRA in the late 1970s (Khon Kaen, 1987), and PRA in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when it was becoming clear that something was about to happen on a wide scale. Both RRA and PRA challenged and presented alternatives to professionally embedded methodologies. With both there was some excellent and inspiring good practice as they spread. But

there are dire warnings from both. With rapid spread and heavy demand, many who claimed to be RRA or PRA trainers and practitioners had top-down attitudes and behaviour, and lacked practical experience. Much practice was bad – imposing, routinised, insensitive, unimaginative, exploitative, and unethical. People were alienated, and the data were unusable and unused.

Two differences from RRA and PRA do, however, give grounds for hope.

• The first is the serious professional and academic interest in qualitative-quantitative issues and going to scale, including the application of group-visual methods. This is evident in recent publications such as *Participation and Combined Methods in African Poverty Assessment: renewing the agenda* (Booth et al., 1998), publications of the Statistical Services Centre at Reading University, the Cornell March 2001 Qualitative-Quantitative Workshop (Kanbur, 2003), and the Swansea July 2002 Conference on Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Development Research. Starting in 2002, the International and Rural Development Department and the Statistical Services Centre at the University of Reading have convened workshops for PRA/PLA practitioners on 'Dealing with data from participatory studies: bridging the gap between qualitative and quantitative methods', combining statistical professionalism with

participatory practice and ethics.

• The second difference is that the application of participatory numbers approaches requires more serious preparation than PRA. Almost anyone can do almost anything participatory and call it PRA. To generate numbers, however, requires more thought, preparation, pilot testing, and discipline.

For the future, different observers will have different prescriptions. Good ideas can be found in statements from workshops in Sussex in 1994 (Absalom et al., 1995), Bangalore in 1996 (Kumar, 1996) and Calcutta in 1997 (all three published in PRAXIS, 1997). Box 1 shows a personal short list for good professional practice in this new context:

A code of good practice for participatory numbers facilitators, users, and sponsors has been evolved by members of an informal network and is (July 03) in near final draft.[6] The bottom line is that when numbers are generated in participatory ways, ethical considerations have to come first.

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[6] The draft Code of Conduct is being finalised by Jeremy Holland j.d.holland@swansea.ac.uk who is also, together with Savitri Abeyasekera, editing a book provisionally entitled *Who Counts?* on participatory numbers.

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**Box 1: Participatory numbers: good professional practice**

• Donors, governments, and international NGOs to exercise restraint and patience and not to demand too much, too fast, and with too few resources.
• Approaches and methods to be invented and evolved by sensitive and experienced innovators to fit each case, recognising the need for time and resources for the critical phase of methodological development.
• Care to be taken in the selection and training of field facilitators, recognising that training takes time (weeks not days), will be a substantial proportion of expenditure, and will bring long-term as well as immediate benefits through capacity building.
• Monitoring,evaluation, and feedback to be facilitated and sought from community participants and combined with practitioners' self-critical reflection, to learn each time how to do better, and the insights shared widely.
• Above all, ethical practice to be demanded and held to. This means not misleading, exploiting, or endangering people. So often local people's time is taken to their loss not gain, their expectations are raised and disappointed, and they are exposed or expose themselves to danger without protection or disadvantage without recompense. Honest transparency about purpose and about what people can and cannot expect are paramount. To the extent feasible, the process should be empowering, a good experience, and a net gain for them.

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# 2

# Participatory quantification in the water and sanitation sector

## By LEONIE POSTMA, CHRISTINE VAN WIJK, and CORINE OTTE

## Introduction

PLA approaches can enable local people, rural or urban, to undertake their own appraisal, analysis, action, monitoring, and evaluation of water and sanitation services. Additionally, it can empower women, poor people, and disadvantaged people, giving them more control over their lives (PRAXIS, 1997). However, participatory methods can take much time and often generate qualitative information that is difficult to compare and analyse.

For this reason, the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) of the World Bank and the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre carried out a global study to design and test a new methodology, the Methodology for Participatory Assessment (MPA). This builds on the advantages of PLA approaches but also allows the results to be quantified, compared, and statistically analysed. Table 1 compares conventional PLA approaches and the MPA.

This article outlines the MPA, its potential usefulness for both community members and organisations providing water services, and some of the concerns and problems associated with its use.

## The MPA

The objectives of the WSP and IRC global study were to:
• test whether communities with more participatory,

| Table 1: Differences between PLA and MPA | |
|---|---|
| **PLA** | **MPA** |
| • Case-specific | • Same set of factors |
| • May be totally varied | • Comparable data |
| • Aggregation in mind | • Aggregation in practice |
| • Duration from short to long | • Duration more or less fixed |
| • Often qualitative | • Qualitative made quantitative |
| • No statistical analysis | • Statistical analysis possible |

demand-responsive, and gender- and poverty-sensitive projects also have better sustained and used water services;
• develop a methodology, the MPA, that generates quantitative data on qualitative issues for use at both community and higher levels.

For both objectives, the team developed an analytical framework to measure the link between sustainability and:
• the level of democratic and demand-responsive planning;
• the level of equitable division of burdens and benefits between women and men;
• the level of autonomy, equity, and quality of local service management;
• the level of institutional support for community participation and management, and gender and social equity

• the level of policy support.

A set of indicators was identified to assess sustainability, together with a sequence of participatory tools to assess the indicators, and a scoring system to quantify data from the participatory assessments. Participants from all three levels – community, agency, and policy – took part in the assessment.

## The use of participatory tools

At community level, separate groups of women and men from better- and worse-off parts of the community assessed the quality of the systems, their functioning, the existing management structures, and hygienic and environmental use. The groups also assessed process indicators such as the level of demand responsiveness and the gender and poverty sensitivity of the planning and implementation processes and the operation and maintenance of the systems. Tools used during the assessment were welfare classification, social mapping, transect walk, review of the existing management structures, pocket voting and matrix voting, rope voting, benefit-cost analysis, and card sorting. The assessment took up to five days.

At agency level, both agency staff and community representatives participated in the assessment. Using various participatory tools, they assessed:

• the enabling organisational system for approaches that are participatory, demand, gender and poverty sensitive; and

• the enabling organisational culture for the implementation of these approaches .

At policy level, the methodology relies mainly on open interview and review of policy documents. The interviews helped determine the extent to which programme policies define sustainability and equity as their goals, and to which strategies are already operational and can  be further developed in support of these goals.

## Quantification of PLA outcomes

To quantify the results, community members used the outcomes from the respective PLA methods to rank their community on scales of 'mini-scenarios'. This made it possible for community members to transfer the qualitative outcomes of their analysis into statistics. It should be noted that scales cannot be developed by the community members themselves. To be valid and comparable across communities, scales are developed based on a set of theories related to development, sustainability, gender, poverty, and equity. Before their use, they should be validated through statistical analysis.

Social mapping is an important part of the MPA
Credit:Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH)



| Table 2: Scoring table – payment systems for running the water supply | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Payment system for running the water supply** | **Score** |
| **Scale** | Nobody pays | 0 |
| | User households pay, but everyone pays the same, irrespective of the actual running costs and household benefits (e.g.consumption,distance) | 1 |
| | User households pay, and everyone pays the same, but based on the costs of the service | 2 |
| | User households pay according to benefits (e.g. consumption, distance) and running costs | 3 |
| | User households pay according to benefits (e.g. consumption, distance) and running costs, but adjustments are made based on payment capacity | 4 |

An example is the equity of payments systems for water supply or sanitation. Using the outcomes of the welfare ranking, the social map (including information on access to the improved water service), and analysis of the use of water, the participants scored their community on a scale of 0 to 4 (see Table 2).

Often, it emerged that payments or subsidies are flat despite substantial differences in welfare, access, and use of the water. However, there may be more equitable arrangements such as payment according to benefits and running costs, or payment according to consumption.

The scales helped community members visualise where they are and where they might want to go. Programme staff and managers could also see which type of financing systems the various communities had planned or used. On the basis of this, they could draw conclusions on adequacy and equity, and determine what this meant for programme

**The MPA emphasises the importance of including women's perspectives as well as men's**
Credit: Corine Otte

support. In the same way, quantitative data on other qualitative aspects, such as existing functioning of management structures and the level of gender and equity in these structures, can be produced through the use of scales.

## Gender and poverty in process and data

The MPA mainstreams gender and poverty approaches in process and data. Poor men and women cannot easily attend meetings for practical reasons such as workload and lack of transport. Cultural and socio psychological factors also play a role. Without good moderation, the better-off and the men will take the lead. For this reason, the MPA includes training for facilitators in gender and social inequalities, and how to handle these in practice. Gender and social equity are also part of the scales. Situations with greater gender and/or social equality receive a higher score than situations that are less so.

## Lessons learned so far

In the global study, the MPA was tested with data from 88 communities in 18 countries. In Flores, Indonesia the MPA has been retested in 63 communities. In both studies the MPA was used to examine the linkage between demand, poverty- and gender-sensitive approaches, and sustainability (see van Wijk, 2001; Gross et al., 2001). The main lessons learned can be summarised as follows:

• **Decision making**: The number and democratic nature of local planning decisions are important ingredients for sustained services. Participation of men and women community members (rather than just agencies, local leaders, or male community members) in planning decisions and the number of decisions taken are significantly related to the performance of these water services.

• **Quality of management**: An important impact on the sustainability and effective use of the services is the presence of locally developed rules and functioning management structures that are accountable and transparent, and recognised by authorities.

• **Capacity building**: The findings of both studies confirmed that capable management organisations, with representatives of women and the poor, are essential for community-managed water services. This is good reason to pay sufficient attention to capacity building of poor and rich, and women and men in community management.

• **Gender**: Women's more equal representation in community organisations that manage the water services and their perceived influence (indicating that representation is not tokenism) are encouraging.

• **Poverty aspects**: Key concerns related to poverty are the composition of water management committees, the opportunities to use domestic water productively within households, and the adjustment of tariffs to differential use, benefits, and capacity to pay.

## The potential of the MPA

Since its design and testing, the MPA has mainly been used for external evaluation. However, experiences have proved that the methodology can also be used to empower local people and agencies to make community-managed water and sanitation services more sustainable and equitable. The use of the MPA as a management tool for monitoring and improving existing services and planning new and expanded services is therefore to be preferred over its use for final evaluations (van Wijk, 2001).

Within the context of the decentralisation of water supply and sanitation to local government level, district authorities will have an increasingly important task. They will

**Equal representation and participation by women contributes to the success of community-managed water services Credit: Corine Otte**



need to maintain an overview of coverage, sustainability, and use in the projects, programmes, and services in their areas. They will need data to plan their own support and monitor the impacts of interventions. However, higher level authorities and donors also want data, often on different aspects and in different forms.

The MPA combines the collection of planning and management data with gender and poverty sensitivity in its indicators and processes. The data collected with the MPA gives district level staff a simple, yet comparable and gender-and poverty-sensitive database on how well-sustained and used completed systems are and what planning and training processes go on in implementation projects. They can use the database, which consists of simple spreadsheets, for tailor-made upward reporting as well as support planning to communities.

The MPA can also help local communities plan and manage their local services. It not only allows them to plan and manage their systems in a participatory way, but also generates data, which are accessible and valuable for their situation analysis and problem solving. Using the same set of data as the district authorities, community members and members of local water and sanitation committees can analyse processes and results, and plan their own improvements, as well as negotiate support on aspects beyond their capabilities.

Based on the potential of the MPA to serve as a methodology, which would be beneficial for both district staff as well as community members, the focus is now on adjusting the indicators, tools, and scoring for sanitation, hygiene, and watershed management. Pilot projects are being developed to test and investigate the strengths and weaknesses of using MPA data in combination with computer-based tools such as GIS and MIS at district level to monitor and improve coverage, access, and sustainability of water services. The challenge lies in limiting the data collection to the key indicators and establishing and maintaining gender- and poverty-sensitive processes, rather than going for more data and doing away with the qualitative and process characteristics.

**Good facilitation is vital if good quality information is to be generated**
**Credit: Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH)**



### Box 1: An experience with the MPA

Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH), an NGO in Nepal, decided in 2002 to use the MPA to evaluate its Gender and Poverty approach (GAP), which was piloted in five projects. NEWAH chose the MPA because it assessed the sustainability of services, used participatory methods, had a gender and poverty focus, and allowed quantitative aggregation of qualitative data. After a two-week training and field test, staff felt that the assessment provided valuable information for planning corrective action. However, they also found it to be time consuming for them and for the communities, and it created high expectations. The staff felt that the MPA had to be simplified and streamlined for ease of application in the field, analysis of data, and interpretation of results. As a result, NEWAH decided to reduce the duration to two to three days, and revise and condense the MPA which will allow NEWAH to assess also specific GAP interventions, processes, and impacts. NEWAH plans to use the assessment in its project cycle, i.e. during the baseline, monitoring and evaluation, and for facilitating corrective action with communities and supporting rehabilitation where necessary in the long term.
Source: Paudyal, L., Moffat, M. & James, V. (2002)

## Concerns and problems associated with the use of the MPA

There are a number of key problems and concerns associated the MPA[1]:

- **Length of the MPA**. In the global study, this was five to six days, which is a big input from communities. However, if the MPA is used in project implementation it can be adapted and spread over the total project implementation and thus be less of a burden for both the community and field workers.
- **Poor implementation due to lack of understanding**. The methodology is complex and not easy to adjust to contexts outside the water and sanitation sector. The lack of insight and or understanding of the methodology among practitioners and/or lack of willingness to adhere to a certain set of principles when developing new scales increases the chances of poor replication.
- **Poor implementation due to lack of skills**. Good facilitation skills are needed to avoid the better-off and men taking the lead and biasing the outcomes. The MPA also requires computer and analytical skills that may not always be present in the organisation, which will hamper full and correct use of the data.
- **Deliberate generation of invalid information**. The validity of the data depends heavily on the quality of the underlying work, but can also be influenced deliberately, especially if community members are not allowed to score themselves and where there is a lack of peer review.

Reasons could be the pressure to give a rosier presentation than reality, but also community members can generate invalid data, either to get additional funds and projects for their community or to cover social inequalities and problems.

- **Deliberate misuse of the information**. A problem with quantification is that statistics look truer, but are they valid? As Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, South Africa stated, 'There are lies, damn lies and statistics, and there are people who deliberately lie with statistics…'. The possible misuse of information is especially a concern at national and district levels. It seems likely that power over use of the information is with the person who controls the database and generates figures from the data. The data can be (mis)used to cover the failures of projects rather than to improve sustainability and access to water for the poor. Furthermore, lack of availability of both qualitative and quantitative information can lead to wrong interpretations and explanations of the collected information.

## A bit of both or the best of both?

Ideally, the MPA takes the best of qualitative and quantitative methods and provides benefits for all, including the most disadvantaged groups in local communities. Although first results are positive, there is a need for additional experiences to decide whether the combination will be as strong as it promises.

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[1] This section is partly based on input from participants at a one-day seminar at IIED in London, UK on 16 June 2003, which discussed quantification in PLA (parti numbers), scaling up, and quality issues.

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GENERAL ISSUE

# Are we targeting the poor?
# Lessons from Malawi

**by SARAH LEVY**

## Introduction

Anybody who works in or with developing countries must now be familiar with the theme of poverty reduction. Many have heard of the goal of reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries by at least one-half between 1990 and 2015. This target came out of the UN Global Conference on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), and has been endorsed by the UN, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the IMF, the World Bank, and most governments around the world. Poverty reduction has become a central focus of multilateral and bilateral aid programmes to developing countries, especially those who qualify for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.

How can we find out if poverty reduction is actually happening? It is common to use the poverty line of US$1 per day to measure poverty. If the number of people living on US$1 per day or less halves between 1990 and 2015, the target will have been met. Household surveys measuring income and expenditure can help to document progress – or the lack of it – in each developing country.

But many people see the US$1 per day approach as being over-simplistic. Firstly, they point out that for many subsistence or semi-subsistence communities it is difficult to measure poverty using money because many transactions in daily life do not involve money. Secondly, human poverty is not only a question of income. It involves livelihood insecurity, vulnerability, deprivation, exclusion, lack of access to basic services, gender divisions, and other factors. It is even important to consider people's perceptions of their quality of life (well-being). This line of thought has led to more 'qualitative', complex assessments of poverty, often involving participatory research methodologies. The most well known are the World Bank's Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) and its Consultations with the Poor (now known as Voices of the Poor) studies, which were done in 1999 (Narayan et al., 2000).

## Are we succeeding in targeting the poor?

Like the income and expenditure survey approach, the 'human poverty' approach can paint a general picture of a country at different stages of progress towards meeting its poverty reduction goals. For instance, as part of a HIPC Poverty Reduction Strategy, a country-wide survey and a qualitative study (e.g. a Participatory Poverty Assessment) may be used every few years to monitor progress towards meeting targets.

But neither of these approaches is much use for day-to-day decision making. Policymakers, civil servants or NGO

## 'Policymakers, civil servants or NGO employees who have to implement the initiatives designed to reduce poverty need a different kind of information. They need to know whether a particular project or programme is working'

employees who have to implement the initiatives designed to reduce poverty need a different kind of information. They need to know whether a particular project or programme is working. If it is, then they may decide to continue implementing it. If it is not, they may consider shifting resources to another, more successful initiative. Frequent small-scale evaluations are needed, in which a key question is: 'Did the intervention succeed in targeting the poor?'.

Questions about the impact of specific interventions cannot be answered by the type of household surveys usually carried out by national statistical offices – even if appropriate questions were to be included in the questionnaire – because the population surveyed is unlikely to coincide with the population targeted by the intervention. Most studies based on participatory methods do not answer these questions either, because the measurements of human poverty elicited during participation tend to be relative (see below), so it is difficult to compare findings between sites and over a period of time.

As part of work carried out in Malawi over the past four years during evaluations of the Targeted Inputs Programme[1] (TIP), we have developed two ways of measuring poverty for assessment of poverty-targeting interventions. The first uses tailor-made surveys incorporating a rough-and-ready poverty index. The second adapts participatory approaches. Both methods have proven effective, but the first is only possible with a relatively large budget and the technical capacity for carrying out a survey. This article presents what has been done so far with the participatory approach and discusses the challenges that lie ahead.

### Measuring poverty in Malawi using PLA
The participatory approach to measuring poverty for assessments of poverty-targeting interventions has been developed by a partnership between researchers based at The University of Reading and The University of Malawi. Development of the concepts has also benefited from discussions with

members of the Parti Numbers group (an informal group looking at the whole subject of deriving numbers from participatory approaches and methods). The approach involves:
• absolute as well as relative measurements of poverty;
• a technique called community mapping with cards.

### Relative and absolute
The first of the studies in Malawi, entitled *Consultations with the Poor on Safety Nets*, began by asking a group of five to ten participants in each community to define categories of wealth/poverty and vulnerability. It found that, 'Communities often distinguished many categories, with characteristics being a mixture of poverty and vulnerability' (Chinsinga et al., 2001). For instance, in Chikadza village in Chikwawa (Southern region), they classified households into three categories: poor; medium; and rich. In Chakuwereka village in Karonga (Northern region), they identified four categories: the relatively well-to-do; the 'struggling'; the very poor; and the vulnerable. And in Kasalika village in Lilongwe (Central region), they distinguished six categories of household: the 'struggling'; the very, very poor; the poor; the elderly; households with orphans; and 'average' households.

A major problem with this sort of approach, in which communities are asked to define the categories, is that they vary from place to place. How can we compare the outcomes in Chikadza and Kasalika? Even if we have asked the participants to divide the community so that we have an idea of the proportion of households belonging to different categories, we find ourselves on difficult ground. In Chikadza the participants identified 139 'poor' households out of a total of 181, representing 77% of the village. In Kasalika only five households were described as 'poor' – 10% of the village. Of course, other categories might also be regarded as poor in Kasalika. The problem is, which ones to include? And how poor are the ones we might decide to include in Kasalika, compared with the poor identified in Chikadza?

Perhaps we are more interested (from a policy perspective) in the 'very, very poor', as identified in Kasalika. But how can we compare the situation in Kasalika with that in Chikadza, where no such category was defined, or in Chakuwereka, where we cannot be sure if the equivalent is the 'very poor', or the 'vulnerable', or some households in both categories.

This problem is one which many practitioners will recognise, because most participatory studies of poverty adopt a similar approach, using some form of wealth ranking based on local definitions (see Box 1). From the point of view of policymakers who need an answer to the question, 'Did the intervention succeed in targeting the poor?', these **relative**

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[1]TIP provides a small pack of free agricultural inputs (10 kg of fertilizer, 2 kg of maize seed and 1 kg of legume seed) to smallholder farmers.

**Box 1: Relative wealth/well-being ranking**

The methodology guide for the World Bank's series of studies, Consultations with the Poor, (World Bank, 1999) asks the facilitator to carry out well-being ranking by establishing:

• *Different well-being groups/categories of households/individuals, as identified by the local people. Allow the community to come up with their own categories. Do not impose ideas. There is no fixed number of categories that a community can come up with. Usually these vary between three-to-six categories, but could be more…*

• *[The] proportion of households/individuals in each of these categories. This could be exact numbers or indicative scores (out of 100, or any predetermined fixed maximum score). This will give an idea about the proportion of poor or deprived people in a community.*

Mukherjee's guide to field methods for PLA (Mukherjee, 2001) describes more sophisticated methods of social grouping on the basis of well-being/poverty/wealth. These are based on social mapping and one of them – Grandin's Method – uses numbered household cards. But they still group or rank only on the basis of 'local people's perceptions' and 'locally generated criteria', missing the opportunity to include an absolute poverty yardstick.

measurements of poverty within each community are not enough. They need a more **absolute** yardstick: something that will be able to distinguish consistently the 'poor' and the 'very, very poor' in all communities where the intervention has occurred.

The second of our series of Malawi studies, entitled TIP Messages (Chinsinga et al., 2002) worked with a more absolute definition of poverty. In our view, such definitions are quite specific to each developing country (or part of it), and should be developed through discussions with communities about how they see poverty, and by consulting previous research. We had the benefit of the Consultations with the Poor on Safety Nets study (Chinsinga et al., 2001), as well as research by Van Donge et al. (2001), which assessed how the poor perceive poverty. Both of these studies found that food security is perceived as a key indicator of poverty in rural Malawi.[2] We therefore decided to use food security as a proxy for poverty. We agreed to use the following definitions in all study sites:

• **Food Secure (FS)**: households that have enough to eat throughout the year from harvest to harvest.

• **Food Insecure (FI)**: households that have enough food to last from harvest up to Christmas but not between Christmas and the next harvest. (The harvest in Malawi is in April/May).

• **Extremely Food Insecure (EFI)**: households that have a

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[2] This is true for rural areas in many developing countries. Brock (1999), reviewing participatory work on poverty and illbeing worldwide for the World Bank's Consultations with the Poor workshop, observed that, 'Respondents in rural areas placed a strong emphasis on food security in their definitions of poverty, illbeing and vulnerability, as well as lack of work, money and assets'.

**'From the point of view of policymakers who need an answer to the question, "Did the intervention succeed in targeting the poor?", these relative measurements of poverty within each community are not enough. They need a more absolute yardstick'**

longer period of not having enough to eat. These households start facing severe food shortages before Christmas.

Food security is by no means a perfect indicator of poverty, and it might be argued that others are better, but the principle is to find something that is:

• meaningful to participants (and means the same in every place);

• simple, so that it is clear which category each household fits into; and

• capable of differentiating between the groups of interest to the study, such as the well-off, the poor, and the extremely poor.

Unlike when asking communities to define poverty/vulnerability in their own terms, or when looking at the various aspects of 'human poverty', it should be stressed that the aim here is to **avoid complexity**. We only need to divide the village into different groups so that we can assess the impact of an intervention. Of course the two approaches are not mutually exclusive – it would be possible to have a broad discussion of poverty/vulnerability and then use a simple, absolute poverty indicator to divide the village into groups.

### Community mapping with cards

The method used for dividing the village into food security/poverty groups and assessing whether or not the intervention (the TIP in this case) succeeded in targeting the poor was simple. We asked five to ten community members to draw a social map. The participants were asked to mark every household in the village on the map and to give it a number. Then they prepared a card for each household, with the name of the household head and the household number as shown on the map. It was vital that every household in the village appeared on the map and had a card with the same number as on the map.

The facilitator then introduced the discussion of food insecurity, explaining our definitions, and asking participants what were the characteristics of households in each category.

**Social map showing all the households in the village Source:Chinsinga et al. (2002)**
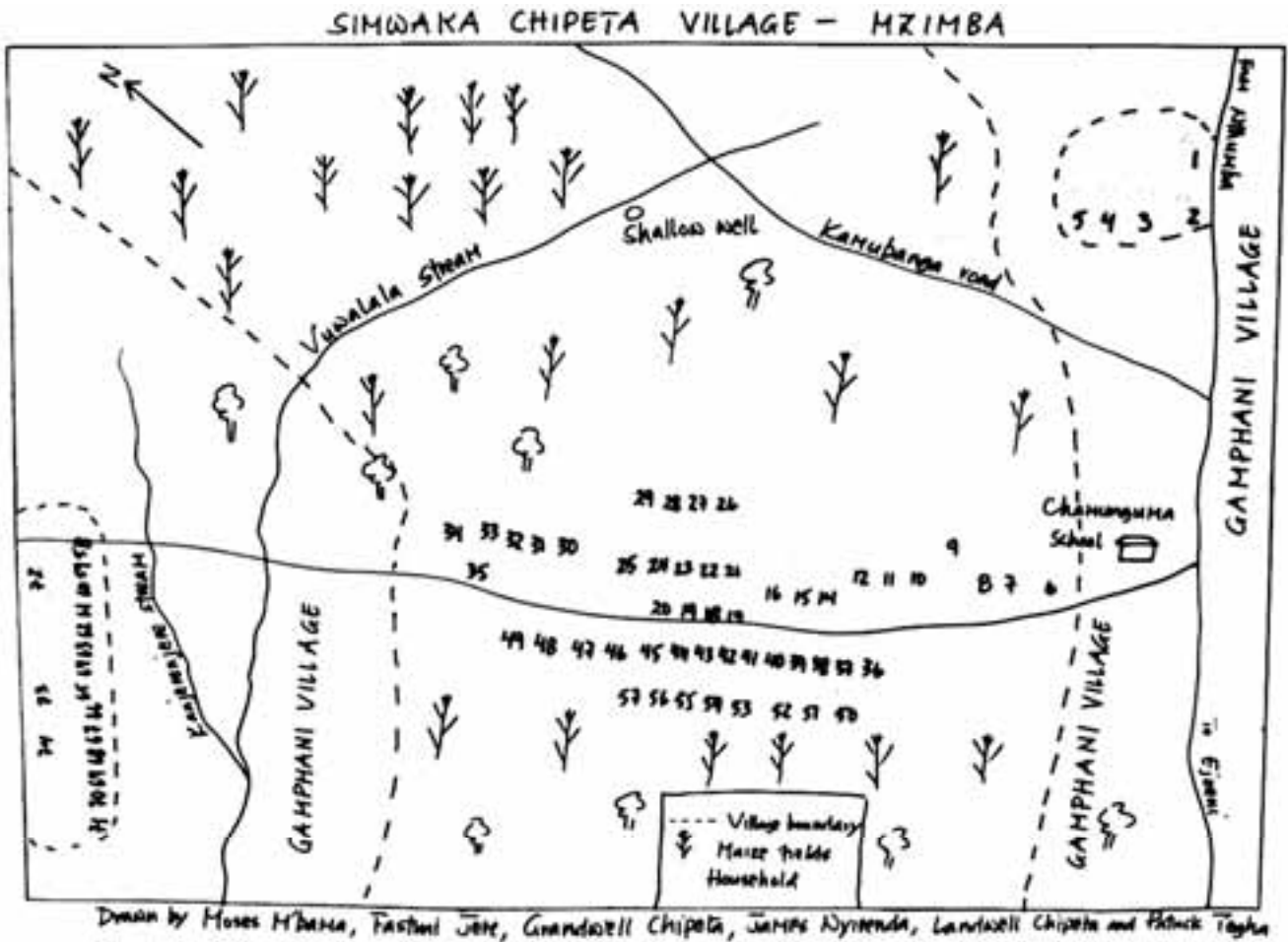


After some discussion, participants were asked to put each household card into the appropriate food security category, and its food security status (FSS) was marked on the card by the facilitator. Finally, participants were asked to say which households received a TIP pack, and the facilitator marked the TIP status (TS) of the household on the card.

What have we achieved by using this method? We know for each village, and for all villages together, what proportion of households are extremely food insecure (very poor) and the degree of success achieved in efforts to target these households. Table 1 shows that 32% of households in the villages visited were extremely food insecure in the 2001–02 season, but TIP was not very successful in targeting these households. The report concluded that, 'There should have been no food secure TIP recipients, and no extremely food insecure non-recipients. There were considerable "inclusion" and "exclusion" errors in the poverty targeting process' (Chinsinga et al., 2002).

**Table 1: Correlation between receipt of TIP and food security status**

| Food security status | TIP recipients (%) | Non-recipients (%) | Total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Food secure | 21.2 | 33.5 | 28.9 |
| Food insecure | 38.5 | 39.7 | 39.3 |
| Extremely food insecure | 40.3 | 26.8 | 31.8 |
| Totals | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Note: Two villages were excluded because TIP packs were shared equally, so it was impossible to distinguish recipients from non-recipients.
Source: Chinsinga et al., 2002.

What are the advantages of using this approach? Firstly, it is simple to do and can be understood by most participants. This means that it has a good chance of producing reliable results. Secondly, we have information for **all** households in the villages visited, which means that we do not run the risk of having a biased sample. In the case of the Chinsinga et al. (2002) study, information was collected on 1343 households

**Examples of cards marked with FSS and TIP status. Source:Chinsinga et al. (2002)**



in 21 villages. Thirdly, it ensures that we have information at household level, but this has been produced quite quickly by asking participants to act as key informants.

The main disadvantages of the approach that we have identified so far are:
• it can be argued that using a proxy for poverty is too simplistic – even for measuring the impact of an intervention – as poverty is a complex issue;
• large villages present problems for mapping and producing cards;
• if you want reliable information at district or national level, you need to do the study in a relatively large number of sites – in Malawi we worked with a minimum of 20 sites for national-level studies – and these need to be selected at random (see Barahona & Levy, 2002).

**Ethical considerations and future challenges**
There are a number of ethical considerations associated with

participatory learning that involves generating numerical data, such as community mapping with cards. They include issues of transparency, consent, and confidentiality. These are the subject of a set of Guidelines and a Code of Conduct which has been drafted by the Parti Numbers group and will be accessible at www.reading.ac.uk/~snsbarah/code by the end of July 2003.

For the future, there are a number of challenges:
• firstly, to ensure that ethical issues are more fully taken into account as community mapping with cards evolves and is adopted by more practitioners;
• secondly, to develop ways of involving participants in the analysis of the numerical data generated in their villages and in feedback into actions that benefit the community;
• finally, to persuade policymakers of the usefulness of this approach, which can play a key role in the process of evaluating poverty-targeted interventions, so that developing countries can make the most of the resources for reducing poverty.

**CONTACT DETAILS**
Sarah Levy
33 Princes Street, Reading RG1 4EG, UK.
Tel/fax: +44 (0)118 951 0141
Email: slevy.calibre@btopenworld.com

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**
Sarah Levy works for Calibre Consultants and
teaches at the Department of International
and Rural Development (IRDD), University of
Reading, UK.

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# Developing coding systems to analyse difference

## By VICKY JOHNSON and ROBERT NURICK

### Introduction

The UK Government is currently funding a number of programmes in disadvantaged communities as part of an initiative to regenerate run-down, deprived areas. These programmes include Neighbourhood Renewal (three years of funding to involve local residents and influence mainstream services in deprived neighbourhoods); Sure Start (targeting families with children under the age of four); Primary Care Trusts (health); New Deal for Communities (a ten-year programme for the most disadvantaged communities); Health Action Zones (promoting improved health and services); and Sports Action Zones (promoting sports).

A common element running through all these initiatives is the requirement that local communities participate in project identification and design. In many cases, the statutory bodies involved – local government and health authorities – have found that traditional ways of consulting with communities, e.g. questionnaires and public meetings, have not produced the level of public involvement expected. Therefore, they are seeking new and innovative ways of consulting and involving communities.

Over the past three years, Development Focus UK has been working with government organisations and NGOs to build capacity in this area. Drawing on our experience of participatory approaches in the North[1] and South, we have designed an accredited training programme, Regeneration through Community Assessment and Action (CAA). The programme involves training a team of local residents and local professional workers (e.g. community development workers, health visitors) in participatory research methods. The trainer then supports and mentors that team whilst it conducts a community needs assessment and prepares an action plan. A primary objective of the CAA approach is to provide agencies and communities with the skills to conduct further CAA processes in the future without the need for external support.

The CAA methodology has been applied across a range of different themes and institutional contexts, throughout the UK (Figure 1), and it is continuing to evolve and develop as experience is gained and shared among CAA teams and trainers.

In this article, we focus on the development and use of **coding systems** in the CAA. Coding systems are a central feature of the CAA methodology and form an important part of the community-based monitoring system and action plans developed during the CAA.

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[1] We have drawn on work Development Focus UK has carried out with Sustain and Oxfam UK on participatory research methods in the UK (see Johnson & Webster, 2000).

**Figure 1: Map showing CAA programmes around the UK**

**Barrow:** Crime; community development

**Glasgow:** Health

**Manchester:** Transport
**Rochdale:** Health
**Salford:** Community needs and monitoring and evaluations
**Halton:** Food

**Leicester:** Health; adult learning; sports action

**Islington:** Health
**Hounslow:** Food

**Cardiff:** Health

**Plymouth:** Housing

**Crawley:** Health

**Brighton & Hove:** Neighbourhood Renewal; skills audit; monitoring & evaluation

### Developing a coding system

Coding systems allow the research team to record selected characteristics of each person consulted during the CAA process, for example, age, gender, ethnicity, relative wealth, and disability. This reveals where there is agreement and where there are differences of opinion between different people in the community and, sometimes, where conflict resolution is required. It also reveals who has been involved in the CAA process and helps ensure that all interests are represented, particularly those of the 'hardest to reach'. In some cases, it is a statutory requirement that information about those consulted is recorded for monitoring purposes.

Each team develops a locally relevant coding system at the beginning of the CAA process. Across all the CAA projects, there are common criteria such as age, gender, disability, and ethnicity. However, within each project the

different age ranges and disability and ethnicity categories are defined by the research team during training and then tested out and modified through work in the community. Additional criteria may also be recorded, depending on the objectives/focus of the research and the community (see examples in Box 3).

Research teams also consult with residents to determine local indicators of wealth using different tools, for example 'skint/rich' lines (poverty/wealth ranking lines – see Box 1 and Figure 2) and poverty mapping.

### Implementing the coding system

After developing the coding system, the team begins the CAA process in the community, using a variety of methods either with groups (e.g. working men's clubs, mother and toddler groups, or specially selected focus groups) or out and about on the streets, (e.g. in shopping centres, parks,

**Figure 2: An example of a skint/rich line**
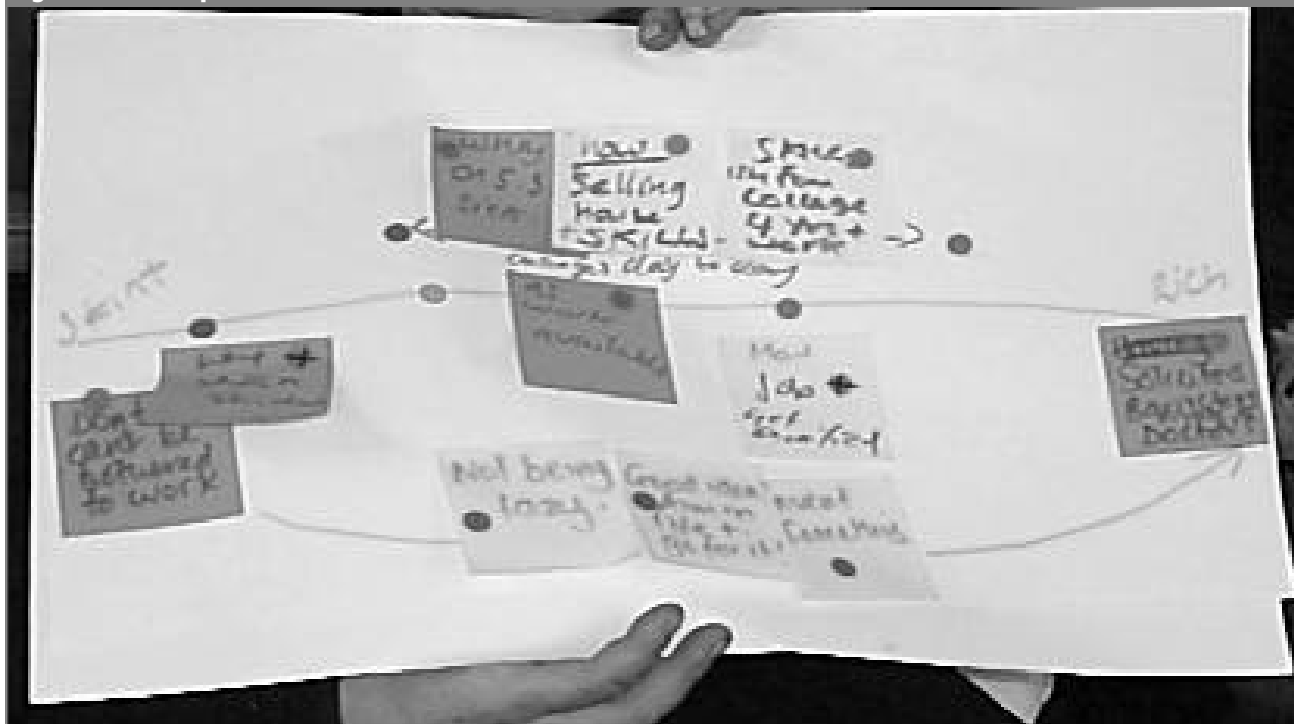


street corners, or bus stops). Each different person consulted is given a sticker according to the coding system for the project. For example, in the case of the Heywood Health Action research team, dots indicate males and stars indicate females, and the different colours – green, red, and yellow – indicate how many earners there are in the household (see Box 2).

Each person's sticker is placed on a project 'monitoring map' to show the location where they live and the geographic spread of the different participants consulted. Figure 3 shows an example of a monitoring map, in which the different colours, shapes, and sizes of dots represent participants of different age and gender.

The coding system is also used throughout the participatory research in all of the different visuals, for example in scoring, ranking, and developing matrices, pies, causal-impact flows, maps and verification, and action planning grids and diagrams (Figure 4). With some tools, participants put their comments on sticky labels, which are all coded appropriately. The analysis carried out by the team collates this information and the team goes back out for street and group verification, again using the coding system. Different stakeholders involved in the 'reference groups' of service providers and policy makers are also

**Box 1: Skint/rich lines**

Residents are asked to place a cross or sticker on a line, indicating how rich/ skint they feel (see Figure 2). They are then asked why they have put themselves there. It is this process of discussion that reveals local criteria for wealth. The discussion broadens out, with residents reflecting not only on their own situation but also what indicators to look out for when assessing wealth and poverty at either end of the spectrum or line. These local indicators can then be incorporated into the coding system.

During the Health Improvement Project (HIP) in Bewbush, Crawley, people in the community identified the number of children and the wages or benefits going into the household as important local indicators of wealth/poverty.

coded so that their perspectives are distinct in the process.

The criteria of the coding system indicated by the different colours and shapes of stickers are issues of difference that the team has decided they need to monitor and analyse visually. These differ for different projects depending on what the team feels is most important to be able to see 'at a glance' on the visuals generated by the participatory research. Other criteria are also important and are included in the coding system using letters, numbers, or shapes drawn onto the stickers. For example, in Heywood different capital letters indicated ethnicity and lower-case

**Box 2: Example of a coding system from Heywood Health Action Research Team**

The team recorded information on the gender, age, and ethnicity of all participants, and the earning status of the household they were part of. The coding system used was as follows:

| Earning status of household | |
|---|---|
| One person in household earning money | Green |
| More than one person in house earning money | Red |
| No person in house earning money | Yellow |

| Age | |
|---|---|
| 0-16 | a |
| 17-24 | b |
| 25-40 | c |
| 41-59 | d |
| 60 and over | e |

| Gender | |
|---|---|
| Male | ● |
| Female | ☆ |

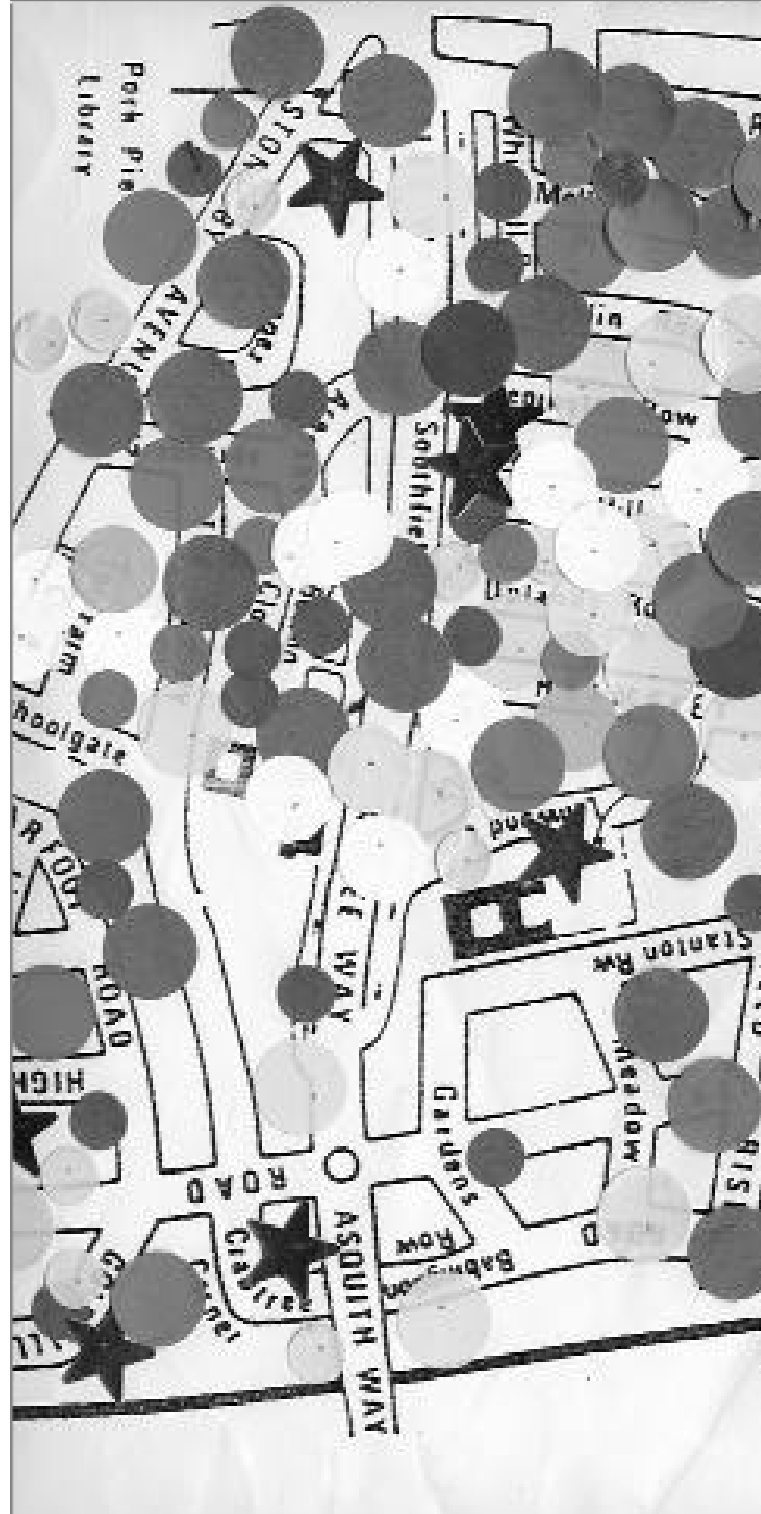| Ethnicity | |
|---|---|
| White British | WB |
| White European | WE |
| White Other | WO |
| Asian | AS |
| Chinese | CH |
| Black Afro-Caribbean | BC |
| African | AF |
| Mixed Race | MR |

Other information recorded on the monitoring grid included: information about disability, the number of adults in the household, the number of children in the household, and whether they have been spoken to before, with date and location.

**Figure 3: Monitoring map illustrating the coding system used for**



letters indicated age (see second part of Box 2). A number can also be placed on each sticker and additional information about the participant recorded on a corresponding 'monitoring grid'. It is part of the training process with the team to devise a coding system that allows an element of visual analysis, while monitoring and tracking all the issues of importance locally, and those that have to be monitored for statutory purposes.

Throughout the process, all contributions made by participants need to have a coding sticker placed on them. Each new participant is given a sheet of stickers to use for this purpose. Using a numbering system with the stickers and grids helps to avoid double-counting the same person if they contribute more than once.

Findings remain anonymous – residents' personal details such as name and address are not recorded as part of the coding system, to maintain confidentiality. However,

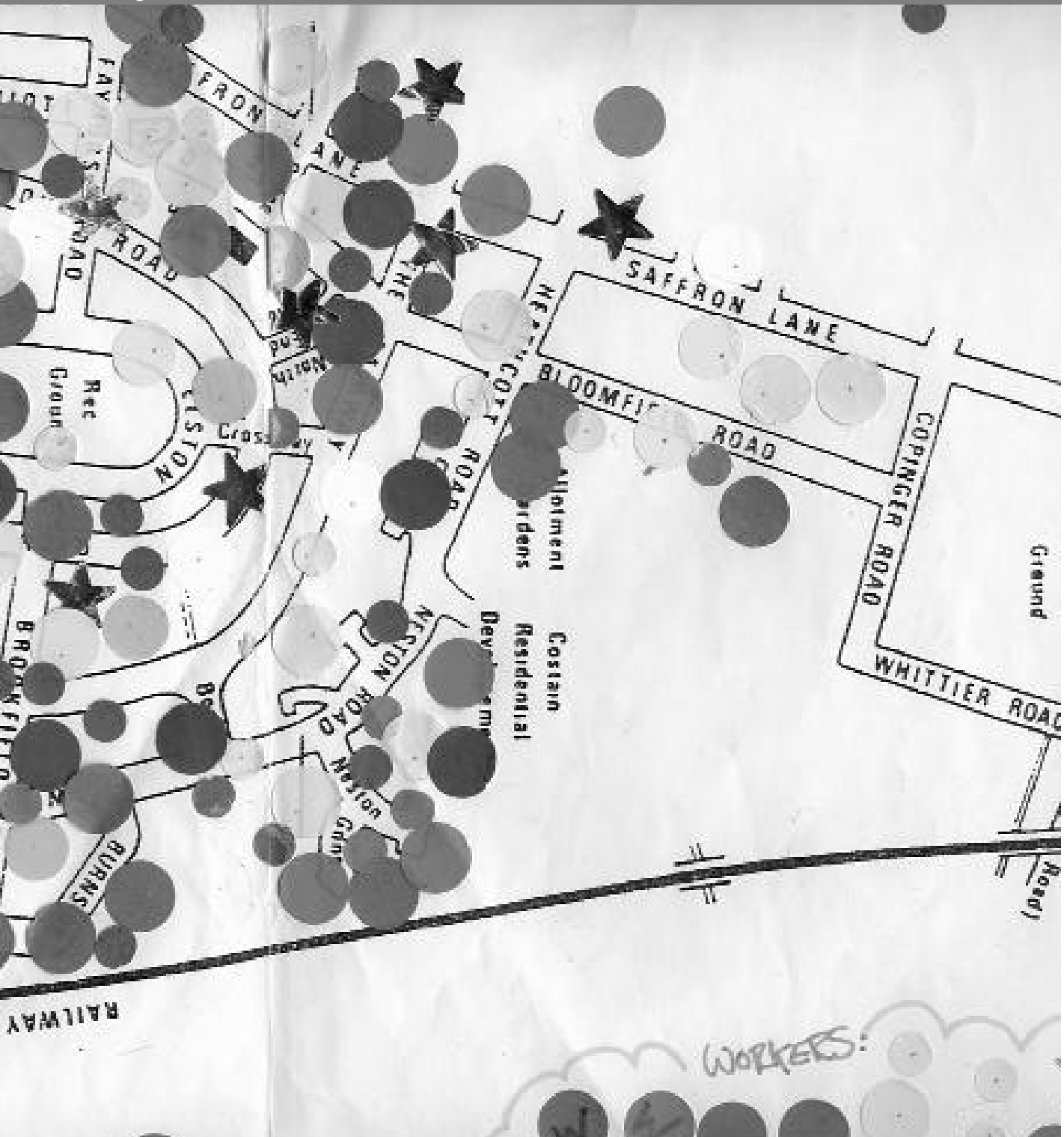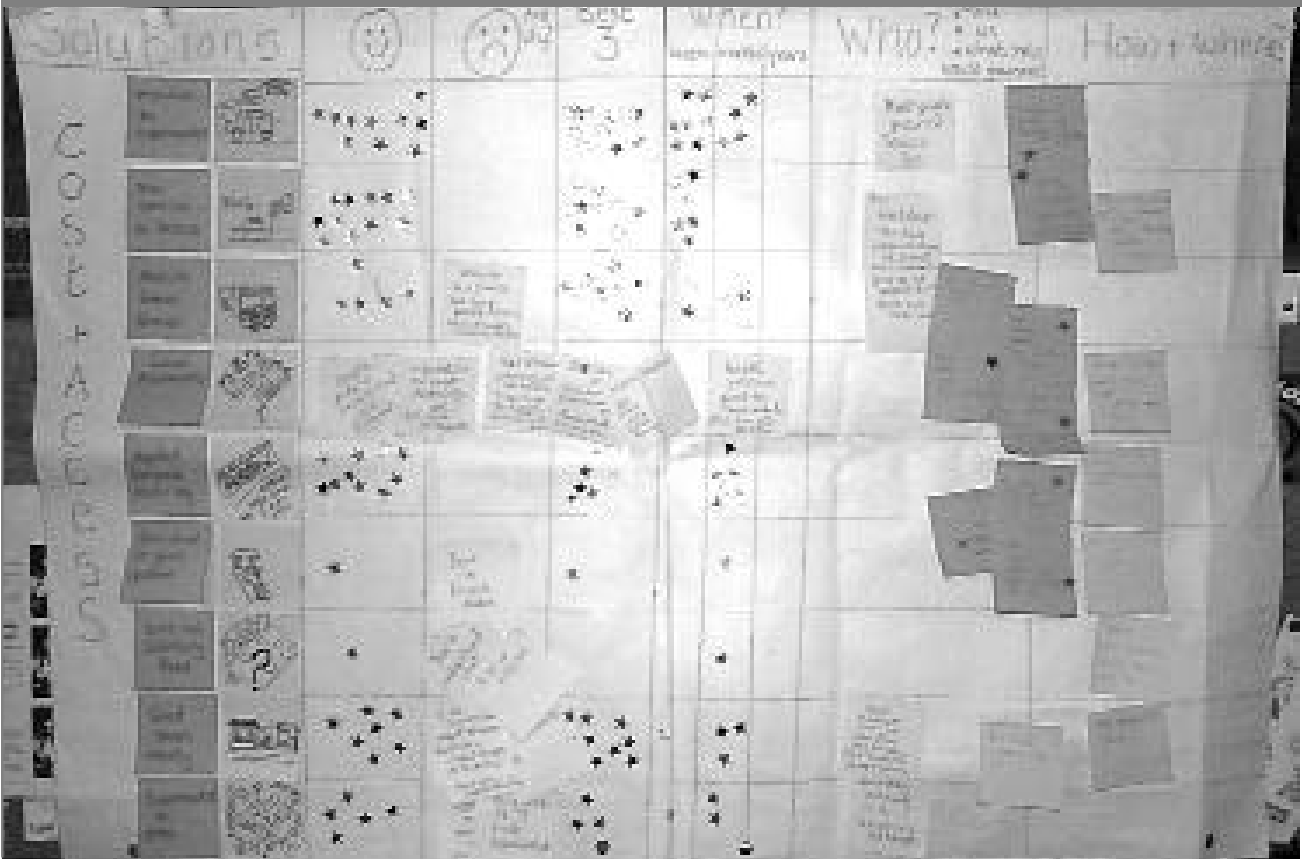**a 'learning audit' carried out in Saffron, Leicester**

**Figure 4: Using a coding system in action planning, Hounslow, West London**



details may be kept separately for individuals who want to be involved in further action and for statutory monitoring purposes.

## Using information from the coding system
The research team uses the information from the coding system in a variety of ways. During the research process, monitoring maps are completed in each session, and at the end of each session the research team duplicates the stickers (or numbers) generated onto the project's monitoring map. This provides a visual record of the coding stickers of all residents consulted during the process, and their geographical location. This is compared with census information, where available, to see whether the proportion of different groups spoken to form a representative sample. The team may identify 'gaps' in the consultation and decide how to access people from the particular groups or locations that are under-represented in the process.

Data from each fieldwork session is also collated and compiled both by creating visuals for feedback, verification, and prioritisation of actions by different people in the community, and by creating electronic databases for further analysis that will also be fed back to the community and verified. Compiled data provides accessible information on the numbers of people spoken to and their characteristics, as revealed by the coding system. This helps to provide the type of quantitative information needed by service providers to back up the qualitative evidence that is gathered in the participatory process.

Throughout the analysis, there is much emphasis on identifying for which residents different issues are a concern, how different issues impact on different residents, the differences and similarities between residents' views, and the different actions and solutions that are appropriate for each group of residents. The coding system is essential for carrying out this kind of analysis.

Box 3 shows a selection of examples of coding systems used in projects, and illustrates the range of different criteria used.

**Box 3: Examples of coding systems**

- **Health improvement project, Bewbush, Crawley**. Views of the existing health services and the different actions prioritised by different groups were analysed, specifically taking into account the views of under–14 year olds and carers with under–14s. Coding therefore included the numbers and ages of children that people were caring for, and also whether there were one, two, or more wages going into the household, what kind of state benefits people were receiving, and whether they received a pension. Gender, age, ethnicity, and disability were also coded.

- **Transport issues, Longsight, Manchester**. Friends of the Earth (an environmental NGO) led the process, which looked specifically at transport issues. Different colours and shapes of stickers indicated the different types of access that people had to different forms of transport, the priorities for visual analysis. The coding key also monitored gender, age, numbers of children and adults in a household, ethnicity, and disability. Analysis of the data showed that many Asian women with no access to private cars had particular difficulties in getting around on buses or taxis. At bus stops they would feel vulnerable and insecure, and private minicab drivers could be rude and intimidating. These concerns meant that many women were deterred from travelling alone. The multi-dimensional nature of the coding key allowed for this type of analysis.

- **Health needs, Islington, London**. A CAA process was run with Healthy Islington and Caxton House (a local community-based organisation) in Elthorne, a very diverse and mixed multi-ethnic community. Coding systems were developed which categorised people in the community into 25 different ethnic groups, as well as by age, gender, and wealth level. The team was able to highlight where there was a lack of support and a need for more access to information for specific ethnic groups, including the provision of translating and interpreting services.

- **Health needs assessment and action planning process, Rochdale Primary Care Trust**. Gender analysis of the coded data revealed specific health issues for men and for women, leading to recommendations for well-women's and well-men's clinics.

- **Sure Start project, Hounslow**. Participants were monitored by whether they were the key user group for Sure Start (families with children under 4). This enabled the team to assess whether they were reaching their target group and to understand their perspectives on food and nutrition.

- **Hollingdean Neighbourhood Renewal Programme, Brighton**. Information was needed on people's housing and income status for statutory monitoring purposes, but the key visual elements chosen were gender and age. Analysis revealed a great difference in the community between the problems and issues raised by young people and by adults.

- **Residents' perceptions of community involvement and the barriers to getting involved, Barrow Community Regeneration Company, Barrow in Furness**. Analysis of the data through the coding key revealed that young people hanging around on street corners was a major concern of adults in the older age groups and prevented them from getting involved in community activities. Actions to promote older residents' involvement will incorporate strategies to address these concerns.

- **Perceptions of crime, Barrow Borough Council**. The coding system monitored residents' household status, i.e. whether they were council tenants, home owners, homeless, or in private rented accommodation, as well as other factors. Although there was an initial belief in the team that housing status was linked to perceptions of crime, the analysis revealed that other factors such as age and gender were more important.

- **Housing design, Sovereign Housing, Plymouth**. Consultation on housing plans, using a coding system showing the perspectives of returning residents of different gender and age, as distinct from other members of the community, meant that the team could clearly see who had prioritised which elements of the design for the new housing and what their reasons were.

## Conclusions: providing the evidence

The coding system allows numbers of people consulted to be monitored and, importantly, numbers consulted disaggregated by the criteria used in each of the projects. In some projects, the research teams have taken the quantitative aspects of the methodology further by entering the coding data and the responses given by residents, onto a database, thereby enabling statistical analysis to be conducted which complements the qualitative analysis.

Ensuring the methodology is robust and rigorous is especially important in the UK context. Many managers in the statutory sector have a background in formal quantitative research and statistical analysis. Statutory processes also need to show that a representative sample of the community has been consulted. The CAA approach still allows the analysis of the scaled-up data whilst also bringing out the concerns and priorities of more marginalised groups in the community. It cannot just be consensus or majority that rules action planning in regeneration, but a rigorous analysis of the qualitative information given by different groups of interest. The production of the action plans is always a political process that needs to involve all the stakeholders from early on the process, but the evidence provided through the use of the coding system means residents can be further empowered with a strong body of evidence behind their views and perspectives. Credibility for the CAA methodology arises because of its application of quantitative and qualitative research elements. The coding system combines both methods of inquiry. 'It's about bringing the quality and the quantity together' (quote from research team member in Bewbush, Crawley).

The methodology continues to evolve as teams who have been trained take the approach forward in their respective areas. Capturing this learning and development is also an important aspect of mainstreaming and consolidating participatory research in the UK.

**CONTACT DETAILS**
Vicky Johnson and Robert Nurick
Development Focus UK, Brighton Media
Centre, 15-17 Middle Street, Brighton BN1
1AL, UK.
Tel/Fax: +44 (0)1273 201324/700707
Email: devfocus@devfocus.co.uk

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Local reports from CAA processes are available
from local partners listed in the article. Contact
details available from Development Focus UK.

**GENERAL ISSUE**

# 6

# The trouble with PRA: reflections on dilemmas of quality

## by ANDREA CORNWALL and GARETT PRATT

Once a marginal practice battling for recognition, PRA has now become an instrument used by the most powerful of global development institutions. As PRA has spread and been taken up by actors and institutions across the spectrum of development practice, it has taken on a diversity of forms and meanings. In some settings, it has enabled development workers and activists to engage poor and marginalised people in shaping plans, projects, and policies intended for their benefit. In others, it has provoked those working in development agencies and government bureaucracies to rethink and seek to transform their practice. Yet in others still it has become a routinised ritual, a form of legitimation for decisions that have already been made, and a substitute for longer term enquiry and engagement.

In this article, we draw on findings from the Pathways to Participation project (see Box 1). This project brought together dozens of practitioners to reflect critically on what PRA means to them and to explore some of the challenges posed by the rapid spread and uptake of PRA for issues of integrity and quality.

## The dilemmas of spread

The dilemmas for quality posed by the rapid growth and spread of PRA have been a source of debate amongst practitioners since the early 1990s. Despite their representation

**Box 1: The Pathways to Participation project**

The Pathways to Participation project took stock of PRA ten years on from its explosion in popularity. It encouraged people to reflect on their past experiences and on the current status of PRA, and to look forward for new directions. The project supported research, reflective workshops, video making, and an innovative 'writeshop' for practitioners. It involved collaboration with researchers, development organisations, and networks in China, the Gambia, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, and Vietnam. The project was initiated by the Participation Group at Institute of Development Studies, UK and funded by Sida, DFID, and SDC. A book based on the project, *Pathways to Participation: reflections on PRA*, edited by Andrea Cornwall and Gareth Pratt, will be published in late 2003 by IT Publications. For more information about the project, and free downloads of publications, visit www.ids.ac.uk/particip/research/pathways.html

by some academics (see, for example, Henkel & Stirrat, 2001) as uncritical proselytisers, PRA practitioners have long held reservations about the effects of the popularisation of PRA. International gatherings of practitioners have produced statements of principle, and of concerns about 'abuse' and 'bad practice' (see Absalom et al., 1995, Adhikari et al., 1997). Yet promoting participatory approaches to a sceptical and even hostile audience sat uneasily with open and honest critical reflection. The tension between facing up to the limitations of PRA and PRA practice and convincing development agen-

cies about the merits of participatory development meant that PRA practitioners' own concerns were rarely shared more widely beyond circles of like-minded people.

The enthusiasm of the mid-1990s, as international organisations began to incorporate PRA into their procedures and practices and produce statements and guidelines on participation, has given way to a more cautious appraisal of the effects of institutionalising PRA. And with this, a new mood of critical reflection is emerging. This is marked less by defensiveness and more by a desire to bridge the gap between the rhetoric and realities of participation in development. Concerns have converged on issues of ethics and values, moving beyond earlier, more methodological, debates. Amidst a sharing of these concerns, a more fundamental set of questions arises about what exactly people think PRA is about or for – something over which there is less agreement than might be imagined. In the following sections, we look at some of the different versions of PRA that are around, and at some of the disagreements about what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' practice. We then look in more depth at some of the challenges this raises for attempts to enhance the quality of PRA practice.

### Defying definition? Versions of PRA

For both those new to and familiar with PRA, there is no easy answer to the question, what is PRA? Absalom et al. (1995) define PRA as:

*A family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance, and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan, and to act.*

As suggested by this open definition, people draw boundaries about what they consider to be 'PRA' in a variety of ways. For many, PRA is primarily identified with its distinctive visualisation methods – maps, calendars, matrices, and so on. PRA is widely known for the use of these kinds of visual representations with and by groups of people in poor communities, often using local materials on the ground, and symbols rather than writing. Sequences of tools are often applied to create general analyses of the life and conditions of people. But methods can also be applied in a more focused way to explore a particular sector or issue, whether it is views on a planned irrigation project, or people's parenting styles. As groups of people create representations of their knowledge together, they discuss the topic at hand, and share views and ideas. For some, PRA ought to culminate in making action plans in which people define what they would like to change and how they would go about it.

## 'Some talk of PRA as a "way of life": as a starting point for changing the ways in which development work is done, by directly addressing relationships of power which subordinate local people and local knowledge'

Not everyone views the use of visual representations as essential to PRA. There are practitioners who hold focus group discussions or community meetings and do not use any diagrams, but describe their practice as PRA. There are also professionals who administer semi-structured interviews or short questionnaires to individuals and refer to their practice as PRA – even if few PRA practitioners would regard this as legitimate.

Others regard PRA as a wider approach to the way in which development is and should be done, which suggests ways of going about any task from creating a system of information management for NGOs, to managing programmes. One Kenyan practitioner said, 'PRA is anything that will enhance more people to get involved, and will allow more people to give their ideas'. For an NGO worker in Pakistan, 'Everything we do is PRA': from using bicycles instead of four wheel drives, to allowing members of credit groups to make their own decisions about how to use loans without interference from NGO staff (Anwar, forthcoming). According to this viewpoint, PRA is more than techniques – it is about underlying values and about the attitudes and behaviour of professionals towards those they work with, within as well as beyond the organisations they work for.

Some talk of PRA as a 'way of life': as a starting point for changing the ways in which development work is done, by directly addressing relationships of power which subordinate local people and local knowledge. Practitioners who subscribe to this view commonly complain that the attitudes and behaviour of many PRA practitioners fall short of their ideal – that professionals are simply substituting PRA for the tools they used to use without changing the ways in which they think about local people, and without changing the way they conceive their own role as people working for social change.

Some distinguish between PRA and PLA[1], some between RRA and PRA, each positioning their version as the 'right' and

[1] Ironically, when IIED decided to change the name of this journal to *PLA Notes* there were fears that PLA would become the next acronym – and sure enough, in some quarters, it did!

most right-on' one. Just as RRA was disparaged in the early 1990s for being too technical and mechanical, so PRA began to be dismissed by some as the 1990s wore on as a one-off event, or focused only on diagramming, in contrast with the more process-oriented, methodologically eclectic PLA. In reality, different labels can be used for practices that are essentially very similar indeed. These labels are used to define and defend forms of practice that fit with what those who claim them think of as 'participation'. Quite how varied people's notions of what being 'participatory' is all about was one of the most striking aspects of the Pathways project.

### Locating 'bad practice'
Practitioners often complain about the 'misuse' or even 'abuse' of PRA. Given the range of opinions about what PRA is or ought to be, and the diversity of practices that are labelled 'PRA', there would seem to be ample scope for criticism. Closer inspection reveals some rather different views about the nature of the problem.

### Rigid versus sloppy practice
For some, what is at issue is an over-emphasis on methods. As a critic in Kenya put it, 'There's nothing about attitude and everything about the tools' (Cornwall et al., 2001). Their version of the problem is that PRA methods have become like a questionnaire survey or focus groups: another tool to add to the arsenal of conventional research techniques. 'Bad practice', then, comes to consist of the use of particular strings of methods in pre-designed sequences, applications that are judged 'mechanical'. Often the overarching purpose of such applications is implicitly also the subject of critique, whether the 'extraction' of information or the use of a particular formula to arrive at a determinate product such as a 'Community Action Plan'. In Kenya, a number of people commented on the pressure to follow a set routine in which they applied a series of recognised PRA tools for any work that is commissioned, regardless of their applicability. As one put it, 'PRA tools should not be followed religiously', yet they often are (Cornwall et al., 2001). A Nepali practitioner voiced a commonly heard critique:

> *They think that PRA is a good thing and so they apply some tools, and then they leave back, and after some time there is nothing. It is PRA for PRA... I think it is because they are more results oriented. They want to show that they have done so many PRAs in so many villages. And sometimes it has become ritual.* (Pratt, 2001)

A different camp of practitioners identifies the opposite problem. They highlight the dangers of advice to 'use your

own best judgement' and 'adapt to the circumstances'. Their concerns centre around what they see as sloppy practice: not cross-checking information, not using a range of methods with a range of actors to triangulate findings, or not producing a 'Community Action Plan' at the end of a PRA exercise to formalise consensus.

### Empowerment versus data collection
The tension between emphasising improvisation and innovation versus rigour and consistency is only one of many axes that divides practitioners. Further complications arise when we acknowledge that people use PRA for very different purposes. Many practitioners think that PRA should be empowering, and complain that most PRA practice does not live up to such claims. They argue that it is just used for data collection, and that this is wrong. As a manager in an international NGO that has been influential in introducing and supporting PRA in Nepal said:

> *Many people have used PRA, even now, as basically an exploratory tool, rather than as an empowering tool. Therefore many community have not benefited from the empowerment aspect of PRA. They might have benefited having one or two projects in their area, but the real empowerment... hasn't come because it has just been used to explore, an extractive tool.* (Pratt, 2001)

In Kenya, a long-standing practitioner now based in a donor organisation contended that, 'As more people come to use PRA they're reducing it to a mechanism or one-off intervention' (Cornwall et al., 2001). Many Mexican practitioners argue that PRA fails to offer any empowering process or to provide the means to question unjust, racist, or antidemocratic structures, observing that it can be used in even the most authoritarian regime (Moya Garcia & Way, 2003). Many counter-pose PRA as an apolitical methodology introduced from America and Britain against Mexican methodologies grounded in explicitly political ideas like self-determination, informal education, and consciousness raising (Moya Garcia & Way 2003).

Others see using PRA as a one-off exercise to collect data, or to serve the information needs of project managers or donors, as a valid pursuit. In fact, some are very enthusiastic about PRA as a substitute for questionnaire surveys in project appraisal, and do not make any claims about it being empowering. A senior manager in a UN project in Nepal, for example, argued that:

> *Especially in the beginning of the programme... we need the baseline to monitor or assess the effects of the project... To collect*

**Participants in a Pathways to Participation workshop perform a play about ethical dilemmas in PRA practice. Others were invited to intervene and show how to do things differently**



> '**Practitioners disagree over how PRA should be practiced and what purpose it should be used for, and thus, at a very fundamental level, they don't agree on what PRA is. Faced with these kinds of differences, arriving at criteria by which to assess quality is going to be extremely hard**'

*that information, projects mostly take a sample, then use a questionnaire survey. It doesn't come up with a good report. People get lost in data collection. This approach is still going on. We tried to introduce PRA, because it is very fast, very informative, and works case to case. It is very specific to a certain area, a specific place, a specific community… It gives quick results. You can have a lot of information and it is more than 90% reliable…*(Pratt,2001)

Likewise, some Mexican practitioners argue that PRA is:

*…'Efficient' in improving project design… These methodologies give better results at a lower cost and in a shorter time frame; an assessment applied generally more to PRA that other [participatory methodologies].* (Moya Garcia & Way, 2003)

### Attitudes and behaviour

For some practitioners, debating about empowerment versus data collection misses the point, as the purpose of PRA is transforming relationships between professionals and the people they are meant to serve whatever the activity. A common complaint is that practitioners have not adopted the right attitudes and behaviour, as emphasised in international discourses of PRA. But one still finds disagreement – for some, the problem is that practitioners display the right attitudes and behaviour in their interactions with other professionals, but do not display them when doing PRA with community members. For others, it is the other way round: people are nice enough when they are in communities, but revert to being dominating and insensitive in their offices or homes. One long-standing Kenyan participation practitioner highlighted the contradictions here:

*One minute you are this very concerned, sensitive, development practitioner who is keen to listen to people, and the next minute you scream at the driver or the office staff, or the way you treat your wife or spouse'.* (Cornwall et al., 2001)

A Nepali practitioner similarly observed:

*People say very beautiful things, beautiful words. People write very beautiful phrases and sentences using participatory approach of development.... But while looking back to him or her and these activities at office, maybe at home, the approach is not being practised.* (Pratt,2001)

### One man's meat is another man's poison

Practitioners disagree over how PRA should be practiced and what purpose it should be used for, and thus, at a very fundamental level, they don't agree on what PRA is. Faced with these kinds of differences, arriving at criteria by which to assess quality is going to be extremely hard. 'One man's meat is another man's poison' as the popular adage goes.

There remains lots of confusion about how to set the boundaries around PRA, and practitioners find themselves torn between calling practice that does not live up to their approval an 'abuse' of PRA or saying that it is not PRA at all. By labelling practices they do not approve of as not being 'real PRA', practitioners are able to continue to defend a version of PRA that could be what they want it to be: and, with it, their ideals – far as these ideals may be from much of what is actually going on around them. An influential practitioner, trainer, and networker in Nepal put his finger on the normative aspects of debates about the nature of PRA, arguing that if PRA is not used to pursue the alleviation of poverty for the poorest, then 'that is not PRA – or, I don't know, maybe it is PRA **but not the kind of PRA we want**.' (our emphasis).

### Good practice is a shared responsibility

Addressing concerns about quality has become ever more difficult as PRA has spread. Burgeoning numbers of consultants now offer PRA as part of their portfolios. Manuals, web resources, and a range of courses offer recipes for practice.

Networks struggle to keep track of the sheer volume of people who now lay claim to being 'PRA practitioners'. Growing donor and lender requirements for stakeholder participation translate into 'doing PRA' to inform policies and projects. PRA is being practiced so widely that there are a staggering number of people influencing other people's practice, and determining what doing PRA 'properly' might mean and whether specific examples of practice – their own or others – live up to their view of good practice. In any single case of practice, many people are responsible for the way PRA is done – from the person funding the work, to the people in the organisation behind the facilitator, to the facilitator themselves, to the diverse participants who take part in the PRA exercise. Things are more messy and complex than any ladder of participation can convey. And this messiness gives rise to a whole range of competing versions of what 'good quality' PRA might actually involve.

The responsibility for the quality of PRA practice is, and will continue to be, diffuse. No single player can determine what others around them mean when they say they're doing 'PRA'. Even their own practice is to some extent out of their hands given the market for PRA and the compromises they may make as a consequence. Networks may exert peer pressure on their members but can't do anything about those who don't join up. Trainers may insist on lengthy, field-based, training courses, and find themselves undercut by those offering quick results. Consultants may turn down contracts for what they see as shoddy PRA work, and find that dozens of others are more than willing to accept. Organisations might use the right language and commission 'a PRA' because it has become expected of them, but lack any basic commitment to following through on what emerges. Community members may skilfully repeat what they know they are expected to say, rather than what they really think, having rehearsed their lines over a PRA map in the pursuit of funding many times before.

### Addressing the quality crisis – practitioners' suggestions
There is no turning back, in the sense that people will continue to hold conflicting views not just about how to do PRA well, but even what PRA is, as we have argued above. Discussions over quality are a never-ending process, with many concerned actors jostling with one another to gain an upper hand in setting boundaries around good practice. Far from seeing these debates and discussions as futile, given the impossibility of consensus, practitioners view debating the quality of PRA, and seeing their ideas translated into practice, as something worth fighting for. They are concerned about the way that their practice, and that of others, affects

> **Box 2: Steps to start up a participatory process using an ad hoc ethical code**
> ■ The external team defines its concept of participation and the level it wishes to achieve in the process.
> ■ The team defines its 'non-negotiables' and communicates them to other actors within the project, at the same time learning theirs.
> ■ The actors both internal and external to the participatory process are open about their intentions, aims, and legitimate interests.
> ■ Focused efforts are made to deal with the obstacles encountered when trying to define and follow an ethical code.
> ■ All maintain an open mind vis-à-vis the different values of each culture, especially between the external team and local cultures.
> Source: Moya Garcia & Way, 2003

development in the places they work.

Practitioners can think of a range of constructive mechanisms for continuing the quality debate. Many hold very strong views about training, and how it should be conducted to influence new practitioners' ideas about good practice. They view it as important to document and share their PRA experiences, and thus to debate the relative merit of different forms of practice in specific contexts. Networks have been formed around the world for which this is a primary aim. Some practitioners go further, and suggest that agreeing minimum standards for practice, guidelines for best practice, or codes of ethics to which they hold themselves or one another to account would improve the situation. In reality, networks of practitioners find it difficult to come up with such guidelines given the variety of views they hold, the variety of the contexts they work in, and the realities of the market for PRA. Suggestions of regulation can also alienate many practitioners for whom innovation and diversity is fundamental to PRA. Despite these difficulties, practitioners in Nepal sign up to a code of ethics when they join the network NEPAN. Practitioners in Mexico and Kenya have attempted to negotiate guidelines for good practice in the course of the Pathways project. Mexican practitioners suggested separate guidelines for short-term, and medium-term interventions. They also suggested creating ad hoc ethical codes to suit each case of practice (see Box 2).

Practitioners are also very conscious of the way that their practice is shaped by their own organisations, or the way that donors fund their work. They have many ideas about the ways these organisations should take responsibility for supporting good PRA practice. There are some who wish their own organisations would formulate agreed guidelines for good practice, and hold all their staff responsible. A network of practitioners in Bangladesh issued guidelines to donors commissioning PRA with some simple questions to use. Some of the questions would help to catch out

**Figure 1: Critical self-reflection is an important ingredient in quality PRA**



IFAD, ANGOC and IIRR (2001)

unscrupulous consultants lying about their qualifications in PRA, while others would help the donor to be more realistic about what kind of time consultants would need. Practitioners talk about the general need to educate donors so that they develop a clearer idea of what they are asking for when they commission participatory work, and what resources and time frames are realistic for the purpose.

## Critical reflection in pursuit of quality

None of these attempts to define and defend good practice presents a complete solution. No one has the power to determine the behaviour of the many people that influence PRA practice. But our experience in the Pathways project affirmed that PRA practitioners value these debates over what PRA is,

and how to do it well. Critical reflection is seen by many practitioners as a dynamic way to continually learn and improve their practice, whether through being interviewed, attending a brief workshop or a retreat, writing their own reflections, or hearing or reading the critical reflections of others. Practitioners find reward and support when they discover colleagues who share their values and ideals through debates about quality and ethics. And even when they disagree, through argument they can clarify their own views on good quality practice. The most serious crisis in the quality of PRA practice will come when practitioners lose their interest in, and passion for, debating what good PRA practice means. Our experience in the Pathways to Participation project suggests that day is far off.

**CONTACT DETAILS**
Andrea Cornwall & Garett Pratt
Participation Group, Institute of Development
Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton
BN1 9RE, UK.
Emails: A.Cornwall@ids.ac.uk;
G.L.Pratt@ids.ac.uk

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# 7

# Fisheries co-management at Lake Victoria: starting up a participatory monitoring process

## by the SEDAWOG TEAM[1]

### Introduction

Agreeing on a plan for the co-management of Lake Victoria's fisheries is one goal of the Lake Victoria Fisheries Research Project (LVFRP). The Project took the view that (a) local fishing communities might already have institutions that could be useful for managing the fishery and (b) that these institutions could potentially influence any imposed regulations in unanticipated directions. For this reason, a double-layered long-term programme was developed, first to monitor communities in order to identify institutions useful to management and how these institutions altered external regulation, and, second, to assess the extent to which communities were able to monitor themselves and the resources on which they relied.

Four communities were selected: Nkombe in Uganda, Obenge in Kenya, and Mwasonge and Ihale in Tanzania. Participatory baseline studies identified the various community-based organisations operating at each beach and initiated relationships with the four communities. The next step in this process was the initiation of participatory monitoring systems with each community. This paper reports how this was done at Nkombe beach in Uganda, and how the

Figure 1: Map of Lake Victoria
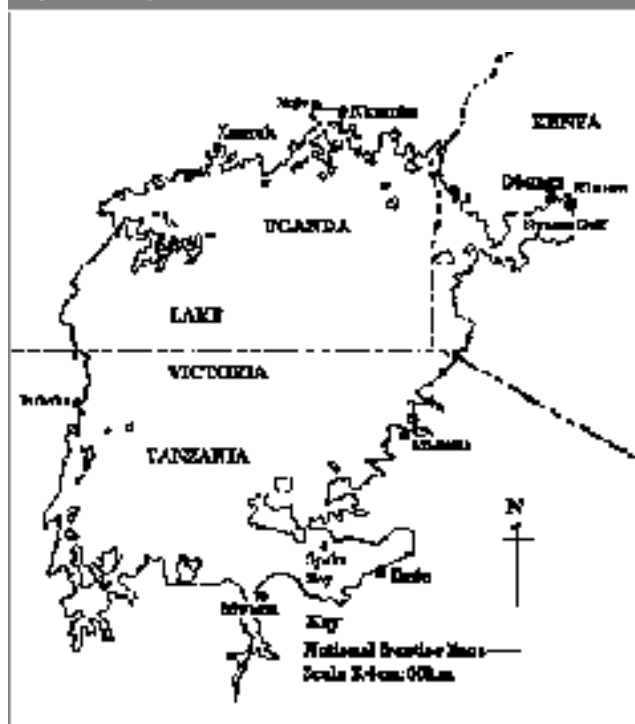
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**Some of the knowledge and learning shared during PRA training at Kiumba Beach, Kenya**





process was then replicated at the other three landing sites. The problems faced, the solutions tried, the monitoring indicators agreed, the replication of the process, and lessons learned are all outlined.

### Background

Lake Victoria is a massive inland water, larger in size than Burundi. It is shared by Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda and supports Africa's largest inland fishery. In 1995, over 400,000 tonnes of fish were landed. Most of this bulk comprised the introduced predator, *Lates niloticus* (Nile perch), the small endemic sardine, *Rastrineobola argentea* ('dagaa') and the introduced *Oreochromis niloticus* (Nile tilapia). Although Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda each have their own fisheries department, they are under-funded and under-staffed. The lake is not, for practical purposes, regulated.

Addressing this is the objective of the EDF (European Development Fund)-funded Lake Victoria Fisheries Research Project (LVFRP), the second phase of which began in 1997 and ended in December 2002. The project worked hand in hand with the fisheries research institutes of Kenya (KMFRI),

Tanzania (TAFIRI), and Uganda (FIRRI). It concentrated on two areas of research: stock assessment and socio-economics. The latter was carried out by socio-economists working under the umbrella of the Socio-economic Data Working Group (SEDAWOG), here referred to as 'the team'.

In the past, much of the socio-economic work on Lake Victoria has been restricted to quantitative data collection. While valuable, this yields data in which little of the very dynamic nature of fishing on the lake, and fisheries management in general, is captured. To overcome this, the project invested in developing the participatory research skills of the participating institutes. An initial workshop was held in Mbita, Kenya, in March 2000, followed by participatory baseline studies with the four beaches, and a second training workshop designed to start up the participatory monitoring process.

### Beginning the participatory monitoring process: misunderstandings and errors

The first steps of this process were successful and the team was pleased with the relationships developed with the beach communities and with the results of the participatory base-

line studies. However, a number of difficulties were experienced in the course of a two-day visit to the Ugandan beach, Nkombe, during which the team had intended to start up a participatory monitoring system.

At Nkombe, the most immediate difficulties faced stemmed from the size of the team, which comprised 20 international members of SEDAWOG. Previous meetings with the community had involved only three of the Ugandan SEDAWOG members, all of whom spoke Lusoga (the local language). It came as a surprise to the villagers to be confronted by the entire team. The alienation was probably compounded by the fact that the team could be clearly identified as outsiders to the village, local area, and to Uganda.

The international composition of the team was unsettling for a community that had had little contact with the outside world. In fact, the team was the first group of researchers ever to visit Nkombe. During a later, and more relaxed exchange of views, the villagers commented that hearing strange languages being spoken and seeing three Europeans helped fuel suspicion about the team's 'real' intentions. Members of the community were convinced that the team had come to make a reconnaissance before acquiring the village land and evicting inhabitants. This rumour arose because several village members had been evicted from land bordering a nearby forest reserve, and the Forestry Department team that had evicted them included a European. Moreover, the village map drawn during the baseline study was viewed by some in the community as evidence of the team's hidden (land grabbing) agenda. The team later discovered that tensions caused by internal power struggles and disputes over, amongst other things, the use of illegal fishing methods/gears had contributed to the community's suspicions of these outsiders. The misunderstanding over the map (and its 'land-grabbing' connotation) caused some villagers to retreat to their homes and not take part in the meeting groups.

Early on the second day of the visit, the team realised there needed to be a significant change in their approach to the community. The team convened an 'emergency meeting' with the beach leader, designed to discuss how the team could improve their approach to the community. One key problem that emerged was the one-way flow of information from the community to the team. Several options were discussed and it was agreed that the team should host a one-day workshop for a delegation from Nkombe at the Ugandan Fisheries Resources Research Institute, FIRRI. This would provide the community with an opportunity to learn about FIRRI and the LVFRP project. This would then be followed by a full meeting with the wider Nkombe commu-

'In Kenya, KMFRI researchers developed a remarkable rapport with the Obenge community... the villagers felt that they were finally being listened to and that someone in the "outside world" genuinely cared about their problems and successes'

nity during which the Nkombe delegation could give their assessment of the work which the SEDAWOG team wanted to achieve. The Nkombe workshop was arranged for the following Monday and the wider community meeting for the following Wednesday.

### The Nkombe meetings
#### Workshop for delegates
Early on Monday, a car was sent to Nkombe to collect their chosen representatives. In addition to explaining the goals of the wider project, the team's objectives for the workshop were to ensure that the Nkombe delegation could return to their community and explain the team's intentions, and to allay fears that we had a hidden agenda.

The car returned to FIRRI, and several members of the research team gathered outside to greet the Nkombe delegation. The group was then shown into the conference room, and introductions were made. The community had sent seven representatives, which included the beach leader, representatives from the local council, and most importantly (as it later turned out), two community elders.

The day started with a guided tour of the FIRRI aquarium and the offices of the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organisation (LVFO). Next, a presentation describing the fish stock assessment component of the LVFRP was made. Presentations on the participatory baseline studies conducted at the Kenyan and Tanzanian beaches were also made.

That afternoon, the discussion turned to the problems the Nkombe fishing community faced and to meaningful indicators of the well-being of the fishery. The very fact that the discussion took place suggested that the representatives were sufficiently confident that the team was not about to steal their land. A sign of this was the openness of the discussion, with community members readily admitting the widespread use of illegal fishing gear and techniques, clearly reassured that SEDAWOG had no power nor desire to punish this.

There was much debate about the well-being of the

**Box 1: Monitoring the fishery at Nkombe beach**

Indicators proposed by the Nkombe delegation were:
• Monthly catch weight totals
• A monthly report on any new events in the community
• Good working relationships between different organisations
• Numbers of immigrant fishers

The indicators proposed by the SEDAWOG team were:
• Gear types used
• Number of boats licensed
• Socio-economic status of the fishing community
• Number of gear thefts and their outcomes
• Registration and identification of immigrant fishers
• Amendments to LMC bye-laws
• List of organisations operating at the beach

**Box 2: Agreed indicators for monitoring the fishery at Nkombe beach**

• Monthly catch weight totals to be provided from the LMC records.
• A monthly report on any new events in the community and, in particular, on whether there had been any changes to the bye-laws of the LMC.
• Good working relationships between the different organisations working in the fishery.
• Numbers of immigrant fishers registered by the LMC each month.

fisheries. One of the elders said, 'In the past we would fill a boat with three nets,' and a younger fishermen said that now, 'It takes up to 100 nets, to fill a boat'. One issue which arose was how the community should report their fish catches. The Landing Management Committee (LMC) was unwilling to give out details of fish sizes but said they would be willing to provide information on the total weight of their monthly catch.

At the end of the afternoon, the workshop had agreed on a list of indicators, those suggested by the Nkombe delegation and those suggested by the team, to be discussed with the wider community (see Box 1). It was also agreed that monitoring would be based initially on bi-monthly visits to Nkombe by the FIRRI team, and bi-monthly visits to FIRRI by Nkombe residents.

After the Monday workshop, the mood was high on all sides. The Nkombe delegation chatted excitedly about what they had learned at FIRRI all the way home. Senior FIRRI staff were thrilled to have hosted a 'real' fishing community and the SEDAWOG team believed the participatory monitoring process had significantly moved forward.

### Community meeting
The Nkombe delegation provided feedback to the wider community at a meeting outside the village church two days later. This was held under a large tree, and was attended by around 100 villagers. At the centre of the circle were two chairs, one of which was taken by the secretary of the local council and the other by an elderly blind man.

After a prayer, the beach leader started the meeting. He distributed photographs taken during their visit to FIRRI and asked the Nkombe delegation to explain what they had learned at FIRRI. Each one stood in turn and made a short presentation while the photographs circulated through the crowd. The representatives were emphatic that the team's

intentions were not to take their land, and that all they had seen at FIRRI related to fish and water. The suggestion then came that the representatives had been bribed, and this was discussed at some length. It was finally resolved when the beach leader reminded the gathering that two of its elders had accompanied the group to FIRRI and had they been bribed, they would surely not lie. The discussions under the tree were, at times, surprisingly frank, with the beach leader and the local Fish Guard (a Fisheries Department representative) both being accused of using illegal gear, and the elderly blind man in the chair being pointed out by a local administrator as the person who was creating fear in the community (being blind and speaking no English rendered his accuser safe).

The SEDAWOG team then outlined their vision of participatory monitoring to the community as a whole and explained the various indicators that had been discussed with the Nkombe delegation the previous Monday.

The indicators discussed at the workshop on Monday were proposed to the wider community. After some debate, the meeting agreed to monitor four of these indicators (Box 2).

### Applying lessons from Nkombe
After leaving Uganda, the Kenyan and Tanzanian socio-economic teams returned home and established similar monitoring programmes. In Kenya, KMFRI researchers developed a remarkable rapport with the Obenge community. It was claimed that the frequent contact and the exchange visits between the landing and the researchers yielded tangible management results. The villagers felt that they were finally being listened to and that someone in the 'outside world' genuinely cared about their problems and successes. As a direct result of this contact, the Obenge beach community implemented a series of regulations, including the banning of nets below five-inch mesh size (the government-stipulated minimum).

In Tanzania, the outcomes at Ihale and Mwasonge beaches were not as spectacular as they had been at Obenge, but nonetheless were very successful. The same

**The SEDAWOG team discussing the Lake Victoria fisheries with a Kenyan fishing community**



format of exchange visits by the beaches to TAFIRI's regional centre in Mwanza, and return visits by the TAFIRI socio-economic team, forged high levels of trust between the communities and the researchers. With trust as the basis of the research relationship, the quality of the data obtained noticeably improved with each visit. At the same time, the communities used these visits to exploit what they saw as the more 'worldly' and educated knowledge of the researchers, seeking advice about all manner of issues and problems. This excellent relationship was, perhaps, the result of strong community-government relationships developed during the *ujamaa* years.

In Uganda, a country whose history has been beset by civil strife, the relationship between the FIRRI researchers and Nkombe ebbed and flowed. At each visit, the researchers had to remind participants of the study objectives, and reassure them that FIRRI's intentions were not to grab land. Slowly, successes began to be seen. During a visit to FIRRI's headquarters in Jinja, village representatives explained that they had taken action to ban two types of fishing techniques, which they perceived to be destructive to the fishery. When probed for reasons why they had done this, they replied that their frequent contact with FIRRI researchers had emboldened them, and that their discussions with the team had taught them they could have some control over their own futures, and that the lake was theirs to look after.

In December 2002, the LVFRP ended. Talk of a follow-up and implementation phase may well bear fruit, but the interruptions in visits may prove very damaging to the relationships developed between the research institutes and the landing sites concerned.

## Conclusions

The team learnt a number of lessons from their experiences with the communities:

• Participation requires a two-way flow of information. Knowing about the SEDAWOG team and being assured that they would continue to learn more about the team mattered a great deal to the communities.

- Participatory monitoring is a slow process. Trust has to be worked at: it was not sufficient that the team merely explained the study objectives or where they came from. The visual impact of actually seeing the research institutes, and experiencing very visual presentations of LVFRP activities, was an important step in this process.
- Nothing goes to plan: if there was a single reason for the success of the exercise, it was that the research team was very flexible and very patient.
- Context is crucial. The historical problem of eviction from the neighbouring forest reserve at Nkombe generated fear that we were there to steal people's land, which had an important influence on the process. In Tanzania, conversely, communities were far less suspicious because they were used to being visited by government representatives.

**CONTACT DETAILS**
SEDAWOG Team
Lake Victoria Fisheries Project, Jinja, Uganda
This paper was prepared by Kevin Crean, Kim Geheb and Marie-Therese Sarch. Their contact details are:
Kevin Crean
Hull Institute for Fisheries, University of Hull, Hull, UK.
Kim Geheb
Email: kim_geheb@hotmail.com
Marie-Therese Sarch
93 Parkhill Road, London NW3 2XY, UK
Email: terrisarch@blueyonder.co.uk

# 8

# Community-based support for orphaned children in rural Lesotho

**By KENNETH STOREN, NTHABELENG LEPHOTO, and COLLEEN DUNST**

### Introduction

Ha Moeketsane is a remote mountainous rural area in the Mokhotlong district of Lesotho, consisting of small villages governed primarily by local chiefs. There are few if any support networks in place: traditional communal mechanisms have broken down as a result of migratory work patterns, the sinking economy, and the effect of HIV/AIDS on the productive population. The government is unable to provide services to this area, leaving a myriad of social problems unaddressed. A subsistence economy and a mixture of traditional and Christian beliefs dictate life. This creates barriers to development, as superstition and lack of information lead to stigma and silence in the face of the spread of HIV/AIDS. People who are infected with the virus are not the only victims. There is an ever-increasing population of children whose parents have died from the disease, and the problems faced by these orphaned children are a major concern in communities. The scale of the problem is highlighted by a survey conducted by GROW[1], an indigenous NGO operating in this district. The survey found that there are 3000 to 4000 orphaned children in the area, representing 5% of the total district population.

[1] Previously, Generating Rural Opportunities for Well-being but now simply known as GROW.

### Working with orphaned children and communities

Many development organisations assess the needs of orphaned children without consulting the children or communities, denying participation on the part of the people they seek to assist. This often leads to one-off delivery of services to meet assumed needs. The children may be left with limited disposable resources, while suffering from a variety of other long-term psychological, social, and economic difficulties. They are also subjected to the isolating effects of jealousy from others in the villages who consider their personal level of poverty to be as critical. GROW has taken a different approach to working with orphans. It has developed a participatory, community-based approach which supports caregivers as well as the orphaned children themselves.

GROW began working in Mokhotlong district 11 years ago, addressing issues surrounding horticultural development. Since then, it has expanded, and introduced programmes in agriculture, non-formal education, infrastructure development, health, and nutrition. Some of the programmes target certain groups like shepherds or pregnant mothers, while others are open to the community in general. The focus of the programmes has shifted in recent years to address issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. Members of the communities identified their growing concern over the

## 'Along with economic needs, caregivers identified psychological and social stresses, including negative behaviour changes, feelings of helplessness, depression, isolation, and stigma as problems facing the children'

prevalence of orphaned children in the district, defined locally as children who have lost either one or both parents. GROW has sought to collaborate with the community on possible strategies to alleviate the burdens faced by these children.

Members of the GROW Health and Nutrition team met first with 27 people identified as caregivers of orphaned children to discuss needs and possible solutions. The majority of caregivers are mothers or sisters of the deceased parents. Along with economic needs, caregivers identified psychological and social stresses, including negative behaviour changes, feelings of helplessness, depression, isolation, and stigma as problems facing the children. The caregivers also faced extra stresses: many were elderly family members, now caring for their grandchildren with limited resources and energy. They suggested bringing the children together in a group to enable them to share their frustrations and problems, receive training in life skills, and begin to develop a support network, as well as allowing caregivers a much-needed rest from the burdens of childcare. The caregivers also wished to form an association to provide support for one another and to the children, although they were reluctant to express a need for psychological support for themselves.

### Developing a support network

The Health and Nutrition team chose to pilot the project in the village of Ha Ntsika. This village is home to GROW's field office, and there are about 25 orphaned children living there. The children were invited to meet for a session consisting of activities designed to promote unity and self-expression. The facilitators sought to encourage participation from the beginning by actively involving children in the sessions. Children are used to being passive recipients, whether in the household, school, or community, and part of the facilitators' work was to instill the idea that the children could develop and govern their group themselves. As expected, the children were apprehensive about participating. This was evident in the first few sessions, as the facilitators encouraged participation, but often encountered

### Box 1: Guidelines for behaviour

- Indicate a desire to speak by raising your hand
- Do not laugh at what others say
- Avoid side conversations while others speak
- Be attentive
- Do not argue in an aggressive manner

silence. Despite this, the children evaluated the sessions positively, displaying enthusiasm to continue.

The first session sought to lay the foundation for future sessions. The children developed guidelines, with the assistance of the facilitator, to encourage everyone to participate and to promote a safe environment. They envisioned a place where all could express their thoughts and ideas without fear of harassment, humiliation, or personal threat. Their guidelines are shown in Box 1.

After the guidelines were completed, the facilitators recorded them on a piece of chart paper, and suggested that they be put on the wall as a reminder for all in attendance to respect one another during the sessions. The facilitators also suggested that participants could add or remove guidelines as the sessions progressed.

The facilitators then introduced sessions to promote life skills, as vulnerable children tend to face an assortment of concerns and disadvantages accompanying the lack of strong adult role models in their lives. These sessions focused on developing communication skills, feelings-recognition, coping, decision making, and assertiveness skills. Other sessions provided training in HIV/AIDS awareness, care, and prevention, as vulnerable children tend to be at higher risk of contracting the disease. Sessions also included art activities, and the facilitators introduced a variety of artistic media to allow the children to explore different forms of creativity and expression. Although the children were encouraged to express emotions or needs in their art work, they were free to create anything they wanted to. Many of the sessions included team-building and trust-building activities. The facilitators felt that it was important to promote these skills, as isolation and mistrust often plague the lives of orphaned children. Each session ended with a participatory evaluation, through group discussion, question sessions, and individual comments.

The programme also sought to involve families that care for orphaned children. Caregivers met as a group to discuss issues surrounding the care of orphaned children, and to seek methods to support the children and one another. The sessions for the children also gave caregivers a break from their childcare responsibilities and provided an opportunity for them to relax or fulfill other commitments.

## Empowering children and communities

The children of Ha Ntsika have responded positively in the first ten months of the programme. The group elected members to govern its activities and speak on their behalf, and to strengthen their ability for self-governance. The group also sought the assistance of a young man from the village, who acts as a guide and mentor. He is currently facilitating the sessions with the assistance of older children, working with GROW staff and the children to develop session plans, reporting mechanisms, and evaluation tools. A young woman from the village also volunteered to assist the group, and will commence training in the near future. Members of the group have introduced new art activities to the sessions, utilising locally available materials, and have facilitated a variety of life skills sessions. They also invited other vulnerable children from the neighbouring village of Tsekong to be part of their group. More experienced group members guide children from the new village through activities and sessions.

The group has also helped other villages to develop a similar support structure. This process began through a combined day camp designed to introduce children from the new target village of Sibi to activities, ideas, and lessons developed in the pilot programme. The children from the group in Ha Ntsika co-facilitated both formally and informally, presenting activities related to HIV/AIDS awareness and life skills development. Children from Sibi participated in the last few GROW-facilitated sessions in Ha Ntsika in order to gain an understanding of how the sessions progressed. GROW facilitators then moved to Sibi to assist the children in that group, along with children from the neighbouring villages of Lilatoleng and Ralithlare. Two people have already volunteered to mentor the combined group, and are training with GROW facilitators in the communities. After an initial round of sessions, each of these villages will be encouraged to develop the independence shown by the group from Ha Ntsika. GROW staff continue to visit the Ha Ntsika group occasionally, to conduct life skills sessions, monitor progress, and discuss concerns with the group. Currently, about 50 to 75 children from five villages attend sessions regularly. The ratio of participating girls to boys is approximately 2 to 1, owing to the fact that many orphaned boys work as shepherds and so cannot attend sessions.

The children are also demonstrating their ability to contribute effectively to their communities. The Ha Ntsika group prepared and performed a play about the importance of strong respiratory health. They presented it at a community event geared towards creating awareness of care, prevention, and treatment options related to respiratory infection, a chronic problem in the rural mountain areas of Lesotho. The audience responded well to both the performance and the content of the play, and the children enjoyed the opportunity to participate actively in a community event.

The children gain a variety of benefits from membership of the groups, including the development of strong friendships with other children facing similar problems. Older children demonstrate concern for the welfare of the younger members, acting as surrogate siblings during the sessions. Positive reactions from group members create a sense of empowerment for those that volunteer to facilitate sessions or introduce new activities. In conjunction with training in life skills, this positive reinforcement helps develop confidence and self-esteem. The enthusiasm demonstrated by the children, both to participate in and to govern the group, bodes well for the future.

Caregivers have noticed positive attitudinal changes in the children as a result of the development of the groups. The caregivers also meet sporadically and have began a communal garden project, with the objective of providing food for the children's support sessions and generating income. However, they remain wary of expressing personal needs. Hopefully, this will change with time.

## Challenges

Developing a psychological support mechanism in the rural communities of Mokhotlong presents many difficulties. Development efforts traditionally involve delivery of tangible goods and services, in the hope of improving economic livelihoods. There are few experiences of this kind of work to draw on in the South. Information must be borrowed and modified from research done in the North and adapted through trial and error to meet the needs of children in rural communities. Resistance comes in many forms, primarily from a lack of understanding in the community at large. Facilitators try to overcome this by informing communities of their work through public gatherings and meetings with local groups that govern development in the villages. Fortunately, the carers of orphaned children recognise the need for this kind of support, seeing first hand the difficulties faced by the children.

In a perfect world, the children would not only see the value in gathering to form support networks, but also take the initiative to do so themselves. However, at this stage they still need to be guided through the preliminary steps of development. The process is slow, as it is a learning experience for both facilitators and participants, but the children are responding well, displaying a desire to learn and lead.

**'The sessions seek to develop skills, confidence, and a sense of togetherness so that children can create a place of their own, where they can express themselves freely and grow among empathetic peers'**

GROW's ultimate goal is to leave behind knowledge and skills so that the groups and networks can continue to thrive on their own.

Breaking the social stigma surrounding orphaning presents another significant challenge. With the rise in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, superstition surrounding the death of young adults, and the exploitative behaviour of some people in the community, care must be exercised to educate all to the true nature of this social phenomenon. GROW and other organisations continue to promote HIV/AIDS awareness in the area through teacher training and village gatherings, in an attempt to create an atmosphere of cooperation and acceptance for vulnerable groups.

Some of the greatest problems facing orphaned children in this country are labour exploitation and sexual abuse. As mentioned previously, many young boys are sent into the mountains to perform the dangerous task of shepherding. Faced with the risks of exposure, cattle theft, sexual abuse, and lack of nutritious food, these children are most in need and difficult to reach. Some attend literacy classes offered in the evenings by GROW's literacy programme, but many will never attend formal schooling. Other children, both boys and girls alike, are sexually abused in the home and community. A culture of silence surrounds sexual abuse in the home, and law enforcement agencies lack the authority under current legislation to

intervene effectively. A legislative initiative by the government of Lesotho, under pressure from NGOs and other civil society groups, seeks to reform the national Child Protection Act. The next step for GROW will be to seek solutions to these problems in the district of Mokhotlong through cooperation with various local and national agencies.

**Conclusion**
The initial goal of the sessions facilitated by GROW staff is to assist children in building skills and coping mechanisms to address difficulties faced in their daily lives. The sessions also seek to develop skills, confidence, and a sense of togetherness so that children can create a place of their own, where they can express themselves freely and grow among empathetic peers. GROW also wishes to see the children act as an empowered and positive body in the communities, dispelling the myth that they are helpless and burdensome. Finally, the children need a place to have fun, make friends, and enjoy life, free from hardships faced in their daily lives. The group in Ha Ntsika seems to be successful in many of these respects, and has gone on to impart skills to children in neighbouring villages.

Facilitators continue to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the sessions through group evaluations, observations of behaviour, and initiatives taken by the children. Caregivers play a pivotal role in providing support in the home and to the groups, allowing for their acceptance and growth in the communities. Ultimately, success will lie in the continued work and cooperation of these groups in developing a strong future for the children.

The devastating effects of HIV have not yet reached their peak in Lesotho. Over the next few years, the number of orphaned and vulnerable children will increase dramatically. Hopefully, programmes will be in place in rural areas to address the situation as it progresses, allowing children and caregivers hope for a better future.

**CONTACT DETAILS**
Kenneth Storen, Director of Social Services
Nthabeleng Lephoto, Community-Based Care
Officer
Colleen Dunst, US Peace Corps
GROW, P.O. Box 74, Mokhotlong 500,
Lesotho, Southern Africa.
Tel: +266 22920 205
Email: lengolo@grow.org.ls

# 9

# Targeting the extreme poor: field experience from Dimla, Bangladesh

*Char* area of Dimla. The river has a significant impact on people's well-being.

## By DIPANKAR DATTA and IQBAL HOSSAIN

### Introduction

The international NGO, Concern Worldwide, has been working in both rural and urban areas of Bangladesh since 1972. Concern in Bangladesh sees its commitment to the poorest and most vulnerable groups as its defining characteristic. To address the challenges of working with the extreme poor living in the environmentally vulnerable remote areas, Concern is presently implementing Integrated Rural Development Projects (IRDP) in four such locations.

Concern's approach to IRDP is to promote the development of sustainable community-based organisations, formed and run by the extreme poor. These organisations serve as structures through which members can organise certain services for themselves, and secure others from the government and NGOs.

In early 2002, Concern decided to assess whether its IRDPs are reaching the extreme poor. Concern's management chose Dimla as the site of a participatory research study which asked two questions:
• Who are the extreme poor?
• Is Concern's Dimla project reaching the extreme poor effectively through its existing activities?

### A brief overview of the Dimla project

Dimla is a sub-district of Nilphamari, which borders the



Indian state of West Bengal to the north. To develop irrigation and control flash floods, the Water Development Board built a barrage (dam) on Dimla's main river, Tista, in 1993. This barrage has created three distinct agro-ecological areas:
• *char* areas (remote islands)
• riverbank and embankment side areas
• *kaim* areas (areas protected by the embankment).

After launching an emergency programme in the flood-affected areas of Dimla in 1998/99, Concern decided to launch a five-year development project targeted at the extreme poor of remote (*char*) areas of Dimla.

**Table 1: Classification of households living in the working areas of Dimla project**

| Column 1 | Column 2 | | Column 3 | | Column 4 = (col3 / col2)*100 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classification of households | Distribution of total households in the working areas | | Distribution of Concern member households in the working areas | | Distribution of total households covered by Concern in the working areas |
| | Number | % | Number | % | |
| Rich | 266 | 5% | 0 | 0% | 0% |
| Middle | 499 | 10% | 0 | 0% | 0% |
| Poor | 1672 | 32% | 908 | 43% | 54% |
| Extreme poor | 2800 | 53% | 1212 | 57% | 43% |
| Total household | 5237 | 100% | 2120 | 100% | 41% |

**Table 2: Distribution of study participants by sex and membership**

| Sex | Membership with Concern | |
|---|---|---|
| | Member | Non-member |
| **Men** | 5 sessions | 5 sessions |
| **Women** | 5 sessions | 5 sessions |

Using rapid rural appraisal (RRA), social maps were prepared in 16 target areas in order to develop clear demarcation lines and identify demographic profiles and physical resources. A detailed well-being grouping exercise was then conducted in every target area to classify all households into four categories[1]: rich, middle, poor, and extreme poor (see column 2 of Table 1).

Initially it was planned that the project would only target the extreme poor. However, after the well-being grouping exercise, the project team recommended targeting some poor households as well due to their extreme vulnerability and likeliness to fall into the extreme poor category anytime. As a consequence, Dimla project started to work with 2120 families (see column 3 of Table 1).

The project organised the target households into community-based groups to pursue activities that would improve their human and material resources, and develop their understanding of their legal rights. The key project activities were savings and credit, awareness raising and skills training, non-formal education, tree planting, and rural infrastructure development. In early 2001, the project team started to advocate for the allocation of government land to homeless households. Despite strong protests from the local elite (who illegally occupied the land), the project team succeeded in mobilising government land for about 100 extreme poor households by the end of 2002. Advocacy activities are still going on.

## The research process
The researchers started by analysing the information presented in Table 1, and then undertook participatory rural appraisal (PRA) with households that had been identified as the extreme poor in the project social maps. Twenty PRA sessions were conducted and on average 12 persons participated in each session. Table 2 presents the distribution of participants in each session by sex and membership.

In each PRA session, participants conducted a well-being ranking exercise, followed by livelihood analysis, dream analysis[2], and analysis of the involvement of the extreme poor in project activities.

## Findings
### Coverage of the extreme poor in targeted areas
As column 4 of Table 1 shows, 54% of poor households have been covered by the project, but only 43% of extreme poor households. This indicates that the project team has been more successful in reaching the poor than the extreme poor.

### *Categories of extreme poor households*
The research also showed that there are there are significant variations in the well-being of the extreme poor in terms of availability/use of human capital.[3] The community divided the extreme poor into three major categories: beggar class, helpless poor, and moderate poor.
• People of the **beggar class** (*Vikuk Sreni*) are extremely poor. They cannot work and are not supported by any family structure, e.g. the disabled, physically or mentally ill or chronically sick people, old people beyond working age, abandoned children. They are excluded from the project target group because the project team believes that only charities (as opposed to any other development activity) can move them out of poverty.
• The **helpless poor** (*Ashohai Gorib*) households also live in extreme poverty. These households either have only one

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[1] The criteria used to identify the households in each category were: food security, landholding status, housing status, ownership of moveable assets like cattle and poultry, state of clothing, access to credit markets, number of economically active adult males, number of dependants, respect in society, and ability to bear the cost of medical treatment.

[2] Editor's note: this is a type of analysis which looks at 'hopes and fears' or 'ideal futures'.
[3] Human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labour, and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives. At a household level human capital is a factor of the amount and quality of labour available. This varies according to household size, skill levels, leadership potential, health status, etc.

**Table 3: Distribution of extreme poor households of Dimla**

| Position in the ranking chart | Name of the newly categorised extreme poor households | Main characteristics | % distribution of newly categorised extreme poor households | | % distribution of all extreme poor households |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Concern Member extreme poor | Non-member extreme poor | |
| Bottom | Beggar class | Extreme poor persons without capacity to work and not embedded in supporting family structures | 0% | 3% | 1.5% |
| Middle | Helpless poor | Extreme poor households having very low human capital | 55% | 40% | 47.5% |
| Top | Moderate poor | Extreme poor households having relatively better human capital | 45% | 57% | 51.0% |
| Total | | | 100% | 100% | 100.0% |

adult earning member, who is often a woman, or the adult members are not in a position to use their existing human capital for various reasons such as having childcare duties or due to sickness.

• Households with more than one adult earning member – one of them often a man – are referred to as **moderate poor** (*Nimno Maddhym*) households. Key earners of these households have relatively better economic mobility and can maximise the use of their human capital in the existing labour market. In the socio-economic context of the char areas, these households are not extremely poor.

## A note on terms: social respect comes first
The most common local terms for the moderate poor were *Nimno Maddhym, Durbal Maddhyatar*, and *Saman Saman Jay*. In the triangulation session, the community unanimously chose the term *Nimno Maddhym* as a standard name for this category. This is because the word *Maddhym* is associated with social respect. 'Moderate poor' is actually the literal translation of *Nimno Maddhym*.

*Ashohai Gorib* and *Vikuk Sreni* were the most-used local terms for households belonging to the middle and bottom categories respectively. 'Helpless poor' and 'beggar class' are literal translations of these words. When the terms were presented at the triangulation workshop, they caused uneasy reactions among some participants. They pointed out that the terms bear strong negative connotations and suggest that the community has unsympathetic attitudes to the poorest of the poor, whilst in fact they are often respected. Despite strong reactions, most of the participants

wanted to retain these terms because they encapsulate the feelings of the poorest groups about their position. They also highlight the social position of the poorest of the poor.

Table 3 shows the distribution of households between the three categories.

From the last column of Table 3, it can be seen that over 50% of 'extreme poor' households do not live in extreme poverty though they have been identified as extreme poor households by the project team.

As people of the beggar class are excluded from the project target group, they have also been excluded from other parts of the research. We focus here on the helpless poor and the reasons why they often are not able to participate fully in the project.

## Helpless poor households
Helpless poor households are deprived of basic needs. They are identifiable by their very poor clothing and physical conditions. Unlike other poor households, going hungry is not seasonal or sporadic but perennial. Members of these households look upon themselves as the most insecure in society. They have very low interaction with other social groups and people just ignore their presence in the community.

These households have little human capital. Their food security mainly depends on the earnings of only one adult member of the household. They are often female-headed (either widowed, divorced, or abandoned) and have dependent small children. Older children (age eight and above) are important assets. There are also male-headed

A group of men carry out well-being ranking



Women analysing the involvement of the extreme poor in project activities

households where the man is aged, disabled or ailing, and the household is dependent on his wife's earnings for sustenance.

Helpless poor households usually cannot seek loans – institutional or informal – because of lack of collateral. They usually do not have cultivable land, cattle, or draught power. If they do have access to land, it is often unproductive. According to participants, cultivable land and draught power are the most important assets for sustainable livelihoods because both can be rented out to provide income, even if households do not have sufficient human resources or land to farm themselves.

Because of the very poor communication and transportation systems in the *char* areas, the economic mobility of the earning members of these households is very low. In addition, government services such as health and education are almost absent.

As a result, these households have very little coping capacity against adversity and critical economic situations. The community believes that the prospects of the helpless poor for moving out of extreme poverty are bleak, not only because of very low level human capital and environmental vulnerability but also because of high levels of uncertainty in the labour market, exploitation, very low social capital[4], breakdown of extended family, inability to join NGOs, lack of involvement in NGO activities, and few opportunities to develop human capital.

### Reasons why helpless poor households are excluded
The assessment clearly shows that helpless poor households are either excluded from the project or have a lower level of

[4] Social capital means social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives. These are developed through networks and connectedness, membership of more formalised groups, and relationships of trust, reciprocity, and exchange.

involvement. They are often unable to join training or adult education programmes as their participation in these programmes prevents them from working. As they do not have regular savings, other group members do not want to give them loans and this makes it difficult for them to join micro-credit activities.

The selection criteria used by Concern to define target households, e.g. stability in the settlement, age below 45, regular savings requirement, can actually bar the helpless poor from benefiting from the programmes since these are characteristics which they often do not share.

### Key learning from the participatory research
• In terms of methodology, we found that the well-being grouping exercise was useful to get an idea of the number and characteristics of well-being groups in the community. It also gave a rough proportion of the different groups within the community. However, the well-being ranking exercise was the best method for identifying households living in extreme poverty. We could only use it after building a good rapport with the community.
• For various reasons, the Dimla project directly and indirectly bypasses the extreme poor, or they cannot participate fully in the development of its activities. Therefore, Concern needs to look at the extreme poor issue separately and with special attention. A **pro-poor strategy** is not effective in reaching the extreme poor. A specifically targeted **pro-extreme poor strategy** is required.

If Concern wants to work with the extreme poor, it should evaluate their existing human and social assets and develop the programme accordingly. The prime goals of the programme should be the protection of existing human capital and ensuring the secure use of human capital for sustainable livelihoods. As there is a strong relationship between human capital and social capital, the protection

A triangulation session at the end of the research. The poorest people sat at the back of the room and did not participate. A second session was arranged to ensure their participation

and optimal use of human capital would enhance and strengthen the social capital of the extreme poor.

• Finally, the financial services provided by the Dimla project failed to reach the extreme poor because of a fault in the system. Credit is mostly 'promotional' instead of 'survival' and 'protectional'. Loan for promotional measures allow the better-off poor to expand their businesses. But the poorest of the poor badly need credit for survival and protectional purposes. Concern needs to adopt new policies: small and flexible loan size to suit the extreme poor; longer, flexible repayment plans; closer supervision; and possibly linking micro-credit to safety net programmes, such as skills training and food aid.

## Learning shows the way …

A big challenge for Concern's management team is to reach the extreme poor effectively given the experience discussed above. Concern has already taken some steps in this regard:

• Conducting more research on extreme poverty to gain a clearer understanding of the vulnerabilities and livelihood assets of the extreme poor is expected to contribute significantly to developing pro-extreme poor strategies, as well

as to designing effective projects for the extreme poor.

• Reviewing project policies to identify their impact on the extreme poor. For example, the removal of the age bar on group membership and more flexible saving systems have provided scope to include more extreme poor households in the participating groups.

• Making it mandatory for all Concern projects to make a list of the extreme poor households in the project area through well-being ranking with group members.

• Working with other organisations to mobilise resources for the extreme poor, e.g. another international NGO, World Vision, is helping organise tree planting activities.

• Putting special emphasis on advocacy to mobilise government land for landless extreme poor families, and on increasing the extreme poor's access to government food aid programmes.

Despite these positive steps, there are many other issues that need to be resolved. For example, some managers think that food aid is essential to reach the extreme poor effectively but some other managers think that it will create a relief mentality among the extreme poor families. There is also a wide debate among Concern managers on the issue

**The triangulation session which was organised in the open field. Iqbal is facilitating the session**



of flexible credit for the extreme poor. While some managers are in favour of flexible credit (interest-free loans), longer repayment plans etc., other managers are opposing it for the sake of the sustainability of community organisations.

Taking into account these debates and the learning from the assessment study, Concern's management team is now working to develop a long-term, location-specific, and multi-pronged pro-extreme poor strategy in order to address the challenges of reaching the extreme poor and improving their socio-economic status.

**CONTACT DETAILS**
Dipankar Datta, Partnership and Capacity Building Adviser, Policy Development and Evaluation Directorate, Concern Worldwide, 52–55 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2, Republic of Ireland.
Email: dipankar2kbd@yahoo.com
Iqbal Hossain, Training Officer, Organisational Development Unit, Concern, House 7, Road 12 (New), Dhanmondi, Dhaka 1209, Bangladesh.
Email: iqbal@concernbd.org

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# Participatory evaluation with pastoralists in Sudan

**by ALMOTALIB IBRAHIM, SARA PANTULIANO, JOHN PLASTOW, WOLFGANG BAYER, and ANN WATERS-BAYER**

## Introduction

Beja pastoralists have been keeping camels and goats in the arid Red Sea hills of Sudan for centuries. After droughts in the 1970s and 1980s, they had difficulties rebuilding their herds and adapting their economy to new circumstances. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, many Beja received food aid or participated in food-for-work programmes.

The Red Sea Hills Programme (RSHP), supported by ACORD (the Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development), started work in Halaib Province in eastern Sudan in 1989. It first focused on water development close to the small inland centre of Suffaya, where many mobile pastoralists were found. In 1992, it expanded operations and started some activities related to livestock-keeping and community development.

In 1995/6, the programme underwent a major review, out of which emerged a three-pronged strategy: participatory planning and implementation, gender sensitivity, and environmental management. The aim was to give local people the means to determine their own development. The stronger gender orientation was meant to ensure that this included women, in a context of very conservative gender relations. A new programme team was recruited, composed almost entirely of local people, including one woman. After six months' on-the-job coaching by a Sudanese specialist in PLA methods, the team began working with Village Development Committees (VDCs) in the coastal zone.

The VDCs plan, implement, and monitor projects prioritised by each community. These include paraveterinary services, goat restocking, fodder supply, well repair, construction of water cisterns, making soil embankments to harvest water for cropping, setting up women's centres (with training in literacy, sewing, horticulture, etc.), cooperative shops, community funds for human medicine, and boat rehabilitation (many pastoralists whose herds were depleted have now taken up sea-related activities).

In 1998, the programme wanted to expand its community development work to the hilly inland areas inhabited by mobile pastoralists. The RSHP team and ACORD saw this as an opportune time to invite external reviewers to assess the programme jointly with the team and Beja communities. In consultation with the VDCs, the team developed a profile for the external reviewers, emphasising participatory skills, familiarity with pastoral livelihoods, mix of social and natural science disciplines, and gender balance. The team, the VDCs and the ACORD desk officer drew up Terms of Reference (ToRs), in which they even proposed specific methods, e.g. SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, for the participatory evaluation.

**'We asked the committee what they considered to be desirable traits of a committee and its functioning... The VDC members reflected on past meetings and discussed who had attended and who had been involved in decision making'**

ACORD headquarters added some points, such as assessing the cost-effectiveness of selected activities.

### From ToRs to questions to evaluation design

The external reviewers and the RSHP team transformed each statement in the ToRs into a question, brainstormed about how this could best be addressed with the villagers, and agreed on several participatory methods to be suggested to them. The evaluation was carried out with four Beja communities – two on the coast and two in the hills – in each case, in villages relatively strong and relatively weak in community development, as judged by the RSHP team.

In each community, the evaluation started with two meetings – one with men and one with women – to introduce the external persons, stimulate a general discussion about village development, and give the Beja an opportunity to select project-supported activities to examine in more detail. At these initial meetings, local evaluators (a woman and a man) were selected by their fellow villagers.

After the larger meetings in each village, the RSHP members and external reviewers met with the two local evaluators to design the evaluation process in their village. The local evaluators suggested the size and composition of the village groups with whom different aspects of the development work should be assessed. These were interest groups involved in the activities identified in the community meetings and, in most cases, were segregated according to sex. The local evaluators arranged the various visits and meetings and decided whether the final feedback meeting with the community should be segregated or mixed. (As it turned out, in all cases, they chose the latter option.)

### Exploring perceived benefits

We asked each of the different interest groups to identify the benefits of the activity in question, and a member of the evaluation team drew each benefit on an A4 sheet of paper. We placed the sheets on the ground and anchored

Using proportional piling to assess the relative importance of project benefits



them with stones.

Each village participant was given ten beans (red for men, white for women) and asked to distribute them among the benefits most important to him or her as an individual. Some people explained their choices as they placed the beans. The votes by men and women for each benefit were then counted and weighted, e.g. if five women and ten men were voting, then the votes of the women were multiplied by two so that it was easier to compare the relative importance given to the benefit by women and men.

We then posed questions to probe why certain benefits were more important overall than others, and why certain ones were more important to one sex than the other. The discussion was in Beja and recorded by a RSHP member. The non-Sudanese reviewers depended largely on the notes of the Sudanese colleagues, as excessive interruptions for translation would have disturbed the flow of discussion among the villagers.

### Identifying beneficiaries

We used the proportional-piling technique for identifying wealth classes that were benefiting from the activity. We placed four piles of beans on the ground to represent different wealth groups within the village: very rich, medium rich, medium poor, and very poor. We deliberately made the pile for the very poor the smallest one. The villagers then re-adjusted the piles to represent the proportions of households in the village that were in these different wealth groups. We asked them to explain how each group differed from the other (i.e. criteria of wealth/poverty).

Then we asked them to indicate which group(s) benefited most from the activity. This led to lively discussion and

**A ranking exercise in Yomont village**



to redistribution of the beans, sometimes even to creation of a new pile. For example, when a group of villagers realised that the pile of beans representing 'very poor' included people with a few livestock and those with none, whereas the paraveterinary services were benefiting the former and not the latter, it decided to subdivide the fourth pile into 'very poor' (few livestock) and 'very, very poor' (no livestock). The discussion then moved to why certain wealth classes were benefiting more than others.

### Assessing local organisational capacities

The VDCs assessed their own organisational capacities by applying the SWOT method, writing in Arabic on a poster on the ground. This was a method they already knew. However, the RSHP team was eager to learn other ways of helping local committees assess their capacities. Therefore, the external reviewers introduced what the team called the 'moons exercise', based on an approach developed by Uphoff (1991). We asked the committee what they considered to be desirable traits of a committee and its functioning. For example, a trait stated by one group was: 'All members attend meetings regularly and take part in decision making'. Then we drew four phases of the moon on the ground (crescent, less than half moon, more than half moon, full moon) and suggested that this could stand for few/some/many/all members attend meetings regularly and take part in decision making. The VDC members reflected on past meetings and discussed who had attended and who had been involved in decision making, until they reached agreement about the appropriate moon phase. We then asked them what they still needed to do to attain the ideal state (full moon), in which direction the committee would develop if support from the RSHP continued or

ceased, and why this would happen.

In all villages, the RSHP had started by promoting the creation of separate men's and women's development committees, each focusing on activities most important to that gender. In some cases, the villagers had already started to form a mixed-gender VDC. In one village where this had not happened, we facilitated a brainstorming and visualisation exercise (in written Arabic) on the pros and cons of a joint committee. As the villagers, through their experience with scales in the cooperative shop, were familiar with weights, they could weigh the relative importance of the pros and cons. The men and women together came to a decision that the pros weighed heavier. This type of evaluation tool served two purposes: to assess the strengths of the separate women's and men's committees, and to further the process of local organisational development.

In those villages where a Venn diagram had been made during PLA exercises two years earlier, the Beja drew a new one to show the present situation of institutional linkages and compared this with the old one. However, the new situation had become so complex that the new Venn diagram could be understood only by those directly involved in drawing it. Nevertheless, they could explain to us and later to the other villagers what the major changes in the last years had been, e.g. that women used to have no contacts outside the village or only indirectly through men, but were now interacting with circles outside the village, such as traders to supply their cooperative shop. Women were actively involved in VDCs, had more freedom of movement, and generally had a much stronger profile in public.

### Analysis and feedback

Each village evaluation culminated in a feedback workshop in which the Beja-speaking members of the evaluation team showed the results, received comments and posed questions to advance debate in the village, particularly about institutional development. The village evaluation reports, including the drawings, were distributed in print in Arabic and on cassette in Beja. The RSHP team facilitated discussions of these reports in the villages, as part of the process of further local planning.

The data from the participatory evaluation were analysed at several levels by different groups:
- village evaluators were involved in analysis at village level while preparing and conducting the feedback workshop;
- the RSHP team was involved at programme level while discussing and comparing the different village findings and preparing the initial evaluation report;
- the external reviewers analysed the functioning and tech-

**Women in Dunganab village rank the perceived benefits of different project activities**
**Credit: Sara Pantuliano**

nical expertise of the RSHP team, although the team later had the opportunity to comment before the external reviewers produced the final report.

In addition to the village evaluation reports, the villages received an Arabic summary of the main recommendations from the overall report. The revised evaluation report in English was sent to ACORD and the RSHP team to serve as a reference for present and potential donors.

## Assessment of the evaluation
ACORD was sufficiently interested in the evaluation process to send someone from headquarters to document it (Pantuliano, 1998). As part of this process documentation, the RSHP team (without the external reviewers) assessed the evaluation. The team found it to be a learning experience that contributed to the programme's own methods and findings in PM & E. Indeed, this had been why the team had wanted a participatory mid-term evaluation: to contribute to its own learning and to that of the villagers with whom it worked.

Favourable conditions for the participatory evaluation were:
• the RSHP team and local evaluators were already experienced in applying participatory tools;
• ACORD accepted a limitation in the scope of the evaluation, realising that all aspects of the RSHP could not be evaluated in a participatory way in a short period of time.

A weakness of the evaluation was that non-beneficiaries, particularly non-Beja people, hardly participated. The external reviewers' contacts were confined to people in contact with the RSHP team (all Beja). Moreover, the contacts within the communities were via the VDC, the composition of which reflected largely the traditional power structure – with some important adjustments, such as the creation of a women's or joint development committee. However, the villagers tended to select traditional leaders and/or their relatives to be local evaluators.

ACORD's questions about cost-effectiveness could not be adequately answered, because the participatory evaluation tools and limited time did not permit collection of suffi-

**A committee leader comments on the village findings in Mohd**



**Group discussion in Gebiet village**



cient quantitative data. Also, before the evaluation, the project had not recorded basic data needed to assess cost-effectiveness. This made the evaluation largely dependent on villagers' qualitative perceptions and opinions, and their rough estimates of costs and benefits.

## Impact of the participatory evaluation

The participatory mid-term evaluation brought about several changes in the RSHP. More attention was paid to environmental issues, both on land and at sea. Awareness-raising activities were introduced that drew inspiration from the traditional *silif* system of natural resource management, and the RSHP facilitated inter-village visits to share relevant experiences. The programme increased its sea-related activities: it began to support oyster farming and provided loans for fishing boats on a full-recovery basis, instead of with subsidies, as the evaluation had shown that this activity brought sufficient income for the beneficiaries to repay a loan. This freed up funds for activities to support more disadvantaged groups among the Beja.

There were also changes in project management at village level. In one village, the participatory evaluation prompted the VDC to become more inclusive by bringing on board more representatives from outlying areas instead of just the core village. Another village recognised that too few individuals were controlling decision making without sufficiently consulting the people who should benefit from the different projects. It therefore set up a Project Committee composed of members of each local project, to liaise with the VDC. This model is now spreading to other villages.

The RSHP team continued using tools applied during the mid-term evaluation and integrated them into a Participatory Impact Monitoring (PIM) system that was set up subse-

quently. The programme's sustainability lens no longer focuses on the technical sustainability of particular activities but rather on the sustainability of the development process as a whole: more attention is given to strengthening community capacities to plan and implement projects, including raising and managing funds, and reporting.

Greater diversification of livelihood options is encouraged. The RSHP regards the various local projects as community-managed experiments through which the Beja learn about the feasibility of new possibilities, at the same time as learning how to identify and manage projects. The RSHP gives strategic and gradually diminishing technical support to specific projects, and more attention to helping the Beja build up representative committees within villages and spanning several villages to manage local development.

The RSHP brings together the development committees and other community members to select their criteria for committee performance (e.g. regular meetings, follow-up of plans, record keeping). They apply various tools for assessment, including the 'moons exercise', and spider-web diagrams to assess key performance elements such as meetings, attendance, and follow-up. The VDCs then plan actions to improve their performance. For example, one community appointed a person to remind the committee members about meeting dates. In another community, the VDC dismissed its chairman because he was absent too often. In a recent appraisal by a VDC in a coastal village, the recommendation was to hand over some of the financial control to women. This indicates that women have gained competence and that community-level evaluation gives recognition to this.

The local committees present their findings to each other and to their own communities in various visual forms (charts, tables, matrices, diagrams), in addition to oral feed-

**GENERAL ISSUE**

**Villagers draw up a community PIM framework showing expectations/ fears,indicators,and observation methods**



back. Some written records are kept by the few literate persons in those villages where they can be found. In addition, the RSHP does its own monitoring of the village projects and local organisational development, applying visual techniques used also by the local groups, such as Venn diagrams and mobility maps.

The participatory mid-term evaluation and subsequent PIM activities offered the Beja communities some structure and tools for their own monitoring and evaluation. These have gradually being institutionalised and increase sustainability in managing activities to improve local livelihoods. PM & E, including aspects of external evaluation, is playing a key role in improving the performance of community organisations in managing development.

**CONTACT DETAILS**
Almotalib Ibrahim Mohamed, Field Coordinator
ACORD RSHP, Port Sudan, Sudan.
Email: almotalib@hotmail.com
Sara Pantuliano
UNDP, Sudan.
277/C Msasani Village
P.O.Box 10962
Dar es Salaam
Tanzania
Email: sara.pantuliano@undp.org;
sarapantuliano@hotmail.com

John Plastow, former ACORD desk officer, now with Oxfam Ireland,
277/C Msasani Village
P.O.Box 10962
Dar es Salaam
Tanzania
Email: john@oxfamireland.or.tz
Wolfgang Bayer
Freelance advisor in extensive animal husbandry and pasture management
Rohnsweg 56, 37085 Göttingen, The Netherlands.
Email: wb_bayer@web.de
Ann Waters-Bayer
ETC Ecoculture
Leusden, The Netherlands.
Email: ann.waters-bayer@etcnl.nl

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# Participatory tools for the evaluation of training interventions

## By RAJIV S. SAXENA and SUBIR K. PRADHAN

### Introduction

The World Bank-funded Uttar Pradesh Diversified Agriculture Support project (UPDASP) in India is supporting a Farming System Approach (FSA) in 32 districts of the state of Uttar Pradesh, with the major emphasis on natural resources management, employment generation, value addition and marketing. Large-scale demonstrations of Integrated Plan Nutrient Management (IPNM) and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) are being conducted in the selected villages. These are aimed at promoting balanced use of nutrients and agro-chemicals, improved crop rotations, and improved soil analysis capacity, which in turn may limit excessive use of hazardous chemicals and reduce the negative impacts of these chemicals on soil and ground water. The UPDASP is supported by the Project Coordination Unit (PCU)/District Project Coordination Units (DPCU), associated NGOs, government line departments like Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, and Dairy, and farmers' organisations. It envisages a system of technology dissemination and adoption through a farmer-to-farmer extension approach, aimed at the diversification and intensification of agriculture in a sustainable manner.

Training is an important part of the project, both for farmers and field staff. This article shares experience gained during a participatory evaluation of training provided under the project. The objectives of the evaluation were to:
- make the evaluation process immediately useful to the stakeholders so that they could take corrective actions without waiting for a report from the external evaluators;
- collect qualitative and quantitative feedback to assess the impact of the programme in order to inform planners;
- expose staff to the use of participatory methodologies and how they could be used in their regular monitoring and evaluation of training interventions.

We focus here on describing some of the participatory tools specifically developed for the evaluation, rather than on the outcomes of the evaluation. We hope that these will tools will be useful to those involved in the evaluation of training and other activities.

### Participatory tools for evaluating training
#### Card Sorting
For monitoring and evaluation of training it is essential to look at the target group's training needs. To do this, a analysis of each person's job, or of each type of job, is needed. The card sorting technique helps to do this. Working in groups, the participants divide their job into its major roles and responsibilities (eight to twelve is common), and write each role/responsibility on a separate card

Participants then choose one particular responsibility

**Figure 1: Card sorting exercise, showing responsibilities and tasks of NGO field staff**
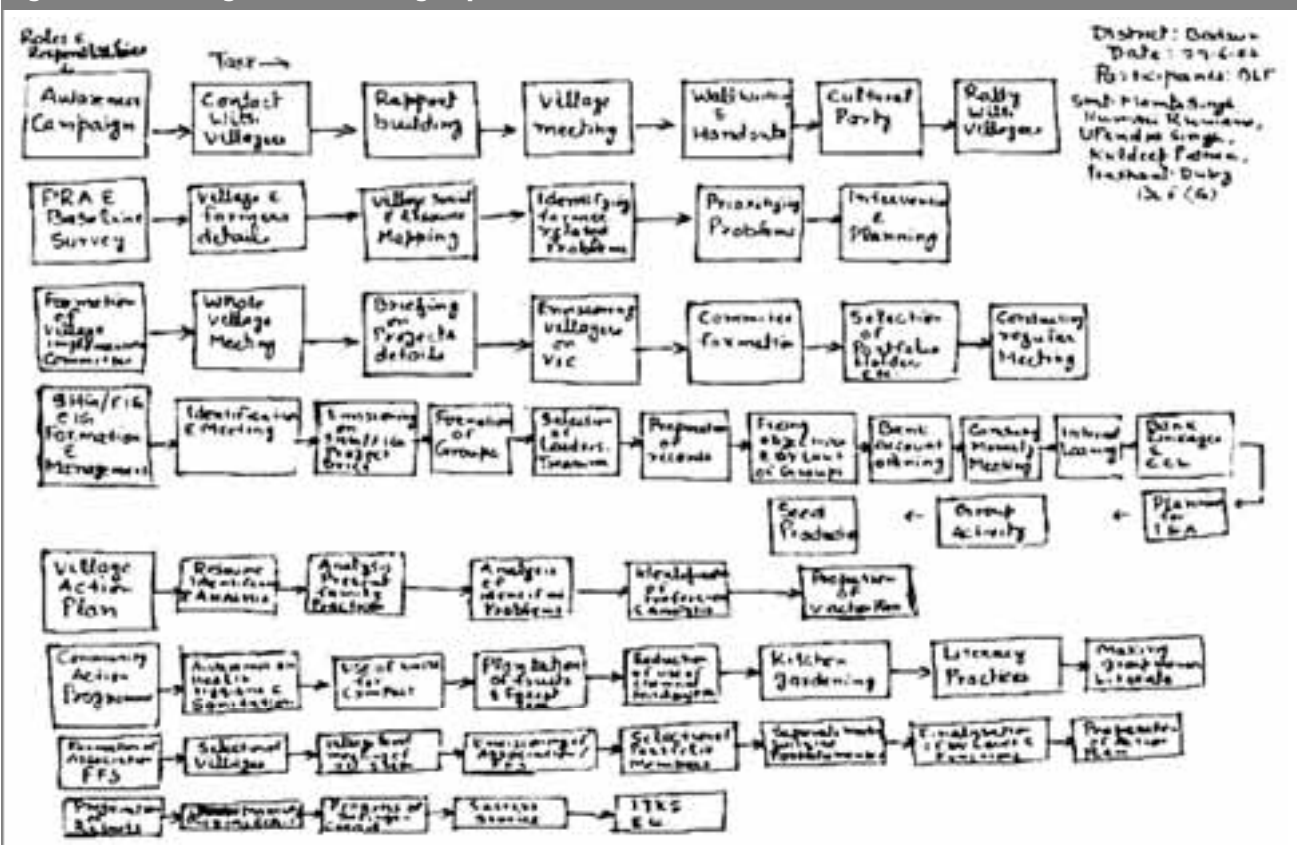


(one card) and identify the tasks required for each chosen area. Each of these tasks is written on a separate card. The cards are placed in a row next to the chosen responsibility, in a sequential order (from left to right). A similar process is followed for the identification of tasks for all the remaining responsibilities. Figure 1 shows an example of this type of analysis for NGO field staff at block level, carried out by the jobholders and their superiors, with the help of the evaluators.

The participants went on to discuss the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for performing each task satisfactorily. They also reflected on levels of performance and factors affecting this.

### Johari's window[1]
This exercise was designed to help participants analyse the influence of their skills, knowledge, and other attributes on

[1] This is after Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingram, who created a set of squares to reveal what we know or don't know about something, and what others know or don't know. They named this 'Johari's window of opportunity'.

their job performance. Field staff first classified the activities they undertook into two different categories: those which were a part of the job, strictly speaking, and those which were not. They then divided up the activities in each category according to how much or little they did of that activity. This gave the four categories shown in Table 1.

The exercises were done with small groups and at the end were triangulated with the larger group. The group then discussed the reasons why they did more or less of particular activities, and why staff carry out activities which are not part of their job. Activities which are part of the job were analysed in relation to existing levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

To help participants analyse how far training has been helpful in enhancing their performance, participants then classified training received into four different categories:
• subjects were important and learning was more;
• subjects were important but learning was less
• subjects were less important yet learning was more;
• subjects were less important and learning was also less.

**Table 1: Results of an analysis of activities undertaken by NGO field staff**

| | Performed less | Performed more |
|---|---|---|
| **Should be done** | • Train and strengthen groups<br>• Inform farmers well in advance of the date and subject of training, exposure visits etc.<br>• Have night halts in villages<br>• Carry out area expansion activities<br>• Hold whole village meetings for technology dissemination<br>• Make efforts to revive defunct groups<br>• Facilitate groups to resolve conflict<br>• Evaluate training and other extension activities<br>• Provide latest information about new varieties of seeds | • Form groups and open bank accounts<br>• Conduct an awareness campaign<br>• Carry out field visits<br>• Carry out soil testing<br>• Hold meetings with the groups<br>• Encourage farmers to try organic farming<br>• Submit various reports required by senior officials<br>• Inform farmers of soil test results<br>• Attend group meetings<br>• Survey and prepare village action plan using PRA<br>• Attend weekly/monthly meetings at block/district level |
| **Should not be done** | • Form groups by providing inducements<br>• Form groups with more than one member from a family<br>• Allow one person to be a member of many groups<br>• Organise training which is not necessary for farmers (e.g. fruit & vegetable preservation) | • Write minutes of group meetings in groups registers<br>• Organise field days in the villages<br>• Guide farmers on subjects about which know little, e.g. storage of onion and garlic, integrated pest management, mushrooms, bee keeping,etc.<br>• Compel unwilling farmers to participate in trainings/meetings |

**Table 2: Learning achieved in training, according to its perceived importance**

| | | Learning | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **More** | **Less** |
| **Important** | **More** | • Project objectives, components, and strategy<br>• Programme organising skills<br>• People's participation<br>• Aerobic composting (NADEP),vermicompost and bio-dynamic composting<br>• Maintaining transparency<br>• Formation of groups<br>• Bank account opening<br>• Account keeping of groups<br>• Procedure for getting cash credit limit for self-help groups<br>• Selection criteria for demonstration and extension activities | • Application of PRA; prioritisation and analysis of issues in village planning<br>• Analysis of economic benefits in demonstration<br>• Motivation methods and team building<br>• Resolving conflicts in groups<br>• Selection process of master trainers & functioning of farmer field schools<br>• Training methodology and identification of training needs<br>• Preparation of action plan after exposure visits based on strengths and weaknesses<br>• Technical subject knowledge to guide farmers properly<br>• Communication and presentation |
| | **Less** | • Account keeping<br>• Preparing balance sheets of groups<br>• Information centre (Kisan soonchna Kendra) | • Documentation of success stories<br>• Credit management and economic activities<br>• Evaluation of own work<br>• Why and how to do grading of groups<br>• Method of organising field days<br>• Awareness about the available literature in projects<br>• Filling out reporting forms<br>• How to facilitate participatory evaluation |

One such example is given in Table 2.

Both exercises helped the participants to understand the relationship between tasks performed by them and the level of learning they had achieved through training.

### Learning matrix

This exercise was conducted to understand the reasons for a high or low level of learning in training and identify areas for further improvement. Field staff identified major topics covered during past training interventions. They then decided on the level of learning achieved at each training: 'enough', 'less', or 'very less'. They also identified factors affecting the level of learning. These were:
• time given for concerned topic: sufficient or less time;
• training methodology followed: lecture or practice;
• effectiveness of trainers: good or medium; and,



**Carrying out a fish bone analysis**

**Figure 2: Learning matrix prepared by NGO field staff**



• number of times a topic was covered: once or repeated a number of times.

They then drew up a matrix, as shown in Figure 2, analysing the level of learning and the factors affecting this for each topic.

### Fish bone

As most of the field staffs' time was devoted to activities related to awareness raising and technology dissemination (broadly called training/extension activities), it was of utmost important to have an in-depth analysis of these activities and sub-activities by field staff themselves. The fish bone technique was used to carry out this analysis (see Figure 3). Participants drew a picture similar to a fish bone on a paper and the main bone was labelled 'extension'. They then identified the various training and extension-

related activities that they undertook – training, exposure visits, field days, wall writing, audio aids (left side), and demonstrations, folders/literatures, cultural party, awareness camps, and audio-visual aids (right side) – and marked these on sub-bones.

Parameters governing the effectiveness of each identified activity were also identified and shown as sub-sub bones. For example, under the activity 'training' (the topmost left one), identified requirements were: need base training, training method (practical), trainer, training place, timely training, sufficient time for the content, and literature provided. Similarly, under demonstration (the top-most right one) the requirements were: pre-demonstration training, timely availability of seeds and fertiliser, quality of seeds and fertiliser, soil testing, selection of field, selection of farmers, and carrying out demonstrations according to need.

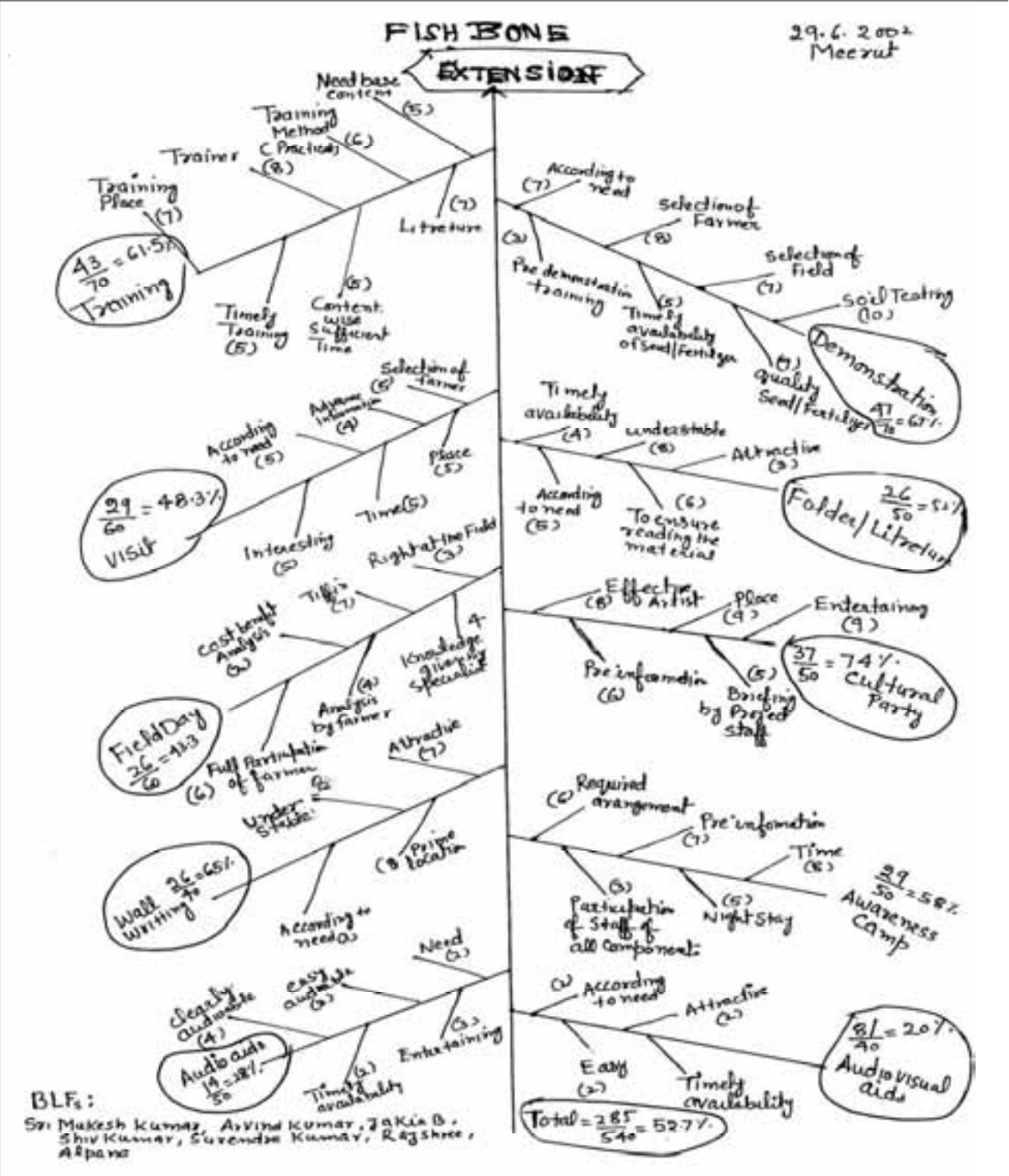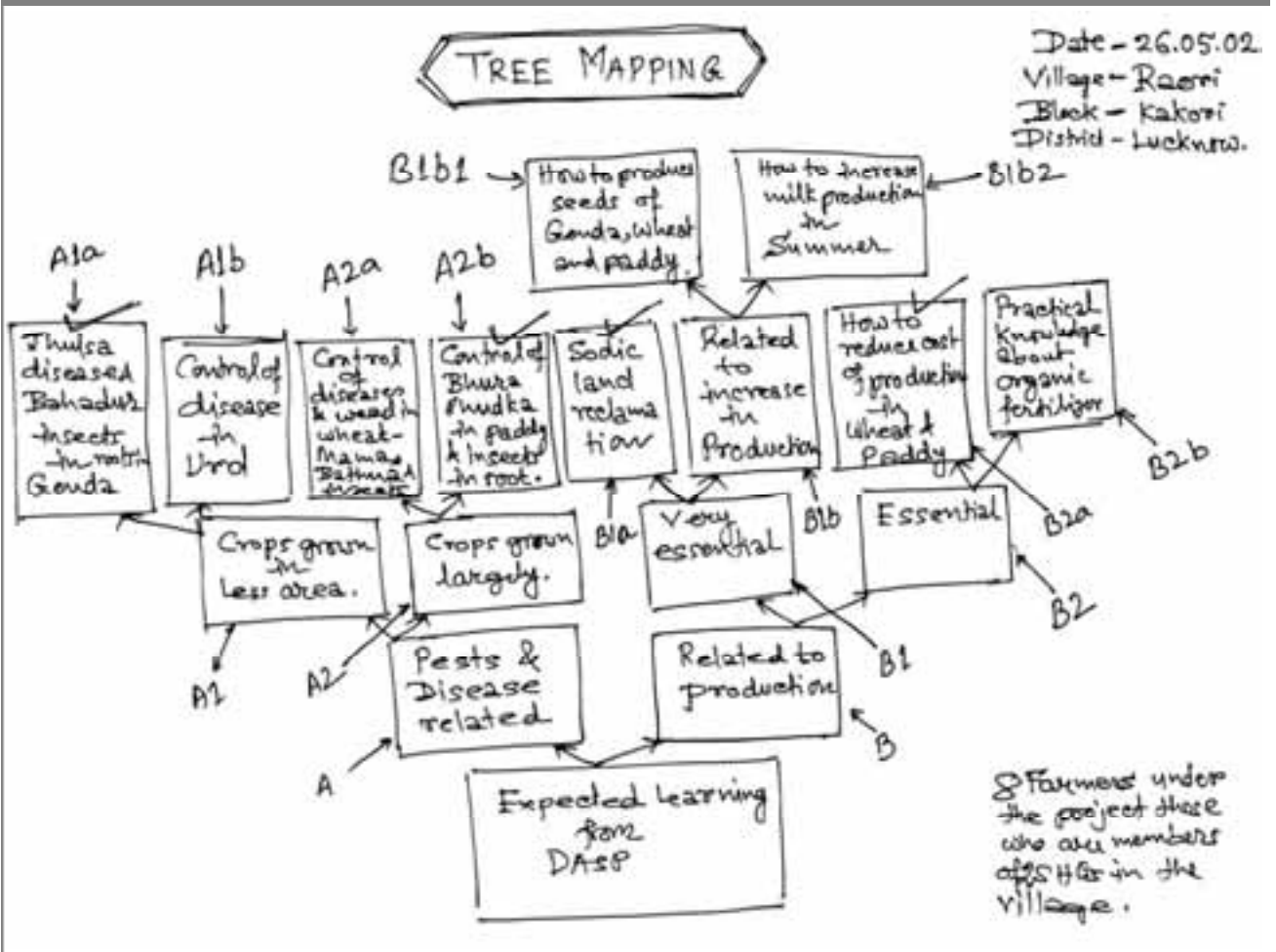**Figure 3: Example of a fish bone analysis of extension activities**

**Figure 4: Analysis of farmers' training needs using tree mapping**



Participants were then asked to score the extent to which each requirement was met for each activity, out of a maximum score of 10, and the scores were added together for each activity. In the case of training, the score was 43 out of 70 (i.e. 61.5%) and for demonstration it was 47 out of 70 (67%). However, aggregated scores for each activity were less important that the identification of parameters and the scoring of parameters or requirements to see to what extent each was being met.

This exercise helped field staff to understand the effectiveness of various activities as well as to identify areas for further improvement.

### Tree mapping

Tree mapping was found to be one of the best participatory tools for analysing training needs and the extent to which training needs were fulfilled.

In a group, farmers articulated their learning expectations from the project. All such expectations were written on one card each. This gave nine cards. Farmers were then asked to look at the topics on the card and to group them together into two broad categories according to the type of topic. Having looked at and discussed the different cards, the farmers divided them into two categories: pest and disease-related topics (A) and production-related topics (B). Farmers then discussed the cards in pile (A) and sub-divided them further into crops grown less (A1) and crops grown widely (A2). Pile (B) was sub-divided into production-related topics that were very essential (B1) and those which were less essential (B2). Each pile was then further sub-divided. (A1) was divided into disease and insects in marigold (A1a) and diseases in pulse crops (A1b). A2 was divided into

Figure 5: Farmers' ranking of different types of training activity
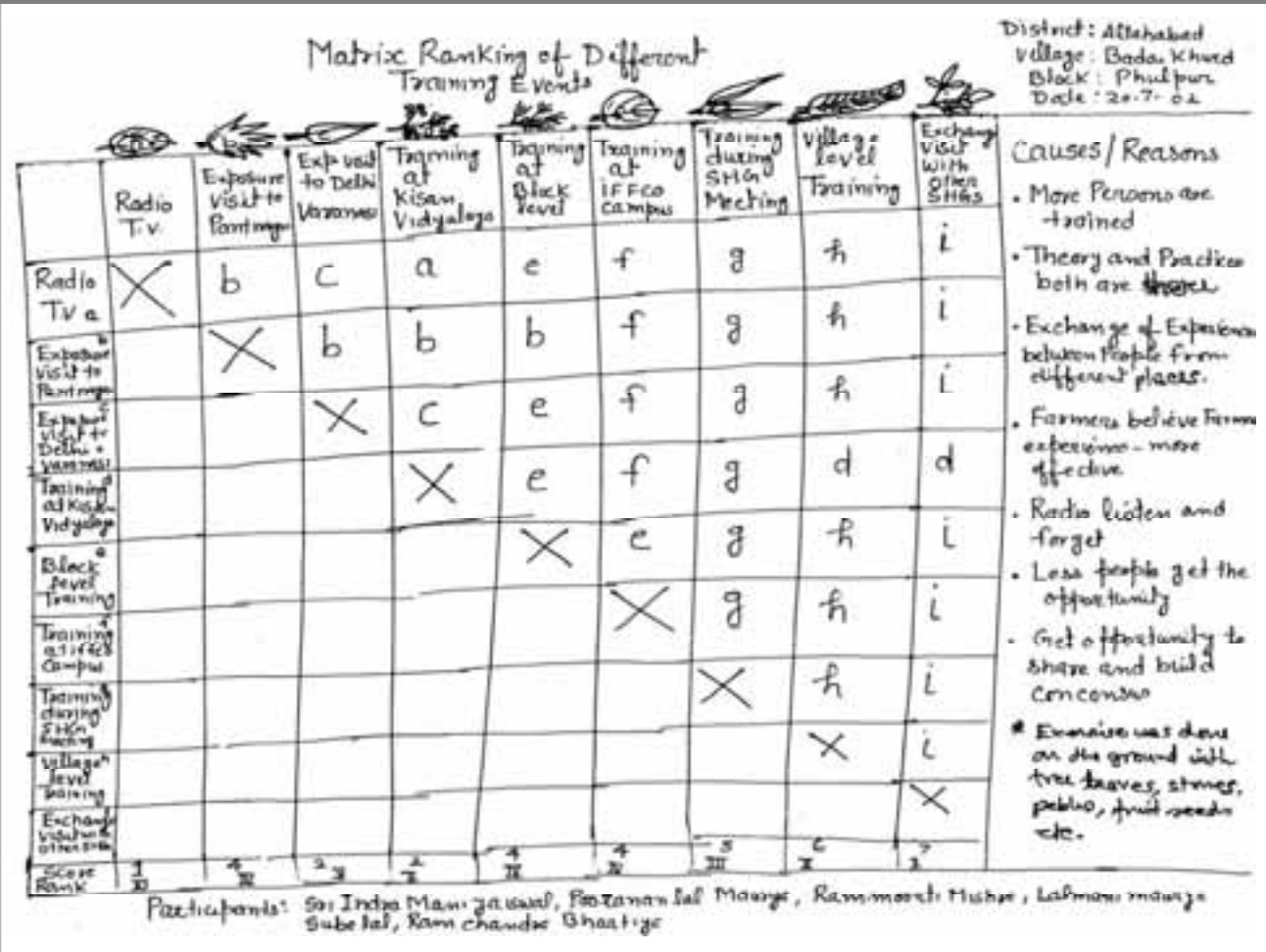
insects and weed in wheat (A2a) and brown plant hopper and insects in roots in paddy (A2b). This continued until there was a single leaf (card) in each branch. Lastly, out of all the expectations identified, farmers ticked the most important ones. While setting the criteria at each stage, farmers had to brainstorm a lot, and this helped them to discover many dimensions, which they were not aware of before.

An example of tree mapping is shown in Figure 4.

## Ranking

Farmers' perceptions of the usefulness of different types of training activity are very important for planning future training. Planning requires insights from both farmers and field staff. The fish bone exercise helped field staff to develop their own understanding, while the matrix ranking exercise

was carried out to analyse farmers' perceptions.

Figure 5 shows the results of such an analysis by farmers. The most notable finding from this exercise was that exchange visits (item i), training at village level (h), and training during self-help group meetings (item g) were highly ranked by farmers whilst the project had been giving more importance to activities like exposure visits (items b and c) and block level training (item e), which farmers ranked as being less important.

## Lessons learnt

Although we have a long experience in conducting training needs assessments, during this one in particular we realised how our work was limited in the past. Mostly we used to jump directly to needs assessment without analysing the related tasks. While doing card sorting, we

**Farmers preparing a matrix**



realised that we were (wrongly) directly asking participants about their learning requirements instead of facilitating them through the sequence followed above.

The tools and techniques used in the evaluation made clear to participants how effective participatory methodologies are, especially in the context of monitoring and evaluation. Field staff decided to initiate corrective measures even during the exercises. While sharing field experiences, the project authorities agreed to undertake such evaluations at regular intervals, internally. The World Bank Mission also recommended use of these tools and techniques, for which necessary training was given to all concerned.

**CONTACT DETAILS**
S. K. Pradhan, Senior Consultant
R. S. Saxena, Regional Chief
Centre for Symbiosis of Technology, Environment & Management (STEM), A-967/7, Indira Nagar, Lucknow – 226 016, UP, India.
Emails: subirpra@yahoo.com;
r_s_saxena@hotmail.com

# Tips for trainers

## by LI OU

PRA and other participatory approaches and methodologies have been used in China since the early 1990s, mainly in internationally funded projects. In the last few years more and more international GOs and NGOs have requested their Chinese counterparts to apply PRA in project planning and implementation. Efforts have been made by Chinese practitioners to adapt PRA to the Chinese situation. However, it has not yet been institutionalised or accepted and applied by the mainstream.

Although China has gone quite fast in the reform, the top-down approach of the central planning economy is still followed extensively by local government, due to the lagging-behind of political reform. PRA application is a radical change and almost completely different from the top-down approach in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviour it advocates. Therefore, as a PRA trainer, you have to be very careful when developing PRA training workshops to accommodate or adapt the participatory approach and methodologies to the political, social, and cultural context in China, and to develop ways of overcoming possible resistance to the new ideas and methods.

### Show how the participatory approach is relevant to national development strategy

PRA training can be divided into three sections:
• 'Why' apply PRA?
• 'What' is PRA?
• How' to do PRA

The 'Why' section is very important for project staff and line agency specialists in China, who have been trained with, and worked so long under, the top-down approach, to make the necessary changes in ideas, attitude, and behaviour. To explain why PRA should be followed in China, we tried to accommodate the participatory approach into the development strategy of the nation.

China had identified sustainable development as one of the national strategies in middle of 1990s. So when you say that the introduction and application of PRA aim at the realisation of sustainable development, the participants will feel or know that the objective is accordant with the national development strategy and not a completely foreign one. After the first doubts or rejection of the new ideas or change are expressed, you can present the internationally recognised comprehensive objectives of the Sustainable Development, and point out that the economic and environmental ones have been paid attention to in China, but social equity and technological appropriateness or suitability have been neglected by policy makers, planners, and government officials, particularly at local level.

Then you can present the cases studied by yourself or other researchers to show the ineffectiveness or inability of the top-down approach to fulfil all these objectives, especially the social and technological ones. Actually, there are also many cases where economic feasibility and environmental sustainability have also been neglected by local leaders who want to show their performance in terms of increase of GDP or annual income per capita. It's better not to use the local cases from the area where you are conducting the training but ones from elsewhere, to keep your neutral position in local affairs or issues. After your presentation, you can arrange group discussions for the participants to discuss their own cases of failures associated with the top-down approach. Participants usually have plenty of such cases and experiences. They are the project staff or partner line agencies' technicians of the projects, and usually practical persons.

After that, you introduce PRA/PLA as one of the solutions or an

**The result of an assessment session for a IFAD/WFP training on participatory impact assessment, Qinghai Province, China, 2002**



alternative approach to sustainable development, and start the 'What' section. Through such an arrangement to link PRA with the political context, the participants become enthusiastic to discuss their local cases and eager to learn the new approach. By the end of the workshop at the evaluation section, they often recommend that their leaders should be trained or attend such a workshop, because they are the decision or policy makers. If the leaders kept their old mindset, the impact of the training on effectiveness, sustainability and attitude/behaviour change would be very limited.

### Tips in the field

During the 'How to do PRA' section, besides the presentation and exercises of PRA methods and tools, some tactics or skills for using the methods and tools are also introduced based on our experiences.

In Chinese situation, it is extremely difficult and not polite or cooperative to have the local officials not accompany the field exercise or PRA survey teams to the field. In many cases tensions exist between the donor organisations or external experts and the local counterparts during the early years or even the whole project cycle, which had been caused by some national or international consultants who insisted on the absence of local officials from the exercises or survey.

A successful alternative strategy in my experience is to persuade local officials to reduce the accompanying number, so as produce a free atmosphere for farmers to talk, on the one hand, and to encourage those who are there to use fully the opportunity to listen to the farmers, their needs, problems and ideas on
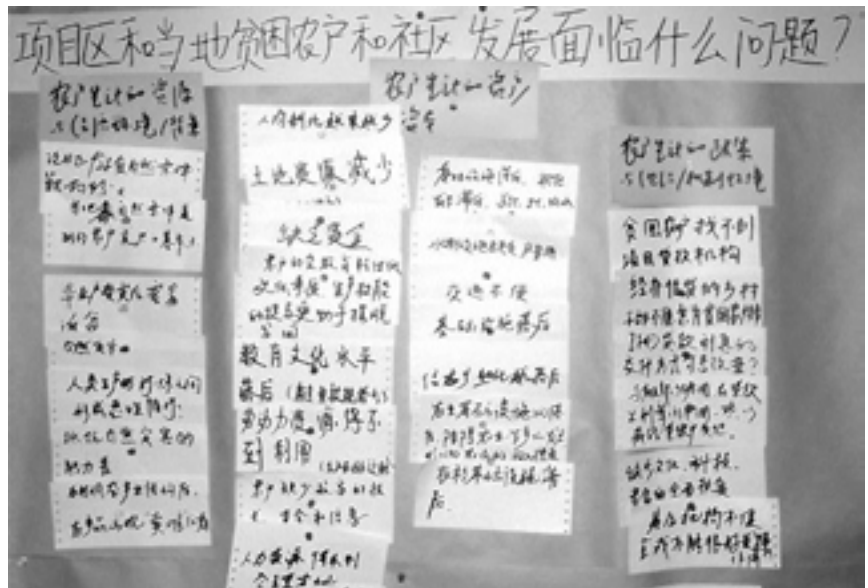
the solutions and requirements for assistance. It is actually consistent with the demands of central government for local officials to improve their work and attitudes.

When coming to the place of meeting, the seating has often been arranged already as in a classroom or conference room, with the outsiders sit at the front or chairman stage like the teachers or leaders, and local farmers sit as the students or audients. In such a case, you ask the local community leaders re-arrange the sitting. Have the chairs and stools form a circle or semi-circle. Invite the farmer interviewees to sit in the front rows. This allows them to face each other and be less aware of the presence of local officials, who sit outside the circle or behind them.

### Facilitate the discussion to avoid the dominance of the elites

You usually find that village leaders and others with a higher status among the villagers within a community like to talk more or even dominate the discussion. It is not polite to interrupt them directly

according to the culture or social norms of Chinese farmers and rural society. It is also not proper for you to behave like this if you want to build up rapport with the community.

To avoid it you could ask the local partner to try to encourage more people to attend the discussion. Usually, not less than 15 men and 15 women is the minimum, if discussions are to be conducted separately, and the more the better. It make it easier to submerge the elites' voice in the discussion.

You can also politely ask the elites to have a rest from talking and turn to the silenced people to encourage them to talk. Currently, 20 years after rural reform and democratic development in rural areas, Chinese farmers are quite open and don't mind expressing different opinions. The onus lies on the facilitator to create an enabling environment.

### Reflect on the PRA process and outputs

For a few years now, I have started to arrange sessions to reflect on the

process and outputs of the PRA
exercises in the evenings after
fieldwork, or after the fieldwork. You
invite the workshop participants to
present the results of using PRA
tools, and reflect on the good things
and shortcomings, as well as the
process, and behaviour and attitude
aspects. After the participants have
done this, you give your own
reflections based on your experience
and understanding. You can use
paper sheets or a pin board and
cards to record the assessment and
comments, and include them in the
workshop documents.
● Source: Li Ou is Professor and Head of
the Development Management
Department/Centre for Integrated
Agriclultural development (CIAD) at the
China Agricultural University. Li Ou, Centre
for Integrated Agricultural Development
(CIAD)/College of Humanities and

**Box 1: Example from an IFAD/WFP training in participatory impact assessment**

The assessment session was made after the field exercise. The participants made the
plenary presentations of the exercise results one after another. After the presentation of
one tool exercise, the trainer pointed out the main strongpoint and shortcomings. For
example, for the first procedure and tool – the classification of the sub-villages within
Maoyu Village with Resource mapping, the main good points included:
• handing over the markers to local farmers and having them decide the direction;
• using Tibetan for the explanation on the map to promote villagers' participation; and
• having shown the obvious differences among the sub-villages.

The key shortcomings included:
• the language obstacle preventing in-depth communication (most of the trainees were
not Tibetan but from other minority ethnic groups;
• having not fully used the symbols to produce enough visualisation effect; and
• missing the chance to assess whether the project was reaching the poorer or poorest
sub-villages.
The discussion went further to explore if the result revealed useful information about
project impact, and comment on the usefulness of the procedure and tools for impact
assessment and M&E. For example, the participants appreciated the community map that
had reflected the changes before and after the project implementation. This could help
identify indicators for Participatory Impact Assessment and M & E.

Development (COHD), China Agricultural
University (West Campus), 100094
Beijing, PR China; Email:
lioucn@163bj.com

ACRONYMS:
IFAD    International Fund for
        Agricultural Development
WFP     World Food Programme

# in touch
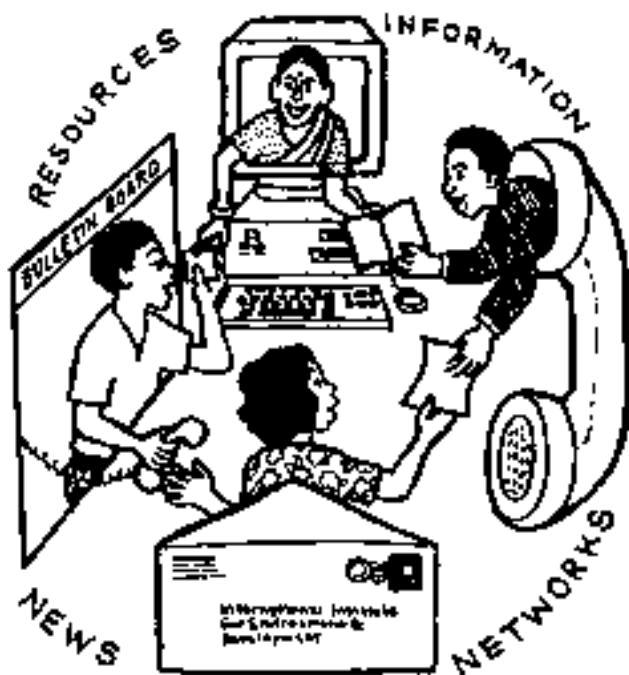


Welcome to the In Touch section of *PLA Notes*. Through these pages we hope to create a more participatory resource for the *PLA Notes* audience, to put you, as a reader, in touch with other readers. We want this section to be a key source of up-to-date information on training, publications, and networks. Your help is vital in keeping us all in touch about:

• **Networks**. Do you have links with recognised local, national or international networks for practitioners of participatory learning? If so, what does this network provide – training? newsletters? resource material/library? a forum for sharing experiences? Please tell us about the network and provide contact details for other readers.
• **Training**. Do you know of any forthcoming training events or courses in participatory methodologies? Are you a trainer yourself? Are you aware of any key training materials that you would

like to share with other trainers?
• **Publications**. Do you know of any key publications on participatory methodologies and their use? Have you (or has your organisation) produced any books, reports, or videos that you would like other readers to know about?
• **Electronic information**. Do you know of any electronic conferences or pages on the Internet which exchange or provide information on participatory methodologies?
• **Other information**. Perhaps you have ideas about other types of information that would be useful for this section. If so, please let us know.
Please send your responses to:
*PLA Notes*, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H ODD, UK.  Fax: + 44 (0)20 7388 2826; Email: PLA.Notes@iied.org
*PLA Notes* is published in April, August, and December. Please submit material two months before the publication date.

## Book reviews

**Peacebuilding: a Caritas training manual**
● R.Neufeldt, L. Fast, Fr R. Schreiter, Fr B. Starken, D. MacLaren, J. Cilliers, and J.P. Lederach, Caritas Internationalis, 2002

This practical manual provides peacemaking trainers with ideas and resources. It includes interactive materials that cover the basic conceptual dimensions of peacebuilding, and training modules that enhance the skills of participants but which are flexible enough to be tailored to particular needs. The first section presents an overall view of the key concepts and offers practical advice on scheduling workshops. The second section contains six modules that lay out basic concepts for peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and resolution. The third section outlines tools for designing, implementing, and improving trainings. A series of practical exercises, handouts, a list of references and resources, and regional case studies complete the manual.
■ Available from: Caritas Internationalis, Palazzo San Calisto, 00120 Vatican City. Tel: +(39) 06 698 79 799; Fax: +(39) 06 698 87 237; Email:caritas.internationalis @caritas.va; Website:www.caritas.org

**HIV/AIDS NGO/CBO Support Toolkit: a CD-ROM and website**
● International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 2002
This toolkit is an

electronic library of resources about NGO/CBO support that have been collated by the Alliance from a wide range of organisations. It addresses a wide range of themes related to NGO/CBO support programming – such as situation assessments, monitoring and evaluation, technical support, and grant provision. While the toolkit is primarily designed for those establishing or improving programmes that aim to deliver both funding and technical support to local NGOs and CBOs, many of its resources will also be of interest to organisations that provide only funding or only training. The resources available are accessible on CD-ROM (attached on the inside front cover of the manual) as well as at www.aidsalliance.org/ngosupport

■ Available from: International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Queensberry House, 104-106 Queens Road, Brighton BN1 3XF, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1273 718 900; Fax: +44 (0)1273 718 901; Email:mail@aidsalliance.org; Website: www.aidsalliance.org or www.aidsmap.com

### The New Toolbox: a handbook for community-based organisations

● C. Symes, 2002
This book is especially targeted at ordinary people living in the townships and rural communities of South Africa. There are four different books in the series, and each one contains simple information about different parts of CBOs, along with interactive exercises to help CBOs to understand their role and their work. Volume One 'Community-based

organisations' gives information on communities and on how to work with them. Volume Two 'Vision building, planning and evaluation' helps to make clear what one organisation's vision and purpose are. Volume Three 'Practical management and governance' describes how to build trust within an organisation. Volume Four 'Managing money and fund raising' is a very simple guide to managing the money an organisation receives and uses.

■ Available from: HIV/AIDS/STI & TB Chief Directorate, The Department of Health, Private Bag X828, Pretoria 0001, South Africa.

### Making the Link between Micro and Meso: learning from experience on community-based planning

Video
● I. Goldman, Khanya-Managing Rural Change, 2002
This video highlights the experience of an action-learning, community-based planning project in Ghana, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. It looks at learning from best practice and implementing systems for community-based planning linked to the local government planning system, so that poor people can influence resource allocation. Over 1.5 million people have been covered by participatory planning through this project.

■ Available from: Ian Goldman, Khanya-Managing Rural Change, 17 James Scott Street,Brandwag, Bloemfontein 9301 South Africa. Tel: +27 (0) 51 430 0712; Fax: +27 (0) 51 430 8322; Email: goldman@khanya-mrc.co.za; Website: www.khanya-mrc.co.za

### Learning from Success: participatory writing workshop (PWW)

Video
● Asian Productivity Organisation (APO), 2002
The APO Integrated Community Development (ICD) programme regularly organises multi-country study missions to selected projects in APO member countries. This video documents one such study mission, which was organised in 2001 with a special focus on micro-credit activities in Bangladesh. The video focuses on the methodology applied to ensure successful learning through study missions. Key activities include sharing ideas and experiences through the presentations of papers and workshops, learning from the field through direct interactions with key stakeholders, and documentation of the lessons learned through an innovative method called the Participatory Writing Workshop (PWW).

■ Available from: Asian Productivity Organisation (APO), Hirakawa-cho Daiichi Seimei Building, 1-2-10 Hirakawa-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0093, Japan. Tel: +(81) 3 5226 3924; Fax: +(81) 3 5226 3954.Email:agr@apo-tokyo.org; Website: www.apo-tokyo.org

### Participatory 3-Dimentional Modelling: guiding principles and applications

● G. Rambaldi and J. Callosa-Tarr, ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation,2002

During a regional Training Needs Assessment Workshop held in Bangkok in April 2001, participatory 3D modelling (P3DM) was identified as a way forward for enhancing collaborative protected area management and facilitating conflict resolution. This document builds on experiences gained in the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand and also contains insights on adult learning and spatial cognition and the analysis of experiences gained in different countries and contexts. The enclosed CD-ROM provides access to selected bibliographic references and contains a 21-minute video, which illustrates the hands-on aspects of 3D modelling. A digital Adobe PDF version of this document is available from www.iapad.org/p3dm_guiding_principles.htm

■ Available from: The Publication Manager, ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation, Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Centre, North Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City 1156, Philippines.

# Events

### Participatory approaches to agricultural extension
### 8th – 26th September 2003
### IIRR, Cavite, Philippines

This course is designed to advance rural development through improved agricultural extension approaches. The course discusses how to scale up these approaches and identifies prerequisites at the community and organisational levels. In this course, participants develop new capacities for planning, managing, and evaluating participatory extension programmes. Among the course topics are: agricultural extension approaches; principles, issues, methods and field applications of farmer-led extension; and, opportunities for farmer-led extension resulting from decentralisation. The course is targeted at field extension managers and supervisors, extension trainers, and development practitioners from government and non-government organisations.

### Community-managed health systems
### 6th – 24th October 2003
### IIRR, Cavite, Philippines

This is a three-week course designed for development workers who plan, implement, and manage health-related programmes and/or projects. Through community interaction, peer discussions, case studies, reflections, and analyses, participants examine community-managed health systems strategies and participatory approaches that are applicable and appropriate in different community contexts. During the course, the participants will analyse the critical voices and perspectives of development agencies and people's organisations to better understand the elements and dynamics of sustainable, community-managed health systems. Throughout the course, participants will develop an action plan based on the theoretical and practical experiences gained, which their respective organisations may put into effect in the promotion of people-centred and community-managed health programmes.

### Rural development management
### 13th October – 7th November 2003
### IIRR, Cavite, Philippines

This course is for senior and mid-level development managers, and covers development issues, managing sustainable and people-centered development programmes, and managing development organisations. It addresses aspects of programme and project planning, implementation and evaluation. Participants are introduced to real-life experiences in rural development. The course is built around observations of community-level development efforts in the Philippines.

### Sustainable agriculture training of trainers
### 24th November – 12th December, 2003
### IIRR, Cavite, Philippines

This course is designed for development practitioners who organise or conduct training activities on sustainable agriculture (SA) and related topics. The course focuses on training development and management applied to sustainable agriculture. It is designed to develop the capability of trainers and promoters in designing, implementing, and evaluating SA training. The training content includes a review of SA basic concepts, principles, and practices; training strategies for sustainable agriculture; building on indigenous knowledge; and, participatory technology development (PTD) that are intended to fill gaps on how technical knowledge can be effectively and efficiently conveyed to others, especially resource-poor farmers who will benefit most.

### Community-based integrated watershed management
### 10th November – 28th November 2003
### IIRR, Cavite, Philippines

This course offers a new approach for integrating technologies and participatory strategies within the natural landscape, or 'watershed' for

resource conservation, production, and its sustainable use. This course is intended for planners, field staff, technicians, and others working in rural development. The training is designed to share concepts and strategies for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating natural resources management projects using watershed approaches in partnership with local communities. The course content includes: concepts and framework of watershed development, elements of community-based integrated watershed management, technology options, participatory approaches, and strategies to watershed development.

**Participatory action research for community-based natural resources management (PAR for CBNRM)**
**8th –19th December 2003**
**IIRR, Cavite, Philippines**
This international course is geared specifically for decision makers working with CBNRM and is designed to be a 'think tank'. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect upon and share experiences of CBNRM, explore principles of PAR, experiment with a range of tools for examining different perspectives relevant to CBNRM with actual stakeholders, critically analyse the PAR approach in relation to CBNRM, and document their insights to add to the discourse

on PAR for CBNRM. Emphasis will be placed on providing a stimulating learning environment for sharing ideas between participants, facilitators, and others.
Starting October 2003, RECOFTC and IIRR can also hold customised PAR for CBNRM courses in an appropriate location, provided that at least 3 months notice is given to organise the course. IIRR can also make arrangements for customised courses and study programmes that are content-specific to the needs of the requesting development organisations.
● For more information about these courses, please contact: Course Coordinator, Education and Training Program, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, YC James Yen Center, Silang, Cavite 4118, Philippines. Tel: +63 46 414 2417; Fax: +63-46 414 2420; Email: education&training@iirr.org; Website:www.iirr.org

**Working with rural communities**
**25th September 2003**
**Llandudno, UK**
In what ways is working with rural communities different from working with other kinds of communities? This is the central question of the course, which will look at three dimensions of the issue: the economic and environmental context in which rural community work is undertaken; the

practical problems that face the rural practitioner, e.g. isolation of small villages and lack of public transport; and the social and cultural characteristics of rural communities. A model of rural community work will be presented on the course and participants will be encouraged to adapt it to their situations. The course will be of interest to a range of practitioners such as arts workers, regeneration officers, community workers, housing officers, and others who are working with rural communities.

**Community development issues in health**
**16th September 2003**
**Inverness, UK**
This one-day course examines community development and its applications in a variety of settings in the health sector. It provides a mix of practical examples, based on the experience of those that are using community development models, along with current theory and policy. It encourages participants to explore the potential for such approaches in their own settings.
● For further information about these two courses, please contact: June Smith, Community Development Foundation, 73 Churchgate, Leicester LE1 2JS, UK. Tel:+44 (0)116 262 2110; Fax: +44 (0)116 262 0187;Email:midlands@cdf.org.uk

# e-participation

## A people's approach to produce web content (PAPWEC)
`www.soi.city.ac.uk/~ck521/papwec`
This web-based tutorial/manual provides the underlying concepts and practical guidelines for a participatory web design methodology – a People's Approach to Produce Web Content (PAPWEC). The information will equip visitors with the know-how on how to use web technologies to their maximum potential. The manual is also available on CD-ROM.

## Integrated approaches to participatory development (IAPAD)
`www.iapad.org`
Participatory Avenues promotes the dissemination of Participatory 3-Dimensional Modelling (P3DM) as best practice for merging indigenous technical knowledge and traditional spatial information. The web supports the culture of knowledge dissemination and acts as focal point for sharing information and technical progress on community-based mapping and public participation GIS (PPGIS). P3DM has a wide range of applications ranging from collaborative research and planning for natural resource management, to dealing with conflict resolution and resource tenure. Reference documents on the method and its applications are available as to download for free.

## Participation tools for better community and land use planning
`www.lgc.org/freepub/land_use/participation_tools`
The Local Government Commission (LGC) assists local governments in establishing and nurturing the key elements of liveable communities and in implementing policies and programmes that help to create healthy, workable, and resource-efficient communities. The website has free to download participation toolkits for better community and land use planning.

## The International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
`www.ciat.cgiar.org/fpr-ipm/tools.html`
The International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) is a Colombian non-profit organisation that conducts socially and economically progressive research aimed at reducing hunger and poverty and preserving natural resources in developing countries. The website offers participatory research books downloadable for free in English and Spanish and also a selection of participatory resources by international organisations and NGOs.

## IIED's Power Tools
`www.iied.org/forestry/tools/index.html`
The Power Tools series provides some practical help to those working to improve the policies and institutions that affect the lives of poor people. The series is being developed by IIED from experience in working on policies and institutions in various fields of environment and development. The Power Tools can be viewed either as web pages or as PDF files.

## Sustainable Rural Development Information System (SRDIS)
`http://srdis.ciesin.columbia.edu/Frame.html`
Sustainable Rural Development Information System (SRDIS) is a specialised, online library of Internet-based resources. Relevant Internet sites, case studies, databases, maps, newsletters, and reports on different topics are shown here. Country profiles and over 300 case studies are also fully accessible.

## The International Youth Foundation (IYF)
`www.iyfnet.org/document.cfm/23`
The International Youth Foundation (IYF) is one of the world's largest public foundations working to improve the conditions and prospects for young people where they live, learn, work, and play. The site has a section on youth participation and some downloadable documents online, including books, articles, and case studies from 90 countries.

## PRGA: gender and stakeholders analysis
`www.prgaprogram.org/prga/toolbox.htm`
This website deals with issues of participatory research and gender analysis (PRGA). Lots of interesting resources are available online, for topics such as gender and diversity, guides for impact assessment and monitoring and evaluation, and participatory plant breeding as well as reviews and links to other related websites.

## The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA)
`www.cedpa.org`
The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) is a women-focused non-profit international organisation working to empower women to be full partners in development, and to mobilise women's participation at the policy level. The site includes descriptions of CEDPA programme activities and current projects, as well as listings of documents, training resources, and links to other relevant sites.

# Recent publications from IIED

Available from: Earthprint Ltd, PO Box 119, Stevenage, SG1 4TP, UK or
Fax: +44 (0)1438 748844
Email: orders@earthprint.com
Website:www.earthprint.com.

**Participatory diagnosis of soil nutrient depletion in semi-arid areas of Kenya**
● L.N. Gachimbi, A.de Jager, H. van Keulen, E.G. Thuranira & S.M. Nandwa
This paper describes the participatory diagnostic process undertaken to develop improved land and water management techniques in semi-arid areas of Kenya. Such diagnosis is an essential initial step in a participatory learning and action research (OLAR) programme whose goal is to develop appropriate techniques at farm level and formulate suitable policy recommendations.
■ IIED 2002. ISBN:1843602163. Order no: 9137IIED. Price: US$ 7.00.

**Stakeholder participation in policy on access to genetic resources, traditional knowledge and benefit-sharing. Case studies and recommendations**
**Biodiversity and Livelihoods Issues 4**
● Krystyna Swiderska
The report focuses on the development of national policy to implement the third objective of the Convention on Biodiversity, which requires the benefits from the commercial and scientific use of genetic resources to be shared fairly and equitably. The report examines how to effectively secure stakeholder participation in the policy-making process. It presents the main findings of four case studies of fairly comprehensive participatory processes for the development of Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) and traditional knowledge policy: the Philippines, South Africa, India, and Peru. The studies examine the strengths and limitations of the processes, drawing on the views of a range of stakeholders. Based on these studies, the report also provides recommendations for securing effective participation which countries may wish to consider in order to establish or enhance participatory processes.
■ IIED 2002. ISBN:1843692147. Order no: 9096IIED. Price: US$ 12.00

**Strengthening user-rights over local resources in Wollo, Ethiopia**
● Tenna Shitarek, Sintayehu Manaye and Berihun Abebe
A range of participatory methodologies are being developed and piloted in Meket Woreda, Ethiopia to strengthen agricultural and off-farm sources of livelihood while promoting longer-term natural resource regeneration. One of these approaches (PLUPI – Participatory Land Use Planning and Implementation) deals with some of the technical and methodological concerns, by following a holistic approach to sustainable land husbandry to complement the Government's agricultural extension programme. This paper shares experience in developing a usufruct procedure in Meket Woreda. It describes the process, achievements and initial impact. It shows the progress to date and concludes by highlighting the key lessons learnt from the process. It also gives some final recommendations.
■ IIED 2001. ISBN:1843692171. Order no: 9139IIED. Price: US$ 5.00

**Environment and Urbanization Rural-urban transformations, April 2003**
Human Settlements programme
This issue describes the multiple linkages between rural and urban areas, with papers drawn from 13 nations. A large and growing proportion of rural households have urban components to their livelihoods while most rural households rely on urban areas for access to markets and services. Many urban households have rural components to their livelihoods and retain strong links with rural areas while some keep part of their asset base in rural areas. This issue has papers on rural-urban linkages in Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, Mozambique and Angola, farmers' markets in Tamil Nadu, peri-urban areas around Hanoi, Colombo, Ibadan, Caracas and Hubli-Dharwad (and how this changes livelihoods and land uses), waste management around Bamako, Ouagadougou and Chennai, and environmental planning and waste water management around cities. It also has papers on NGO development in Jakarta, a new international fund to help poor households get land, the links between disaster risk and urban development, and youth participation in El Alto (Bolivia).
■ IIED 2001. ISBN:1843694417. Order no: 9228IIED. Price: US$ 9.00.

**State versus Participation: Natural Resources Management in Europe**

● Andréa Finger-Stich and Matthias Finger

Volume II in the Institutionalising Participation Series. The participation of the public, local communities, indigenous peoples, and various other stakeholders in natural resources policymaking, planning and/or management has been increasingly promoted in international and national policies. This book analyses and discusses how participation does – or does not – occur in the management of forest and water resources at various institutional levels in European contexts. More precisely, the authors critically analyse how the state has, over time, strengthened its own development interests by removing decisions over the management of natural resources from local users and communities' hands and today tends to instrumentalise people's participation for its own legitimacy purposes. This evolution is considered in the light of two more recent trends, namely the globalisation of economic interests and the demands for democratisation, decentralisation, and accountability. The authors highlight the strategies various state agencies use to control participation in decision-making processes relating to forest and water resource management. You can read more about this book at www.iied.org/agri/ipa.html#9169

■ IIED Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihood Programme and IDS Participation Group, 2003.ISBN: 1 84369 242 2. Order no 9169IIED:. Price:USD22.50/£15.

**People-Oriented Approaches in Global Conservation:Is the Leopard Changing its Spots?**

● Sally Jeanrenaud

Whereas local people were once considered a threat to nature and were often removed from protected areas, many international and national conservation organisations now promote a wide range of people-oriented conservation approaches. Despite these changes, this paper suggests that we should be cautious about claiming that 'participation' has been mainstreamed in global conservation programmes. Drawing mainly on case studies from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the author suggests that organisational structures, fundraising imperatives, dominant conservation narratives, and western environmental values all work against the 'leopard changing its spots'. Volume I in the Institutionalising Participation Series, This book is now available in French as a pdf (*Populations Locales et Conservation de la Nature: Le Léopard serait-il en train de Muer?*).
Read more: www.iied.org/agri/ipa. html#9134fr

■ IIED Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihood Programme and IDS Participation Group, 2002. ISBN: 1 84369 036 5. Order no: 9134IIED. Price: USD22.50/£15.

**Local Perspectives on Forest Values in Papua New Guinea – The Scope for Participatory Methods**

● Maryanne Grieg-Gran and Irene Guijt with Basil Peutalo

Wild resources are often overlooked in policymaking and land use decisions, yet they are important for local communities and often critical for their survival. IIED's Hidden Harvest project examines the role of wild resources in local livelihoods in different countries and ecosystems. This report presents the outcome of a Hidden Harvest training workshop and field exercise carried out in Papua New Guinea which focused on wild forest resources. Using examples from the fieldwork, the report highlights some methodological questions related to valuation in transitional communities. These questions are particularly pertinent for research related to economies that have not commoditised all natural resource management-related economic activities or for professionals seeking to use complementary methodologies. The report concludes that participatory methods have an important contribution to make, given the challenges in local level valuation, both as a complement to more conventional approaches and in their own rights as a tool to inform decision making.

■ IIED Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods, 2002.ISBN: 1 35793 8X. Order no: 6155IIED Price: USD25.00.

**Cheminer avec le Conflit: Méthodes Pratiques (French)**

● Simon Fisher, Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, Jawed Ludin, Richard Smith,Steve Williams, Sue Williams

New French translation of Working with Conflict, previously published by Zed Books and Responding to Conflict. This source book is for

people working in areas affected by conflict and violence. Easy to use, well laid out, and including helpful visual materials, it provides a range of practical tools – processes, ideas, visual aids, and techniques – for tackling conflict. These tools have been developed over a number of years by the organisation Responding to Conflict (RTC) in collaboration with practitioners from around the world. Includes a guide to understanding conflict, how to build effective strategies to address conflict, intervening in situations of acute conflict, and the skills involved in evaluation and learning.
■ IIED, 2002. ISBN: 1843692287. Order no:9157IIED. Price: USD22.50/£15.00.

**Participatory learning and action: a trainer's guide**
● Jules N Pretty, Irene Guijt, John Thompson, Ian Scoones

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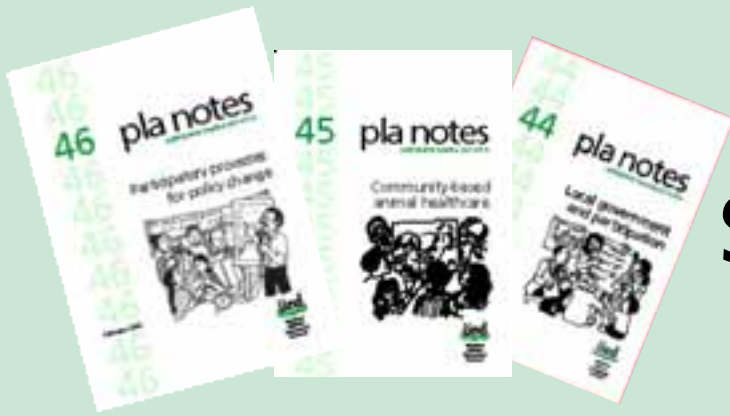Please debit my credit card to the value of: US$_____ ❏ VISA ❏ Mastercard ❏ American Express

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