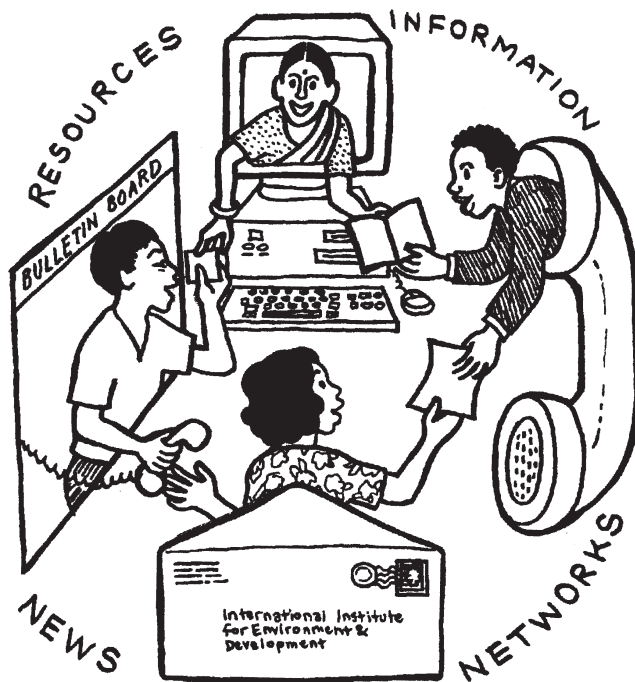# in touch

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

• **Networks**. Do you have links with recognised local, national or international networks for practitioners of participatory learning? If so, what does this network provide – training? newsletters? resource material/library? a forum for sharing experiences? Please tell us about the network and provide contact details for other readers.

• **Training**. Do you know of any forthcoming training events or courses in participatory methodologies? Are you a trainer yourself? Are you aware of any key training materials that you would like to share with other trainers?

• **Publications**. Do you know of any key publications on participatory methodologies and their use? Have you (or has your organisation) produced any books, reports, or videos that you would like other readers to know about?

• **Electronic information**. Do you know of any electronic conferences or pages on the Internet which exchange or provide information on participatory methodologies?

• **Other information**. Perhaps you have ideas about other types of information that would be useful for this section. If so, please let us know.

Please send your responses to:
Participatory Learning and Action,
IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London
WC1H ODD, UK.
Fax: + 44 20 7388 2826;
Email: pla.notes@iied.org

Books and other resources on the theme of immersions

Organising an immersion in ActionAid
● ActionAid International, 2006.

ActionAid International (AAI) has recently put together this resource pack. It documents ActionAid's growing experience in immersions, and is also a guide for those involved in coordinating such events on its behalf. Since 2003, AAI has been regularly organising immersions with the support of local partners all over the world for both internal and external purposes. The resource pack has a step-by-step structure, which describes how to organise a successful immersion in AAI, drawing from previous lessons learnt.

This is a learning-by-doing process and, as such, it is ongoing. For this reason, the pack itself is under continuous revision and subject to change, made in light of new experiences.
■ For updates on this process, its documentation, and to exchange related experiences, please contact: Sonya Ruparel, ActionAid, Hamlyn House, Macdonald Road, London N19 5PG, UK. Tel: +44 20 7561 7653; Email: Sonya.Ruparel@actionaid.org

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Exposure and Dialogue Programme (EDP) Tool Box
● Namrata Bali and Karl Osner
SEWA, 2007

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a prominent women's trade union in India with

more than 900,000 members. SEWA has been developing its own immersion programme, the Exposure and Dialogue Programme (EDP), since 1991. This is as a result of its cooperation with the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Parliament, the German Commission for Justice and Peace, and the EDP Association.

EDP has a considerable structural impact in SEWA. It serves to protect SEWA's original mission as an organisation of very poor women, to train new SEWA leaders from SEWA's own ranks, and to expand the organisation in India. In addition, it helps bring the overall national political environment more in line with the needs of the poor and the poorest in the informal economy. SEWA is also using the immersion methodology for shaping international dialogue programmes.

As a part of their ongoing cooperation, Namrata Bali (SEWA Academy) and Dr Karl Osner (Ex-BMZ officer and founder of EDP Association) have been working for the last five years on a Tool Box to enhance EDPs in SEWA. This EDP kit is the result of the experience gained by SEWA in organising EDPs and Dr Osner's contribution to its methodological progress. The Tool Box currently comprises of four general guidelines on EDPs at SEWA – guidelines for 'host ladies', facilitators, external participants, and organisers – and two more documents on specific types of EDPs:
• Guidelines for shaping EDPs combined with international conferences, based on EDPs jointly organised by Cornell University – WIEGO and SEWA Academy – on a regular basis since 2002; and,

• Guidelines for analysing vulnerability, life cycle shocks and events, and coping strategies of SEWA members through EDPs – jointly organised by VimoSEWA (SEWA Insurance) and SEWA Academy.
■ For more information, please contact Namrata Bali at SEWA Academy (India), Email: sewaacdy@icenet.co.in or Karl Osner, Email: osnerkarl@yahoo.de

Stop and pause: HIV/AIDS theme video
● ActionAid Kenya, 2007

As part of their Participatory Reflection and Review Process, in February 2007, ActionAid (AA) staff spent a week with people living with or affected by AIDS/HIV in Usigu (western Kenya). The AA team included international and national staff members from a wide range of disciplines. Most of the hosts chosen were women. Their experiences – as described by those who lived it – generated contrasting feelings and emotions: sorrow and joy; despair and hope; anger and peace. And above all, it has led to new and critical learning imparted by the real holders of that knowledge, the affected communities. The process – as well as the human dimensions of this thematic immersion – is documented in this amateur video.
■ CDs are available from AA Kenya. For more information, please contact: Leonardo Okello, Email: leonard.okello@actionaid.org and/or IASL Team, Email: iaslteam.jhb@actionaid.org

Plan Bangladesh's Handbook on Child-Centred Community Development
● Plan Bangladesh, 2004.

Based on its field experience, Plan Bangladesh has been developing a

systematic, holistic approach and framework to enhance the capacity of poor children and their families to better their life conditions and community. This working framework is known as Child-Centred Community Development. It is based on principles of equity and people's empowerment.

Participation and true interaction among Plan staff members, children and their families are crucial steps in this process. Special attention is devoted to establishing and strengthening human relationships, and the practice of immersions has been identified as the most appropriate. It is applied throughout the process cycle (i.e. preparation, situation assessment, planning, resource mobilisation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation).

By sharing time, experiences, and values with some of the families in the community, Plan members initiate the process of mutual learning and building of trust. The community becomes more familiar with the staff, Plan's mission, and its work. In turn, staff members develop an experiential understanding of the community dynamics and its reality perception. Different techniques and attitudes are recommended in order to make each immersion as informal and fruitful as possible. More details and a comprehensive overview on this approach are provided in this handbook.
■ For more information, or for copies of the manual, please contact: Haider W. Yaqub at Plan Bangladesh, Email: Haider.yaqub@plan-international.org

Bangladesh – a quest for reality
Bosse Kramsjo
● Shamunnay/The Swallows, 2000
ISBN: 984 31 0698 3.

This book is not just a truthful account of the contradictions of a poor but

fertile country like Bangladesh. It is also an important eye-opener and reminder – for those already aware – of the unjustifiable contradictions that exist in international development aid. The author writes of his first-hand experience in the development community in Bangladesh. He describes a symptomatic gap between what aid workers think they know – and what poor people's realities truly are.

Although experiences like immersions are not directly described here, many of the questions raised throughout the book are closely related to the promotion of practices like immersions:
• Whose reality counts?
• Who is the real development expert?
• What does development mean and for whom?
• To what extent are development aid and its operators accountable to primary stakeholders?
• How often do development experts create quick opinions or bias based on feelings and guess?

The book is published by the Swedish NGO, The Swallows, and the Bangladeshi research organisation, Shamunnay.

■ Available from: Centre for Science and Environment, Bookstore, Core 6-A, 4th floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003, India. E-mail: cse@cseindia.org

General books and resources on PLA

Springs of participation: Creating and evolving methods for participatory development
● Edited by Karen Brock and Jethro Pettit
Practical Action Publishing, 2007

ISBN 978-1-853396-47-2

Participatory tools and approaches only come alive through use. In the hands of principled and committed practitioners, tools can have real success in opening new space for discussion and action. This carefully compiled and stimulating volume draws together first-hand practitioners' accounts of the genesis and development of specific participatory approaches, including Reflect, the Internal Learning System, PALS, and Stepping Stones.

The various chapters are all interesting in their own right and will appeal to readers looking for thoughtful insights into well known challenges of participatory methods:
• how to make the best of differences in power among participants and practitioners;
• how to link effectively with formal survey methodologies;
• how to share attitudes and values as well as tools and techniques during training; and
• how to meet external needs without putting local needs in second place.

What binds the diverse chapters is a common philosophy that participatory approaches are less useful if static and formulaic. They need to be in a perpetual process of reflection, refinement, and adaptation – which can only be done effectively if there is subtle understanding of users and their contexts, but also appreciation of the hows and whys of the approach itself. To show us how a particular participatory approach has come to its present character, each

author takes a historical view, charting a personal as well as a shared journey of learning and adaptation. A chief pleasure of the volume is the practitioners' clear-eyed, constructive self-criticism, made sharp by their avoidance of too much theory and difficult language.

Though the contributions all arise from a single workshop in 2005, the book deserves a long shelf-life, as it draws out from the approaches under scrutiny many lessons for us to apply in our own work. At the same time it reminds us through example that every practitioner's experience is unique.
Reviewed by Sonja Vermeulen, Senior Researcher, Forestry and Land Use Programme, IIED.
■ Available from Practical Action Publishing, Schumacher Centre for Technology and Development, Bourton on Dunsmore, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV23 9QZ, UK. Website: www.developmentbookshop.com

Building capacity through financial management: a practical guide
● John Cammack
Oxfam GB, 2007

This book is part of the Oxfam Skills and Practice series. Based on the premise that sound financial management is a key to achieving a more effective organisation, the book presents practical ways to build financial management capacity in an international development context. The book is written for non-governmental organisations (NGOs), larger community-based organisations (CBOs), and charities. It is primarily about building capacity, rather than how to do accounting. As an independent consultant and trainer working internationally, John Cammack believes in providing practical tools that enable

cross-cultural learning. He was previously head of finance for Oxfam GB, is a qualified accountant, manager, and teacher and holds both an MBA and an MSc in international development.

The book is divided into the following four parts:
• Linking capacity-building and finance;
• Building financial management capacity;
• Moving towards sustainability; and
• Tools for building financial management capacity.

There are also two appendices containing forms to aid in the review and assessment of an organisation's financial capacity, a glossary of terms, a list of relevant websites and one of suggested further reading, and an index. Each of the book's parts builds on the other, but the fundamental elements of good financial management are repeated throughout, so one needn't read the book from start to finish to understand its key messages.

Part 2 on Building financial management capacity is the longest of the book. It provides a great deal of its important substance. Section by section, it walks through each of the significant functions of a financial management system from planning and budgeting to external audit and broader organisational concerns. At the back of each of these sections is a table listing common concerns and possible solutions. Part 4, Tools for building financial management capacity, rounds out the book nicely with a simple but comprehensive toolkit and analysis of training requirements to help implement the ideas and concepts set forth earlier in the book.

The book is written in plain English with short paragraphs that are clearly labelled. Where financial and accounting terminology is used, it is defined, and illustrative examples and case studies interspersed throughout help bring the author's points to life. Cammack's hands-on experience with international development organisations is evident. He has a good grasp of the varying financial and capacity needs of different-sized organisations as well as those of the providers and users of financial information.

While the book discusses the different points of view of the multiple actors in a financial management system, it is pitched to a reader with management level skills and experience – an individual capable of making choices and decisions for an organisation. I can recommend this book to that individual. For a small book, it covers a wide range of topics comprehensively but simply, and it ably makes the case for why strong financial management systems are important to development organisations. The book will appeal to managers of NGOs and CBOs in most parts of the world and shouldn't become dated any time soon. I suggest that the book be read once straight through. Its independent parts can then be used as reference material depending upon the organisation's current situation.
Reviewed by Linda Siegele, Staff Lawyer, Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD). FIELD is a working subsidiary of IIED.

Where there is no artist: development drawings and how to use them (Second Edition)

● Petra Rőhr-Rouendaal
Practical Action Publishing, 2007
ISBN: 978-1-85339-613-7

Drawing is one of humanity's oldest means of expressions, yet never before has there been more diversity in the way we produce images. This is good news for development communication, and in *Where there is no artist* we have a resource that amply explores the way art can be used in this field. It's an accessible book that is useful for everyone with an interest in drawing and development issues.

Here drawing is recognised as a tool to communicate with others, regardless of language, culture, or nationality. Visual images are used as a common language to help express thoughts and emotions. The book offers practical examples of how drawn visual aids can encourage their viewers to be relaxed but also inquisitive and imaginative in playing out the various possibilities that the narrative could take, especially in terms of their own experiences.

A variety of traditional drawing methods and tips on drawing skills — for example, portraits, profiles, expressions, and body language — are included, with expressive drawings throughout.

For drawing to be used as a learning tool, there must be a way in for the viewer to understand and absorb what the artist is doing. Therefore it should be appropriate to the situation and must communicate to its intended market. A range of posters, comic strips, puppets, games, discussion starters, and other visual aids are included to achieve this. Rőhr-Rouendaal introduces a variety of methods and tips for

engaging people and we really benefit from her experience here.

Drawing is used as a device to aid recognition and understanding of complex issues but is susceptible to misinterpretation. The book explains the importance of testing whether it will reach and be understood by the intended audience, when and if it needs to be done, and how to achieve it. When visual aids are used well they can improve visual literacy, which has a lot to do with the interplay between visual and verbal ways of communicating. How we understand this is part of a wider debate may in some ways parallel with our understanding of linguistics.

The book comes with two CD ROMs attached. In many parts of the world we take for granted the technology which enables us to construct, manipulate, and communicate drawings via computers. It includes a section on digital media and how it may be used to manipulate images; but this spreads itself thinly. The emphasis in the main is on traditional methods that can be simply produced without need for specialist equipment.

Where there is no artist includes more than 1,200 drawings that may be used copyright free for education. They illustrate people in their environment and relate to a wide range of educational and health issues. Overall, the book is easy to use, fun, and a real source of inspiration.

Reviewed by Nick Turner, Communications Officer, IIED

■ Available from Practical Action Publishing, Schumacher Centre for Technology and Development, Bourton on Dunsmore, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV23 9QZ, UK. Website: www.developmentbookshop.com

Guide to participatory tools for forest communities

● Kristen Evans, Wil de Jong, Peter Cronkleton, Douglas Sheil, Tim Lynam, Trikurnianti Kusumanto, Carol J Pierce Colfer

CIFOR, 2006
ISBN: 979-24-4656-7

Participatory methods have gained in respect and popularity over the last 10 to 15 years. Along with their use and greater legitimacy there has been considerable development of individual tools and participatory approaches. One of the earliest collections of tools, 'Participatory Learning and Action, A Trainer's Guide' was written by Jules Pretty, Irene Guijt, John Thompson and Ian Scoones in 1995 and published by IIED. There are now numerous tool boxes and handbooks for researchers and practitioners to choose from.

This guide aims to provide new options for people who work with forest dependent communities with the objective of furthering sustainable development. The guide is a product of the research project 'Stakeholders and Biodiversity in the Forest at the Local Level' funded by the Swiss Development Agency and CIFOR.

The Guide is concise and is presented in four parts:
• Concepts: a brief overview of the context in which forest dependent communities live, the importance of community participation, and an introduction to participatory research.
• Guides for selecting a tool: provides a useful overview of the tools. The section ends with a review of additional considerations such as who should participate, who should facilitate, and some ethical considerations.
• Toolbox: this presents ten tools in a standard format – overview, advantages and limitations, practical considerations, and further information.

Given the substantial literature now available on participatory methods, it is hard to understand what this latest publication from CIFOR contributes. The publication is derived from a research project, but there appears to be no direct link between the project and the toolbox. Many of the examples in the toolbox appear to predate the project or were conducted under other projects. The opportunity to ground-truth, adapt, and develop the tools appears to have been missed or not recorded. The toolbox itself is an odd mixture of tools that most practitioners will recognise (such as pebble scoring) and newcomers such as Bayesian Belief Networks. The framework used means practitioners don't learn much that they didn't already know from old favourites but don't quite get enough to be excited by the new tools (especially with names like Bayesian).

For researchers with access to international scientific literature, the most valuable parts of the guide are the references or resources that are provided in the outline of the tool.

In the Purpose, the authors suggest that their aim is to add more tools to the guide 'as they are developed'. My plea to the authors and CIFOR is that in the next publication, or edition, that they show how the tools have been used and 'ground-truthed'. Practitioners may experiment within the context of their everyday work, but they rarely have the luxury of the time and space to develop and test tools.

Reviewed by Ivan Bond, Senior Researcher, Forestry and Land Use Programme, IIED

■ Available from Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Bogor, Indonesia. Email: cifor-publications@cgiar.org Downloadable from: www.cifor.cgiar.org/ Publications/Detail?pid=2095

How wide are the ripples? Introducing IKM Emergent

● www.ikmemergent.net

Most studies of participatory work focus either on the work itself or on how it connects to the specific development research or programme to which it is connected. But what role does participatory work have in influencing wider development knowledge and decision-making? What role could it, or should it have? These questions are seldom explored.

Emergent Issues in Information and Knowledge Management (IKM) and International Development (known as IKM Emergent) is a new research programme. It is based on a network of academics and practitioners who share a general concern with how development sector organisations select, handle, and use knowledge in their work.

IKM Emergent is organised through three working groups. One of these groups is the Dialogue, Discourse and Translation working group. It is concerned with illustrating the problems of – and the opportunities for – articulating, receiving, and using knowledge produced in the global South to inform development thought and action. As part of this agenda, it seeks to understand better how the output of participatory processes with local populations is used in the development sector.

Send us your case studies – prizes to be won!

IKM Emergent is offering one prize of €1,000 and up to five of €500 for the most interesting and relevant entries which cover any of the following:

• Examples of the wider use of material produced through development-related participatory processes outside the immediate research or programme context in which they had been conducted. This can be either within development organisations or in the public domain.

• Examples of how messages have been distorted, or of significant failures to use or learn from output produced through such processes.

• Examples of the subsequent use of lessons learnt. For example, within the 'participating community' through engagement in participatory processes or from feedback to the community of the research findings to which such processes had contributed.

Each case study should be between 2000-4000 words long. They may be presented in English, French, Spanish, or Portuguese.

The winners will be selected by editors of the *Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)* series in collaboration with participants in the IKM programme.

The winning case studies will be considered for publication in English in *PLA* and through other channels by IKM Emergent under a creative commons licence.

Wanted – researcher!

The working group is also looking for someone interested in conducting further research and producing on overview of the issue. IKM is looking for a researcher/analyst who would be interested in:

• Conducting a survey of existing literature and grey literature. To what extent is the issue of the wider use of participatory material within development organisations being addressed? And in particular, what is its use within information/knowledge management and learning processes?

• Conducting a survey of a small sample of development organisations. Do they publicise the results of participatory processes internally? How is this done? How is the resulting material stored, described, and retrieved within their information systems?

• Considering the broader lessons of the case studies.

• Producing a paper which would analyse the issues involved, identify and describe good practice, and identify areas of concern or of continuing ignorance. What further actions might IKM, participation communities of practice, or development organisations take part in?

This work would be conducted principally in English. The researcher could be independent or part of an organisation. A grant of €5000 would be paid to support this work. IKM Emergent would wish to publish a version of the final paper, again under a creative commons licence.

■ Please contact: Mike Powell at mike@ikmemergent.net

Events and training

Exposure and Dialogue Programme Association (Bonn/Germany)

The EDP Association has organised Exposure and Dialogue Programmes (EDPs) since 1992. The EDP aims to build strategic alliances for poverty reduction among politicians and other high level decision makers. In cooperation with different partners in Europe and overseas, EDP focuses on the circumstances under which ordinary people make steps out of poverty by their own effort. This is to promote insights into the potential of different forms of genuine self-help – on the background of tools, norms, and regulations that build both local and international capacities.

Facilitated by grass-root organisations, participants visit host families in their homes, live and work with them for at least 3 to 4 days. Exposure experiences are reflected upon in detail and potential follow-up steps are discussed before participants return to their own institutions.

After having conducted 77 programmes in four continents, the Association wishes to improve internal processes of how to monitor impact on EDP participants and cooperation partners. On March 11, 2008, a small group of technical experts will look at potential instruments which help to monitor and 'evaluate' personal change towards being 'pro-poor' and how this might effect structural changes in cooperating institutions. Any technical advice on the topic of impact monitoring of immersion programmes is very welcome.
■ Please contact Jörg Hilgers, Email: hilgers@exposure-dialog.de

Mosiac Workshops

Stakeholder Participation in Planning, Needs Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation using PRA/PLA Tools
● 7th–12th July 2008
Ottawa, Canada

The Stakeholder Participation workshop focuses on core participatory concepts, tools, and their application. This is an intensive 6-day workshop set in the community to maximise learning, group interaction and networking. Topics include:
• the origins of participatory development;
• learning and application of PRA/PLA tools;
• the application of participation to project design, monitoring and evaluation;
• developing effective facilitation skills;
• building action plans; and
• team building.

Two-day community assignments proposed by community-based organisations in the Ottawa region will allow participants to apply tools learnt in the workshop to real-life situations. This is also a great opportunity to network with other practitioners, NGOs, donors, and action researchers from all over the world.

Results-Based Management, Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space Technology
● 14th–18th July 2008
Ottawa, Canada

This new workshop introduces participants to Results-Based Management, Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space Technology. Demonstrate the effectiveness of your programmes with Results-Based Management. Master what we mean by results, develop programme or organisational plans that are results-based, and design performance monitoring systems based on indicators and participatory methods. You will also expand your repertoire of tools to also learn about Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space and how they can be applied to your organisation, programme, and/or project. These approaches are increasingly being used around the world to tap into new ways of working that are more results-oriented, more appreciative, and less problem-focused and more self-organised versus top down.

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
● 21st–26th July 2008
Ottawa, Canada

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) involves a different approach to project monitoring and evaluation by involving local people, project stakeholders, and development agencies deciding together about how to measure results and what actions should follow once this information has been collected and analysed. This intensive 6-day experiential workshop is practically focused with daily excursions into the community and a 3-day community assignment. Topics covered at the workshop include:
• Origins of PM&E
• Skills and attributes of a PM&E facilitator
• Learning PM&E tools
• Designing a monitoring and evaluation framework
• Quantitiative and qualitative indicators
• Building action plans, and much more.

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

If you can't attend the workshops, please contact Mosiac to custom design a workshop to suit the specific needs of your organisation.

■ For further information, please get in touch. Please provide your full mailing address and we will send you a brochure. Email: wkshop05@mosaic-net-intl.ca; Website: www.mosaic-net-intl.ca

IMMERSION OPPORTUNITIES

ActionAid International Immersion Programme
Immersions are regularly organised by ActionAid International through its country programmes and partners in Africa and Asia. Participants in an ActionAid-facilitated immersion spend a minimum of 3 days and nights staying with a family in a village and living, as far as possible, how that family lives. Though also used for internal purposes, the AAI Immersion Programme is open to external development professionals, staff of aid agencies, and governments. An updated schedule is available on the AAI website: www.actionaid.org/main.aspx?PageID=571

■ For more information, please contact: ActionAid, Hamlyn House, Macdonald Road, London N19 5PG, UK; Tel: +44 20 7561 7653; Email: immersions@actionaid.org

World Bank, Pakistan
Generally, the practice of immersions in the World Bank – known as the Grass Roots Immersion Programme (GRIP) and Village Immersion Programme (VIP) – is not regular. But they are done regularly in some countries like Pakistan as a result of a personal and professional choice. Qazi Azmat Isa, who works as Senior Community Development Specialist in WB Pakistan, runs immersions twice a year in order to monitor and evaluate the Pakistan's Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), which is under his responsibility.

■ If you are interested in sharing this experience and understanding it first-hand, please contact: Qazi Azmat Isa, South Asia Sustainable Development, World Bank Office, Islamabad, Pakistan. Tel: + 92 51 227 9641, ext. 151; Email: qisa@worldbank.org

Exposure and Dialogue Programmes, Self-Employed Women Association (SEWA), India
SEWA has a long and diversified experience in preparing Exposure and Dialogue Programmes (EDPs). SEWA can host people/organisations that are willing to undergo such exposure programme. EDPs can be organised and shaped according to needs (e.g. thematic or open-ended EDP). The number of participants can range from one to 14.

■ To find out more about possible arrangements and costs, please contact: Reema Nanavaty, Director, Economic and Rural Development, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), SEWA Reception Centre, Opp. Lokmanya Tilak Baug, Bhadra, Ahmedabad, 380 00, India. Tel: +91 79 26575129, +91 79 26577175; Email: bdmsa@icenet.co.in

Insight Experiential Learning Programme
● Praxis – Institute for Participatory Practices, India

Praxis India firmly believes in the practice of immersions and has therefore institutionalised it as a refresher experience for its staff members. Praxis feels that is equally important to promote immersions among other institutions, such as NGOs, multilateral and bilateral donors, universities, government bodies, and media agencies.

Insight is Praxis's experiential learning programme, and has been developed specifically for external organisations. An _Insight_ shall be a spontaneous and genuine learning process in which outsiders and insiders (guests and hosts) can openly come together to share and understand each other's perspectives.

Praxis intentionally avoids proposing fixed schedules. Each _Insight_ will be specifically designed in order to match participants' expectations and hosts' availability. An _ad hoc_ meeting with participants as well as local families will be pre-arranged to this aim. However, some features will be common: an orientation before the exposure, staying with families for a minimum of 3 to 4 nights, and a conclusive reflection session among guests, hosts and facilitators.

■ To find out more about Insight, please contact: Raffaella Catani, Praxis, C-75 South Extension Part II, 110049, New Delhi, India. Tel: +91 11 41642348-52 (Ext. 222); Email: raffaellac@praxisindia.org

e-participation

ActionAid International – Immersions
www.actionaid.org

As part of its main website (www.actionaid.org), ActionAid International has devoted one page to explain its concept of immersions and how these kind of experiences can help make poverty personal. A calendar of forthcoming immersions offered by AAI is available with all necessary contact details. It is also possible to download AAI's report on its pilot immersion held in Ghana in 2005 as well as its latest immersion brochure.

Directions: AAI home page > About us > Immersions

Praxis (under construction)
www.praxisindia.org

Nowadays there is a wide range of documents available on immersions (manuals, handbooks, personal accounts, international workshops' notes, reports etc). However, access to them is generally limited either because they are scattered across different websites or available as hard copies only. Because of this, Praxis is aiming to facilitate better interaction among immersion practitioners and others who are interested in learning more.

Praxis is creating an Immersions website within its existing website (www.praxisindia.org). The website will offer two kinds of services:
• an updated and comprehensive archive of documents related to immersions (possibly organised by topic); and
• an interactive forum for meeting, sharing, discussing, and learning.

The forum is meant to initiate dialogue and reflection on people's diverse immersion experiences. Its aim will be to generate collective learning and methodological improvements. This space will be open to all people/institutions interested in taking part in this sort of peer-review system. We hope it will contribute to the growth of good practice and potential new applications for immersions.

■ If you or your organisation is interested, or have any queries or suggestions, please contact: Raffaella Catani, Praxis India, Delhi Office, C-75 NDSE Part II, New Delhi 110049, India. Email: raffaellac@praxisindia.org. Tel: +91 11 416 42348 52 (Ext. 222)

Learning for Sustainability
http://learningforsustainability.net

Learning for Sustainability has been substantially revised and updated over the past few months. This site focuses on sustainability issues such as natural resource management. It provides an online guide for government agency staff, NGOs, and other community leaders working to support multi-stakeholder learning processes. It examines capacity building for individuals in agencies and communities that directly or indirectly take the lead in initiating and supporting the many social process strands that support a learning society. The site provides links to key information sources on each strand – include networking, dialogue, adaptive management, knowledge management, and evaluation. A short introduction to each section outlines the nature of the resource links provided, and provides pointers to other topic areas which are closely related in use.

Links include guides, manuals, and checklists that address issues such as participation and engagement. Learning is shared in areas such as the HIV/AIDS sector, public health, and protected natural areas. There are resource listings on underpinning social research methods including systems thinking, interdisciplinarity, and action research. One page lists online resources for both post-graduate research students and their supervisors. Topics include thinking about the supervisory team, as well as tips for structuring and writing a thesis or dissertation.

The LearningForSustainability.net site also manages additional pages on finding volunteering and job opportunities. These are directly accessible from the main site indexing system. These link to other online resources together in one easy to access site.

Open Forum on Participatory Geographic Information Systems and Technologies: PGIS/PPGIS custom search engine
www.ppgis.org

The interface PGIS/PPGIS custom search engine has been improved and is welcoming new participants. The objective is to develop a highly specialised Custom Search Engine reflecting knowledge and interests in PGIS/PPGIS practice and science. Researchers and practitioners are invited to contribute to its development. In addition, you can insert the search interface on your web sites.

The Open Forum on Participatory Geographic Information Systems and Technologies is managed by www.iapad.org and hosted by www.ppgis.net. PGIS, PPGIS and community mapping bibliography is found at http://ppgis.iapad.org/bibliography.htm

The Communication Initiative: The Drum Beat, Social Marketing
www.comminit.com

This issue of The Drum Beat explores the concept and practice of social marketing. It includes summaries focusing on aspects of community involvement as it relates to social marketing, and then looks at examples of campaigns addressing issues of HIV/AIDS, nutrition, and physical activity, as well as those focused on young people. Finally, it includes a list of resources for those researching how to implement a social marketing campaign. Articles and resources online include:
• Social marketing: principles and practice;
• Social marketing principles;
• Social marketing and changing behaviour;
• Exchange theory;
• Family tree of theories, methodologies and strategies in development communication: convergences and differences;
• Section on social marketing;
• Social marketing – the 4 Ps; and
• Social marketing – a seven step approach.

Access this issue online at www.comminit.com/drum_beat_391.html

Subscribe to The Drum Beat: www.comminit.com/subscribe_drumbeat.html

A Periodic Table of Visualisation Methods
www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.html

Visual Literacy is an e-learning website. It focuses on **visual literacy** – a critical, but often neglected skill for business, communication, and engineering students. Visual literacy is the ability to evaluate, apply, or create conceptual visual representations. The tools aim to assist you to evaluate advantages and disadvantages of visual representations, to improve their shortcomings, to use them to create and communicate knowledge, or to devise new ways of representing insights.

The Periodic Table is a quick and easy visual reference to visualisation methods. By moving the cursor over the table, pop-up boxes provide a visual example of each method. The methods range from pie charts and Venn diagrams, to evocative knowledge maps, stakeholder maps, affinity diagrams, and more.

Like a Periodic Table, the methods are categorised into different areas of visualisation: information, concept, metaphor, and compound visualisation. These are further subdivided into process and structure visualisation.

Finally, the table notes whether the methods are supplied with either an overview or detail about the method, or both combined, as well as whether the method promotes divergent thinking (creating ideas and responses) or convergent thinking (critical thinking for analysis and synthesis).