

Editorial

Welcome to the new look 60th issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*! The focus of this special issue is community-based adaptation to climate change. Its publication is timed to coincide with the forthcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 15) to be held in December, in Copenhagen, Denmark, and events surrounding it. The conference will bring together world leaders to try to make decisions on four key questions:

- How much are the industrialised countries willing to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases?
- How much are major developing countries such as China and India willing to do to limit the growth of their emissions?
- How is the help needed by developing countries to engage in reducing their emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change going to be financed?
- How is that money going to be managed?¹

Reducing emissions of greenhouse

gases is crucial to limiting the extent of future climate change. However, there is also recognition that human-induced climate change is already happening, and those most affected will be the estimated one billion people living in developing countries who are already poor and marginalised.² Since the industrialised countries are responsible for most past greenhouse gas emissions, they have accepted that they should help those who will be most affected by climate change to adapt to its impacts (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change).

It is now increasingly recognised that, for poor communities, adaptation approaches that are rooted in local knowledge and coping strategies, and in which communities are empowered to take their own decisions, are likely to be far more successful than top-down initiatives. In addition, communities have the right to participate in decisions that affect them.

¹ Source: <http://en.cop15.dk>

² Jessica Ayers and Saleem Huq, *Community-based adaptation to climate change: an update*. IIED briefing, June 2009.

For these reasons, community-based adaptation has come to the fore in recent years.

'Good' community-based adaptation, like other forms of participatory development, is community-driven, empowering, and strengthens local capacity. Much CBA is rooted in disaster risk reduction approaches, designed to build the resilience of communities to disasters, such as floods and drought, with the difference that it should also incorporate longer-term climate change and its predicted impacts into community-based planning. Broader participatory community development and livelihood approaches should also be taking into account the effects of climate change, if development gains are to be sustained.

Communities have a wealth of knowledge about the local environment, and have been adapting to and coping with change for years. Although this knowledge and traditional coping mechanisms may become less effective as climate change leads to greater unpredictability in weather patterns (e.g. rain coming at any time rather than at predictable times) and more extreme events (e.g. droughts and floods) it remains an invaluable resource, and, in the absence of historical written records, is often the only source of information on e.g. rainfall trends. This is not to say that scientific knowledge does not have a very significant role to play in helping communities to adapt to climate change, and many of the articles in this issue reflect on the respective strengths and weaknesses of local and scientific knowledge, and how the two can best be integrated.

Community-based adaptation brings together those working in the fields of disaster risk reduction, community development, and climate change science. There is still much work to be done to encourage these different communities to develop a common language, to share good practice, and to draw on the lessons of other participatory development work, in particular, the dangers of rushing to scale at the expense of the quality of participation, as

happened with PRA in the 1990s. The overview for this issue reflects on different types of participation, and on what is meant by 'good', empowering participation.

Structure of the special issue

The special issue is divided into three sections:

- The first section includes **reflections on participatory processes and practice in community-based adaptation to climate change**. These have a variety of entry points, including participatory vulnerability analysis, disaster risk reduction frameworks, and Farmer Field Schools. The case studies provide a rich source of experience and lessons for CBA practitioners.
- The second section focuses on **participatory tool-based case studies**. These describe a participatory process with an emphasis on the use of a particular participatory tool, such as participatory video or participatory mapping. They also reflect on the strengths and limitations of these tools.
- The third section, **participatory tools**, includes shorter, step-by-step descriptions of how to facilitate a particular tool in a community, for example, rain calendars and mental models of the drivers and effects of climate change.

Guest editors

The guest editors for this issue are Hannah Reid, Terry Cannon, Rachel Berger, Mozharul Alam, and Angela Milligan.

Hannah Reid is a Senior Researcher in the Climate Change Group at IIED. She is interested in the links between climate change and sustainable development and is a lead editor for *Tiempo: a bulletin on climate and development*.

Terry Cannon works with the Climate Change Group as a Visiting Fellow at IIED. Until recently he was Reader in Development Studies at University of Greenwich. His special interest is in community-based vulnerability assessment and disaster reduction, and climate change adaptation in relation to rural livelihoods. He is



Flyer for the 3rd international conference on community-based adaptation to climate change.

currently working on projects for this in Bangladesh and Vietnam.

Rachel Berger is currently climate change policy adviser with Practical Action, a development NGO that focuses on reducing poverty through enabling poor people to access and develop technologies appropriate to their needs and resources. Before her current role, Rachel managed multi-country projects in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia focusing on strengthening livelihoods in the face of increasing climate variability, and empowering communities to address their problems. She currently works on advocacy and policy on adaptation to climate change in the international UN climate change negotiations, as well as supporting Practical Action's country offices on climate change policy and programme work.

Mozaharul Alam has recently joined UNEP as Regional Climate Change Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific Region, located in Bangkok. Before joining UNEP, he coordinated the climate change programme of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS). He has conducted and coordinated significant amounts of research on climate change impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation at national, regional, and international levels. He has also designed and implemented a

community-based adaptation project in Bangladesh and provided technical inputs on CBA projects in African Countries.

Angela Milligan is Co-Editor of *Participatory Learning and Action*. She worked with poor farming communities in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in the early 1990s, an exciting time when the use of participatory approaches was expanding rapidly, and the rate of innovation was extremely high. She was an avid reader of those early issues of *PLA* (then *RRA Notes*)! After returning to the UK, Angela worked as a tutor and course writer for the Wye College, University of London distance learning courses in Agricultural Development. After a stint communicating the research findings of DfID's natural resources research programmes, she joined IIED in 2001 as Editor of *Participatory Learning and Action*, and has been here ever since! Getting to grips with the discourse of disaster risk management and climate change adaptation has been a steep learning curve, but guest editing this issue has been a great learning experience, and has highlighted the importance and challenges of CBA work.

How this issue came about

The idea for this issue arose from the involvement of the International Institute

for Environment and Development (IIED)'s climate change programme in the First International Community-based Adaptation (CBA) conference, held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2005. More than 80 experts, policy makers, NGO representatives, and grassroots practitioners discussed the possible impacts of climate change on communities, and how to help them adapt in the future. Whilst the first conference focused on firming up the concept of CBA and gaining acceptance for it, a second and third conference (in 2007 and 2009) considered issues such as the distinction between CBA and community-based development, scaling up CBA, and how to integrate climate science into CBA whilst maintaining a community-driven process.³ A fourth conference will be held in Tanzania in February 2010 (see In Touch, page 199 for more details).

An invitation to submit papers for this special issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* was circulated to PLA and climate change networks prior to the third CBA conference, and abstracts were then selected by the guest editors for development into full papers. These were supplemented by directly commissioned papers, drawing on the guest editors' suggestions and those of staff at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, in particular Robert Chambers.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the guest editors for their hard work and dedication to this issue, despite many other demands on their time, as well as all who submitted articles. We would also like to thank Robert Chambers for pointing us towards innovative work on CBA, particularly the development of new participatory tools. Thanks also to our editorial board for their insightful comments on the papers for this issue. Finally, huge thanks to our authors who had to contend with sometimes contradic-

tory feedback from climate change 'experts' and participation 'experts', and who dealt with our requests for changes with patience and good humour.

The rest of the issue

Tips for Trainers

For this issue we have two Tips for Trainers articles. First, **Sonal Zaveri** presents Communication Maps, a participatory tool to understand communication patterns and relationships. Developed in Nepal, the tool provides a simple and effective way to plot and understand how children communicate with the people in their lives.

Next, **Ziad Moussa** provides some tips on using a tool called Rivers of Life, which allows participants to reflect on personal experiences and influences that have motivated them in their personal and professional life. Participants are invited to use the symbol of a river to reflect on key stages in their lives, positive experiences and influences, and difficult challenges. This is a fun way to introduce people to each other in a workshop setting and was used at the RCPLA workshop in Cairo last year. See the RCPLA pages for an update on the programme *Deepening Participation for Social Change* that was initiated at the workshop.

In Touch

The In Touch section of this issue is divided into two sections. The first section contains a variety of books, papers, and web-based resources on climate change adaptation, including sources of climate data, case studies of CBA, and CBA methodologies. The second section includes resources on other participatory themes.

RCPLA

Find out the latest news from partners and colleagues from the Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network.

³ Ayers and Huq, *ibid.*

PLA 59: DVD

Together with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), we are working on a bilingual DVD which contains English and French versions of the articles in *PLA 59: Change at Hand: Web 2.0 for development*, as well as video documentaries, and a Tips for Trainers in Spanish. This will be available in January 2010. *PLA 59* has been extremely well-received (see under *PLA* online below), and we hope that the bilingual DVD will enable you to share the issue more widely with partners and colleagues.

Other news

Change of format

You have probably noticed that this issue of *PLA* looks rather different from previous issues! We have been considering a change of format for some time now as feedback from readers suggested they would prefer a smaller, more portable size. The new size should also mean that issues of *PLA* sit easily on a shelf, without flopping over as the larger size does! A further consideration, in these times of financial crisis, is that the format is a standard size, and so is considerably cheaper to print.

Whilst the look is a little different, we still aim to be an informal journal, with plenty of photographs and illustrations. All our articles are peer-reviewed by members of our International Editorial Advisory Board, helping us to maintain the very high quality of the content, while also keeping a focus on practitioner-based experiences.

We would very much welcome your feedback on the changed format. Does it work better for you? Are there any other changes you could like to see? Email us at pla.notes@iied.org with your views.

PLA online

We had a record number of downloads of *PLA 59* on Web 2.0 for development, and have had an amazing amount of positive feedback on the issue. There is so little

about participatory Web 2.0 that this is clearly meeting a need, and we hope that the issue has encouraged many of you to dip a toe in the world of Web 2.0.

Don't forget that you can also access and download most issues of *PLA* free online. Visit www.planotes.org for more information.

Next issue

In a change to our publicised schedule, our next issue, *PLA 61*, will be published in June 2010 rather than December 2009, and the issue will be a special theme one on community-led total sanitation (see below).

PLA 61: Community-led total sanitation, June 2010

This issue is being produced in partnership with Plan International and will be guest edited by Sammy Musyoki from Plan International and Petra Bongartz from the Institute of Development Studies, UK.

In recent years, sanitation has received renewed attention internationally and has been acknowledged as one of the central components of development because of its interconnections with health, livelihoods, education, the environment, and other sectors. Its close ties with poverty reduction are being increasingly recognised.

The WHO and UNICEF reports suggest that as many as one in three people worldwide lack sanitation facilities. Most of those affected live in low-income countries in Asia and Africa. Poor sanitation, lack of access to clean water, and inadequate personal hygiene are responsible for an estimated 90% of incidences of childhood diarrhoea (WHO). It is estimated that diarrhoeal diseases kill at least two million children in poor countries each year, and diarrhoea is the second highest single cause of child mortality (WHO).

Despite the efforts and resources that have been poured into sanitation in the last decade, the millennium development goal (MDG) for sanitation ('halving by 2015, the

proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation’) is a distant dream for many developing countries. Providing subsidies to build toilets has not been enough and creates a culture of dependency on external help.

In contrast, Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) focuses on mobilisation of collective action and behaviour change to ensure real and sustainable improvements in sanitation and hygiene. CLTS has its origins in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), drawing on simple PRA visual tools such as mapping, transect walks, and flow diagrams to enable communities to analyse and learn from their hygiene habits and practices, and come up with collective action plans for sanitising their habitat without depending on external subsidies.

This issue will focus on recent CLTS experiences in Africa, enabling sharing of experience and lessons, and improving practice and policy around CLTS. Practitioners will come together to share and reflect critically on the questions, issues, and challenges that CLTS practice throws up, and develop articles for the issue. This promises to be a fascinating and timely issue, which will be of interest to practitioners in Africa as well as other regions.

Editorial board news

We would like to say farewell to two IIED members of our Strategic Editorial Board.

Ivan Bond left IIED in September to join the UK Department for International Development. He will be working primarily on REDD (reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation), but will maintain close contact with IIED. Ivan took a leading role in the development of *PLA 55* on Community conservation in southern Africa, and he will continue to be a member of the wider *PLA* advisory editorial board. We wish Ivan well in his new position, and look forward to receiving his

continued input on the development and content of *PLA*.

Sonja Vermeulen left IIED in November this year to pursue other interests. Sonja has been a very valuable critical friend during her time on the *PLA* Strategic Editorial Board. She also guest edited *PLA 53, Tools for influencing power and policy*. This issue was developed around the Power tools project, which provides ‘how-to’ ideas that marginalised people and their allies can use to have a greater positive influence on natural resources policy.⁴ We would like to extend our warm thanks to Sonja for all of her good-humoured support over the years, and look forward to keeping in touch in future.

Final thoughts...

The decisions that will be made at in Copenhagen in December 2009 will have far-reaching repercussions for people the world over for years to come. As we move forward, good participatory practice will play an essential role in community-based adaptation. We hope that this issue will encourage readers to take into account climate change impacts, both present and future, in their development or relief work with communities, in participatory research, and in policy-making. We hope also that this special issue will promote the spread of good practice, and the sharing of experiences and lessons, so that we can all help to meet the global challenge of climate change.

⁴ See www.policy-powertools.org