editorial

Welcome to the 58th issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*. This issue has a reflective focus and follows on from the 40th issue, published in 2001, entitled *Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment*, guest-edited by Michel Pimbert and Tom Wakeford. Issue 40 focused on participatory methods and approaches that seek to enhance deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment. This current issue picks up on the theme of deliberative democracy, looks at successes and failures in citizen involvement programmes and examines some of the changes in the world of participation since 2001.

About this special issue

Many of the articles in this issue are from the North, mainly the UK, however since issue 40, several countries from the South are now engaging in these deliberative democratic processes, as we can see from four of the articles in this current issue. At the end of the theme section, we provide an abstract of each article, followed by relevant internet resources.

The theme section is broken into four sub-sections:
- the strengths and weaknesses of citizens' juries and similar participatory processes;
- participatory budgeting;
- gender and representation; and
- grassroots community activism.

The overall aim of this special issue of *PLA* is to allow practitioners to reflect on some of these aspects of participation. By fostering a deeper understanding of participation we hope to promote improved policies and practices. We believe the articles call for an increased global solidarity among those committed to transforming the power of oppressed peoples via participation.

About the guest editors

Tom Wakeford and **Jasber Singh** are guest editors of this special issue. They are both participation practitioners. Tom works for the Beacon for Public Engagement initiative at Newcastle and Durham Universities in the UK, and is a Visiting Fellow at the International Institute for Environment and Development. Jasber is based at the London Wildlife Trust where he works with young people and communities experiencing oppression.

Acknowledgements

General section

This issue also includes three general articles. Firstly, we have an article from Bolivia on participatory methods to test new technologies with farmers. The second general article is on participatory mapping among those whose livelihoods depend on rose cultivation in Bulgaria. The third article looks at ways of engaging in processes of healing with children who are in long-term hospital care.

Regular features

Tips for Trainers

The featured tip in this issue is about democracy walls – a structured open space where participants can post their ideas and opinions in a workshop setting.

In Touch

These pages include book reviews, events, workshops and on-line resources.

RCPLA update

Read the latest news from the *Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action* network – and become a member!

Update on multimedia training kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication

In April 2008, *PLA* co-Editor Holly Ashley participated in a two-day workshop hosted by the Technical Centre for Rural Cooperation (CTA) in the Netherlands. The *PLA* Editorial team is a member of a consultative group which is helping with the development of a modular multimedia and multilingual training kit on participatory mapping practice. The title and the purpose of the project is 'Support to the spread of "good practice" in generating, managing, analysing and communicating spatial information'. The project is jointly funded by CTA, IFAD and the Ford Foundation, and the training kit will be available from CTA in 2009/2010. For more information, please contact Giacomo Rambaldi, Email: Rambaldi@cta.int

Follow-up on *PLA* 57 – Immersions: learning about poverty face-to-face

We hope you enjoyed issue 57, which seems to have generated a lot of interest. We are hoping to hold a special event on the topic at the UK Department of International Development office's in London in September.

Update on IKM

PLA co-editor Angela Milligan attended a conference in Cambridge, UK organised by IKM Emergent. IKM Emergent is a five-year research and communication programme funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It brings together a group of development researchers and practitioners concerned with the ways knowledge is created, handled and used in development practice. It is particularly concerned with multiple knowledges – different kinds of knowledge from different sources – and how to ensure that **all** relevant knowledges are considered, including those which are often overlooked such as local knowledge and knowledge generated in the 'South'.

We are currently discussing the possibility of some joint work between IKM Emergent and *PLA* which would look at what happens to knowledge generated in the course of participatory work at local level. Does it feed into regional, national or international level strategies and policies? What happens if it conflicts with these strategies? Is it shared between organisations at local level? What are the barriers to using the knowledge in this way and how have organisations and individuals overcome them?

Following a call for papers in our last issue, we received two research proposals which are now being discussed with IKM Emergent. If the work goes ahead, one of the expected outcomes would be an issue of *PLA* which would capture some of the challenges and ways forward for participatory work.

We hope to have more news in our next issue. In the meantime, if you have particular experiences in this area that you would like to share, please contact Angela at angela.milligan@iied.org.

Next issue: *PLA* 58 – Participatory web for development, December 2008

There are dozens of emerging interactive web applications and services (often referred to as the participatory web, or Web 2.0). These can enhance the ways we create, share, and publish information. But these technical opportunities also bring challenges that we need to understand and grasp. Some of the key questions that this special issue will seek to address include:
- How can Web 2.0 applications be integrated with participatory development approaches?
- How can they facilitate and contribute to people's participation and decision-making?
- What are the challenges and barriers to people's participation?
- How do we address factors such as access, equity, control, and oversight?
- Can Web 2.0 applications challenge fundamental social inequalities?

This forthcoming special issue aims to publish a collection of articles, which provide working examples from practice. The articles will be based on a selection of papers presented at the Web2*For*Dev 2007: Participatory Web for Development conference, Rome, September 2007. It will be co-published by IIED and CTA.

Forthcoming issue

For *PLA* 60, we are hoping to produce a special issue on community-based adaptation methods to climate change. The issue would look at the methods used by communities to cope with climate change impacts (such as floods, rising sea levels, droughts and other extreme weather events). In addition, the special issue would look at methods communities worldwide are using to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. If you have had any relevant experience, please do send us contributions to consider for this issue.

We hope that *PLA* 58 will provide you with some interesting food for thought and we look forward to your feedback. Please continue to send us articles for our general section, or material for **In Touch** or **Tips for Trainers**. Please visit our website (www.planotes.org) for our guidelines for submissions. Here too subscribers can link with IngentaConnect to download the latest issues.

Holly Ashley, Nicole Kenton, and Angela Milligan, Co-editors

PLA 57 errata
p3. – 1st column – Fahamu is a pan-African NGO not a Kenyan NGO.
p.137 – VIPs should be Very Important Person visits (not Village Immersion Programmes).

Theme section