PART VI:
Scaling up – ways of institutionalising participation

Introduction

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by JOHANNA PENNARZ

Scaling up presents a huge challenge in China, not just because of the sheer size of the country, but also because of the complex and complicated way government works. Since the failure of the Village Development Planning (VDP) roll out (see Part I), there is a general understanding that participation cannot be implemented by decree from above. It requires changes of attitudes, mindsets and behaviour – and learning from practice.

Pilots are an integral part of policy learning in China, and it is often from small-scale pilots that large scale change is initiated. Chinese policies like to use evidence from practical demonstration projects to support the political agenda. What works in practice can be referred to and will be disseminated to promote further change.

The Kunming workshop took place at a time when experiences with participation were emerging from a range of sectors and institutions. However, the critical step of institutionalising practices and behaviour still remains to be done. During the Kunming workshop, participants noted the potential benefits and the challenges for scaling up participation. Central government policies are generally more in favour of citizens' participation than they used to be. The Kunming workshop noted the central government's policies on the 'new socialist countryside'/'harmonious society', the Organic Law and the shift towards greater service orientation as enabling factors. In this issue, **Wang Yue**'s case study already showed how participatory pilots are viewed as legitimate and useful against the background of the central government's policy agenda (see Part IV). At the same time workshop participants highlighted the major institutional challenges.

The financial resources in particular for capacity building, but also for extensive consultation are often not sufficient. **Deng Weijie**'s case study provides a compelling example on the gap that often exists between government ambitions and actual resources (see Deng's case study in this section).

As a result, previous attempts to roll out participation have failed due to capacity constraints. The Guangxi case study presents an innovative approach to overcoming capacity constraints through institutionalised learning. Guangxi has placed strong emphasis on capacity building and learning through a decentralised and practice-oriented learning approach. Participation has been scaled up in Guangxi and has started to influence another poverty reduction project (see **Huang Chanbin** and **Zhou Qing**'s case study in this section).

Like most policies that are passed down through many levels, the higher levels provide the basic principles and targets, while local levels retain space to define the details of implementation. The Guangxi case study provides a good example of how the requirement to follow a participatory approach is handed down from provincial to county levels. This is done through an official document that is general on the process, but specific on how roles and responsibilities at the interface are defined. The approach is essentially pragmatic: local government is provided the space to work out the practical details based on what works best for them. By providing the space for innovative practices, the province has gained a wealth of experiences on participation which they have shared through their learning system.[1]

A major challenge for rolling out multi-sector poverty reduction programmes in a participatory way is how to coordinate the various initiatives implemented by different sector departments in a way that they respond to the comprehensive needs and priorities of a community. The present fiscal system does not support coordination and alignment of sector programmes (also see case studies in Part III). The World Bank-supported Community Driven Development (CDD) approach presents an attempt to overcome public finance constraints through direct disbursements of funds to communities. It tries to address issues of financing since it disburses funds directly to communities and allows them to spend them according to their integrated development plans (see **Li Hui**'s case study in this section).

Issues of accountability are not yet addressed. Local governance presents a particular challenge for poverty reduction. Previous assessments noted the concerns about channelling larger volumes of central funds to local governments, in particular the lack of adequate financial management systems and monitoring and oversight capacity to ensure that the funds are well-spent (see World Bank/DfID 2009).

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`From poor areas to poor people: China's evolving poverty reduction agenda' *An assessment of poverty and inequality in China*, World Bank

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[1] See also Tips for Trainers, Article 33, in this issue.

Exploring community-driven development (CDD) in Chinese poverty reduction

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by LI HUI

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Background

Entering the new century, the Chinese government formulated a series of policies to 'strengthen agriculture and benefit farmers and social security'.[1] In the following years, the process of poverty reduction was further accelerated, and great achievements were made between 2001 and 2005. But five main obstacles to poverty alleviation were persisting at the community level:
• Levels of participation were low in the traditional poverty reduction projects and mostly confined to cash and labour contributions;
• Community capacity building was very slow and skills for self-organisation, self-management, self-development and self-supervision were insufficient;
• Development funds for poor communities were insufficient;
• Problems with targeting the poor population remained unresolved; and,
• There were no permanent mechanisms for sustainable development at community level.

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[1] The *China Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Outline* (2001–2010)
www.gov.cn/english/official/2005-07/27/content_17712.htm

> **Box 1: Community-driven development in the World Bank**
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> Community Driven Development (CDD) is an approach to development that supports participatory decision-making, local capacity building, and community control of resources. The five key pillars of this approach are community empowerment, local government empowerment, realigning the centre, accountability and transparency, and learning by doing. With these pillars in place, CDD approaches can create sustainable and wide-ranging impacts by mobilising communities, and giving them the tools to become agents of their own development. Support to CDD usually includes: Building capacity of community groups; promoting an enabling environment through policy and institutional reform (decentralisation, sector policies, etc.); and strengthening local governance relationships, including forging linkages between community based organisations and local governments. Within the World Bank, CDD programmes are usually financed through Social Funds. Social Funds directly finance small community managed projects and allow poor people to become actively involved in the development of their communities.
> **http://tinyurl.com/2epuxzp**

To address these problems, the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development cooperated with the World Bank in the Community-Driven Development (CDD) pilot projects, starting in May 2006. The total project investment was about 44 million RMB, covering 60 key poor villages in four counties of four provinces (Jingxi County in Guangxi Autonomous Region, Jialing District in Sichuan Province, Baishui County in Shaanxi Province, and Wongniute Banner in Inner Mongolia). These projects were scheduled to be finished by 30 June 2009. These projects covered three main areas: small community infrastructure and public services, community development fund, and community natural resources management and environmental improvement.

The specific objectives of the project were to apply the tools of community-driven development, explore establishing sustainable mechanisms of self-organisation, self-management and self-development, by mobilising the potential social capital of the communities and improving governance at the local level.

Innovations and main activities of the project

Based on the principle of 'respecting the subject status of the farmers and giving play to their creative spirits', and based on both the international experiences of community-driven development and the Chinese domestic context, the innovations and main activities of the project were in the areas of the control of funds, decision-making processes, transparency, support systems, and capacity strengthening, which is described in further detail below.

The right to control funds

This pilot project was the first poverty alleviation project in China that directly handed over the right to control project funds to communities. Their right to control these funds was the key to community-driven development. To ensure that the communities could control the funds and safely use them, the project developed rules and regulations for the use of funding, based on the following principles:

1. The villagers autonomously discussed and formulated the fund management methods, and democratically elected the managers.
2. Special community supervision groups were established to inspect how the funds were used at any time.
3. In natural villages or villagers' groups, the communities established their own project accounts to manage the funds.
4. Subject to the communities meeting all the necessary requirements, the county PMOs have to grant the funds unconditionally to the community accounts on a lump sum basis.
5. The account, passbook and passbook password are held by three different

people, and money must be withdrawn jointly by the three people to ensure its safety.

6. The community must be notified promptly that money has been used and they must supervise its use.

The right to make decisions

The CDD project was also the first poverty alleviation project in China in which all the decisions were made autonomously by the communities. It was up to the communities to decide what to do and how to do it. The communities established project organisations through democratic elections. These organisations comprised the project implementation group, the project supervision group and the project management committee of the natural villages. They were responsible for implementing, organising, managing, and maintaining the projects as well as for project supervision and assessment of projects during the selection process and decision-making. The communities formulated the systems, supplemented with a publicity and complaint mechanism, and all major matters had to be discussed and decided through plenary meetings.

Open and transparent publicity and complaint mechanism

The publicity system ran through the entire course of the pilot project, and was able to 'publish everything that needs to be published.' During project design, the use of funding and the major decisions were published in the community, to ensure the communities' right to know and decide. Secondly, a special complaint mechanism was established. Responsibility to handle complaints was allocated to named individuals at the World Bank, Central PMO, Provincial PMO and County PMO, and the relevant details (contact address, telephone and fax) were made available to the communities. The channels for complaints were made public. There were also procedures and regulations for the handling of complaints, which protected the legitimate interests of those making complaints and gave prompt feedback to the communities on the actions taken and outcome.

Community service system to support capacity building

The CDD project was aware of the gap between the ideal of community-driven development and the realities of community capacity. The project established and improved a service system for community-driven development to strengthen community capacities for self-organisation, self-management, self-development and self-supervision. The project allocated a facilitator to each administrative village for disseminating project rules and information, and to provide assistance in carrying out work in the community. The key functions of the County PMOs were service, coordination, tutoring and supervision and being responsible for examining and accepting the facilitators' work. Also, the project creatively introduced international NGOs to provide training and technical guidance to the County PMOs and facilitators, such as Plan International, Action Aid and World Vision. Project supporting groups at county and township level, drawn from relevant government departments, provided the communities with technical support and training.

Exploring new mechanisms to improve capacities

The CDD project explored new mechanisms to build capacity throughout the process. Through continuous practice, the communities and farmers accumulated experiences and gradually built their capacities for self-organisation, self-management, self-development and self-supervision. The project was implemented in cycles, and the purpose was to gradually improve the capacity of the community by repeating the process of project application, evaluation and selection, implementation, management and supervision. Community organi-

Figure 1. Comparison of participation levels between traditional poverty approach and a community-driven development approach.		
Contents	**Nianli village (CDD project)**	**Qilong village (traditional project)**
1. Planning		
Interviewed villagers involved in the planning process	100% involved	69% involved
Baseline survey	98% interviewed villagers are clear on the project objectives, contents and investment	31% interviewed villagers are clear the project objectives, contents and investment
Development of project management rules	100% involved in by discussion	24% involved in different ways
2. Implementation		
The priority of local villagers?	98% agreed	35% agreed; but 27% just follow the one assigned by higher authorities
The project fund management	98% satisfied with the transparency	35% satisfied with the transparency. 27% knew nothing about the fund management
The interest of local participation	High participation by 83% interviewed	High participation by 24% interviewed; but general by 37% interviewed.
The fund raising by community	100% agreed for their priority only	14% agreed, but 45% disagreed or thought it was too difficult
3. Monitoring and Evaluation		
Monitoring	98% involved in the monitoring, and 100% are clear the fund is well monitored by the independent community monitoring team	24% involved in the monitoring, and 29% are clear the fund is well monitored by the independent community monitoring team
Ownership	100% agreed	31% agreed
Complain channel	96% knew the telephone number, 85% knew where to find the number, and 85% satisfied with the treatment	27% knew the telephone number, 22% knew where to find the number, and 33% satisfied with the treatment

sations became stronger and they gradually improved their self-organisation and self-management capacities.

Project effects and impacts

After almost three years of piloting, the project has achieved significant results, with improvements in living conditions, and enhancement of productivity and farmers' standard of living. Community cohesion and the desire of the wider population for participation were reinforced, and the self-organisation, self-management, self-supervision and self-development capacities of the communities significantly improved.

Village-based decision-making has led to stronger motivation and ownership

Since communities were given the right to

discuss and decide, they became more engaged and active. They changed from the traditional mentality of 'waiting, depending and begging', and developed an increasing sense of responsibility. As one villager of Jingxi, Guangxi said, 'In the past, it was the government who built the roads, and they wanted me to participate in their affairs, so I wanted to be paid for working. Now it is us who are building the road, and the government helps us, and it is the government who participates in our affairs. Therefore, it is our responsibility to build the road properly.' A comparison of participation levels between a village that implemented the traditional poverty reduction approach project in Qilong Village and a village that implemented the CDD project (Nianli Village) in Jingxi, Guangxi, illustrates the high levels of participation achieved through the CDD approach.[2] (See Figure 1).

Village-specific decision-making has reached the poor and addressed their needs

The communities controlled the resources and made the decisions, which changed the traditional top-to-bottom decision-making mechanism. It was people-oriented, respected the farmers' wishes, and solved the most relevant, urgent and immediate problems of the farmers. It made the government's public products and services better aligned with people's needs. Our inquiries at Guangxi found that 98% of the interviewees believed that the projects implemented were the most needed projects that they selected by themselves and 100% would actively raise the funds to support them. Hejiazhuo villagers in Baishui, Shaanxi Province pointed out that

the project procedures were way too extensive, but that the process could solve the realistic problems for the people.

The village-based fund management has been more cost-efficient

By directly handing over the management of project funds to the communities, the sense of responsibility and ownership of the communities was reinforced. The communities actively mobilised the internal resources, including contributions of labour, money, technology and other social assets. There were more self-constructed projects, which led to lower costs and more efficient use of funding. For example, in Guangxi the construction of a water pond would normally cost 150,000 RMB. With labour contributions by the villagers, it would cost only 40,000 RMB, less than 30% of the original budget. The technical department commented positively on the quality of construction.

Both internal and external supervision has ensured safe use of funds

The complaints system highlighted a range of challenges: Some community funds were controlled by a few people inside the Implementation Groups, fund use was not transparent, the quality of project implementation was rather poor, the process for the selection of contractors was not transparent, and people were suspicions about the construction works. The PMOs at the national, provincial and county levels undertook detailed investigations into the reported problems and resolved them promptly, so that the community's interests were safeguarded, and confidence restored.

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[2] The survey was carried out by the Foreign Capital Project Management Centre of the Poverty Alleviation Office of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region by questionnaires on 23-24 September 2008. The two villages are located in two adjacent towns. Their basic village conditions are similar, for example, the geological conditions, the national, production and living conditions, the level of poverty, the living habits, etc. The two communities had both implemented road projects. 49 questionnaires were sent and 47 were returned in Nianli village, and 50 questionnaires were issued and 49 were returned in Dragon Village The sample household is about 15% of the whole village households. The questionnaires are done by the rich, medium and poor households randomly.

The process approach has strengthened capacities for self-development

The communities have undertaken a wider range of management tasks as part of the project cycle. They established a community monitoring group and publicity and complaint mechanisms, and practiced supervision. The communities also improved their self-development capacities through financial management training, tendering, engineering design, supervision/management and other managerial skills, and planting and breeding technologies. The Implementation Group of natural village, Baishui County, Shaanxi Province reported that 'we can create our own project proposals now, and we have gained a lot of financial, tendering, purchasing and engineering knowledge. In future, we can conduct projects by ourselves without even the assistance of the community facilitators.'

The process has strengthened grassroots democracy

The use of practices such as democratic election, decision-making, democratic and autonomous management and supervision has strengthened governance and capacities of grassroots organisations. Moreover, more honest and capable people keen to advance public welfare were encouraged to participate in the public affairs of communities, and the project management organisation eventually became part of the villagers' committee and party committee. Thus, more extensive democratic engagement was achieved and the wider community became involved.

CDD has reduced conflicts and promoted harmonious development

Principles of openness, equity and transparency were followed and the publicity system and complaint mechanism were applied during the process. It was also ensured that there were rules to follow for the community decision-making, project management and supervision. Thus the project prevented individuals promoting their private interests under the guise of serving the public. Through this, the project has built mutual trust, especially trust in the project organisations, the government and those implementing the project. The government did not make decisions for the masses, but instead provided the communities with support and services. The party secretary of Nianli Village, Jingxi said, 'Through this project, I have become more authoritative in the village. The project was open and transparent, the masses trusted in us, and no longer scolded us anymore. With the implementation and management committee and implementation group in place, my job become a lot easier, as it was they who organised the masses to hold meetings and implement the project. Moreover, everybody came up with the idea through discussion.' Many villagers said that future projects should also adopt the CDD ideas and methods.

Lessons learnt

After three years of practice and exploration, we believe that the application of community-driven development ideas and methods in poverty alleviation can effectively solve the problems of targeting, participation and insufficient capacity in China. These experiences are worth replicating and rolling out. The main experiences of the pilot projects were that:

Good communication and dissemination are crucial. The CDD project used various means to disseminate project ideas, methods and contents to the communities, such as calling for villagers' meetings, publicity boards, radio broadcasting, door-to-door interviews, group discussions, mobilising CPC members and key teams. By extensively disseminating information, the community was informed of the essence and core of the project, and the community was motivated to participate.

Substantial efforts must be spent on training: The national PMO trained the county PMOs and NGOs, NGOs trained

county PMOs, and community facilitators trained the community-based grassroots organisations, while the community facilitators trained the communities. Multi-perspective and multi-content training was conducted, including ideas for and methods of community-driven developments, project flow charts and requirements, participatory working methods, technologies, management, finance and procurement. Training was done in many different ways; such as special-topic training classes, meetings as training, field investigation, field training, and partner education.

Mindsets have to change on all sides: The government had to consider the masses and establish a service-oriented awareness. It also needed to clarify the duties of all stakeholders, strengthen their relationships, and ensure standards. The farmers also had to change their mindsets. By transferring the right of financial control and management and introducing a competitive mechanism, the 'waiting, depending and begging' mindset of the farmers became 'I make my own decisions for my own businesses.'[3]

A system has to be in place to safeguard the principles: Clear rules about the core content and project procedures have ensured the smooth implementation and extension of the CDD project. This included clarification of the duties of all parties as an institutional guarantee to hand over the right of decision-making to the communities. It was also necessary to formulate definite fund management methods, and to ensure rights of financial control for the communities. Finally, it was necessary to ensure the implementation of such systems as competition, publicity and complaint, and to ensure equity, openness and transparency.

Concluding remarks

Community-driven development has started to show effects in poverty alleviation, development and even in the construction of new socialist rural areas in China. It has been widely popular amongst farmers, scholars and government at different levels. In just three years, the CDD project has gone from pilots in 60 villages in four counties of four provinces, and expanded to almost 1,000 villages in more than 140 counties of nine provinces. It has been extended from the field of poverty alleviation to other agriculture-related and socio-economic fields, and it has been expanded from the use of aid funds to the use of government funds. However, as to whether it could be extensively rolled out and applied in poverty alleviation, development and the construction of the new socialist rural areas, even to upgrade it to policy level, would require more study and extensive practices.

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[3] As CDD project funds are directly transferred into administrative village accounts, the process of project application, evaluation and selection at the level of the natural village is in competition with the whole administrative village.

28 A participatory learning system in Guangxi

by HUANG CANBIN, ZHOU QING

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Background

In 2005, the Guangxi Poor Rural Community Development Project (PRCDP) used participatory ideas and working methods throughout the course of designing, planning, implementing and managing PRCDP. One of the main objectives of this project is developing participatory skills of project organisations and the local villagers. By organising and establishing a participatory learning system, participatory ideas and methods were continuously applied to project construction, and played a significant role in project implementation and management. The following are some descriptions of how this participatory learning system was established and how it functioned during and after the project period.

Building capacities and establishing a team of facilitators: Since project preparation, the project implementation and management organisations at all levels of province, county and township in Guangxi

PRCDP were extremely concerned about team building, and adopted multiple measures to consolidate and stabilise the team of facilitators within the leadership. As a result, despite the administrative changes, all counties and township organisations were able to keep their group of key facilitators of participation within their project management positions.

Training of the facilitators' team and improving their participatory and professional skills: This included formal training on participatory skills, facilitation skills, planning skills, participation in the course of project implementation and management, monitoring and evaluation. Equally important was talking about the participatory approach at all types of meetings and training sessions. Nowadays, talking about project participation has become part of the working routine in the development sector.

Learning, sharing, and promoting participation throughout the project area: The participatory village planning experiences and case studies were summarised, shared, and documented as methodologies for dissemination, like the *Participatory Village Planning Operation Manual for Project Areas in Guangxi* to guide participatory village planning in the project areas. Similarly, experiences with participatory project implementation and case studies were summarised, shared and formulated in the paper, *Participatory Project Implementation and Management Operation Manual for Guangxi PRCDP (Proposed)*, which was officially issued to all relevant project organisations to standardise participation in project implementation.

Establishing a platform for participatory information exchange and constantly promoting the construction of a participatory learning system: Measures such as compiling participatory project implementation cases, publishing project work bulletins, exchanging information on the poverty alleviation informa-

tion website, organising working meetings, exchange meetings, special workshops, inter-province and inter-county learning tours, and holding training classes, had been applied to constantly promote the construction of a participatory learning system.

Reinforcing co-operation with the international organisation, and draw participatory working experiences from foreign countries: Before this project Guangxi had no previous experiences with participatory approaches. The cooperation with international organisations like ITAD and Hong Kong-based NGOs such as Oxfam, Partnerships for Community Development (PCD) and World Vision was therefore important. They organised various training sessions and supported pilot projects on community-based development through which the facilitators gained a lot of practical experience. Since most trainers and experts from these international institutions possessed previous experience in rural China, they were able to provide the local participants the information and skills they mostly needed. According to the feedback, most participants agreed that the ideas and methods they had learned from the trainings provided by international organisations, such as risk matrix and priority setting, semi-structure interview, question tree, etc., could be adapted to the local context very well.

The project promoted empowerment and capacity-building, mobilised the initiatives of the people in the communities, and strengthened the sense of project ownership and responsibility of the farmers in the communities: The farmers were provided with communication platforms and channels through which they could express their opinions and suggestions, such as routine village meetings, group discussion, informal gatherings, etc. and directly participate in decision-making on project components. Villagers claimed that they were willing to

Photo: Guangxi FCMC

Yao community in Guangxi – Yao are among the poorest groups in Guangxi, living at higher altitude and in remote locations.

involve into these activities because they could receive and confirm some useful information through communication, such as the contents of the project, who and how to benefit from the project, and how to make sure the project was effective.

During project preparation, the farmers in the local community actively contacted the PMO, and applied to start projects as early as possible. They also actively coordinated land use and organised workers. During the implementation stage, they actively provided labour and raised funds for the work to be undertaken by the communities. Simultaneously, they actively consulted each other on issues arising throughout the course of implementation. For example, the community of Xiaojiang Village, Longsheng County held more than ten internal meetings on a single road issue. After completion of the project, they all agreed that the community should have a management and maintenance system in place to guarantee that the project results could be sustainably utilised. Later, the local villagers contributed labour and money for maintenance and management.

Participatory working practices enabled project staff at all levels to accept the participatory idea and practices, promoting project development. This project had an influence on the attitudes of the project officers from the local government. By participating in the participatory planning process, the county and township project facilitators had a new understanding about the significance of the participation of the local communities and poor households in project implementation. Eventually, their attitudes have changed - from disbelieving the analytical capacity of the local communities to acknowledging and respecting the capacities of the communities; from being unwilling to communicate with the local communities to conscientiously learning from the local villagers and listening to their wishes; from daring not to empower local people to

Box 1: How roles and responsibilities were defined in Guangxi

The *Guangxi Project Operation, Implementation and Management Manual* clarified the basic principles and requirements for participation, and the county and township PMO staff believed that 'these requirements were reasonable, and what they actually did were more than these requirements.' Moreover, all six project counties explored specific operation methods for the farmers to participate in the implementation process.

The way roles were defined depended on the project contents, but the following arrangements were used:

– The county PMOs led the contracting and the contractors implemented the project, while the township PMOs and farmers' representatives from the communities participated in calling for tenders, inspection and acceptance;
– Township PMOs led the contracting and the contractors implemented the project, while the county PMOs and farmers' representatives from the communities participated in calling for tenders, inspection and acceptance;
– The communities led the contracting and the contractors implemented the project, while the county and township PMOs offered assistance and participated in inspection and acceptance;
– The communities were responsible for implementation, while the county and township PMOs offered assistance and participated in inspection and acceptance.

Regardless of the means of implementation, there was the participation of the farmers and farmers' representatives from the communities. Moreover, all counties had been exploring and summarising the different management arrangements and different ways of participation. In the villages where the project scale was small and there were many people with technical abilities in the community, they autonomously implemented the project, such as building a clinic.

A system for the community to participate in quality supervision and acceptance was established. During the course of implementation, somebody from the community management group participated in supervising the schedule and quality. For critical technical links, the county sent technicians for supervision and control. During the course of community supervision, if any problem was found, they could call the county and township PMOs directly, who would then send facilitators or technicians to investigate and handle the issues reported by the villagers.

The PMOs assisted the communities in establishing systems for final check and acceptance, and the subsequent maintenance. The contracted component had to be assessed and accepted by the communities before the county and township PMOs could organise official acceptance. This institutionally guaranteed the right of farmers to participate in monitoring.

allowing them to make autonomous decisions. The facilitators' roles changed as well. Through the participatory poverty analysis and participatory planning processes, county and township facilitators felt that rather than dominating the whole procedure, project facilitators should have several roles: namely as assistant, catalyst, and servant. They should adopt a positive driving role to participatory project implementation.

Project practices had an impact on improving domestic poverty alleviation approaches and formulating a new development mechanism: The participatory ideas and methods were so widely accepted by government leaders that they made a requirement that those working on poverty reduction must learn from the project's experience. Therefore, in Guangxi, the practice of farmer participation in procurement was adopted widely. Farmers' participation in supervision and acceptance checks of infrastructure projects was promoted. Communities were encouraged to settle disputes over compensation for land losses through participatory discussions.

The Guangxi PRCDP participatory learning system also applied more capacity building tools such as training, actual operation, sharing experiences, summarising good practices and extending implementation. By doing so, the team of facilitators was enlarged, and the participatory approach was constantly scaled up as project implementation progressed. For these large, comprehensive, community-driven poverty alleviation projects with a loan-based nature, the establishment of a

multi-layered participatory learning system was a positive experience. With several years of practice, we have noted the following insights:

• It is very important for a project to engage with governments at all levels. Well-designed and stabilised project management structures have helped to ensure the application and sustainability of the participatory approach.

• The project conducted a lot of advocacy and mobilisation; it allowed farmers to actively participate in needs assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation-related decisions and actions. As a result, it made true changes to the local communities with regards to their increased knowledge, abilities and their self-development.

• The project established a platform for all kinds of information exchanges, reinforcing training efforts, constantly promoting a participatory learning approach and improving the capacity of project management organisations and local communities, which are the keys to guaranteeing the sustainable use of participatory approaches in the project.

• The formation of official documents and guidelines such as the *Participatory Village Planning Operation Manual for Project Areas in Guangxi*, the *Guangxi Project Operation, Implementation and Management Manual*, and the *Participatory Project Implementation and Management Operation Manual for Guangxi PRCDP*, provided an institutional guarantee for scaling up the participatory approach and replicating together large, comprehensive, community-driven poverty alleviation projects.

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Adapting participatory methods to the government system: the Wenchuan Earthquake Rehabilitation Project

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by DENG WEIJIE

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Background

I have been working as a trainer on participatory methods in China for a long time. I also have worked with the government on poverty reduction over many years. I worked on both the PRCDP and CWMP which are presented in this issue. Both projects are presented in this issue. But it was only recently that I was invited to carry out training on participatory methods for government staff, funded by the Poverty Alleviation and Development Office (PADO). This was a new experience, which required adaptation of common participatory methods to the government context.

Adaptation of training methods

The PADO has been exposed to participatory training methods for more than twenty years, and I have being involved in this process. However, the use of participatory training methods was usually confined to projects funded by international donors, which provided more enabling conditions (see Table 1) than the national government funded projects. Under those conditions, common participatory training tools include: group exercises, role play, warm up (energisers), games and organised debates. All these tools require time and space.

However, the conditions for training within the government system are very different. They are mostly determined by ambitious government training targets, which aim to stretch limited funding to cover a large number of participants within a very limited time. Also, there are limited capacities for organising and facilitating adult learning processes and training workshops. This means that there is

Table 1: A comparison of training in international and government projects	
Training in international projects	**Training within the government system**
Small number of participants for each workshop, usually less than 40;	Too many participants for each workshop, sometimes more than hundred;
All participants with a similar background, such as villagers, township government and county government staff;	Participants with a broad range of backgrounds;
Junior officials as main target groups, only a few senior officials;	Staff from different levels (county, municipality, province and national) all lumped together into one training event;
Generous time for training, around 3-5 days;	Limited time allocated for working meetings such as training workshops;
Generous (physical) space for training and group exercise; movable furniture, including the tables and chairs.	Standard meeting venues are big meeting rooms where tables and chairs are fixed and cannot be moved.

limited space and opportunity to apply tools such as group exercises, role plays and games. However, there are still some participatory learning tools that can be used within such a constrained setting.

The Wenchuan Earthquate Rehabilitation Project

This case study describes how participatory methods were used in the context of training government staff working on the reconstruction after the Wenchuan earthquake.

In 2008, a devastating earthquake hit Wenchuan county and the neighbouring areas; more than 20,000 people died and more than 10 million people were directly affected. The international community provided timely aid and support not only for the immediate rescue operations, but also for the rehabilitation. In addition government and civil society mobilised substantial resources. In an attempt to integrate rehabilitation efforts the national PADO initiated Participatory Reconstruction Planning, Implementation and Monitoring in 19 impoverished pilot villages affected by the earthquake in Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi Provinces in late 2008. In order to share the experience and lessons learnt from that and to improve the

effectiveness of reconstruction in another 40 poor villages for the second phase, the national PADO organised a meeting on the Second Demonstration of Poor Villages on the Post Wenchuan Earthquake Reconstruction Planning & Management in Sichuan Province on 4 March 2009.

I was invited to facilitate a session on participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). The conditions for this training were as follows:
• More than two hundred participants from national, provincial, municipal and county PADO attended;
• Some participants had experience on participatory approaches; most of them had no previous experiences with participation;
• Only two hours was allocated for a 'Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation' session in a big meeting room, where all facilities are immovable;
• Only a flipchart was provided as training material; a blackboard and printing paper were also available for this meeting.

The national PADO requested clearly that participatory methods should be used in this two hour event, in order to promote participation and effective sharing. The PADO particularly emphasised the impor-

Photo: Deng Weijie

Large groups of participants and formal seating arrangements provide challenges for a participatory training event.

tance of achieving a consensus on participation in planning, monitoring and evaluation for the post Wenchuan earthquake reconstruction in China. It was obvious that the national PADO understood the benefits of participation and wanted others to learn and apply a participatory approach in the second phase of village reconstruction. The purpose of the workshop was therefore to raise awareness and acceptance of participation; it understood that this would not be sufficient for an effective training on participatory methods. Despite the large number of participants, they did not want this to be a formal lecture. Typically in these kinds of events the trainer would speak for most of the time and participants would be in a passive listening mode only. We wanted to facilitate an interactive process, which would enable participants to actively contribute.

Based on those requirements, I designed the two hour training on PM&E for post-earthquake reconstruction and conducted it through the following steps, using participatory methods:

1) The participants were seated in rows, the usual **seating order** for official meetings (shown in photo above);

2) As an **icebreaker** I started with a maths exercise; each participant had to select a three-digit number which through some calculation steps was turned into the same result for all. Everyone did the calculation by itself, without talking to each other. Once completed, all participants announced their result at the same time. People were thrilled and they wanted to understand, why everyone had the same result. The atmosphere had warmed up immediately;

3) This was followed by **brainstorming** within the plenary. Participants discussed why all had the same answer despite starting from different data? Then we made the link to understanding poverty data and the root causes of poverty. Participants understood that the appearance of poverty might be the same, but the root causes leading to poverty are very different. Therefore, only the poor will know what the exact root causes are, which is similar to the individ-

Group presentations during the training workshop.

ual participant who knows which number he/she selected initially. The participants therefore agreed that the poor know more about their lives than outsiders (officials). This means that target groups must be involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation process;

4) Then the topic moved on to PM&E for reconstruction, and we had a plenary discussion on 'Are communities able to monitor and evaluate the reconstruction' (Yes or No, but Why)? Most of participants said No since the villagers are not knowledgeable on PM&E, and that technicians or specialists should take on this role rather than local villagers, while other participants said that villagers do know what they want and what they already benefitted from even if they are not formally educated.

5) Towards the end of the plenary discussion the participants were divided into two groups; the ones who said No in the right hand group and conducted a facilitated debate with the ones who said Yes in the left hand group; then the ones who said No in the left hand group argued with the ones who said Yes in the right hand group. This was a challenging process which brought up all the arguments about PM&E for post-earthquake reconstruction. In the end consensus was achieved that villagers are able to monitor and evaluate the reconstruction in their own ways. I pointed out that the participatory approach had been actually applied in the First Demonstration villages in 2008, and some of practitioners had participated in this meeting so we were able to share and learn from each other;

6) Then the participants from Sichuan, Gansu and Sha'anxi Provinces were divided into provincial groups to discuss the experiences from the first phase of pilot reconstruction villages. The participants recognised that the amount of money spent does not make a pilot, but planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation provided valuable experiences. Participants agreed that there should be more participation in M&E. The participants from the First Pilot Villages then presented their experience and lessons learnt in 2008, and they explained that it is easy to conduct PM&E with a skilled facilitator, but local PADO staff still need to learn how to facilitate this process;

7) Finally, I presented a photo slide show

about the PM&E (baseline survey) process in August-September 2008 which provided some practical illustration of the PM&E steps. This has further reduced barriers and helped to convince participants that PM&E is practical and doable. The feedback from participants and national PADO was that participatory training is much better than formal lectures, which were used previously. Some participants said that previously there was no interaction with participants during the training events. The experience of participation in training made people understand that it is much easier to embrace new concepts such as PM&E if this is done through active learning rather than just listening. Practical examples and reflective discussions helped to create a basic understanding and overcome mental barriers on participation. This could hardly have been achieved through a conventional lecture approach.

The international experience shows that participatory approaches could function more effectively by using only a limited number of trainees and having about twenty participants in each training workshop. But it is almost impossible for the Chinese government at different levels to organise such a small conference or training workshops, since 'Meeting as Training' has been the norm for governmental authorities for many important events, such as the 'Reconstruction Meeting' where there are more than a hundred participants. I am convinced that participatory approaches should be tried even under challenging conditions and tools can be effective if they are adapted to the conditions. I found the following tools useful in the context of large training events:
• **Icebreakers:** for encouraging all participants' participation at the beginning;
• **Brainstorming:** for enabling all participants to share their experiences and ideas on specific issues;
• **Cards:** for all participants to share their personal perspectives;
• **Paired discussion:** for sharing among the participants;
• **Mosaic group discussion:** for the participants who sit together but usually come from the same organisation or region to share their different perspectives;
• **Argument:** for clarifying some key issues easily as well as promoting the atmosphere of participation;
• **Case study:** presentation of experience and lessons learnt;
• **Voice of photo:** for providing participants with the opportunity to understand the story and evidencing the case which was presented by the facilitator.

A major lesson from this event is that the facilitator must be confident and take up the challenge to apply participatory methods even under less than favourable conditions. It is important that the trainer knows the background of participants, the training facilities and especially the space provided for the training, so that he/she can devise an effective training strategy and design.

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EIAs go public: creating new spaces for participation

by LILA BUCKLEY

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In resource scarce China, people's ability to move – and stay – out of poverty relies heavily on their ability to participate in the sustainable management of their resources. This is especially true in rural areas where the majority of residents rely on agriculture and other land-based practices for their livelihoods. Tackling resource scarcity and degradation in China has therefore long been both an ecological issue and an arena for public participation – often at the interface between wealthy and impoverished. Within this context, the development of environmental legal frameworks such as China's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) law has provided opportunities to strengthen policies for public participation as well.

Like other cases of participatory poverty alleviation approaches explored in this issue, developing China's EIA law involved pragmatic use of international experience and financial support (from the World Bank), as well as unique piloting and experimentation with participatory processes, even involving a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the drafting of the law itself. This process resulted in a series of public participation requirements within China's EIA legal framework that remain an ongoing arena for experimentation around the role of participation in poverty alleviation. Participatory in its creation, this EIA law provides an example of how participatory

approaches are gaining traction beyond small-scale pilot projects to be integrated into the structure of China's development institutions.

In this article I share insights into the participatory policymaking process from the founding director of the Chinese NGO involved in the drafting of the EIA framework. This organisation was the Global Environmental Institute (GEI), where I worked as Assistant Executive Director from 2005-2008. Though there are still governance questions surrounding public participation practice in China, the law helps to address some of the accountability issues facing participatory processes in other levels of development and poverty alleviation work in China.

Grounding China's EIA rhetoric in public participation

Though the concept of conducting assessments of the environmental and social impacts of development projects has existed in Chinese policy circles for more than three decades, avenues for public participation in this process have lagged behind. Where they have been introduced, Chinese and international NGOs have played an important role.

One of these NGOs was GEI, a Beijing-based Chinese environmental NGO founded in 2004. GEI's founding director, Mrs. Jin Jiaman, recalls that when the EIA concept first entered policy in 1979 as part of China's national Environmental Protection Law (EPL), proponents saw it as an important tool for achieving sustainable poverty alleviation and diffusing conflicts between local people and developers over resources. However, explains Jin, early EIA law proved to be pure rhetoric, providing no concrete stipulations or methodologies for its implementation. A channel for applying this law was theoretically opened a decade later with the first mention of individual environmental rights in the revised version of China's EPL, in which Article Six clearly stated, 'All companies and individuals have a duty for environmental protection, and have the right and authority to report and bring suit to those companies and individuals committing environmental damage and pollution.' Unfortunately, this too lacked clauses for implementation and, according to Jin, was thus largely ignored. Nearly another decade later, then, when the concept of EIA's was reintroduced by the State Council in a 1996 Article Two of the 'Rules and Regulations for Management of Environmental Protection in Construction Projects', there were still no provisions for public input.

Despite this slow start, the policy rhetoric finally began to achieve some grounding under a 1994 law that permitted the registration of NGOs. The first groups to be formed focused on environmental issues, and according to Jin, these groups began drawing links between Chinese policies and communities affected by China's increasingly severe pollution and degradation. In this way, the creation of officially registered NGOs gave public participation in the environmental sphere its first legitimate access point. 'Growing activism of NGOs and increased pollution protests around China during the 1990's' recalls Jin, 'further contributed to the push towards more specific provisions for public participation in EIA legislation.'

These included a 2002 amendment to the EPL which stipulated that, 'the country will support companies, experts and the public in using appropriate methods to participate in environmental impact assessments.' It also addressed the concepts of stakeholder forums, public hearings and other methods of public participation for the first time. Then in 2003, China passed a new stand-alone EIA Law that was a significant departure from the earlier drafts. The new law broadened the scope of EIAs to include all development and construction projects, and legally secured the public's right to conduct analysis, prediction, and evaluation of environmen-

tal impacts from all development projects and plans. With EIAs now required for all projects and procedures, and protections for the right to public participation in the assessment process, the conceptual framework was set for a meaningful implementation of EIAs with public input.

International engagement and participatory policy-making

With this initial framework in place, GEI found itself in the middle of a much wider policy-making process which engaged a wide range of actors, from Chinese government officials and construction companies, to other NGOs and the World Bank. In 2006, the World Bank reached an agreement with China's EIA Centre of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA, now the Ministry of Environmental Protection) to carry out a programme on 'Public Participation in China' and invited GEI to take part.

In a series of meetings to draft the law, participants discussed the value and approach of public involvement in the EIA process. Jin remembers negative reaction to her suggestion that true public participation must include multiple stakeholders. 'It felt very lonely,' recalls Jin, finding herself the sole NGO in an environment where her organisation and ideas were viewed as a threat to development and progress. 'I began to wonder how we could really help the government achieve its goals when the very concepts of NGOs and public involvement in environmental regulations were so foreign.' She explains that many in the group felt that her emphasis on public participation in the development process was unrealistic, leaving her feeling frustrated in the initial meetings. 'While I felt the central government had very good intentions in writing these regulations,' she remembers, 'I knew that actually creating

and enforcing strong public participation regulations would be a very long process.'

This initial team dynamic was a microcosm of the challenges such regulations face in China, in an atmosphere where NGOs and the general public can feel they have little voice. Despite the team's steep learning curve, it did succeed in producing draft regulations, which themselves were subject to wider public feedback and further editing before being issued by SEPA in March 2006.

The resulting 'Interim Public Participation Law for Environmental Impact Assessments' formulated the goals and scope of public participation in EIAs and clarified the rights and obligations of the developers, environmental groups, and the public.[1] These were then followed a year later by a clause on 'Environmental Information Disclosure Measures' providing the normative framework for information disclosure on environmental impacts of development projects.[2]

Remaining challenges in China's EIA

Despite the significant progress made to include public participation in the EIA process, many challenges still remain. While today's law provides clear and concrete steps and requirements for public participation, many grey areas in the implementation process need clarification. For example, the law fails to formally delegate authority or clarify the jurisdiction of the public in the process of participation. Nor does it define the scope and jurisdiction for true veto or policymaking power on the part of participants. Furthermore, there are no provisions for supporting human resource and other expert assistance required for public participation in hearings and monitoring of the EIA process.

At the institutional level, the organisational structure for EIA enforcement

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[1] For more information on the Interim Public Participation Law for Environmental Impact Assessments see Moorman J.L. and Z. Ge, 2006.
[2] For an unofficial translation of the disclosure measures, see www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/Intellectual_Life/Ch_OGI_Regualtions_Eng_Final_05160 7.pdf

Photo: Simon Lim

Conflicts around resource use are becoming a critical feature of development and it is important that communities are able to engage with government decisions.

continues to be weak, understaffed, and inadequately centralised. MEP's EIA Centre, which is composed of highly experienced environmental scientists, is responsible for writing EIA-related regulations, licensing independent EIA agencies, and overseeing the work of regional EIA offices. These regional offices depend on funding from local governments, which generally prioritise economic development over environmental protection. Independent EIA agencies are dependent on development contractors for their survival, which opens the door to corruption during the assessment process, as these agencies are free to demand higher prices to downplay environmental problems.

Road ahead for institutionalising participatory poverty alleviation

Thus, while these documents represent an important step forward for China's sustainable and equitable development, the hard work of institutionalising participatory processes and building participatory capac-

ity – especially among impoverished groups – is still ongoing.

Over the past several years multiple actors have continued working to put pressure on destructive companies and foster participation capacity among local communities. For example, capacity building workshops targeting journalists and grassroots NGOs have involved mock public hearings for EIAs to build capacity and explore avenues for engaging residents in environmentally damaged regions to participate in development decisions. In addition, NGOs have worked to directly tackle industry through information disclosure and litigation. One coalition of NGOs known as the Green Choice Alliance focuses on global supply chains to pressure large corporations towards environmental performance-based sourcing.

News media has also proven itself a useful mechanism for empowering citizens and NGOs on EIA issues. For example, news journalists drew attention to ecologically destructive development in the Old

Summer Palace (Yuanmingyuan) and a wetland reserve outside Beijing, soon after the laws were passed. In both cases, informed citizens, NGOs, and scientists rallied to stop the development projects.

This brief essay has provided a glimpse into one NGO's experience engaging in China's legal infrastructure. GEI's inclusion in the drafting of the EIA law is a positive attempt to create space for multi-stakeholder involvement in the country's policymaking. NGO involvement in the drafting of future laws, however, should not be seen as an end goal in and of itself. Indeed, NGOs themselves cannot be assumed to represent the voice of the public. Rather, GEI's experience highlights the potential – and the need – for a much more participatory policymaking process. China's EIA law and regulatory framework needs to be strengthened. But improved regulation alone is not going to achieve equitable development. The challenge now is to create wider space for public policy-making and provide all people – not just one NGO – the opportunity for informed participation.

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