

PLA Notes

Guidelines for Contributors

The principal aim of the *PLA Notes* series is to share current experiences, critical perspectives and methodological innovations among practitioners of participatory learning and action approaches to development. We aim to keep the series informal to enable the rapid sharing of practical experience from the field with the wide network of practitioners linked to the *PLA Notes* series through its readership. *PLA Notes* is published three times a year, in February, June and October.

Types of material accepted

- *Articles*: max. 2500 words plus illustrations – see below for guidelines.
- *Feedback*: letters to the editor, or longer pieces (max. 1500 words) which respond in more detail to articles.
- *Tips for trainers*: training exercises, tips on running workshops, reflections on behaviour and attitudes in training, etc. Max. 1000 words.
- *In Touch*: short pieces on forthcoming workshops and events, publications, and on-line resources.

The Editor reserves the right to edit and amend contributions for publication in PLA Notes.

Criteria for publication

PLA Notes has been produced for over ten years now and during this time has reflected growth and development in thinking and experience around the use of participatory methodologies. Whilst we continue to welcome accounts of recent experiences in the field (or in workshops), we would like to emphasise the need to **analyse the limitations as well as the successes** of these approaches.

In an era in which participatory approaches have often been viewed as a panacea to development problems, or where acquiring funds for projects has depended on the use of such methodologies, it is also vital to pay attention to the **quality** of the methods and process of participation, as well as to the **practical outcomes** of such approaches. Whilst the focus of *PLA Notes* is methodological, we feel it is important to give more importance to issues of **power** in the process and impact of participation, asking ourselves who sets the agenda for participatory practice. It is only with critical analysis that we can further develop our thinking around participatory learning and action.

In addition, we are interested in hearing about the use of participatory approaches at **regional and national** levels, as well as at local levels, and in different arenas, for example in **policy making**.

To summarise, we are particularly looking for articles that contain one or more of the following elements:

- an *innovative* angle to the concepts of participatory approaches or their application
- *critical reflections* on the lessons learned from the author's experiences
- an attempt to develop *new methods*, or innovative adaptations of existing ones

- consideration of the *processes* involved in participatory approaches
- an assessment of the *impacts* of a participatory process on the livelihoods of the target community
- potentials and limitations of *scaling up and institutionalising participatory approaches*
- potentials and limitations of *participatory policy-making processes*

Articles should, if possible, be co-authored by all those involved in the research or development project. This ensures that everyone's contribution to the development process is fully valued and acknowledged.

We particularly welcome contributions from practitioners in the South and can offer editorial support and advice to potential authors. If you have an idea for an article, but are unsure of whether it is suitable, please contact the Editor, giving details of the area you wish to cover.

Language and style

Our readership covers many different disciplines, countries and educational backgrounds, and English is not the first language of many readers. For this reason, please try to use a clear and accessible style when writing contributions:

- Keep sentences short and simple
- Avoid jargon, theoretical terminology and overly academic language
- Explain any specialist terms that you do use and spell out acronyms in full
- Use the active voice: 'we did' rather than 'it was done'.

Length

See under 'types of material accepted'.

References

If references are mentioned, please include details. However, since *PLA Notes* is intended to be informal, rather than academic, references should be kept to a minimum. Please cite in-text references as follows:

The Zimiseleni adult team now plays the role of enlightened witness (Miller, 1990).

OR

Miller (1990) argues that

Photographs and drawings

These should have captions and the name(s) of the author and photographer/illustrator clearly written on the back. If you are sending electronic files, make sure that the photos/drawings are scanned at high enough resolution for print (300dpi) and supply captions and the name of the photographer/illustrator by email. Please do not import photographs or drawings into Word files; they should be sent as separate files (preferably jpgs).

Format

We accept handwritten articles but please write legibly. Typed articles should be double-spaced. Please keep your formatting as simple as possible. Avoid embedded codes (eg footnotes/endnotes, page justification, page numbering). Titles and headings should be lower case, except for the initial capital of the first word. Use bold for headings and italic for sub-headings.

Submitting your article

Articles can be sent by email or on disk. If you are sending a disk, we use Word 6 for Windows, but can read most other word processing packages. If you are sending a disk, please include a hard copy of the article as well. Articles should be sent to the address/email given below.

The editorial process

All articles are reviewed by at least two members of the Editorial Advisory Board. If we feel that the article has potential but needs some revision, we will write back to you explaining the kinds of revisions we think are needed. We then wait for your response, after which the second draft is circulated to the Editorial Board. Further revisions are sometimes needed, but are always undertaken in consultation with the author(s).

We aim to respond to your initial contribution within 3 months, but due to the travelling commitments of the Editorial Team this is not always possible.

For further information, contact:

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