

In memory of Jimmy Mascarenhas

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Robert Chambers

Jimmy Mascarenhas passed away on 5th January this year. He had been briefly in intensive care with a respiratory disorder. His family, Sheila, Adrian and Kiran, were with him. For the participation community, this is an immense and untimely loss.

Jimmy will be remembered as a great innovator and disseminator. While working with MYRADA in South India and later with OUTREACH, the NGO he started, his part in the discovery, development and dissemination of the methods and approaches of PRA was seminal. He and his team of fieldworkers in Gulbarga District pioneered participatory approaches for watershed management and conservation which were enormously influential. They were among the first, if not the first, to evolve some of the visual participatory methods such as watershed modelling, resource mapping, seasonal diagramming and matrix ranking. Jimmy initiated the practice of staying days and nights in villages as part of training. He and his team in MYRADA were at that time full of an enthusiastic excitement that bordered on disbelief that what was happening could be real and that it could happen not once, but again and again.

Later, establishing OUTREACH as a new NGO, demanded courage and determination. It was a difficult period when he worked immensely hard and made personal sacrifices to ensure that staff were paid and that OUTREACH survived and grew. Now it is a well-established NGO with a fine record, concentrating on women's groups and processes which enable them to federate and to manage on their own.

From the very early days of PRA Jimmy had the vision to see its potential in many fields and types of organisations. He made a distinctive contribution through introducing it in Government. As early as 1990, he worked with and trained Government staff in Andhra Pradesh, in the Drought-Prone Areas Programme and in Social Forestry. Later he engaged closely with Government on the huge participatory Watershed Management Programme. He trained many people in many professions, especially agriculturalists and foresters. In recent years, he had outstanding success with young lawyers, bringing them into direct contact with poor people. And he and OUTREACH had made much progress in exploring and developing participatory monitoring and evaluation.

Remarkable though Jimmy's influence and achievements were in India, they were perhaps even greater

internationally. He was one of the hosts for the first South-South Sharing workshop in India in 1992. Through OUTREACH, he later organised and hosted others. He conducted early PRA trainings in Nepal, the Philippines and elsewhere. It was probably in Southern Africa, in Namibia, Zimbabwe and so notably at Stoffelton in South Africa, that his charismatic inspiration in introducing PRA was most influential, sparking off almost explosive enthusiasm and spread of activity. Many people in many countries have been affected by him and by those he met and trained.

Jimmy had prolific and diverse experience and talents: a background in agriculture; ten years as the manager of a tea estate; a period with Anil Gupta at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, reinforcing his appreciation of farmers' knowledge and innovations; years as a field manager in MYRADA; and then creating his own NGO. As a trainer he had extraordinary ability. He was enormously committed, energetic and full of fun. His stamina was almost frightening. His trainings would go on to midnight and then start again with reflections at 6 the next morning. And he would carry all of us with him and could persuade even the most sceptical of senior participants. He was not to be denied. And there were other sides to him, like his love of music and singing which he shared with his musical family.

Jimmy influenced many of us in many parts of the world. The legacy of the good things he did will continue to grow and spread through those he touched and those they have touched in turn. It is tragic that he has gone so soon. Many of us have lost a dear friend and colleague. We must mourn his passing, and extend our deep sympathy to his family and to his colleagues in OUTREACH. But he would also want us also to celebrate. We can remember the good things in his life. Were he with us, this would be with a toast of his favourite, a rum and Thumbs Up (like coke). So let us raise our glasses and drink to Jimmy and give thanks for all he did and meant to so many, for the example he set, and for the inspiration which he spread. One of the best, one of the very, very best, was Jimmy.

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