

## Editorial

### • Introduction

Most of this issue of *PLA Notes* is devoted to the use of participatory approaches to inform policy and shape institutions. The 'Participation, Policy and Institutionalisation' section draws on three workshops that were held earlier this year. The first two were held at the Institute for Development Studies, Sussex. They explored how PRA can be used to influence policy and how participatory approaches can become part of an organisation's culture.

The third workshop was held in Bangalore, India. It discussed the Attitude and Behaviour Changes which underpin effective participatory processes. This is known as the 'ABC of PRA'. It is central to any attempts to scale up participatory approaches and maintain the quality and effectiveness of PRA.

The papers, which are found at the end of this issue, draw on key materials presented at the three workshops and other, relevant papers received by IIED. They explore the opportunities and constraints to scaling up participatory processes and discuss how PRA can be linked to a wider and enabling policy environment.

PRA for policies and institutions is emerging as an important theme for practitioners. We welcome other contributions that address the debates raised by these papers or comment on the views expressed in this issue.

### • In this issue

First however, this issue opens with a collection of more general articles. These fall into two main categories: agriculture and health. The first two articles share experiences of farmer-led farm trials in Africa and Asia. In the first article, four researchers from KVK in

India (by T. Barik et al) reflect on four years of participatory research in Orissa. Their paper highlights the learning experience for farmers and researchers. It also demonstrates how the research agenda was focused and refined by farmer experimentation with two crops, groundnut and rice, in three successive trials.

On a similar theme, Ejigu Jonfa describes some of Farm Africa's experiences with 'Farmer Participatory Research' in Ethiopia. His paper demonstrates gender differences in cotton trial evaluation: men and women farmers used different criteria to evaluate various cotton varieties.

Continuing the gender theme, Wenny Ho shows how gender balanced participatory planning was promoted within an agricultural development project in Nicaragua. Her paper provides practical tips on how to empower women to contribute to the planning process.

Also in Latin America, Eleanor McGee describes the use of child health calendars with women in Honduras. She suggests that the pictorial approach is a practical way of keeping and monitoring child health records with rural women who are unable to read or write.

Carin and Duke Duchscherer describe an innovative way of assessing basic minimum needs. This uses a modified Venn diagram which enables communities to explore and prioritise village needs. This methodology can be used with different groups, such as women, extension workers and children, to contrast views on needs and priorities.

The 'Extracts' section contains a diverse range of articles, including economics, conservation, evaluation and novel voting procedures. Cate Turton and Albert Aquino describe the heated debate that centred on a seasonal calendar on rice prices in Tanzania. They describe the

relationship between rice production, pricing and the policy implications of structural adjustment programmes on trading in agricultural produce.

Ute Reckers describes UNEP's approaches to participatory monitoring and evaluation. She describes how pastoralists evaluated different project activities in northern Kenya. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) is an increasingly popular topic. In response to numerous requests, we would like to have a theme issue of *PLA Notes* on PM&E in the future. Please send us your experiences.

M. T. E. Mbuvi reflects on the naming of places after the natural environment. He describes how this can be an entry point for discussions and other methodologies (particularly transect walks) and can also be used in environmental education.

The last article in the *Extracts* sections is our only Northern case study in this issue. Carolyn Jones describes outsider and insider voting experiences from Scotland. This enables a comparison of the views of local people and facilitators and can also be used as training tool.

Our regular features are also included in this issue. The *Feedback* article explores a common problem among practitioners: how to undertake 'open-ended' appraisals without raising local expectations. This issue's example comes from Bart Pijnenberg and Daniëlla de Winter's work in Zambia. Because of extensive prior project experience in Zambezi District, local people were opportunistic and expectant of future project activities. In a thoughtful response from Senegal, Bara Gueye describes ways of 'evening up the stakes' so that local people become real partners rather than the objects of research and development processes.

For trainers in participatory learning, there is a useful 'Tips for Trainers' which relates to the Attitudes and Behaviour Change theme. Continuing our serialisation of the Trainers' Guide to Participatory Learning and Action, this issue looks at ways of preparing for training and facilitating.

As always, we welcome your comments and contributions on any of the issues raised in *PLA Notes*. In particular, the *In Touch* pages are your forum to share experiences and publicise networks, materials or training events. We look forward to hearing from you!

**CALL FOR EXPERIENCES!**

The next issue of *PLA Notes*, February 1997, is to be a theme issue on Methodological Complementarity, the use of PRA and other research and planning. Kathrin Schreckenbergs article in *PLA Notes* 24 (October 1995) described the use of RRA and conventional methods for her PhD research in Benin. We are looking for similar experiences that use a combination of methodologies but within a *development* context. Please send us your contributions for this issue.