

Editorial

- **Theme issue**

Most of this issue of the *PLA Notes* explores the complementarity of participatory approaches with other, more conventional research and development methodologies. The theme section of the *Notes* explores what is driving the creative combination of methodologies and discusses why complementarity seems to be both essential and effective for research and development practice. However, it also highlights areas where compromise is likely.

- **In this issue**

First however, this issue opens with a collection of more general articles. In the first article Edward Breslin and Peter Delius describe the innovative use of participatory methodologies to understand the underlying causes of malnutrition and poverty at the village level in South Africa.

Participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation are increasingly being used. In the second article in this issue, Seerp Wigboldus and Steve Knisely overview the experience of the Nepal Resource Management Project in its search for an evaluation methodology that is meaningful not just for project staff, but also for villagers.

On a similar theme, Amith Shah reflects on Process Documentation Research which is a dynamic approach to project monitoring. She describes the methodology used by the Gujarat Institute of Development Research in exploring the process of implementation of a social forestry project in Western India.

In a candid account of the challenges of undertaking participatory on-farm research, Alsen Oduwo describes the experiences of an

NGO, Community Mobilisation Against Desertification, in promoting the use of green manures in a lower potential district of Kenya.

From West Africa, Ichire Ojating and the students of the Federal University of Agriculture explore how PRA can help to reveal traditional folklore. A better understanding of the traditional knowledge could be used to conserve the natural resources of Nigeria.

In the last article in the general section, Tim Russell describes a simple and quick way of undertaking pair wise ranking. This technique is useful for prioritising or ranking lists of activities or problems.

The *Extracts* section in this issue contains two articles. The first from India (V A Bourai et al) describes the use of props which can facilitate the use of questionnaires within communities. The second article, by John Wilson, reflects on the need for participatory approaches to implementing projects and suggests that the methods of participation should not become an end in themselves.

In an article in the *Feedback* section, Kumaraswamynadar Arasu explores some of the challenges to maintaining the quality of PRA and constraints to institutionalising participatory approaches to development. In a considered response, Neela Mukherjee emphasises the importance of the personal behaviour and attitudes of PRA practitioners. She also highlights the 'time dimensions of participation and empowerment' which are not appreciated by many development agencies.

For trainers in participatory learning, the serialisation of the Trainers' Guide to Participatory Learning and Action focuses on training methods and approaches. The Tips for Trainers section has been prepared by Robert Chambers. It describes how and why card sorting should be undertaken on the ground.

As always, the *In Touch* pages (at the back of the issue) share experiences and publicise new and relevant materials and training events. We welcome your comments and contributions to this, and any other, section of the Notes. Happy reading!

CALL FOR EXPERIENCES!

Two new theme issues of *PLA Notes* are planned for 1997. In June, we will explore '*Performance and Participation*', the use of drama, theatre and video for promoting participation. The October issue will explore the use of *participatory approaches with fishing communities*. Please send us contributions on either of these themes. Articles should reach us at least two months before the publication date.