

Editorial

• Theme issue

Most of the articles in this issue of the *PLA Notes* explore the use of participatory approaches with fishing communities. They examine how participatory approaches can be used to tackle the challenges of small scale fisheries development. The guest editor for the theme section of the *Notes* is Marie Thérèse-Sarch, who worked with the Traditional Management of Artisanal Fisheries project in Northern Nigeria (see Sarch, this issue). She is currently completing her doctoral thesis examining interactions between fishing and farming activities in households at Lake Chad.

• In this issue

First, however, this issue opens with a suite of more general articles. The first two articles examine the use of participatory approaches in novel settings. In the first, Anbalagan, Karthikeyan and Narayanasamy describe the use of PRA to assess the impacts of tannery pollution on a village in Southern India. In the second, Torsten Striepke describes the use of participatory approaches in small business development in Nepal. Both these articles combine participatory approaches with other methodologies to build up a detailed picture of the local context.

Maxwell, Armar-Klemesu, Brakohiapa and Annorbah-Sarpei describe the use of participatory concept mapping to understand the causes of urban malnutrition in Ghana. Their approach is useful for studying complex problems which have multiple causes and can be adapted to different contexts.

A similar visualisation approach is used by Scheuermeier and Ayuk to enable researchers and farmers to explore the bottlenecks and potential pitfalls in an agricultural system.

They adapt food path analysis to examine food production. When completed, the diagram provides an 'entry point' for community discussions about the system under study.

In the final article in the general section, van Wijk explores how participatory approaches can enhance project evaluation. Describing a sanitation and hygiene programme in southern Niger, she shows how the programme benefited from an understanding of how adults learn. This is described in the article.

Regular features

The *Extracts* section in this issue draws on a letter from Lepcha and Virgo and comments on the use of ladders as props for research. It responds to a previous article on 'satisfaction ladders' in *PLA Notes* 28. In the *Feedback* section, Anil Shah describes the challenges of promoting a development process that meets the needs of local people and development agencies. He highlights the importance of consensus building and the sharing of information within and between institutions and communities. In a response to Anil's article, Kudakwashe Murwira stresses the importance of flexible institutions that should play a facilitating role in participatory development.

For trainers in participatory learning, the serialisation of the *Trainers' Guide to Participatory Learning and Action* describes how games and exercises can be used to enhance learning in a workshop setting. The *Tips for Trainers* section has been prepared by Barbara Kaim and describes one such game called 'Buses'. This exercise can be used as an ice breaker and for grouping participants.

The *In Touch* pages (at the back of the issue) share experiences and publicise new and relevant materials and training events. The *RCPLA Pages* in *In Touch* section describe the work of a participatory network in Bolivia. Happy reading!