

Editorial

- **Theme issue**

This theme issue of *PLA Notes* explores the use of participatory approaches to help local people better understand markets and to develop their skills in managing financial resources. The guest editor for the theme section is Andy Jeans. Andy originally trained and worked in mechanical engineering, but for the past 15 years has worked in small enterprise development, mainly in Africa and South Asia. His experience includes action-research in the fields of micro credit, vocational training and a variety of innovative approaches to the provision of non-financial services for enterprise growth.

- **In this issue**

First, however, this issue opens with half a dozen general articles. The first article, by Iokiñe Rodríguez describes the experiences of a Venezuelan NGO, EcoNatura, in using PRA for conflict resolution in a national park in Venezuela. This is followed by an article by Abigail Mulhall and Peter Taylor. Drawing on their field research in four countries, they show how participatory methods can be used to explore the learning environment in rural primary schools. The third article, by Abigail Willmer and Jennifer Ketzis, describes a methodology field tested in Honduras which enables gender and generational divisions of household labour to be explored. Somesh Kumar and Vinay Srivastava explore how genealogies, an anthropological method for exploring descent and kin relationships, can be made more participatory.

The final two articles in the general section address more technical topics. The first article has been collaboratively written by nine authors and documents the findings of a workshop held earlier this year, at the University of Durham, UK, on how geographic information systems can be made more participatory and locally relevant. The article takes a critical look at what has been

achieved so far and explores the opportunities and challenges for the future. In the final article in the general section, William Fielding, Janet Riley and Ben Oyejola explore the use of ranking and remind readers of the limitations of ranking when used as a decision-making tool.

Regular features

The *Feedback* article is written by David Thomforde and explores how participatory evaluation methods can be used with people with disabilities. In two reflective responses, Sulemana Abudulai and Deb Johnson comment on the use of participatory evaluation methods, in particular the level of trust that is required for an organisational assessment to lead to positive outcomes and contribute to an organisational learning process.

Continuing with the evaluation theme, the first of the two articles in the *Extracts* section describes an innovative method for evaluating a peer education programme for extension workers. The simple method provides women with a confidential self-assessment tool. On the same theme, the extended Tips for Trainers has been prepared by Françoise Coupal. It shows how drawing can encourage participants to think creatively about different approaches to evaluation.

The second article in the *Extracts* section, written by Neela Mukherjee, describes the communication linkage matrix. This method develops a Venn Diagram to enable participants to explore the quality of their relationships with different organisations.

The serialisation of the Trainers' Guide examines how to train in participatory methods in a workshop setting. The *In Touch* and *RCPLA Pages* provide updates and resources on participation.

Happy reading!