

Editorial

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Welcome to this issue of *PLA Notes*. First, the special theme issue, which we had planned for this issue concerning Sexual and Reproductive Health, has been postponed to February 2000 (issue 37). This means that there is still time to submit articles for this edition, so please do forward any experiences which you would like to share with the Readership of the Notes to us for consideration. Issue 36 provides a selection of general articles across different subject and sector areas. We hope you will enjoy reading them.

The articles start with an interesting account of a participatory evaluation of a CARE International project in Harare, Zimbabwe, (Harnmeijer, this issue), where the predefined terms of reference for evaluating the project were changed into 10 positive hypotheses/statements which the evaluation team, in conjunction with the community, then had to either support, refine or refute. The article raises some very interesting learnings for how to approach participatory evaluations. The next article looks at the evaluation of a participatory training workshop for GTZ staff, in an attempt to institutionalise participatory approaches within the organisation, and poses some challenging questions for consideration (See Gassner Keita and Forster, this issue). Next is an interesting account by Jeremy Cox, considering the many dilemmas faced by social scientists when conducting interviews with communities and suggests ways to overcome them. This is followed by a fascinating presentation of the Force Field Analysis, a visual tool enabling communities to approach and analyse problems (Kumar, this issue).

Next is a report of participatory self-assessment with the case of a dairy sector support project in Tanzania (see Forrester-Kibuga and Power, this issue). The self-assessment was conducted, using 54 picture

postcards as a visual stimulus for identifying issues, prioritising through voting and then, ranking the outcomes and mobilising a community for action. This is followed by an account from Nepal, where social networks of communities were mapped to analyse the strength of existing social networks within 3 communities in the context of a health improvement scheme (see Gibbon and Pokhrel, this issue).

The articles conclude with a case study from Zimbabwe, in which Richards et al. consider the extent to which PRA methods can be used to collect economic data, and provide a comparative analysis of PRA methods and the formal household survey. An extra addition to this issue is a review of the recent conference in Ottawa, Canada, '*Deepening our Understanding and Practice – a conference on participatory development and beyond*'. It provides a taste of the key themes, outcomes and issues for furthering the debate around the future of participation.

Regular features

The *Tips for Trainers* contribution is provided by John Rowley, in which a participatory tool, a matrix, is used to evaluate a PRA training workshop.

In the *In-Touch* section, (at the back of the issue) experiences are shared and new relevant materials, training courses and events are published. Remember that the information for this section is provided by the Readership of the Notes for the Readership, so do keep it coming. The *RCPLA Pages* in the *In Touch* section discuss the latest developments of the RCPLA Network, concentrating on the IIED Resource Centre and some funding news. You will also find some information on the activities of other network partners.

We hope that you enjoy this issue and please send any feedback you may have on the series to the Editorial Team at IIED. Happy Reading!