

An introduction to *Prajateerpu*: a citizens' jury/ scenario workshop on food and farming futures in Andhra Pradesh, India

by MICHEL PIMBERT and TOM WAKEFORD

Philip at the
Prajateerpu process

Introduction

Prajateerpu – a citizens' jury/scenario workshop on food and farming futures in Andhra Pradesh (AP), India¹ – was a six-day exercise in deliberative democracy involving marginal-livelihood citizens from all three regions of the state. It took place at the Government of India's Farmer Liaison Centre (Krishi Vigyan Kendra) in Algole Village, Zaheerabad Taluk, Medak District, Andhra Pradesh, from 25 June to 1 July 2001. *Prajateerpu* was devised as a means of allowing those people most affected by the government's *Vision 2020* for food and farming in AP to shape a vision of their own. Grounded in the tradition of participatory action research (PAR), this deliberative process aimed to link local voices and visions of food and farming futures with national and international policy making (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002). It also introduced innovative elements such as an oversight panel, video scenario presentations, and witnesses, with the aim of ensuring deliberative competence and balance, given the extreme political sensitivity of many of the topics both in India and internationally.

Background

The State of Andhra Pradesh in South India is currently rethinking its approach to farming, land use, and rural devel-



opment. The AP Government's *Vision 2020* seeks to transform all areas of social, environmental, and economic life in AP, not just food and farming. The government's strategy for sustainable development and poverty reduction is intimately linked with the delivery of this comprehensive vision. External development agencies support the Government of AP in this endeavour, with the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) being the main donors.²

² DFID is a major actor in Andhra Pradesh because it provides direct budgetary support to the state government, which receives about 60% of all of DFID's aid to India (DFID, 2000, 2001). Working with the World Bank it supports interrelated and mutually supportive elements of the government's *Vision 2020*. The four main pillars of DFID's budgetary support to the government of AP are identified as: (i) Power Sector Reform and Restructuring, (ii) Fiscal Reform, (iii) Governance Reform and (iv) Rural Development/Agricultural Reform (DFID India, April 2001; DFID, 2001, email communications; www.andhrapradesh.com). DFID did not fund the *Prajateerpu* process. Its India office was invited to participate in it, but it was unable to send an official delegate to take part.

¹ *Prajateerpu* is the Telegu word for 'people's verdict'.

Oversight panel member Justice Sawant



Oversight panel member Ms Savitri



Anandamma at the Prajateerpu process



About three-quarters of the state's population of 80 million people are engaged in agriculture. Over 80% of those involved in agriculture are small and marginal farmers and landless labourers. Fundamental and profound transformations of the food system are proposed in *Vision 2020*, yet to date there has been little direct involvement of small farmers and rural people in shaping this policy scenario. In this context, five organisations³ designed and facilitated a participatory process to encourage more public debate in policy choices on food futures for AP. *Prajateerpu* ('people's verdict')

has been devised as a means of allowing those people most affected by *Vision 2020* for food and farming in AP to shape a vision of their own (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2002).

The Prajateerpu process

Methods for deliberative democracy and participatory action research

The citizens' jury/scenario workshop did not seek to achieve representation from all social groups; instead it purposefully and positively discriminated in favour of the poor and

Box 1: The Prajateerpu approach

The citizens' jury. A citizens' jury made up of representatives of small and marginal farmers, small traders and food processors, and consumers. To reflect the reality of rural Andhra Pradesh, most of the members were small and marginal farmers and included indigenous people (known in India as *divas*). Over two thirds of the jury members were women.

Visions of the future. Jury members were presented with three different scenarios. Each one was advocated by some key opinion leaders who attempted to show the logic behind the scenario **Vision 1: Vision 2020.** This scenario has been put forward by the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and has been backed by a loan from the World Bank. It proposes to consolidate small farms and rapidly increase mechanisation and modernisation. Production-enhancing technologies such as genetic modification will be introduced in farming and food processing, reducing the number of people on the land from 70% to 40% by 2020.

Vision 2: An export-based cash crop model of organic production. This vision of the future is based on proposals within IFOAM and the International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO) for environmentally friendly farming linked to national and international markets. This vision is also increasingly driven by the demand of supermarkets in the North to have a cheap

supply of organic produce and comply with new eco-labelling standards.

Vision 3: Localised food systems. A future scenario based on increased self-reliance for rural communities, low external input agriculture, the re-localisation of food production, markets, and local economies, with long-distance trade in goods that are surplus to production or not produced locally. Support for this vision in India can be drawn from the writings of Mahatma Gandhi, indigenous peoples' organisations, and some farmers' unions in India and elsewhere.

Each vision was introduced with a 30-minute simulated video news report that sought to highlight key aspects of each possible future scenario and help jury members to visualise their implications.

Expert witnesses. Following the video presentations, expert witnesses presented the case for a particular vision of the future. Members of the AP Government, the corporate sector and civil society organisations were given equal amounts of time to present their case to the jury. Jury members were allowed to cross-question expert witnesses after their presentation.

Jury deliberations. Jury members considered all three visions, assessing pros and cons on the basis of their own knowledge, priorities, and aspirations. The different contributions of invited

expert witnesses were important for the jury's deliberations. The jury members were not asked to simply choose between vision 1, 2 or 3. Instead, outsider facilitation encouraged them to critically assess the viability and relevance of each scenario for the future. They could choose a particular pre-formed vision OR combine elements of all three futures and derive their own unique vision(s).

An oversight panel. A group of external observers oversaw the jury/scenario workshop process. Their role was to ensure that the process was fair, unprejudiced, trustworthy, and not captured by any interest group.

Video archives. The entire citizen jury/scenario workshop process along with interviews of various actors was documented on digital video to:

- provide a clear and accurate record of the event, including the location, the jury setting, the participants, the nature and quality of the debates, the process and its outcomes; and,
- allow any party or external agency to learn from this experience or check for shortfalls in balance, fairness or failings in the deliberative process.

Media. News and media professionals were invited to the *Prajateerpu* event to relay information about the jury deliberations and outcomes to a wider audience, both nationally and internationally.

³ The All-India National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), Andhra Pradesh Coalition in Defence of Diversity (APCDD), The University of Hyderabad, AP, and UK-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

Discussions and deliberations following a presentation



'The citizens' jury/scenario workshop did not seek to achieve representation from all social groups; instead it purposefully and positively discriminated in favour of the poor and marginalised farmers, indigenous peoples, and the landless'

Some key events

To maximise the extent to which excluded voices were allowed the opportunity to be heard by policy makers, the *Prajateerpu* process involved more elements than just the hearings of the citizens' jury/scenario workshop. A brief summary of some of the key events that led up to the e-forum will help put the discussions contained in this special issue in context.

The *Prajateerpu* event took place in June 2001, following ten months of preparatory work, including the search for oversight panel members, jury selection, and identification of specialist witnesses and clarification of the roles, rights and responsibilities of different social actors involved. The jury's verdict was extensively covered in the media, both in India and in the UK. After peer review in India and the UK, the report was produced in March 2002 and was launched in the UK Houses of Parliament in the presence of invited press, MPs, and members of the public. Following a series of press releases, the report received press coverage in the UK and India, and questions were asked by Members of Parliament (MPs) in the UK Parliament about the role of British aid in Andhra Pradesh, to which the Secretary of State for International Development, the Rt. Hon. Clare Short, responded.⁴ Specific complaints were also raised by the DFID office in India about certain aspects of the report. This, in turn, resulted in an extensive, sometimes heated, debate internally between IIED, IDS, and DFID. In August of 2002, the e-forum on Participatory Processes for Policy Change was launched to encourage a wider discussion of the important methodological issues raised by the *Prajateerpu* work. In the latter part of 2002, a *Prajateerpu* training workshop was held in India, and plans were developed to hold more *Prajateerpu*-like events in AP.

marginalised farmers, indigenous peoples, and the landless. The approach used for the participatory assessments of alternative policy futures for food systems, livelihoods, and environment in Andhra Pradesh is described in Box 1. In turn, the *Prajateerpu* process was informed by a commitment to the theory and praxis of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and other forms of inquiry based on the formation of democratic and inclusive spaces.

Outcomes

The facilitators used a range of methods to give jurors the opportunity to validate their knowledge, and challenge the misunderstandings of decision makers. The jurors' comments were in many ways more diverse than those of specialists because they had looser commitments to subject boundaries and, to a certain extent, a more insightful and open-minded approach to the tensions these boundaries can mask. There was a significant diversity of opinion among the jurors. There was a widespread agreement on the statements in their verdict, however, which included the following:

We oppose:

- the proposed reduction of those making their livelihood from the land from 70% to 40% in Andhra Pradesh;
- land consolidation and displacement of rural people;
- contract farming;
- labour-displacing mechanisation;
- GM Crops – including Vitamin-A rice and Bt-cotton; and,
- loss of control over medicinal plants including their export.

We desire:

- food and farming for self reliance and community control over resources; and,
- to maintain healthy soils, diverse crops, trees and livestock, and to build on our indigenous knowledge, practical skills, and local institutions.'

⁴ See: Hansard Joan Ruddock Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for International Development 20 Jul 2001: Column: 477W; Hansard Alan Simpson Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for International Development 20 July 2001: Column: 475W; Letter from Keith Vaz MP to Secretary of State for International Development 11 April 2002; Hansard Dr Carole Tongue Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for International Development 26 March 2002: Column: 876W.

Justice Sawant, Michel Pimbert and Sudha Goparaju



Expert witness Michael Hart, and oversight panel member Paul ter Weel on a field trip in the Medak District, AP



A Telegu version of the *Prajateerpu* report was also launched in Andhra Pradesh in February 2003.

The launch of the English version of the *Prajateerpu* report in the UK Houses of Parliament on 18 March 2002 was particularly successful in amplifying the voices of small and marginalised farmers in the global arena. One of the jury's requests in its verdict was that 'aid from white people' both reached and actually benefited them. The *Prajateerpu* organisers paid for one of the members of the citizens' jury (Mrs Anjamma) to travel from her village in AP in order to present the jury's verdict to MPs, the media and others, in London, although the opportunity to debate with DFID officials never arose. The launch of the *Prajateerpu* report in such a visible way was consistent with the design of a deliberative process that linked local voices on the future of food, farming, and rural development with national and

international policy making. An attempt was made to go beyond the idea of advocating on behalf of the marginalised to the practice of enabling the marginalised to speak for themselves.

Since the launch of the *Prajateerpu* report in the UK Houses of Parliament, a wide community of interest has emerged. Intermediary individuals and channels have begun to form to act between the jury and those with the power to create change.

This, then, was some of the context that subsequently led to a vigorous re-examination of the validity and quality of the *Prajateerpu* process and outcomes. This debate continues. The e-forum primarily facilitated a re-examination of the conceptual and methodological aspects of the *Prajateerpu* process and the challenges of applying deliberative and inclusive procedures in other controversial policy settings.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michel Pimbert, Principal Associate, International Institute for Environment and Development, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK. Email: michel.pimbert@iied.org

Tom Wakeford, Formerly Research Officer, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK, and Research Associate, Policy Ethics and Life Sciences Institute, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4EP, UK. Email: tom.wakeford@ncl.ac.uk

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