

editorial

Welcome to issue 52 of *Participatory Learning and Action*. This time we have produced a general issue. For those of you who were expecting a special issue on rights-based approaches, this issue has been delayed – but all is not lost. We would like to thank guest-editors Andrea Cornwall and Sammy Musyoki at the Institute of Development Studies who are working hard on the rights-based issue, which will be published next year instead. So for this issue, we bring you a selection of articles, extracts and training tips from practitioners around the world.

We are also very pleased to welcome back Editor Angela Milligan. Angela has just returned from maternity leave to rejoin the *Participatory Learning and Action* team, bringing along her enthusiasm and a fresh outlook on the series.

We will also be announcing in the December 2005 issue the names of members of the newly created *Participatory Learning and Action* Editorial Advisory Board. So far, over 30 practitioners and academics from around the world have accepted an invitation to join us, and we look forward to working with them in the future, to develop and expand the scope of the series, and to encourage new authors to send in their own contributions.

General articles

Our first article, by **Alice Morris, Geeta Sharma, and Deepa Sonpal**, highlights the extent of the exclusion experienced by persons with disabilities in India. In a collaborative participatory rural appraisal carried out by two NGOs and 13 grassroots organisations, special tools and approaches were developed to

include the perspectives of persons with disabilities. The PRA provided a rare opportunity for persons with disabilities to interact with the community on an equal basis. It created an understanding and awareness of the perceptions and attitudes of both disabled and non-disabled persons, highlighted the reasons why disabled people are excluded, and suggested strategies for promoting inclusion.

Next, **Nuhu Salihu and Sam Hickey's** article presents experiences to date with a paralegal extension programme in North West Cameroon. The programme works with the Mbororo people in the region, a minority pastoralist group whose livelihoods and rights have been threatened and undermined by the State. As the authors state, 'It is not just that [the Mbororo] lack access to justice, but that their interactions with the State and the justice system are mostly as victims'. The article looks at the strategies pursued to raise awareness of their rights as citizens amongst the Mbororo people (raising their legal and political literacy) and to help them overcome injustices, such as the taking of their land and cattle by powerful individuals, and wrongful imprisonment and detention. The lessons from the programme are feeding into work with other marginalised groups in Cameroon.

Miguel Loureiro describes the way in which greater participation by farmers and extension staff, has helped to make government agricultural extension services in Ohangwena, Namibia more demand-driven and efficient. Miguel analyses the qualities of the management and technician team in the region which make it particularly effective, including their youth and openness to

new approaches. He then gives a detailed account of management innovations in planning and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, staff performance assessment, internal communications, interaction with stakeholders, and publicising activities. He includes examples of tools used, such as an annual activities and events calendar, a quick questionnaire for monitoring the performance of staff, and participatory training needs assessment. Many of these managerial innovations will be applicable to other governmental service delivery organisations, such as water supply, sanitation, health, and education. As Miguel says, 'There are no copyrights on any of these innovations, please experiment, adapt, and improve them'.

Fahriye Sancar writes about involving children in municipal planning in Yali, an area of the Bodum peninsula in Turkey. Children are seldom consulted in planning exercises, yet the results of the planning will have long-term effects on their environment and the future, in which they have the major stake. The children were asked to take photographs of their favourite places using disposable cameras. The photos were then developed and pasted on boards, and the children were asked to write down why they decided to take the pictures that they took. The pictures provided many examples of the children's environment, reflecting what they valued in it and the use they made of it. These were invaluable in the planning that followed. They were particularly useful in indicating places that are highly valued by the children but are most likely to disappear as Yali grows and develops as a tourist

destination, for example, wild places, streets, old trees, and junk. The article highlights the need to balance economic growth with preserving a sense of place.

V. Corey Wright describes how a gender matrix activity was used with Maasai communities in Northern Tanzania to raise awareness of the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is disproportionately affecting women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS has referred to this trend as 'the feminisation of the epidemic'. Corey gives details of how the matrix is developed with different community groups, including children, and gives tips on how to facilitate the process. As well as raising awareness and generating a comprehensive mutual understanding of women's and girls' status, the activities also encouraged participants to reflect on the cultural values, customs, and other factors that compromise women and girls' human rights and contribute to their vulnerability. Participants, including the men, began to recognise their contribution to the problem and their responsibility to make individual change as well as promote social change. This is reflected in the implementation by communities of some of the strategies for change identified during the process.

Narayan Dhital's article looks at a conservation programme in the Qomolangma National Nature Preserve in Tibet which supports village-level projects that are participatory, conservation friendly, and which improve the livelihoods of local people. The author describes how village conservation and development projects are selected by

the local communities, by using various PRA tools to look at the strengths of their village and to envision its future. Local support can be attained only if livelihood improvement programmes complement conservation initiatives. Renewable energy projects, which provide access to electricity, are a priority for the conservation programme, as well as for local villagers.

Alastair Bradstock describes a participatory land use process developed by FARM-Africa with land reform groups in South Africa to devise appropriate land-use plans for farming. After decades of alienation from the land, black farmers' groups are using these processes to gain technical and organisational knowledge, support and skills to help optimise their farming management planning.

Next, **Clare Symonds** provides an account of using participatory approaches with a local community to design a road improvement scheme in the UK. A local group called East Oxford Action used participatory video, mapping and scale models of the road, and a local drop in centre to successfully involve over 2,000 local residents and road users in the consultation for the scheme design – a process which has been described as 'unique' in the UK.

Throughout this general issue, we also present a series of extracts from a recent book called 'Ideas for Development' by **Robert Chambers**. Here, Chambers reviews some of his previous written work, and then presents some key evolving 'ideas for development', finding new potentials for participation and participatory approaches. The first extract, on transformations, is taken from part

two of Chapter Four: Review, reflections and future. The next set of extracts are taken from part two of Chapter Six: Behaviour, attitudes and beyond. Each extract presents the case that behaviour and attitudes are a key point of entry for doing better in development, and explores wider implications for norms and practices for all development professionals.

Tips for trainers

In this issue we have two tips for trainers. Continuing the Oxford theme, **Josh Brewer** and **Matthew Winpenny** describe their experiences of using participatory photography with homeless people in Oxford. Working with people from Steppin' Stones, a support centre for the homeless based near the Cowley Road in East Oxford, the authors present a guide to running a series of participatory photography workshops, and how the final images can be used in advocacy work with disadvantaged groups.

The second piece is an extract from **Reflect's** *Communication and Power* manual, with additional comments taken from a recent document on Reflect training. This extract describes the Reflect approach to numeracy and training: how to demystify maths; how to make it more accessible to people; and how to root mathematics in practical, everyday uses.

Regular features

Our usual In Touch section is packed with book reviews, details of forthcoming events and training, website reviews and other online resources. You can also read about activities in the Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network.

Next issue

The next issue, *Participatory Learning and Action* 53 (December 2005) will be a special issue on *Tools for Marginalised People*, drawing on work carried out by the Forestry and Land Use Programme at IIED with its partners. These tools are for opening up space for marginalised people to participate in policy making.

Spiral of participation

You may have noticed that the cover for this issue is different to our usual illustration. Without wanting to say too

much about it, the spiral idea was inspired by recent conversations with participatory practitioners in the UK, including the PEANuT team (Participatory Evaluation and Approaches at Northumbria University) and Charlotte Flower at Oxfam GB, and this conversation can also be traced back also to recent workshops with the Reflect network, Oxfam GB and others.

The spiral of participation represents different things to these people. It will mean many different things to other people as well. Some people may not like the idea of a spiral

to represent participation. So we would like to invite you to send us your own short reflections on what the spiral might (or might not) mean to you in your own work and experiences. We will then publish a selection of these reflections in the next issue.

Contribute to *Participatory Learning and Action!*

Please continue to send feedback, general articles, tips for trainers, book reviews and details of workshops and events!