

# RCPLA Network

In this section, we update readers on activities of the **Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network (RCPLA) Network** ([www.rcpla.org](http://www.rcpla.org)) and its members. RCPLA is a diverse, international network of national-level organisations, which brings together development practitioners from around the globe. It was formally established in 1997 to promote the use of participatory approaches to development. The network is dedicated to capturing and disseminating development perspectives from the South. For more information please contact the RCPLA Network Steering Group:

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## News from the RCPLA Network Coordinator

### Refining our scope of work

The importance of participation for sustainable development is now widely accepted. Awareness of and commitment to the centrality of participation is increasing. Capacity building training in the skills of grassroots participation is widespread. And there is a remarkable openness to participation in policy formation and decision-making.

To continue its prominent role within international development, it has been essential for the RCPLA network to consciously broaden its scope and focus on promoting the participatory approach as a tool to help researchers and development practitioners in their work. This has

helped the RCPLA to sustain its existence and increase its membership base. It has also provided the network with the needed ground to address and facilitate discussions around different developmental issues while linking them to participation.

Within this framework, the RCPLA launched its first e-discussion and case study competition on the topic 'Using the Participatory Approach in Climate Change Adaptation'. This topic was chosen as a result of consultation among the network members. Online, members ranked the following issues: Corporate Social Responsibility, Climate Change, Water Resource Management, Equity and Health. These development topics represented the main issues addressed globally as well as the areas of interest to RCPLA members. To find out more about

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these activities please visit [www.rcpla.org](http://www.rcpla.org)

Another important activity is the RCPLA workshop in Cairo, Egypt 4th–6th March 2008, hosted by the network coordinator. RCPLA members were invited to submit a case study illustrating 'The Power of Participatory Development'. These case studies will be reviewed by a committee of development practitioners for publication. The workshop was also a good opportunity for new and old members to get to know one other, exchange experiences, and work on developing a RCPLA activities plan for 2008 and beyond. We will report back further in the next issue of *PLA*.

### New members

Over the last few months, many organisations have shown interest in

joining RCPLA. We have the pleasure to welcome on board the following new members:

**Knowledge Transfer Africa (KTA)**  
KTA operates in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Botswana, Zambia, South Africa, and Mozambique. It works to promote development through information dissemination and enhancing the skills of farmers and marginalised groups to enable communities to solve their problems through participatory development.

**Jesuit Migrant Service Mexico (SJM-MEX)**  
SJM-MEX was established to achieve total respect of migrants' families and improve their living conditions in Mexico and surrounding countries. SJM-MEX is member and coordinator of the SJM/CA&NA network (SJM/CA&NA operates in nine countries and it is made up of fourteen Jesuits Company Provinces including universities, social projects, human rights advocacy centres, and special studies centres). It is also a member of the SJM/PROMEX network and the SJMLA network.

**University of Ulster, Sociology Department**  
Located in Ireland, the University of Ulster's Sociology Department operates to provide learning opportunities for youth. It also offers them the opportunity to carry out research in different fields – economic, social, and cultural. The department aims to develop the understanding of participatory approaches in order to strengthen the work carried out for socially excluded communities who are undergoing transition and seeking justice and social change with regards to the legacy of the political conflict in

Northern Ireland.

**Grace Church in Zambia**  
The Grace Church in Zambia is a faith-based organisation. It was established in 1999 to promote sustainable development. It focuses mainly on enhancing community members' skills to manage their resources and providing them with the much needed information to protect themselves from the pandemic HIV/AIDS.

**The Leadership and Management Development Centre (LMDC)**  
LMDC is an Egyptian national entity affiliated to the Ministry of Investment. It supports the Ministry in achieving the government's mandate to implement reform programmes aimed at improving investments in all different sectors. Since 1989, the LMDC has been geared towards human resources development activities. It aims to enhance the management and efficient utilisation of business resources, while ensuring the degrees of accountability, transparency, quality, and timeliness in delivery of technical assistance required by different local and regional agencies and the recipients of assistance funds.

**Ogoni Youths Interaction Network (OYIN)**  
OYIN is a youth-based community relations and peace initiative. OYIN has operated since 2001 in the Niger Delta Region. It was established to advocate for peace and sustainable development through informing young people with the aim of creating a community of local people that know their rights, needs, and how to achieve them.

**To join the RCPLA network please contact Ms. Passinte Isaak Email: pisaak@nefdev.org**

## News from the Asian Regional Coordinator

### *Insight* – a Praxis Experiential Learning Programme

In the last year and half, Praxis has been working on developing the concept and practice of immersions. This has led to two institutional commitments: to adopt it internally as well as promote it amongst other organisations. By adopting immersions as a regular, internal practice Praxis wants to further energise its activism and also update its knowledge and understanding of peoples' reality, something which is easy to miss while wearing a professional's hat.

Praxis feels that it is equally important to promote immersions amongst other institutions, such as NGOs, multilateral and bilateral donors, universities, government bodies, and media agencies. *Insight*, which is a Praxis Experiential Learning Programme, has been conceived and developed for such organisations.

More details on the core of the immersions experience, its varied forms of application and the Praxis *Insight* Programme are in this special edition of PLA, which Praxis has co-edited with IIED and Izzy Birch.

### **TheWorkshop07: the 11th International Commune on Participatory Development**

As an organisation committed to the promotion of participatory development, Praxis engages in various activities. The international workshop is a flagship event. It provides a forum for development workers across the world to update themselves about the new trends in the field of participatory development.

The Workshop07 was the 11th consecutive workshop held by Praxis. More than 75 participants from across 18 countries gathered in Hyderabad, India, to participate in this 11 day workshop. The specifics of the 12th workshop will be announced in May 2008. Please visit [www.praxisindia.org](http://www.praxisindia.org) for details.

#### Praxis – UK

Praxis UK ([www.praxis-uk.org](http://www.praxis-uk.org)) is an organisation affiliated to Praxis India with partners, supporters, and staff of many nationalities. It is part of a global movement that encourages ordinary and often marginalised people to exercise their right to participate in their own development. The primary focus is to facilitate the use of participatory practices in human development. Praxis uses every opportunity to promote participation in development, from training in the use of participatory tools, people-centred research, intensive documentation, to proactive initiatives.

Praxis UK seeks to be active in international development by continuing Praxis India's work over the last decade. This is mainly through research, advocacy, programme support, and capacity building initiatives in partnership with NGOs, governments, and donors. The aim is to articulate Praxis UK's vision and draw upon Praxis India's relevant experiences and contextualise it in contemporary policy debates and discussions on global social development. While the offices in India focus on expanding longer-term engagement in the Asia region, the UK office will be focused on representing Praxis in the UK, expanding its remit to Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and other

transition countries.

For more information contact the Programme Officer, Sowmyaa Bharadwaj. Email: [sowmyaab@praxis-uk.org](mailto:sowmyaab@praxis-uk.org)

#### News from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

It has been an exciting time for the Participation, Power, and Social Change Team, with a major international workshop and the launch of two new publications at the Development Studies Association's (DSA) annual conference.

We were part of a team running the international **Champions of Participation** workshop in Sussex, UK. This brought together participants from countries worldwide to meet with UK local government staff, citizen representatives, and elected officials. During the workshop they shared their experiences of championing participation in local governance in diverse circumstances, as well as visiting local UK authorities to see examples of participation in action. A short report will soon be available. For more information on the event, please email: [ppsc@ids.ac.uk](mailto:ppsc@ids.ac.uk).

Continuing to develop its work on violence and participation, researchers from the Citizenship, Participation, and Development Research Centre met in Jamaica for a **Building Citizenship Where There is Violence Workshop**. Participants are all using participatory research methods to work on issues of citizenship in violent contexts in their own countries. PPSC member Joy Moncrieffe took the group to visit primary schools she is working with, where they had a chance to talk to the children, many of whom had

experienced various forms of violence. For more information on this work visit the DRC website: [www.drc-citizenship.org](http://www.drc-citizenship.org)

The Development Studies Association's annual conference was held at IDS during September. The team launched two new books at this conference. ***Springs of Participation***, edited by Karen Brock and Jethro Pettit, explores the creation and evolution of **participatory methodologies**. It brings together the experience and reflections of a group of experienced practitioners working in diverse situations and countries. It aims to show how academics and practitioners can learn to develop effective and sustainable new working methods. Please see the In Touch section in this issue of *PLA* for a fuller review. In addition, we also launched ***The Power of Labelling***, edited by Joy Moncrieffe and Rosalind Eyben. This book looks at how labels, such as 'the poor', are created and used and how these labels shape power relations in development and aid work. For more information about how to get copies of these books email: [bookshop@ids.ac.uk](mailto:bookshop@ids.ac.uk)

The **Participation Resource Centre** continues to provide an information and document delivery service to Southern countries and organisations. Here you will be able to find full details of a range of practical and analytical materials relating to **participatory approaches to development, citizenship, rights, governance, and the environment**. The entire collection can be searched online through our website: [www.pnet.ids.ac.uk/prc](http://www.pnet.ids.ac.uk/prc). Or for further information email: [ppsc@ids.ac.uk](mailto:ppsc@ids.ac.uk).

## News from IIED

### Welcome to our new Editorial Board member!

As mentioned in the Editorial, the *PLA* team is delighted to welcome Peter Taylor from IDS onto our Strategic Editorial Board.

### Linking Poverty Reduction and Biodiversity Conservation

The Poverty and Conservation Learning Group (PCLG) is an initiative coordinated by IIED, which aims to facilitate learning on conservation-poverty linkages between and within different communities of interest.

For more info visit:

[www.povertyandconservation.info](http://www.povertyandconservation.info)

The PCLG is seeking inputs to a

discussion on tools and methodologies for assessing the social impacts of protected areas. Please visit the site, read the discussion document and give your feedback! [www.dgroups.org/groups/oneworld/pclg](http://www.dgroups.org/groups/oneworld/pclg)

The PCLG Directory of Poverty and Conservation Organisations and Initiatives 2007 is now available at: [www.povertyandconservation.info/docs/20071201-PCLG\\_Directory.pdf](http://www.povertyandconservation.info/docs/20071201-PCLG_Directory.pdf)

**BioSoc** – the Biodiversity and Society bulletin – is an output of the PCLG. **BioSoc** highlights key new research on biodiversity and society, poverty, and conservation and is available in English, Spanish, and French. To subscribe to BioSoc and to IIED's monthly new publications e-bulletin and bi-monthly e-bulletin

with updates on IIED research, events and publications visit [www.iied.org/pubs/newsletters.html](http://www.iied.org/pubs/newsletters.html)

### The Gatekeeper Series

This series is produced by IIED's Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity, and Livelihoods Programme. It aims to highlight key topics in the field of sustainable agriculture and resource management. Each paper reviews a selected issue of contemporary importance and draws preliminary conclusions for development that are particularly relevant for policy makers, researchers, and planners.

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