

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) 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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Integrating participation into climate change projects: experiences from the RCPLA

The New Land New Life Project: climate change impacts on water and health, Aswan, Egypt
This two-year action research project aims to derive and test possible relations between climate change, water management issues, and health conditions, for the benefit of the poor people in new resettlement communities around Lake Nasser.

The Near East Foundation's project team has worked closely with community members to enhance the adoption of positive environmental actions and reduce climate change effects on water and health. Early in the project, the team invested in building people's trust, interest, and ownership. The focus was on the community – not only as the project beneficiary, but also as the main stakeholder. Settlers in the area were involved in all steps of implementation. With guidance and support from the research team, settlers designed their own experiments, implemented them, and participated in the analysis of results. Importantly, decision makers were also involved in the implementation. Throughout the project, the research team acted as facilitators, trainers, and advisors.

The community-based participatory research approach offered opportunities for settlers to identify and assess their needs and strengthened cooperation with the research team. It resulted in technical project gains, and yielded greater benefits to the settlers' livelihoods. It also established policy dialogue between researchers and decision makers, and between community members and decision makers.

Adaptation to the impacts of sea-level rise in the Nile Delta coastal zone, Egypt
This three-year research project aims to

develop and test methods and approaches for determining optimum and feasible adaptation options to sea-level rise in Egypt. Working in Ras El Bar-Gamasa as a pilot study area, it integrates traditional modelling approaches with multi-stakeholder deliberation processes, to reduce vulnerability and minimise the external costs of adaptation.

The project is being implemented by three Egyptian partners: the Coastal Research Institute, Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation; the Institute for Graduate Studies and Research, Alexandria University; and the Center for Development Services. This project uses a participatory approach with communities, involving them in all project activities. It aims to involve all concerned stakeholders and gain their support in the process of identifying and implementing appropriate adaptation options. So far, a participatory socio-economic study has been conducted in the pilot areas. The study has identified the basic social and economic patterns in the community, and the community's basic knowledge about climate change and sea-level rise. We now plan to hold meetings with different stakeholders to inform them about the research results, receive their feedback, and consult with them on possible adaptation options.

● *For further information about these projects please contact:*
rcpla@cds-mena.org

News from the RCPLA Network Coordinator

Over the past few months, RCPLA members have been active in promoting participatory approaches by organising workshops to introduce participation as an effective tool to bring about 'social change' – adopting participation throughout the lifecycle of the projects they are implementing and documenting their best practices to be disseminated worldwide.

- A series of Training of Trainers (TOT) entitled 'Building the Capacity of Programmes that Empower Participation and Child Rights' was carried out by the Center for Development Services (CDS) in Egypt. The training provides development practitioners with the techniques required to transform their role from resource transferors to becoming agents of social change in their own communities. The trainings introduce the concept of participatory learning and action (PLA) and how it can be integrated at the different levels of the project cycle.

- The Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK) have used participatory action research (PAR) methodologies and PLA tools in their project 'Determining the relationship between the status of water, sanitation, and hygiene in schools and the performance of boys and girls'. For more information see News from the East Africa region in this section.

- The RCPLA network is in the process of finalising its new publication 'Deepening Participation for Social Change'. This publication presents conceptual reflections on participation in development; analyses participation as an active process throughout the project cycle; and identifies the challenges faced in deepening the use of participatory approaches. It also includes a series of case studies from China, Egypt, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria, and will be available online.

Please visit the recently updated RCPLA website. Interesting news and resources are now available. Don't miss the interview by Robert Chambers on PGIS! See: www.rcpla.org

News from the Asia region

The Annual Praxis Commune on Participatory Development (Workshop

09) – as announced in the last issue – was held in Kerala, India, 30th September – 9th October 2009. Workshop 09 saw a diverse group of participants from sixteen countries and from several states of India. It was widely acknowledged by the group that the experience was well worth the journey. Highlights included Robert Chamber's presentation on attitude and behaviour changes (ABC's) for participatory development and, within the workshop's different modules, exploring practical approaches to effectively implement participation. For more information, including photos and videos of the event visit: www.theworkshop.in

Also, in a UNICEF-funded project that requires the community to take the initiative on the issue of maternal deaths in India, Praxis is working on a design that will feature children as agents of change. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has clearly outlined the importance of child participation in issues that concern their welfare.¹ Yet a sense of apathy prevails on creating adequate infrastructure to enable child participation to become a reality. However, Praxis and UNICEF are committed to the active role of children within the programme. We hope that this marks the start of more child-centred projects in the near future.

Praxis continues its engagement with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's (BMGF) Avahan project to ensure effective participation of community members.² After conducting a participatory data collection, Praxis worked with community-based groups consisting of female sex workers, transgender groups, and men having sex with men, to use participatory ranking and scoring tools to assign different weights to different indicators used in assessing an empowered community-

¹ See: www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm

² See: www.gatesfoundation.org/avahan/Pages/overview.aspx

based group. The deliberations that emerged were rich in content, analysis, and reasoning, leading Praxis to alter its initial weights and demonstrating the dynamic engagement between Praxis and the community.

● *For more information visit:*
www.praxisindia.org

News from the East Africa region

The Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK) and SNV-Netherlands Development Organisation Kenya's South Rift Portfolio have partnered with the Kajiado Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (KWASH) Forum to determine the relationship between the status of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in schools related to the performance of boys and girls in national examinations.

Kajiado is located in the southern greater Rift Valley, Kenya. In this action research partnership, PAMFORK is promoting participation through the use of participatory action research (PAR) methodologies and facilitating multi-stakeholder processes that deepen the understanding of the relationship between WASH and performance and learning in schools. This helps to build stakeholder capacity from the district to implement WASH-related interventions. SNV Kenya seeks to contribute towards increased access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation for the peri-urban poor, for rural communities, and in schools. Their main clients are District Water and Sanitation Forums – multi-stakeholder platforms to improve access to water and sanitation.

The multi-stakeholder KWASH Forum developed a district WASH agenda in July 2008, facilitated by SNV South Rift Portfolio. The KWASH objective is to provide leadership, direction, and to facilitate effective coordination of WASH issues and interventions. The forum also aims to

develop and share knowledge to both enhance awareness and stimulate investment in water development and sanitation improvement.

The proposed action research is an ideal convergence between water and education sector issues. The project objective is to support the forum in enhancing its coordination function and stimulate synergy and joint action by stakeholders on specific strategic WASH-related issues. The first step was to support the forum in a participatory agenda-setting process in July 2008. This identified specific issues and challenges of the greater Kajiado district related to WASH. The poor state of water, sanitation, and hygiene in schools was identified as a key issues, especially because it requires the input of diverse stakeholders. Taking immediate action at the district scale was, however, a challenge. There was not enough information on the magnitude of the problem. So 120 primary schools from the greater Kajiado district were randomly selected and invited to participate in the WASH action research. Poor WASH in schools was identified as a major concern, due to:

- **inadequate water in schools**, including inappropriate technologies for harvesting and supplying water in schools; and
- **poor sanitation and hygiene in schools** and inadequate sanitation facilities (partly due to an inadequate emphasis on sanitation in schools) and inappropriate technologies for sanitation and hygiene in schools.

PAR was used to ensure meaningful and informed participation of all stakeholders, and to assess how WASH issues affected the learning and performance of boys and girls in schools. We used an interactive enquiry process to gather evidence, stimulate reflection, and inform debate, so that stakeholders at various levels could take appropriate action. Six PLA tools were created and

used in the process:

- School WASH mapping;
- WASH scoring and analysis;
- WASH situation and relationship to learning;
- Institutional WASH response;
- Future WASH mapping (to stimulate action); and
- Transect walk (to stimulate action).

These tools were designed to ensure that the respondents were able to analyse and assess their own WASH situation and deepen the understanding and analysis of the WASH issues from their own perspectives, in order to:

- enable respondents to share experiences and demonstrate the value and relevance of their existing knowledge about WASH in schools, and stimulate them to take action;
- involve respondents in self-directed inquiry and compiling, tabulating, and interpreting data on WASH and performance in schools;
- stimulate creative self-expression within the group so that school WASH problems can be viewed from a new perspective, opening up new possibilities for innovative solutions;
- strengthen analytical and planning capabilities through tasks which involve comparative analysis, making choices and connections among alternatives, and planning logical courses of action; and
- help respondents acquire and retain new information, which can lead to better decision-making and achieving desired goals.

● *For more information visit:*
www.rcpla.org

News from the European Region

Members of the Participation, Power, and Social Change team at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK have continued their work on a broad range of

research, events, and workshops.

In May 2009, Citizenship DRC contributed to a workshop called *Reconsidering human security: does it work for the insecure?*³ This looked at a framework for peace-building that moves beyond the state-centred model, to one where security is a collaborative project, involving and benefiting all parts of society. The team was also involved in a symposium in Cape Town in September 2009, focusing on how development could be done differently to really do justice to the diversity of people's social and sexual identities. In addition, we facilitated a workshop in Dublin for Trocaire on participatory and accountable governance, and took part in a Bond debate on the merits – or otherwise – of the logframe.⁴ We hosted a Visiting Fellowship programme which received over 100 applications and generated a rich exchange with the nine fellows who spent the summer with us, from Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa, Pakistan, Colombia, and Chile. And in October, students taking our MA in Participation, Power, and Social Change arrived, bringing with them a rich diversity of experience and learning. We welcome them and hope that they enjoy their time here.

Recent publications by our team include the IDS Bulletin 'Violence, Social Action and Research' by R. McGee and J. Pearce, and an IDS Practice Paper 'Changing the World by Changing Ourselves: reflections from a bunch of BINGOs' by Cathy Shutt. Another IDS Practice Paper 'Going to Scale with Community-Led Total Sanitation: reflections on experience, issues and ways forward,' came out in the spring, and the latest in a number of pastoralist-related publications was published last month:

³ The Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability (Citizen DRC), IDS.

⁴ Bond, formerly known as BOND (British Overseas NGOs for Development).

'Raising Voice: Securing a Livelihood: the role of diverse voices in developing secure livelihoods in pastoralist areas of Ethiopia – a summary paper.'

As a team we are entering a period of transition as funding for our core programme of work came to an end in September this year. We are now in an interim phase, re-assessing our focus and putting together proposals for future programmes. For more information, visit: www.ids.ac.uk

News from the Food and Agriculture Team at IIED

Declaration on Agrobiodiversity Conservation and Food Sovereignty
From 20th–29th September 2009, a group of farmers and scientists from Ethiopia and Peru met in the Potato Park, Pisac, in the Department of Cusco, Peru to engage in cross-cultural and horizontal learning about concepts and methods on how to design, plan, implement, and manage Agrobiodiversity Conservation Areas. This was organised by IIED's partner Association ANDES and the Association of Communities of the Potato Park.

Discussion covered a range of issues related to the conservation and sustainable use of native crops and agrobiodiversity. This included the Indigenous Biocultural Territory and Agrobiodiversity Conservation Areas approach, and continued with customary laws and governance structures for conservation of agrobiodiversity, resilience in managing climatic changes, indigenous knowledge, access to genetic resources, and intellectual property. Workshop participants considered possibilities for the implementation of national and key international legal frameworks for agrobiodiversity conservations such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and

the FAO's International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

An outcome of the workshop was the Declaration on Agrobiodiversity Conservation and Food Sovereignty, signed by the participants. For more information see: www.andes.org.pe

Citizen deliberations on Democratising Food and Agricultural Research

A number of citizens' deliberations are being facilitated as part of the IIED multi-regional project on Democratising Food and Agricultural Research. This a bottom-up process whereby farmers and other citizens can decide what type of agricultural research is needed to achieve the right to food and food sovereignty – and also organise to collectively push for change in policies and practice.

The first in a series of citizens' juries, *Raita Teerpu*, will be held in the south Indian state of Karnataka on 1st–5th December 2009. The process involves several partners from Karnataka and other Indian States. For more details see the specially designed website: www.raitateerpu.com

Thanks to a partnership with Indian media, this unique event is also being announced and explained through local radio programmes. We plan to do a live telecast of part of the jury hearings and the presentation of the final verdict and set of farmer recommendations on the directions and governance of agricultural research in India.