

Welcome to issue 59 of *Participatory Learning and Action*.

We would first of all like to thank our readers for their patience. *PLA* 59 is the December 2008 issue although it was actually published in June 2009. We hope that you find it was worth the wait!

This year promises to see some exciting developments for the *PLA* series. We are planning a major programme of monitoring and evaluation activities as well as a review of the format of the series, including our website. The aim is to ensure that *PLA* is a leading resource for participatory practitioners in style, format and content. We will update our readers about forthcoming activities in the next issue.

In addition, in November 2008 we had a successful launch of issue 57 *Immersion: learning about poverty face-to-face*, which was held at the UK Department for International Development (DfID) in London. The launch included a short ActionAid film, 'Immersion in action, Uganda – personal and host family experiences,' introduced by Kate Carroll (ActionAid), as well as presentations and a panel discussion. We are grateful to Josh Levene of Praxis-UK for helping to organise the event, Mark Robinson of DfID for chairing the discussions and to panel members Robert Chambers (IDS), Dee Jupp (independent social development consultant), Sonja Ruparel (ActionAid) and Katy Oswald (IDS). For those of you with online access, this issue is now available to download free of charge online.<sup>1</sup>

Since 2007, recent issues of *PLA* have also been published online with IngentaConnect. Since then, downloads of free material has been

steadily increasing. All our subscribers have free access to new and recent issues of *PLA* online, as soon as they are published. Why not visit the IngentaConnect website and activate your online subscription?<sup>2</sup>

We have also been working hard on the next issue. *PLA* 60 will be a special edition on community-based adaptation to climate change and will be published in time for the next United Nations Climate Change Conference Copenhagen (COP15) in December 2009.

While all of the articles included in this edition are themed, *PLA* 61 will be a collection of articles of general interest. Please continue to send us your contributions! Guidelines for authors can be found on the inside back cover of each issue.

## Themed section

### Change at hand: Web 2.0 for development

This special issue has been co-published by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation EU-ACP (CTA).

There are dozens of emerging interactive web services and applications, sometimes referred to as the 'participatory', 'social' or 'read-write' web, but more commonly known as Web 2.0. Together, they are radically changing the ways we create, share, collaborate and publish digital information through the Internet. These new technical opportunities bring challenges as well as opportunities that we need to understand and grasp.

Most of the themed articles are

based on presentations made at the the international Web2forDev conference, 25th–27th September 2007 at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) headquarters in Rome, Italy.<sup>3,4</sup>

The conference was the first international event focusing specifically on how Web 2.0 tools could be used to the advantage of Southern development actors, operating in the sectors of agriculture, rural development and natural resource management.

The articles in this special issue have been peer-reviewed by members of the *Participatory Learning and Action* series International Editorial Advisory Board. We are also very grateful to members of the Web2forDev Conference Steering Committee for their comments and reviews.

The cover image for this issue depicts two hands supporting a 'tag cloud' – a collection of keywords or terms generated by Internet users to describe online content.<sup>5</sup> The tags represent both Web 2.0 tools for development and some of the most popular keywords or tags that are used to describe them. The hands represent the potential benefits that come from the participation of

<sup>3</sup> The organisations involved were: Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation EU-ACP (CTA), International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP Secretariat), Association for Progressive Communications (APC), University of British Columbia Okanagan, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Euforic and Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR).

<sup>4</sup> The term 'Web2forDev' is short for participatory Web 2.0 tools for development.

<sup>5</sup> For a definition of 'tags' and 'tag clouds' see the glossary on p.123.

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://tinyurl.com/pla57>

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://tinyurl.com/plaonline>

**Participants and panellists at a plenary session at the Web2forDev conference.**



Photo: Giacomo Rambaldi

people brought together using these tools. For the guest editors, this special issue was an opportunity to help 'demystify' Web 2.0 and Web2forDev and share learning and reflections. We hope that it will help to bring Web2forDev to a wider audience of development practitioners and academics: inspiring you to give Web 2.0 tools a go and share your successes and challenges.

**Introducing the guest editors**

The guest editors for this special issue are Jon Corbett, Ben Garside, Giacomo Rambaldi and Holly Ashley.

**Jon Corbett** is an assistant professor at the Centre for Social, Spatial and Economic Justice at the University of British Columbia Okanagan, Canada, and also a member of the Web2forDev Steering Committee. Jon Corbett is also an assistant professor in the Community, Culture and Global Studies Unit at UBC Okanagan. Jon's community-based research investigates participatory mapping processes and

tools that are used by communities to help express their relationship to, and knowledge of, their territories and resources. Specifically, Jon's research interests explore how digital multimedia technologies can be effectively combined with maps to be used by remote and marginal communities to document, store, manage and communicate their culture, language, history and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). Jon's research also examines how using these technologies can strengthen communities through the revitalisation of culture and traditional environmental management practices, as well as externally through increasing their influence over regional decision-making processes.

**Ben Garside** is a researcher with a strong background in information and communication technology, including participatory web development. Ben works with the Sustainable Markets Group at the International Institute for Environment and Development

(IIED), where he has been working on global food and agricultural research and policy projects. Ben is currently working on a pilot project to explore the use of Web 2.0 tools to facilitate devolved collaborative working in development. He is also leading a new IIED project on how to better measure the impacts of ICTs and their impact on livelihoods for the poorest, including combining new and traditional communications techniques to reach non-literate marginalised groups.

**Giacomo Rambaldi** is senior programme coordinator at the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation EU-ACP (CTA) based in Wageningen, the Netherlands. CTA operates in 78 ACP Countries. Giacomo has 27 years of professional experience in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean where he worked for a number of international organisations including the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Italian Aid to Development, the ASEAN Regional Center for Biodiversity Conservation and the Asian Development Bank. Giacomo has been active on the Internet since 1999 when he launched his first website.<sup>6</sup> He coordinated the organisation of the Web2forDev 2007 international conference and has since been involved in exploring and promoting innovation in the domain of online collaboration and publishing.

Unusually for a special issue of *PLA*, series co-editor **Holly Ashley** is also one of the guest editors. Holly previously worked closely with Jon and Giacomo on *PLA* 54 and was invited to attend the Web2forDev conference as part of the conference

<sup>6</sup> See: [www.iapad.org](http://www.iapad.org)

**Members of the Web2forDev conference media team meet. From left to right: Liliane Kambirigi, Pierre Antonios, Hilde Eugelink, Noel Kokou Tadégnon, Gnona Afangbedji and Brenda Zulu.**



Photo: Jon Corbett

media team, interviewing participants and writing reports for the conference blog. Prior to the conference, Holly had limited experience in using Web 2.0 tools for development. The conference provided an exciting opportunity to learn more about and experience first-hand many of the numerous Web 2.0 tools and their potential application in development, as well as learning more about the emerging Web2forDev community of practice.

### Tips for trainers

#### Web 2.0 tools: a series of short introductions

In this issue, we present a series of short introductions to a selection of Web 2.0 tools and concepts. Drawing on lessons learnt from articles in the special issue and other resources, these introductions give a brief description of each tool and how they can be used for development purposes, along with links to where applications can be downloaded

online and further information. A glossary describing Web 2.0 tools and concepts is also included on page 123.

### REGULAR FEATURES

#### In touch

Much of our In Touch section is devoted to online resources related to Web 2.0 tools for development – including information about the new Web2forDev Development Gateway. This is a new initiative which aims to act as a starting point for Web 2.0 learning and sharing experience in the context of development work.

#### RCPLA pages

Find out the latest news from partners and colleagues from the Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network.

#### Strategic Editorial Advisory Board news

We are pleased to welcome two new members to the PLA strategic editorial board.

**David Satterthwaite** works in the field of poverty reduction and environmental problems in urban areas. He is a senior fellow at IIED and also on the teaching staff of the Development Planning Unit (University College London) and Honorary Professor, University of Hull. He is also the Editor of *Environment and Urbanization*, a leading international journal on urban development issues. His current work is on the potential role of urban poor federations to address their needs and develop partnerships with government agencies – and on why the scale and depth of urban poverty is under-estimated by most governments and international agencies. He contributed to the Third and Fourth Assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and received the Volvo Environment Prize in 2004.

**Cath Long** started with IIED in April this year. Before this, Cath worked with forest communities and people using forests in Africa, Latin America and the UK for over 15 years. Cath has lived and worked in Uganda, South Africa and Sierra Leone and for the past seven years has worked closely with partners in the Congo Basin region and in the Andean Amazon (principally in Peru). Her work has always been focused on supporting forest people to secure their rights to control and use forest resources and protect their forests. Cath has a PhD in forest ecology and a long history of working with community-led groups on practical forest management projects as well as campaigning and advocacy on forest rights.

We also say farewell – but not goodbye – to **Peter Taylor** from the Participation, Power and Social

Change (PPSC) team at IDS. Peter is joining IDRC in Ottawa, Canada. Peter has been an active member of our strategic editorial board for the last year. However, Peter will remain on our international advisory board so we look forward to working with him again in the near future.

### New International Advisory Board member

We are pleased to welcome Jasber Singh to our international advisory board. Jasber recently co-guest edited *PLA 58: Towards empowered participation: stories and reflections*. Jasber is a visiting research fellow for the International Institute for Environment and Development and Newcastle University. Jasber learnt the nuances of participation with British youth minorities in the North of England. Here he used techniques such as participatory video, sport and music with young minorities to analyse and change their lives and to effectively deal with racism. He was also Deputy Director of Cooperative Inquiry for Newcastle University developing a range of participatory projects on science and environmental issues. Recently he worked with an NGO to develop environmental justice programmes with marginalised British youth in inner-city London. Currently he is based in India with two NGOs using a participatory action research approach to investigate the interplay between food sovereignty and energy productions (agro-fuels) with marginalised communities.

### Forthcoming: PLA 59 English and French multimedia CD-ROM

In addition to this special issue, we will be producing a multimedia CD-ROM. It will contain PDF versions of articles from this special issue in English and French as well as other key multimedia resources, including video and audio clips. Selected articles will also be available in Spanish. Copies will be free to subscribers of *PLA*. This issue will also be available via the CTA online catalogue.<sup>7</sup> Subscribers to the CTA Publications Distribution Service can order both the printed and CD-ROM versions with their credit points.

### About CTA

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation EU-ACP (CTA) was established in 1983 under the Lomé Convention between the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) Group of States and the European Union Member States. Since 2000, it has operated within the framework of the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement. CTA's tasks are to develop and provide services that improve access to information for agricultural and rural development, and to strengthen the capacity of ACP countries to produce, acquire, exchange and utilise information in this area. CTA is funded by the European Commission. CTA, Postbus 380, 6700 AJ Wageningen, The Netherlands Website: [www.cta.int](http://www.cta.int)

### Next issue

*PLA 60* will be a special issue on community-based adaptation to

climate change, and is guest edited by Rachel Berger of Practical Action at the Schumacher Centre for Technology and Development, Terry Cannon and Hannah Reid of IIED's Climate Change Group, with Mozaharul Alam.

### Final thoughts

We would like to thank both the authors and guest editors who have contributed so much to this special issue. Producing this special issue has not been without its challenges. Several of the case studies featured here recount what are relatively new experiences of working with Web 2.0 tools – within a relatively new community of practice. As such, several authors found it a challenge to provide in-depth analysis and critical reflections of their experiences. To an extent, the authors here are pioneers, exploring the field while many of us may remain hesitant to embark on our own Web2forDev journey. As Anja Barth and Giacomo Rambaldi note in their article about the conference,

*The greatest challenge that most practitioners identified was encouraging organisations to adopt Web 2.0 applications and implement a 'Web2forDev' culture across the development arena – and more importantly, in the South.*

We hope that this special issue provides a useful reference and learning tool for those of you who wish to learn more about Web2forDev.

<sup>7</sup> See: <http://catalogue-en.cta.int>