

# 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

### E-forum in June

This year the network is focusing on providing RCPLA members with multiple opportunities to present individual and institutional work and to share knowledge and experiences in international spheres. We encourage those interested in the participatory approach to join RCPLA and be part of the network activities for 2007. The initial activity, starting in June, will be an e-forum. To join this forum and participate in the process of choosing the topic of discussion, send an email to [pisaak@nefdev.org](mailto:pisaak@nefdev.org).

### Membership

The network coordinator has given a significant focus to promoting the

RCPLA Network and encouraging new members to join RCPLA. This year, the RCPLA witnessed a remarkable expansion in its membership and now has 19 members from India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, Kenya, Egypt, Bolivia, United Kingdom, and Canada. We have pleasure in welcoming on board two new members who joined the network in the past few months: Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) in Nepal and Khanya-African Institute for Community Driven Development (Khanya-aicdd) in South Africa.

*Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN)* is a member-based organisation established in January 1995 by a group of like-minded development practitioners in Nepal. NEPAN envisages a situation in Nepal

where the poor and underprivileged people become the main focus for sustained, equitable and humanistic development. It promotes and facilitates participatory development approaches for the empowerment of the people through research, advocacy, lobbying and capacity-building activities. It believes in sharing skills and experiences without any boundaries. NEPAN is affiliated with the Social Welfare Council of Nepal. Currently, its members include 330 individual members and 40 institutional members. The key programmes they are currently implementing include promoting and strengthening participatory approaches, good governance, social inclusion, peace and development. To learn more about NEPAN please visit [www.nepan.org.np](http://www.nepan.org.np)

*Khanya-African Institute for Community Driven Development (Khanya-aicdd)* is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1998 to promote sustainable livelihoods and community-driven development for the poor in Africa. To carry out its mission, Khanya-aicdd works in action-learning processes linking government, civil society and business. The approach used by Khanya-aicdd is based on the belief that development is about learning – learning from one's own experience and that of others to improve policy and practice. In this process they have succeeded in building long-term relationships with organisations and individuals across Africa, with international centres of expertise in the South and North, as well as a wide range of donors. This approach underlies the key services which they offer: action-research/learning in Africa; facilitation and consultancy on poverty and change internationally; building capacity to promote the development of livelihoods approaches and local governance, primarily in South Africa; implementing innovations (primarily in the Free State and focus provinces of South Africa); sharing experience internationally and building coalitions. To find out more about Khanya-aicdd please visit [www.khanya-aicdd.org](http://www.khanya-aicdd.org).

### News from the Asian Regional Coordinator

#### Praxis – Institute for Participatory Practices

The road to development has no simple answers. The only way to take the right one is to ask the stakeholders for directions. Participatory development today is

not a buzzword, it is the blueprint of a true democracy. Every year at Praxis, we hold an international workshop where we invite participants from NGOs, INGOs, government bodies and corporates to acquaint themselves with the latest in participatory development. Over the last decade more than a thousand participants, from more than thirty countries have benefitted from this initiative. Many have chosen to come back repeatedly in order to refresh their skills. In September of this year we are holding Workshop 07, the 11th Praxis Annual Commune on Participatory Development. See page 64 of Events and Training in this section for more details.

### News from the Participation Group at IDS

#### Activities

The Participation, Power and Social Change Team at IDS has been busy, with members of our team involved with a number of events and initiatives around the world. We were delighted to attend the 25th anniversary of PRIA in India, an international centre for learning and promotion of participation and democratic governance, as well as the World Social Forum in Nairobi in January.

Furthering our work on participatory communications we are currently contributing to the organisation of the Our Media Conference in Australia which is focusing on sustainable futures: roles and challenges for community, alternative and citizens' media in the 21st century. More details at [www.ourmedia07.net/?page\\_id=4](http://www.ourmedia07.net/?page_id=4). In December we co-facilitated a training workshop, organised by

Equalinrights and OxfamNovib, on participatory video for voice, reflection and exchange on human rights-based development in Somaliland. We have also been using participatory video and theatre in our work on transformative learning, running a training workshop with young people in Kenya on HIV/Aids.

We have recently been commissioned by Plan International to carry out independent research on the development impact of child sponsorship. Although widely used by organisations, there has been little research on the effects of this form of fundraising. Research is currently underway, taking place in both donor organisations and recipient countries – more details on our website at [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/Part/proj/childsponsorship.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/Part/proj/childsponsorship.html)

Much of our work involves researching and understanding how power shapes our lives and relationships: *Exploring Power for Change* is a recent IDS bulletin that draws together some of the latest thinking from our team. Our Pathways of Women's Empowerment Programme, looking at how global policy processes act as pathways for women's empowerment, has also been very active, launching three publications in March: more details at [www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/](http://www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/). In addition, *Feminisms in Development: Contradictions, Contestations and Challenges*, edited by Andrea Cornwall, Elizabeth Harrison and Ann Whitehead was recently published by Zed Books. Also by Zed, *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*, is a recent collection of case studies predominantly from the South edited by Peter Newell and Joanna Wheeler, and is part of the Claiming

Citizenship series of the Citizenship DRC (see [www.drc-citizenship.org/](http://www.drc-citizenship.org/) for details).

Books can be ordered from [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/) and more details of all of the above can be found on our website [www.ids.ac.uk/ppsc/](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ppsc/) or email [ppsc@ids.ac.uk](mailto:ppsc@ids.ac.uk).

### Staff news

Sammy Musyoki, networking and capacity building coordinator in the Participation Group and member of the *PLA* strategic editorial board, has just taken up a new job with Plan International. He will be based in Kenya as their strategic programme support manager, helping programme teams with planning, monitoring and evaluation and shaping the strategic direction of the overall country programme. Sammy was instrumental in bringing *PLA* 51 on Civil Society and Poverty Reduction to fruition and the *PLA* team is delighted that Sammy will continue to remain on the *PLA* editorial board. We wish him success in his new role.

### News from IIED

#### Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Programme, Natural Resources Group

##### *Food sovereignty in Mali*

In February, two international events took place in Mali where farmers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and others joined forces to reshape the world food system. The first was the

farmers' exchange on the privatisation of seeds, held in Bamako, and the second was the *Nyéleni* World Forum on Food Sovereignty in Sélingué, named *Nyéleni* as a tribute to a legendary Malian peasant woman. These gatherings reaffirmed the right to food sovereignty. This includes the right of producers to dignified livelihoods and the right of all consumers to nutritious, sustainably and locally grown food. It also includes the right of nations to protect and regulate domestic production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development.

The Bamako event was designed as a 'farmer exchange for mutual learning' and was facilitated by IIED and its partners from India, Peru, Indonesia and Iran. It was set up prior to the *Nyéleni* event to raise awareness and inform West African farmers about the threats and impacts of the privatisation of knowledge, seeds and livestock genes on food sovereignty and independence, and to share their own local experience.

The main outcomes, which were taken to the *Nyéleni* World Forum, are outlined in the Bamako Declaration on the Privatisation of Seeds and Farmer Knowledge:

- to support the use of traditional seeds and animal breeds for food sovereignty;
- to stop the privatisation of seeds and biopiracy;
- to ban GMOs in Africa; and
- to support farmer exchanges and innovations.

The *Nyéleni* Forum was attended by President Amadou Toumani Toure as well as more than 500 people, including small-scale farmers and fishermen, indigenous peoples, landless migrant workers, pastoralists and NGOs. The *Nyéleni* Declaration outlines a collective and global strategy to ensure people's right to food sovereignty. See [www.nyeleni2007.org](http://www.nyeleni2007.org)

For more information visit [www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/ag\\_liv\\_projects/Farmers\\_Exchange.html](http://www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/ag_liv_projects/Farmers_Exchange.html)

#### Forestry and Land Use Programme, Natural Resources Group

##### *Making the law work better for social justice in forestry*

The international Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG) met at the end of 2006 to explore notions of social justice in forestry. Country team members, representing a wide variety of institutional backgrounds (including local and regional NGOs,

parliament, forestry authorities and academia), came together from Cameroon, Ghana, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, India, Indonesia and Vietnam. Participants exchanged news of how they have sought to influence and change legal systems for the advancement of social justice and local benefits in their countries. For further details on the FGLG and the workshop report please visit [www.iied.org/NR/forestry/projects/forest.html](http://www.iied.org/NR/forestry/projects/forest.html)

