

# 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 Steering Group

Some exciting news! During the Steering Group meeting held at the offices of the Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) in Colombo, Sri Lanka in August, Ali Mokhtar was voted in as the new Network Coordinator. We would like to thank Tom Thomas at Praxis for all his hard work and support of the Network over the last three years. Special thanks also to Catherine Kannam, who ably assisted Tom.

Ali Mokhtar, who is also a member of our newly formed International Editorial Advisory Board, has over fifteen years of experience working with non-governmental organisations in community development and project management. He is currently

a development strategy advisor to a number of international development agencies operating in the North Africa and the Middle East region and is based at the Center for Development Services, part of the Near East Foundation (NEF) in Cairo.

## Communications for Change (C4C) initiative

After the Steering Group meeting, the RCPLA Network, with special assistance from IPID, launched *Our World Our Voice Our Media: Community Media Experiences and Skills*, the first step of its Communication for Change (C4C) initiative. Two of the editors - Ashish Sen and Tom Thomas - presented the resource kit to an invited audience of NGOs, government ministers and local press in downtown Colombo.

The resource kit looks at how to communicate to bring about change by exploring the democratisation of the media and providing a practical guide of how to use alternative, participatory forms of communication as a means to achieve this change. See the In Touch section for more details.

## News from the new RCPLA Network Coordinator

Believing in the power of communication and based on the successful impact of the C4C initiative in South Asia and Africa, the use of participatory development communication will be expanded in the MENA region through the new Network Coordinator. Promoting best practices in this area will serve as a guide to development practitioners

who strive toward realising economic, social or political change. *Our World Our Voice Our Media: Community Media Experiences and Skills* has captured the experiences and efforts of Southern community-based initiatives using community media to make critical difference to peoples' lives, and will soon include case studies from the MENA region. Editions in French, Arabic, Spanish and Kiswahili are planned.

Over the next three years, the RCPLA Network hopes to witness a significant expansion in its membership base and the resources it is offering to the wider development community. Members will be recruited from all over the world to represent different types of institutions ranging from academic, research, and development, all committed to participatory practices. Special attention will be given to attract large organisations that are the hub of various NGOs, as well as other networks that support and implement participatory approaches.

For more information on the RCPLA Network, visit [www.rcpla.org](http://www.rcpla.org). If you are interested in joining the RCPLA or in funding any of the network activities or initiatives, please contact [amokhtar@nefdev.org](mailto:amokhtar@nefdev.org)

### News from the Institute of Development Studies

To begin with, news of some changes! Firstly, the Participation Group has formally become the Participation, Power and Social Change Group. This change reflects the shift in emphasis of our work in recent years. Also, after 8 years of excellent leadership and vision, John Gaventa has handed over the team leader role to Rosalind Eyben, a fellow group member. Lastly, we are pleased to welcome two new fellows to the team: Colette Harris, who has studied and worked on issues of gender, identity and power relations, particularly in Tajikistan, and Joy Moncrieffe whose focus is on issues of accountability and good governance, politics and inequality, and ethnicity and political management.

A number of workshops and activities took place throughout the autumn. One highlight has been the **Realising Sexual Rights' Workshop**, which took place on 28-29 September. Over 50 people from 22 countries participated in this workshop. Participants worked on a wide variety of issues: female genital mutilation, HIV/AIDS, lesbian, gay and bisexual rights, abortion rights, human rights, transgender identity, sex education, family planning, sex

work, marriage, masculinities and women's empowerment. Throughout the three days, common ground was found amongst the diversity of participants by looking at sexuality in the framework of sexual rights and discussing such questions as: What are the connections between poverty, injustice and sexuality? How can development take a more positive, empowering and pleasure focused approach to sexuality? More information on the workshop, as well as links to other IDS work on sexuality, can be found on <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/research/sexrights.html>. To join the dissemination list for future IDS work on sexuality, e-mail your name, organisational affiliation and contact details to [s.jolly@ids.ac.uk](mailto:s.jolly@ids.ac.uk)

Recruitment for our next MA in Participation, Power and Social Change is underway. Designed for working practitioners who wish to study and practice ways of increasing the participation, influence and voice of people in the development process, this is an action learning course running over 15 months with two intensive 10 week periods at IDS at the beginning and end and is due to commence in May 2006. For further information please look at the website at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/teach/mapart.html>