

Editorial

Welcome to issue 64 of *Participatory Learning and Action*.

All over the world we are seeing exciting experiments in participatory governance. But are they working for the young? This issue of *PLA* highlights how young Africans are driving change by challenging the norms and structures that exclude them, engaging with the state and demanding accountability. We hope that this issue will enable other participatory practitioners – young and old – to learn from their experiences.

About this special issue

In March 2011, IIED, Plan UK and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) brought together a group of adults and young people involved in youth and governance initiatives across Africa to take part in a ‘writeshop’ in Nairobi, Kenya.¹ The idea behind the week-long meeting was to share learning and experiences, build writ-

ing skills, form new relationships and develop a set of articles for this issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*. During the writeshop, participants also worked closely together to define the key messages and objectives of this special issue (see Box 1). They shared their writing with each other for informal peer review, honing their article’s content, structure and style. At least three of our writeshop participants were young people, and many more were involved in the earlier drafting stages of each article.

Guest editors

Rosemary McGee has been a research fellow in the Participation, Power and Social Change Team at the Institute of Development Studies since 1999. She has extensive work experience in policy and programme posts in the international development NGO sector. Her research and teaching focus in particular on forms of

¹ For more information about *Participatory Learning and Action* writeshops see Milligan and Bongartz (2010).



Photo: George Cobbinah Yorke

Participants came to the writeshop with draft versions of their articles. Bedo Traore from Mali presents his to a group of fellow participants. To his right are Sophie Bide, our translator from Plan UK, and Serigne Malick Fall, a consultant for Plan Senegal.

Box 1: Objectives for this special issue

During the writeshop, participants jointly decided on the main objectives for this special issue.

- To highlight ways in which youth governance approaches differ from – but are just as essential as – mainstream approaches to governance that target adults.
- To highlight the different approaches to youth and governance.
- To document good practice on the implementation of participatory approaches to governance and development processes.
- To share and be honest about the challenges and lessons learnt about engaging youth in governance processes, recognising that it is OK if we do not have it all figured out or completely right the first time – we are learning.
- To highlight strategies and approaches which promote youth engagement in governance and development processes.
- To promote youth as agents of social change in Africa.
- To promote the justification for youth involvement in governance.
- To share experiences of good practices around youth in participatory governance in Africa while recognising differences in context.
- To influence developmental strategies in Africa through better participation of young people in local governance.

citizen participation in decision-making, governance and rights-claiming processes – and on the international aid system, both official and non-governmental. Her doctoral research was conducted in a violence-torn region of Colombia, as was much of her NGO work, and she continues to work closely on issues of conflict and citizenship and on Colombia as well as other countries in Latin America and Africa. She has worked with Plan UK and Plan International as an applied researcher, consultant and advisor on several projects related to governance and young people's participation.

Jessica Greenhalf is currently the Country Director of Restless Development Uganda, a youth-led development NGO supporting innovative youth programming on civic participation, livelihoods and sexual and reproductive health. Prior to this Jessica was a member of Plan UK's governance team overseeing a five year DfID-funded youth and governance programme. The programme supported participatory governance initiatives involving young people across the health, sanitation, education and agriculture sectors in 16 countries. Jessica is a passionate advocate of meaningful youth

Photo: Holly Ashley



Participants and authors Cynthia Ochola Anyango, Charlotte Bani-Afudego and Abdul Swarray discussing their articles. In the background, guest editors Jessica Greenhalf and Rosemary McGee discuss the day's agenda.

participation, with experience supporting youth-led and youth-focused programming and research and learning processes in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Acknowledgements

This special issue has been made possible by the fantastic energy and commitment of our writeshop participants and authors, and especially by our guest editors Rosemary McGee and Jessica Greenhalf. Their excellent writeshop facilitation and editorial support has generated some very valuable learning for the *PLA* team, which we look forward to sharing with others in future writeshops.

We would also like to thank Plan UK and IDS for their financial support for this issue. Special thanks also to Grace Ogolla at Plan International for organising the logistics for the writeshop and to Caitlin Porter of Plan UK for her continued support and for taking over as our main Plan UK contact following Jessica's move to Restless Development in Uganda. And we owe a huge debt of thanks to Sophie Bide, who provided tireless translations for our

French-speaking participants both throughout the writeshop and afterwards.

In Touch

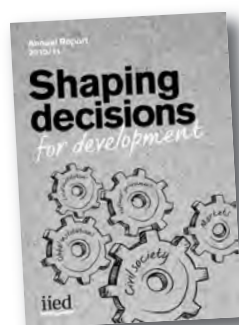
This issue includes a wide range of resources dedicated to youth and participatory governance issues.

Other news

IIED's annual report 2010–2011: Shaping decisions for development

While IIED works in many areas of environment and development, a common challenge is the inequality, injustice and lack of sustainability that mark many of the power relations and decision-making institutions across the world.

IIED'S 2010/11 annual report highlights this year's achievements, with a focus on our governance work and highlights this issue of *PLA*.² The *PLA* team also launched



² Online: <http://tinyurl.com/iied-ar-pla64>. Full URL: www.iied.org/general/about-iied/annual-report/african-youth-participatory-politics



Photo: Holly Ashley

Participants discuss issues affecting organisational learning at the launch of PLA 63: *How wide are the ripples? From local participation to international organisational learning*, 23rd November 2011.

issue 63 *How wide are the ripples? From local participation to international organisational learning* at IIED's new offices, which generated a lot of interesting discussion! Read more about the launch in the RCPLA Network pages, this issue.

Next issue – *PLA 65: Biodiversity, culture and rights* (June 2012)

The rights of indigenous peoples and local communities over their inter-linked biological and cultural heritage – or biocultural heritage – are increasingly under threat. Recent developments in international law should strengthen these rights. Indigenous peoples and local communities now have the right to secure their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) for any law or proposed development which affects them. And the Nagoya Protocol on access to genetic resources and equitable benefit-sharing (ABS) requires countries to support the

development of community protocols for ABS.³ But there is a danger that standardised top-down approaches will be adopted which could undermine community governance of their biocultural heritage.

This special issue will be published ahead of the next Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP11) in India, in October 2012, which is also likely to be the first meeting of the parties to the Nagoya Protocol. It will capture learning from participatory processes for developing community biocultural protocols and securing FPIC in different contexts. It also aims to raise awareness amongst the biodiversity community of the importance of community designed and controlled processes for developing these protocols and FPIC – as experience shows that their real value lies in the community-level participatory processes they entail.

³ The Nagoya Protocol on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization is an international agreement. It is one of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity that was adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on 29th October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan. Adapted from source: www.cbd.int/abs

Photos: Holly Ashley



Getting creative: results from a participatory snowball session where participants discussed challenges and solutions to writing blocks.



Left to right: Sophie Bide, Serigne Malick Fall and Temitope Fashola discussing what makes a good article title.

Box 2: Some reflections on the writeshop

Throughout the week, we filmed some short interviews with participants. We asked them for their reflections on the writeshop process – and what impact and influence it has had on their thinking around youth and governance issues. Here are some short excerpts:

This week's writeshop has really helped me to think about applying more detailed analysis to my work on youth and governance... The process has bridged the gap between learning and application and I am already thinking about how to amend my activity plans to accommodate everything I have learnt.
Leila Billing, ActionAid International Zimbabwe

What has really excited me is that issues about young people in governance are beginning to be placed on the table – and on the agenda for NGOs and governments – as well as learning how this is a common thread that runs across Africa.
Lipotso Musi, World Vision Lesotho

The most important thing that you have given back to me is the desire to communicate through writing... The PLA approach is demanding, original and innovative all at the same time. And I think it will make me want to look more closely at the journal.
Serigne Malick Fall, a consultant for Plan Senegal.

Practical tips on writing an article for *PLA*
 Are you thinking about contributing to *Participatory Learning and Action*? We have created a practical guide on writing an article for *PLA* which is now free to download.⁴

Preparing for the writeshop in Nairobi was an ideal opportunity to build on our previous *PLA* writeshop experiences (see also Box 2). I realised that the sessions on how to write an article for the series merited a handout for participants, to complement the PowerPoint presentations I had prepared. The resulting guide includes

⁴ The writer's handbook is free to download online here: <http://pubs.iied.org/G03143>



George Cobbinah Yorke

Left to right: Jessica Greenhalf, George Cobbinah Yorke, Fadekemi Akinfaderin-Agarau and Bedo Traore. **Then back left to right:** Sophie Bide, Sallieu Kamara, Annette Jaitner, Serigne Malick Fall, Lipotso Musi, Rosemary McGee, Edwine Ochieng, Temitope Fashola and Edward Akapire. **Then front left to right:** Holly Ashley, Kenyatta Maita Mwashe, Jennifer Tang, Anderson Miamen, Cynthia Ochola Anyango, Linda Raftree, Abdul Swarray, Leila Billing and Charlotte Bani-Afudego.

tips and guidance on our readership and how to write an article, as well as lots of practical examples taken from previously published *PLA* articles. The first draft of the handbook is now online. If you are considering writing an article for the *PLA* series, I hope that you will find it useful.

Final thoughts...

Our week in Nairobi was an intense and exhilarating experience. Aside from the packed writeshop agenda throughout the week, many of our authors worked long hours to improve their articles. I would get up at 5.30am to watch the sun rise with a mug of coffee, before settling down to a few hours of reviewing before breakfast. I

made good friends too, and have enduring memories of everyone's good humour, energy and enthusiasm. And above all, I was struck by our participants' dedication, passion and commitment to promoting the rights of young Africans as active citizens, helping them – and others – to change their lives for the better.

Our writers are supporting youth to share their learning, perceptions and reflections with an international audience. They have reminded us that young Africans are the citizens of the future and that with the right support, they can achieve extraordinary things.

Holly Ashley, co-editor, *Participatory Learning and Action*

REFERENCES

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- Ashley, H. (2011) 'Kindling your spark: an editor's practical advice to writers.' Unpublished. *Participatory Learning and Action* free handbook. IIED: London. Online: <http://pubs.iied.org/G03143>