

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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News from the Asia Region: update from Praxis

Praxis – the Institute for Participatory Practices – is a not for profit organisation committed to mainstreaming the voices of the poor and marginalised sections of society in the processes of development. Based in New Delhi, with branches in Chennai, Patna, Hyderabad and London, Praxis works to promote participatory practices in all spheres of human development. Praxis carries out research and consultancies, and also engages in several self-funded initiatives to further the cause of development.

TheWorkshop2012

16th Praxis Annual Commune on Participatory Development

TheWorkshop2012

Praxis will be hosting its 16th Annual Commune on Participatory Development from 5th–12th September 2012 in Bengaluru, in the southern state of Karnataka, India. This year's theme is *Make Participation Count*. The format offers participants the opportunity to



learn about participatory methods during the first six days of classroom and out-of-class sessions and fieldwork, and attend modules to see how these tools,

methods and approaches work in different contexts. The thematic application modules this year include: project cycle management; public accountability; social return on investment and political economy analysis; disaster management; campaign, advocacy and networking; and a module to be evolved by the participants. Details are available at

www.theworkshop.in. For more information email: info@theworkshop.in

Praxis activities

Praxis launched the *Read aloud* series of participatory storybooks for children in the 7–12 age group. *Bala the bunny and other stories* tells the stories of characters whose right to voice their concerns and opinions about their own lives and livelihoods is muzzled. The stories have been adapted from real life case studies based on research projects undertaken by Praxis over the past 15 years. The book is available for purchase at:

www.praxisindia.org/?q=readaloud

The Praxis team has completed a study on the life and struggles of sanitation workers in Patna in the eastern Indian state of Bihar. The study, *A legacy of stench*, was released in March this year. ■ Online: <http://tinyurl.com/legacy-of-stench> Full URL:

www.socialequitywatch.org/images/Files/the%20legacy%20of%20stench.pdf

Praxis organised the first consultation in the series *Whose Reality Counts?*, a platform for dialogue facilitated by Praxis to explore challenges faced by various organisations in weaving human rights and social justice into the core of evaluations and ways in which they have been overcome. *Gender, Sexuality and Development: Whose Reality Counts?* focused on different programmes that measure interventions on gender empowerment with an emphasis on sexuality. Read more about the event at: www.praxisindia.org/?q=node/239

Work with sexual minorities and injecting drug users

Praxis is associated with a five-year programme measuring community mobilisation among female sex workers, men having sex with men, transgender people and injecting drug users in six Indian states (Nagaland, Manipur, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh,

Karnataka and Tamil Nadu). The aim is to enable an effective transition of the HIV/AIDS intervention programme from donors to the state and the communities themselves. The design was evolved with comprehensive inputs from members of the community. Data collection and analysis for the third successive year has been completed.

■ For more information about Praxis and its work, see: www.praxisindia.org. The Praxis YouTube channel shows videos of previous workshops as well as other films made by Praxis. See: www.youtube.com/PraxisIndia

News from the European Region: update from IDS

Research updates

The Participation, Power and Social Change (PPSC) team at the Institute of Development Studies has continued its work in tackling social injustice and promoting participatory research for social change. Through the first anniversary of the Egyptian uprisings, Mariz Tadros and others have been analysing why and how the Arab uprisings began and what this means for human rights and public policy. They suggest that citizen-led politics is being left out of the formal arena and that this will bear a cost not only in lives, but in emerging policies that will compromise people's rights, dignity and well-being. Other team members are involved in a multi-year programme called Mobilising Men to Challenge Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Institutional Settings which asks what can men do to work with women in challenging the institutionalised nature of this sort of violence?

Our work on 'unruly politics' (political actions that rupture the social and political order) has gained momentum. In the last year, we developed a framework for using an 'unruly' lens to better

understand the changing face of citizen action. Others have been working with a project in Bosnia and Herzegovina, using digital storytelling and participatory video to evaluate a ten-year governance programme. And building upon our work on the global financial crisis, we have continued to examine how the food, fuel and financial shocks affected poor people and how they have negotiated coping strategies in developing contexts.

PPSC blog

Last autumn our new PPSC blog was launched. Giving space and voice to our team and other collaborators, this site regularly posts informative, inspiring and provocative blogs that cover the full spectrum of our work. Since its launch the number of followers has been growing daily and the overall audience week by week.

■ For the latest on the PPSC's activities and critical thinking, sign up at: participationpower.wordpress.com

New publications

The team has produced a number of resources in recent months. Robert Chambers' *Provocations for development* was published in April by IT Publications and comprises an entertaining and unsettling collection of writings that questions concepts, conventions and practices in development. Patta Scott-Villiers' inspirational work with a group of



Ugandan youth who learnt to use action-research techniques has resulted in *Strength, creativity and livelihoods of Karimojong youth* (see www.pastoralists.org). The team has produced two recent IDS Bulletins: *Action research for development and social change*, edited by Danny Burns, came out

in March and *The pulse of Egypt's revolt*, edited by Mariz Tadros, in December. Recent working papers from the team include *Women's empowerment revisited: from individual to collective power among the export sector workers of Bangladesh* by Naomi Hossain, and *Shifting power? Assessing the impact of transparency and accountability initiatives* by Rosie McGee and John Gaventa.

■ More information is available at: www.ids.ac.uk/go/bookshop.

Team members

The team has welcomed new member Jerker Edstrom who works on masculinities, HIV and AIDS, and returning member Jas Vaghadia. We are also pleased to have Naomi Vernon as part of the team, working on Community-Led Total Sanitation. After many years with the team, we are sad to say goodbye to Georgina Powell-Stevens who has moved on to work on a major new project elsewhere in IDS: we wish her well.

■ The above are just a few highlights from the team's work – for more information please see: [www.ids.ac.uk org](http://www.ids.ac.uk/org)
Sign up for our blog:
participationpower.wordpress.com
Email J.Stevens@ids.ac.uk

News from the European Region: update from IIED

Launching PLA

As mentioned in the Editorial, IIED held a successful launch of *PLA 64: Young citizens: youth and participatory governance in Africa* at our new offices in Gray's Inn Road, following the launch of *PLA 63: How wide are the ripples? From local participation to international organisational learning* a few months' earlier, which had been co-organised with the Organisational Learning Network (OLN).¹ *PLA 65* will be launched in

October 2012 at a side event at the Convention on Biodiversity's 11th Conference of Parties in Hyderabad, India. We hope to be able to continue to launch and promote future issues in this way, and establish ongoing informal learning networks to share ideas and lessons from articles published in *PLA*.



Panel on food security in Africa
The Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA), in partnership with IIED, launched the Food We Want – Sustainable, Local, Fair project at IIED's offices in March. The event commenced with a discussion on Food Security in Africa: Critical Issues for Small Scale Producers led by three panelists: Michel Pimbert from the Agroecology and Food Sovereignty team at IIED, Micheline Ravololonarisoa, former Head of the Africa section of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (now UN Women), and William Lume, Director of the Centre for Inter-African Relations (CEFIAR), based in London. Both Michel Pimbert and Micheline Ravololonarisoa stressed that the majority of farmers in Africa are women, and that there is increasing participation by women in decision-making relating to agricultural practices. Michel Pimbert put forward the framework of food sovereignty and an agricultural production system that mirrors natural cycles of production as a sustainable model, and William Lume gave some historical background to the food security issue in Africa. The panel discussion ended with a question and answer session, followed by a presentation on the project itself by PENHA staff.

¹ See: www.bond.org.uk/pages/organisational-learning-network.html

- Read IIED's blog on the event at: www.iied.org/agricultural-development-business-usual-not-option
- Read more on the Food We Want website: <http://tinyurl.com/fww-launch>
Full URL: www.foodwewant.org/eng/News/Food-We-Want-Sustainable-Local-Fair-colourfully-launched-in-the-UK
- For information on PENHA see: www.penhanetwork.org

Democratising agricultural research

IIED and its partners have been facilitating an inclusive process of farmer deliberation on what kind of agricultural research small-scale farmers and food processors want (www.excludedvoices.org). This is being carried out in the Andean Altiplano of South America, South Asia, West Asia and West Africa. As part of this multi-regional process, a series of citizens' juries was held in Mali over the last six years. Their aim was to allow ordinary farmers and other food producers, both men and women, to present and discuss their priorities on the governance of agricultural research in West Africa, and make policy recommendations. The farmer jurors made over 100 recommendations after cross-examining expert witnesses. It was recognised that there was a need for diversity and an inclusive agenda that puts

Farmer specialists at the citizens' juries on Democratising agricultural research, Mali



Photos: Khanh Tran-Thanh

small farmers at the centre. In the follow-up to this unique and deliberative process, West African farmers asked to have an open High Level Policy Dialogue with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and its main donors. This took place in Accra, Ghana in February this year, chaired by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Professor Olivier de Schutter. There were about 100 people present – among them 22 participants from AGRA, including its President, the President of ROPPA, 26 West African farmers (men and women), about 20 farmers from other regions affected by the first Green Revolution, and three indigenous peoples from Thailand.² There was a video link up with the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Agroecology at the UK Houses of Parliament, which enabled the participants in Accra to dialogue with staff from the UK Department for International Development, MPs and civil society members. Despite some technical hitches with the sound, the participants felt that the policy dialogue set an important precedent for policy-making on the governance of agricultural research for development in West Africa, bringing hitherto marginalised views of farmers to the table.

- Download the photo story at <http://pubs.iied.org/G03349.html>. See also: *Democratising agricultural research for food*

² Le Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers).

sovereignty in West Africa at
<http://pubs.iied.org/14603IIED.html>
 ■ Read the IIED blog: www.iied.org/west-african-farmers-heard-uk-houses-parliament

Policy briefings

Two IIED policy briefings on the above research have been recently published – see our In Touch section for more information:

- *Putting farmers first: reshaping agricultural research in West Africa*
<http://pubs.iied.org/17122IIED.html>
- *Putting citizens at the heart of food system governance*
<http://pubs.iied.org/17125IIED.html>

IIED websites and blog

IIED launched its redesigned website in April – and over the next few months we will be updating and improving the *Participatory Learning and Action* pages. See e-participation for more information on the website below and others. We welcome your feedback!

- Visit the new website: www.iied.org
- Visit also our new blog page: www.iied.org/blogs
- For updates on the Democratising Agricultural Research projects mentioned above see: www.excludedvoices.org
- For policy updates, guidance and resources on biocultural heritage, see IIED's website: <http://biocultural.iied.org>

Staff members

We are pleased to welcome Barbara Adolph to IIED's Natural Resource Group. Barbara is coordinating and consolidating the Institute's work on food and agriculture. Barbara has worked in agricultural research and rural livelihoods for over 15 years, advising government agencies, research organisations and civil society organisations working in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Before joining IIED, Barbara worked as a consultant for Triple Line Consulting Limited and as senior scientist for the Natural Resources

Institute, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics in India, and the University of Hohenheim in Germany. Barbara is a passionate advocate of participatory methodologies – and wrote an article in *PLA* (then *RRA Notes*) on farmers' participation in watershed management in South India. We look forward to working closely with her.

We are very pleased to welcome Barbara, but we are also very sorry to be losing another valued and well respected colleague, and another ardent supporter of participatory research – Michel Pimbert. Michel has been offered a Fellowship at the Rachel Carson Centre for Environment and Society at the University of Munich, where he plans to continue some of his long-standing work with partners. Michel joined the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme (now the Agroecology and Food Sovereignty Team) at IIED 13 years ago, and has carried out some radical and groundbreaking action research with partners around the world, notably on the regeneration of food systems based on social and ecological diversity, and on more inclusive forms of citizenship. His recent work on democratising agricultural research culminated in the dialogue with AGRA and farmers in Accra earlier this year, as mentioned above. Michel has authored several articles in *PLA*, including in this issue, as well as numerous other publications promoting citizen voice and power-equalising research. Michel has continuously supported and inspired the *PLA* editorial collective – always warmly encouraging us in his distinctive style, and playing a key role on our strategic board. He will be greatly missed but, as he says, he will continue to be part of this community of practice, and we are delighted that he will remain on our editorial board. We wish him every success for the future and look forward to ongoing collaboration.