

Editorial

• Theme issue

Welcome to this issue of *PLA Notes*, where the theme is 'analysis': how to make sense of the mountain of information derived from participatory approaches. The theme explores who is involved in analysing information at different stages and discusses how critical reflection can and should become part of any participatory process.

The guest editors for the theme section of this issue are Irene Guijt and Su Braden. After eight years at IIED, Irene recently left to start a PhD at Wageningen Agricultural University on the organisational challenges of participatory monitoring and evaluation. She has extensive experience with participatory research and planning processes within the natural resource sector, and has trained others in five continents. Dr. Su Braden has over 20 years of experience with development work in Europe and overseas, specialising in the use of participatory video. She created and co-ordinates a Master's degree course entitled 'Television and Video for Development' which is based at the University of Reading, UK.

• In this issue

This issue opens with a suite of more general articles. In the first article, Anton Simanowitz discusses the adoption of participatory approaches to poverty targeting through the work of the Small Enterprise Foundation, a micro-finance NGO working in the Northern Province of South Africa. He considers the benefits of participatory wealth ranking and finds the process to be more inclusive and transparent than the visual targeting methods previously used to identify levels of poverty.

In the following article, Gary Woller and James Mayfield describe a field test called The Twenty Points of Progress Programme, a participatory methodology for systematically measuring and assessing the impact of village

development programmes. The communities rate their villages with regard to certain indicators and, through plenary evaluation, the results are used for community action planning, consciousness raising and resource mobilisation.

In the final article of the general section, Gary Jordan provides a brief report back of the Public Participation Geographic Information Systems (GIS) specialist meeting, held in Santa Barbara, USA in October 1998. He discusses that whilst truly participatory GIS is a relatively new issue, it has become an increasingly common subject in the participatory development community (see *PLA Notes 33*, p27-34). The aim of the meeting was to examine key issues, to look at existing case studies of participatory GIS with a particular emphasis on good practice, and to define research priorities. Whilst interesting cases of good practice were presented, he notes with some concern that some of the so-called participatory GIS case studies often did not involve active participation, and reflects that much remains to be done before reaching a comprehensive definition of participatory GIS.

Regular features

In the *Feedback* section, Marion Gibbons discusses barriers to the institutionalisation of PRA in NGOs in Nepal. She raises concerns about the quality and follow-up of PRA training in Nepal, emphasising that PRA is not being used on a systematic basis within organisations that have received PRA training. She identifies a possible cause of this to be the lack of process-orientation of many PRA trainers and suggests ways to improve this in order to ensure more effective use of PRA in Nepal. In a thoughtful response to Marion's article, Michel Pimbert stresses that mainstreaming the use of PRA approaches and methods in the NGO world is part of a larger process of institutionalising participation in development. He observes that the issue is not

only confined to Nepal but is of wider relevance to the development debate. He feels that whilst good personal practice of trainers is essential, the process should be supported with affirmative action from the NGO and donor communities to institutionalise good practice.

For trainers in participatory learning, the serialisation of the *Trainer's Guide to Participatory Learning and Action* gives a range of examples of how to train in the use of participatory methods in a field setting. The *Tips for Trainers* section has been prepared by Andy Inglis and Susan Guy of Scottish Participatory Initiatives, and discusses a new tool, the H-form, to facilitate monitoring and evaluation exercises. This Tip for Trainers contributes to the theme of this issue on 'Learning from Analysis'.

The *In Touch* pages (at the back of the issue) share experiences and publicise new and relevant materials and training events. *The RCPLA Pages* in the *In Touch* section profile one of the RCPLA Network members, the Learning Resource Centre of the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) - based in the Philippines, and gives some information about the annual meeting in June 1998 of UPD-Net, also an RCPLA partner, held in Uganda during the summer of 1998.

Happy reading!

**COMMUNITY WATER MANAGEMENT:
REMINDER**

The June 1999 edition of *PLA Notes* will focus on issues of Community Water Management. If you have not already submitted an article but would like to do so, please contact *PLA Notes* at IIED (see inside cover).

**SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH:
CALL FOR PAPERS**

The October 1999 edition of *PLA Notes* will focus on participatory approaches to Sexual and Reproductive Health, including HIV and AIDS. We need new articles for this edition and would love to hear about any innovative approaches - such as drawing, role-play, radio shows, training workshops etc. - which you have used, and which focus especially on the value of experiential learning, rather than on the more conventional, top-down Information, Education and Communication approach.

Previous editions of *RRA Notes* and *PLA Notes*, especially numbers 16 (1992) and 23 (1995) have focused on Health and on HIV respectively. However, these are now several years old and we have received various requests for more recent material on these important issues.

Ten years ago, very little attention was paid to sexual and reproductive health issues by anyone outside the health sector. But we can now see how agricultural cycles and access to and control of money and other resources are closely related to sexual health issues, such as unwanted teenage pregnancies, domestic violence, untreated and undiagnosed sexually transmitted infections, gender issues and, of course, the spread of HIV. Thus, a growing number of development workers are recognising the need to learn about and face these deeply felt but difficult-to-address needs.

The theme issue will be guest edited by Andrea Cornwall and Alice Welbourn. If you would like to contribute to the theme issue, please send an abstract or article to *PLA Notes* at IIED (see inside cover for address) by the end of April 1999. The guidelines for authors (inside the back cover of *PLA Notes*), provides details of how articles should be presented. We look forward to hearing from you!