

RCPLA Network

News from the Participation, Power and Social Change Team (PPSC) at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

Participate

Participate, coordinated by IDS and Beyond 2015, is a global research initiative which focuses on the experiences of those living in greatest poverty. It brings together participatory research programmes in more than 40 countries, and connects the unfiltered voices of those most affected by poverty with UN and intergovernmental deliberations. Participate is filling a crucial gap in the current policy context, providing high quality evidence on the reality of poverty at ground level, bringing the perspectives of the poorest into the post-2015 debate. The Centre for Development Services (CDS), Cairo and Praxis in India are also members of the initiative.

To date, Participate has drawn out key lessons from existing participatory studies and global consultations;

provided methodological support to a network of organisations and 18 participatory research projects which are currently ongoing; developed a major programme of research using participatory visual methods; and engaged in international advocacy activities to ensure that knowledge from the margins is included in post-2015 policy-making.

In the second half of this year, Participate will produce a documentary of the research process, a synthesis of the findings from 18 research projects, and organise ground-level panels (to mirror the UN high-level panels on the post-2015 development agenda) in India, Uganda, Brazil and Egypt (see the update from Praxis below). It is also creating an exhibition of the synthesis and a collage of multimedia outputs from the research as a space for engagement at the UN General Assembly in September 2013. A series of reflections and methodology pieces will be produced, continuing ongoing efforts to ensure that

participatory research and knowledge from the margins is embedded in global policy-making.

■ To find out more, please visit: www.participate2015.org or email: participate@ids.ac.uk

The Big Push Forward

The Big Push Forward provides space for discussion, debate and the exploration of appropriate approaches for assessing transformative development processes. Evidenced-based results, rigorous data, conclusive proof and value for money are terms promising clarity about what works and what should be funded in international development. For some donors, certain ways of knowing and assessing impact are considered more legitimate than others. Yet increasingly people are recognising the need for multiple and mixed methods and approaches to better understand complex change and that, compared to imposed standards, are more likely to lead to fair assessments to support a fairer world.

The PPSC team at IDS, Praxis and CDS are all members of the Big Push Forward – an informal international network of practitioners seeking constructive ways to advance conceptually and methodologically international development aid's support of a fairer world, beyond the narrow bureaucratic protocols that assume guaranteed predictable outcomes.

Rosalind Eyben, a fellow at IDS and member of the PPSC team, is one of the co-convenors of the Big Push Forward. See the In Touch section of this issue of *PLA* for more information on the conference on The Politics of Evidence held at IDS in April 2013.

■ For more information on The Big Push Forward visit: bigpushforward.net

Other news from the PPSC

There has been a great deal going on in the PPSC team in recent months. In

addition to the Participate and Big Push Forward initiatives, they have been involved in a variety of projects, publications and events. Accountability may seem like an obvious part of the relationship between a state and its citizens yet accountability mechanisms are often weak or absent. Working with HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, they have been undertaking a multi-country study which aims to gain insights into accountability and its contribution to development and local democratic governance.

■ See: IDS Working Paper 422 *Local accountabilities in fragile contexts: experiences from Nepal, Bangladesh and Mozambique*. Available online (350kb): www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp422.pdf

Rosalind Eyben has been looking at how unpaid care work across the world is rarely acknowledged within development agendas, and investigating how to get this important aspect of peoples' lives included in development policy and programmes.

■ See IDS Policy Briefing Issue 31: *Getting unpaid care onto development agendas*. Available online (1mb): www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/IFPB31.pdf

The PPSC team recently launched a new book which explores how people can, and are, using participatory methods to create their own statistics and influence policy. *Who counts? The power of participatory statistics* is published by Practical Action (see our In Touch section for a review and more details).

In addition, Zed Books have just published *Organizing women workers in the informal economy: beyond the weapons of the weak*, edited by Naila Kabeer, Ratna Sudarshan and Kirsty Milward, as part of the Pathways of Women's Empowerment Consortium. This is the first in a Zed Books series on feminism and development.

Since 2009 we have been working with Oxfam on tracking the social

impacts of economic crises. This project has just produced a report called *Squeezed: life in a time of food price volatility, year 1 results*.

■ Available online: policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/squeezed-life-in-a-time-of-food-price-volatility-year-1-results-292412

New website

Supported by the Swiss Development Corporation, the PPSC have set up a new website on participatory methods at www.participatorymethods.org. Focusing on participatory approaches to strategic analysis, programme design, monitoring and evaluation, it also includes resources on participatory learning, research and communication in organisations, networks and communities. The Participation Resource Centre is included in the site – many of the resources are electronic and others can be sourced by emailing: ppsc@ids.ac.uk. The centre also continues to operate as a physical space at IDS where visitors are very welcome.

The PPSC blog goes from strength to strength: recent postings have discussed the lack of accountability in the garment industry following the tragic collapse of the factory in Dhaka, how communication in development, particularly using images, can worsen a charitable ‘us and them’ mentality within richer countries, and how men are risking their lives for gender justice. Read more online:

participationpower.wordpress.com

■ For further information about any of the above, or if you wish to visit the Resource Centre please email ppsc@ids.ac.uk or call +44 1273 915879.

Update from the Centre for Development Services (CDS), Cairo

As mentioned above, CDS is part of the IDS Beyond 2015 Participatory Research Group, a consortium of organisations who are working to coordinate and strengthen participatory research projects

which engage people living in poverty directly in the post-2015 debate. The group aims to draw local initiatives together to produce rich, in-depth qualitative evidence, co-produced with people living in poverty, on what their priorities are, what they see as pressing development needs, and what they might need from a post-2015 framework. CDS bring into this group its extensive participatory research on youth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

■ For more information on CDS activities visit: www.cds-mena.com



Update from Praxis India

Praxis 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 process 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.

TheWorkshop2013

Praxis will be hosting its 17th Annual Commune on Participatory Development from 21st–28th October 2013 in Thrissur, in the southern Indian state of Kerala. This year's format offers participants the opportunity to learn about participatory methods and attend modules to see how these approaches work in different contexts. The thematic application modules on offer this year include: project cycle management; public accountability; participatory

TheWorkshop2013

17th Praxis Annual Commune on Participatory Development

communication; participatory monitoring and evaluation (with a focus on sustainability); campaigning, advocacy and networking; and community mobilisation.

■ For more information visit:

www.theworkshop.in or email Praxis at: info@theworkshop.in

Ground-level panels

As part of the Participate global initiative, Praxis hosted a ground-level panel, integrating voices of poor and marginalised people in India with recommendations on development policies. The panel was made up of 14 people who experienced poverty and exclusion in their day-to-day lives. This panel deliberated on the recommendations of the United Nations high-level panel on 14th–18th July 2013 and their report was shared at an event attended by representatives of civil

society, the media and government bodies. The panellists were not members of any government, private or non-governmental organisations or associated with any political parties or trade unions. Instead, they drew on their own experiences of marginalisation and exclusion to provide a ‘ground-level’ reality check to the high-level panel. Read the ground-level panel report online: www.praxisindia.org/?q=node/245

Recommendations made by a ground-level panel of 14 people from poor and marginalised communities from across India echoed demand more generally for a corruption-free society and a state that focuses on removing barriers rather than just handing out benefits. The recent mood in the country seemed to find resonance at a meeting hosted by Praxis in July 2013 called Voice for Change: A Post-2015 Development Agenda by People Living in Poverty.

The panel included *dalits*, tribal people, religious and sexual minorities, differently-abled people, children and the elderly. The panel met in Delhi to



Photo: Praxis

The ground-level panel's exhibit at the Voice for Change meeting.

Photo: Praxis



Ground-level panel participants collectively reviewed the recommendations and agreed 15 overarching action-oriented goals.

deliberate on the United Nations high-level panel recommendations for the post-2015 development agenda. The panellists, who experience poverty daily, used a participatory process to collectively review the recommendations, agreeing 15 overarching action-oriented goals:

- establishing a corruption-free state and society;
- promoting equity;
- establishing robust accountability mechanisms;
- providing identities instead of goals;
- creating institutional spaces to promote people's participation in local governance and policy-making processes;
- an end to stigma and discrimination;
- abolishing traditions that uphold discrimination;
- creating stringent restrictions on the sale and promotion of alcohol and other addictive substances;
- facilitating collectivisation, awareness and sensitisation of citizens;
- promoting a safe and secure home environment;

- promoting the interests of agricultural labourers, poor farmers, peasants, tribal peoples and slum dwellers and their rights;
- protecting the environment;
- enforcing mechanisms to prevent tax evasion by corporations;
- creating and rigidly implementing systems that protect workers' rights; and
- promoting gender equality and safety in public spaces.

As Raghunath Sada, a panel member from Dabhang district of Bihar said:

Promises of food, housing, health, employment and education have been repeated in different forms since the 1950s. We want action now. We want goals to be written in such a way that they address all barriers that prevent the realisation of these promises.

The panel also stressed the need to include a ban on nuclear armaments and to address the domination of the United States in the United Nations.

The panel shared its recommendations with social activist Ms Aruna Roy,

planning commission member Dr Syeda Hameed and seasoned journalist Mr Vinod Mehta. Dr Hameed said she would raise some of these issues when the planning commission next met on discussions of the post-2015 development agenda.

To commemorate the event, a postage stamp was released and two books documenting the narratives of sexual minorities, sex workers and poor people living in cities was released. The Voice for Change series includes two titles: *Collective action for safe spaces by sexual minorities and sex workers* and *Citymakers seeking to reclaim cities they build*. These books document the experiences of marginalised groups and their struggle for an inclusive development process.

■ For more information on the ground-level panels, please contact Anusha at Praxis. Tel: +91 997 1116536 Email: anushac@praxisindia.org

Beyond 2015

As mentioned earlier, Praxis is part of the Participate initiative, which enables voices from the margins to be heard by policymakers and sector experts working on the post-2015 development agenda. Praxis facilitated participatory video processes with sexual minorities and urban poor groups in Tamil Nadu. The

participants debated on the development framework that should replace the millennium development goals in 2015.

■ Watch the film online:

youtu.be/O-oMKwKIX38

To request a copy email: communications@praxisindia.org

Participatory disaster management planning Praxis helped to formulate a district disaster management plan, working with the District Disaster Management Authority in Bihar, India. Praxis mapped 18 diverse indicators across 1248 villages in Samastipur district, using an open-source GIS platforms. The most significant aspect was that the plan, unlike other disaster management plans, focused mainly on 'disaster risk reduction' and 'preparedness' elements. Instead of planning post-crisis interventions in the wake of disasters, the project sought to prepare 19 line departments and agencies to pre-empt potential threats posed by disasters. It customised existing government departmental allocations to creative uses for dealing with disasters, without requiring any extra budget.

Development of self-administrable tools for measuring vulnerability reduction
Praxis is associated with a programme for 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 these communities. Data collection and analysis for the final year has been completed.

As a logical progression from the community mobilisation monitoring study, Praxis created a set of self-administrable



Participate

Knowledge from the margins for post-2015

tools to monitor community mobilisation with sustainability as its goal. The self-administrable tools were piloted at community-based organisations in Tamil Nadu. The tools are meant to guide an organisation towards self-sustainability under the different parameters of leadership, governance, resource mobilisation, project cycle management, networking, financial and legal risk management, provision of rights and entitlements and engagement with society.

The toolbox is called *From beneficiaries to agents of change – self-administrable tools to assess community preparedness for vulnerability reduction*. Download online: www.praxisindia.org/?q=books

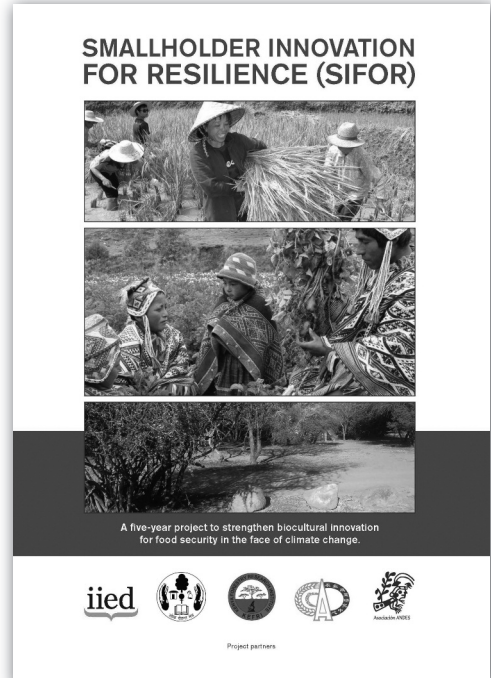
■ For more information about Praxis and its work, visit: www.praxisindia.org
The Praxis YouTube channel includes videos of previous workshops as well as other films made by Praxis:
www.youtube.com/PraxisIndia

Updates from IIED

Smallholder innovation and traditional knowledge

The Agroecology Team at IIED and partners are collaborating on a project to strengthen biocultural innovation for food security in the face of climate change. In October 2012, a planning and methodology workshop was held in China to launch the Smallholder Innovation for Resilience (SIFOR) project. This brought together the research partners – the Centre for Chinese Agricultural Policy (CCAP, China), Asociacion ANDES (Peru), Lok Chetna Manch (India), Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI, Kenya) and IIED (UK).

The goal of this five-year project, funded by the European Union and UK aid, is to improve food security and resilience by enabling smallholder innovation and traditional knowledge systems to thrive in developing countries.



The project will conduct research with traditional farmers in areas of significant crop diversity: potatoes in the Andean Potato Park, Peru; maize and rice in the Karst mountains of southwest China; rice and millets in the Himalayas, India; and indigenous vegetables in coastal Kenya. It will generate new evidence of the role of local landraces and traditional knowledge in adaptation to climate change; develop practical approaches and tools to strengthen local innovation systems and rights; and promote more enabling policies to support smallholder innovation. The project will revitalise biocultural innovation for adaptation and food security through participatory action research, including: the development of seed registers, value addition and novel products; strengthening farmer organisations; and participatory plant breeding (PPB).

■ For more information, download the project information: pubs.iied.org/G03557.html or contact Krystyna Swiderska: krystyna.swiderska@iied.org

New blog series: In Our World

IIED has launched a new blog series called In Our World. Each week, we publish links to top content about environment and development that we have seen online in the past few days.

Here are recent editions:

In Our World, 30th August (cities, ecosystem services, food, forests and more) www.iied.org/our-world-30-august-cities-ecosystem-services-food-forests-more

In Our World, 23rd August 2013 (land, climate, cities, forests and more) www.iied.org/our-world-23-august-land-climate-cities-forests-more

In Our World, 16th August 2013 (natural resources, cities, business and more) www.iied.org/our-world-16-august-natural-resources-cities-energy-business-more

You can subscribe to IIED's news and updates here: www.iied.org/sign-up