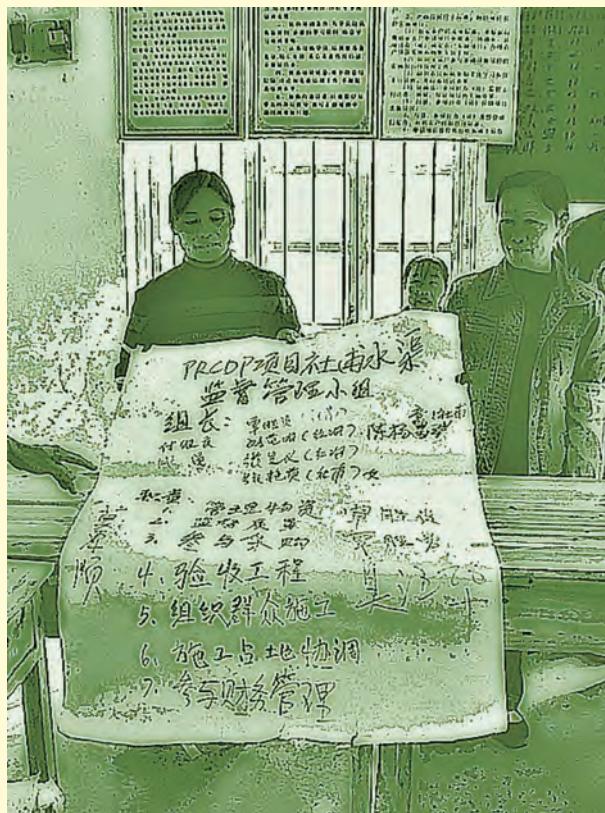


62

participatory learning and action



Wagging the dragon's tail: emerging practices in participatory poverty reduction in China



Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) – formerly *PLA Notes* and *RRA Notes* – is published twice a year. Established in 1987, it enables practitioners of participatory methodologies from around the world to share their field experiences, conceptual reflections, and methodological innovations. The series is informal and seeks to publish frank accounts, address issues of practical and immediate value, encourage innovation, and act as a ‘voice from the field’.

We are grateful to the UK Department for International Development (DfID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Irish Aid, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (Danida), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) for their financial support of *PLA*. We would also like to thank the World Bank and DFID China for their additional support to this special issue of *PLA* 62. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding organisations or the employers of the authors.

Participatory Learning and Action 62

© IIED, 2011

Order no: 14605IIED

Cover photo: Johanna Pennarz

Cover design: Simon Lim, Su Luo and Nicole Kenton
Artwork: Su Luo

Design and layout: Smith+Bell

Printed by: Park Communications Ltd, London

Guest editors: Johanna Pennarz, Song Haokun,
Deng Weijie and Wang Jianping.

Editors: Holly Ashley, Nicole Kenton, and
Angela Milligan.

Strategic Editorial Board: Nazneen Kanji, Jethro
Pettit, Michel Pimbert, Krystyna Swiderska and
David Satterthwaite.

Special thanks to James Keeley and Lila Buckley of
IIED and to Arjan de Haan for their expert advice.
International Editorial Advisory Board:

Oga Steve Abah, Jo Abbot, Jordi Surkin Beneria,
L. David Brown, Andy Catley, Robert Chambers,
Louise Chawla, Andrea Cornwall, Bhola Dahal,
Qasim Deiri, John Devavaram, Charlotte Flower,
FORCE Nepal, Ian Goldman, Bara Guèye,
Irene Guijt, Marcia Hills, Enamul Huda,
Vicky Johnson, Caren Levy, Sarah Levy,
Zhang Linyang, Cath Long, PJ Lolichen,
Ilya M. Moeliono, Humera Malik,
Marjorie Jane Mbilinyi, Ali Mokhtar,
Seyed Babak Moosavi, Neela Mukherjee,
Trilok Neupane, Esse Nilsson, Zakariya Odeh,
Peter Park, Bardolf Paul, Bimal Kumar Phnuyal,
Giacomo Rambaldi, Peter Reason,
Joel Rocamora, Jayatissa Samaranayake,
Madhu Sarin, Daniel Selener, Anil C Shah,
Meera Kaul Shah, Jasber Singh,
Marja Liisa Swantz, Cecilia Tacoli, Peter Taylor,
Tom Wakeford, Eliud Wakwabubi, and
Alice Welbourn.



The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is committed to promoting social justice and the empowerment of the poor and marginalised. It also supports democracy and full participation in decision-making and governance. We strive to reflect these values in *Participatory Learning and Action*. For further information contact IIED, 80-86 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8NH, UK. Website: www.iied.org



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License. Recipients are encouraged to use it freely for not-for-profit purposes only. Please credit the authors and the *PLA* series. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California 94105, USA.

We welcome contributions to *PLA*. For information and guidelines, please see the inside back cover.

Download past and current issues

All issues of *PLA* are now free to download from www.iied.org

Subscribe

Subscriptions are free to the South. For more information please contact: Research Information Ltd., Grenville Court, Britwell Road, Burnham, SL1 8DF, UK.
Email: info@researchinformation.co.uk
Website: www.researchinformation.co.uk

Purchase back issues

Please contact Earthprint Ltd., PO Box 119, Stevenage, SG1 4TP, UK. Email: orders@earthprint.co.uk
Website: www.earthprint.co.uk

Participatory Learning and Action (*PLA*) is an umbrella term for a wide range of approaches and methodologies, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Participatory Learning Methods (PALM), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Farming Systems Research (FSR), and Méthode Active de Recherche et de Planification Participative (MAR). The common theme is the full participation of people in the processes of learning about their needs and opportunities, and in the action required to address them.

In recent years, there has been a number of shifts in the scope and focus of participation: emphasis on sub-national, national and international decision-making, not just local decision-making; move from projects to policy processes and institutionalisation; greater recognition of issues of difference and power; and, emphasis on assessing the quality and understanding the impact of participation, rather than simply promoting participation. *Participatory Learning and Action* reflects these developments and recognises the importance of analysing and overcoming power differentials which work to exclude the already poor and marginalised.

Contents

Editorial	4
Acronyms	10

THEME INTRODUCTION: WAGGING THE DRAGON'S TAIL: EMERGING PRACTICES IN PARTICIPATORY POVERTY REDUCTION IN CHINA

Preface	13
<i>Alan Piazza</i>	13
Map of China	16
1. Overview: changing government-community interface in China <i>Johanna Pennarz and Arjan de Haan</i>	17
2. Prologue: reflections on participation in Southwest China in the early 2000s <i>Andreas Wilkes</i>	24

PART I: COMMUNITIES TAKING CHARGE

3. Introduction <i>Johanna Pennarz</i>	33
4. How community farmers participated in project planning and implementation <i>Nati</i>	37
5. How an ordinary farmer was elected as project leader <i>Qin Guozheng</i>	40
6. How farmers claimed their rights to supervise projects <i>Song Haokun</i>	45

PART II: CHANGING ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS –THE FACILITATOR

7. Introduction <i>Johanna Pennarz</i>	51
8. Reflections from the Sanjiang Workshop <i>Johanna Pennarz</i>	53
9. Facilitating community-level processes <i>Qin Cheng</i>	55
10. The role of village facilitators <i>Qin Guozheng</i>	57
11. The role of the township facilitator <i>Meng Shunhui</i>	59
12. Adapting to the local context: lessons learnt from external facilitation <i>Wang Jianping</i>	62

PART III: MANAGEMENT PRACTICES – TOWARDS FAIRER AND MORE TRANSPARENT RESOURCE ALLOCATION

13. Introduction <i>Johanna Pennarz</i>	71
14. From participation inside villages to competitive selection amongst villages <i>Yang Gang</i>	74
15. Participatory planning and poverty analysis in Guangxi <i>Qin Zhurong</i>	79
16. Different ways for implementation in different communities <i>Chen Chunyun</i>	84

PART IV: THE CHINA WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PROJECT (CWMP) – A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

17. Introduction <i>Nicole Kenton</i>	89
18. Background and approach <i>Wang Yue</i>	91
19. Innovative, community-led practices <i>Wang Baojun</i>	95
20. The perspective of the Ministry of Water Resources <i>Wang Yue</i>	101
21. Challenges and lessons learnt <i>Liu Yonggong</i>	104

PART V: EXPERIENCES BY PROFESSIONALS – PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES IN HEALTH AND EDUCATION

22. Introduction <i>Lu Caizhen and Johanna Pennarz</i>	111
23. Improving the health of rural women through participation <i>Yu Denghai</i>	114

24. Applying participatory teaching in big classes – experiences of a primary school teacher <i>Li Jianru</i>	119
25. Participation based on empowerment: the Chengdu Gay Care Organisation <i>Wang Jun, Wang Xiaodong, Yang Dou, Yu Fei, Lin Shu, Lin Xiaojie, Wen Yi, Yang Yu</i>	125

PART VI: SCALING UP – WAYS OF INSTITUTIONALISING PARTICIPATION

26. Introduction <i>Johanna Pennarz</i>	133
27. Exploring community-driven development in Chinese poverty reduction <i>Li Hui</i>	135
28. A participatory learning system in Guangxi <i>Huang Canbin, Zhou Qing</i>	142
29. Adapting participatory methods to the government system: the Wenchuan Earthquake Rehabilitation Project <i>Deng Weijie</i>	147
30. EIAs go public: creating new spaces for participation <i>Lila Buckley</i>	152

PART VII: CONCLUSIONS

31. Changing spaces at the interface of government and citizens <i>Johanna Pennarz</i>	159
---	-----

PART VIII: TIPS FOR TRAINERS

32. Why participatory research and how participatory? <i>Maruja Salas</i>	165
33. Learning is more than training – experiences from PRCDP <i>Johanna Pennarz</i>	170
34. Training in the Chinese context: tips and resources for trainers <i>Wang Jianping, Deng Weijie, Sun Dajiang and Johanna Pennarz</i>	173

IN TOUCH

Book reviews, Events and training.....	187
RCPLA Network	205

Editorial

Welcome to *Participatory Learning and Action* 62 on reflections on emerging practices in participatory poverty reduction in China. We are very pleased to be able to devote a special issue of *PLA* to China, a country which is experiencing significant shifts in its traditional government-led development. As you will see from the contributions from Chinese authors and others who are working in the region, participatory approaches and changing relationships between the state and citizens are at the heart of these transformations. It is the citizens who are 'wagging the dragon's tail' in a positive and empowering way. In the west the dragon is often portrayed as the nation of China. Within China, the dragon is used as a symbol of Chinese culture.

This issue looks at the interface between government and communities and how this is changing as a precondition to poverty eradication. Participation is becoming key to reducing poverty through improving livelihoods, at the same time as sustaining the environment, maintaining China's rich cultural and ethnic diversity

and ensuring good governance. Good governance is not just about the performance of government institutions, but about the nature and quality of their relationship with civil society organisations, community groups and citizens (Bass *et al.*, 2005). In other words, it is about shifts in power – a theme which underpins this issue of *PLA*.

Citizen's participation in decision-making in China started to become possible in the late 1980s. Privatisation of state enterprises began in earnest when it became clear that state-run enterprises were not sustainable and could not compete on a global scale, and so China opened itself up to the rest of the world. In the early 1990s, participatory approaches were introduced into China with the assistance of international funding. Increasingly, the state is giving greater independence to civil society organisations. This is creating opportunities for increased participation by citizens in decisions that affect their lives, as the Overview to the theme section by **Johanna Pennarz and Arjan de Haan** shows. These opportunities are accompa-

Photo: Guangxi FCPMC



Yao women in Guangxi Province waiting for training on agricultural production skills to start - with more and more men leaving the villages for work in the coastal areas, women are increasingly taking charge of agricultural production.

nied by changes in the political decision-making process at the local level, largely due to the election of village committees, greater service orientation and increasing attention to consultative processes by government departments. The Overview is followed by a Prologue by **Andreas Wilkes** who sets the scene by reflecting on the impacts and benefits of the introduction of participatory approaches in China.

About the special issue

PLA 62 draws on case studies from a number of projects funded by the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development-China (DfID-China), including the Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP), a community-based project carried out in Southwest China which started in 2005.¹ In his Preface to this issue, **Alan Piazza** of the World Bank describes how an increasing understanding of poverty by the World Bank and close cooperation with the government alleviation agencies has led to better targeted

projects and a growing recognition that participation of the poor is critical for more effective poverty reduction.

The PRCDP aimed to develop an inclusive and equitable approach to poverty reduction among ethnic minorities in the western provinces of China (see map on p. 16). In this region, people live in remote, rural areas and are among the most impoverished. Their participation in these projects has given them visibility and voice.

Many of the contributors to this issue of *PLA* are community members who had never been given the opportunity before to share their experiences and perspectives with a wider audience. They are all practitioners, many of them government staff, who worked directly with communities. The photos in this issue illustrate the diversity of the community members – an image which is often far from our western view of ‘modern’ China. China has 56 official ethnic groups remaining. The largest group, the Han, makes up over 92% of China’s culture, yet the other ethnic minority groups main-

¹ See Box 1 on p 34 for a summary of the project.

tain their own rich traditions and customary way of life.² Two contributors to this issue represent small and little known ethnic groups – **Nati** (Part I, Article 4) is Lahu, a relatively small group in China, although there are large groups of Lahu living in the region (in particular in Thailand). **Qin Zhurong** (Part II, Article 15) is Maonan, one of the smallest ethnic groups in China.

Many of the articles in the theme section are case studies and reflections from the PRCDP. The majority of these articles were initially prepared for presentation at the Kunming workshop in 2009, where results and lessons were shared. These case studies were reworked for this issue of *PLA* to provide further critical reflection on the processes and lessons learnt. The articles will be translated back into Chinese and published online and will provide a valuable resource for Chinese readers.

The format of the articles in this issue of *PLA* is slightly different. We have included a brief introduction to the authors at the start of the articles. In most cases, we have not given contact details for the Chinese authors, as most are not English speaking. If you have any questions or comments for the authors, please contact **Song Haokun**, one of the guest editors, who worked closely with the authors.³

The issue is divided into sections, with an Introductory Overview and a Concluding Overview. Parts I-III look at enhanced participation at the local level through facilitators and changing management roles, reflecting on the PRCDP. Part IV is devoted to a participatory project which evaluated the impact on livelihoods of a large-scale watershed rehabilitation project in Gansu Province. Part V focuses on participatory approaches in the health and education sectors, and Part VI looks at processes and initiatives for scaling up the participatory approach in China. In our

Tips for Trainers section we have three articles, the first from **Maruja Salas**, an experienced facilitator who has worked in Southwest China. The second article reflects on experiences with the PRCDP by those involved in the project, and the third article is written by practitioners from PRA training organisations in Southwest China, giving information on their training activities and resources.

Our regular In Touch section includes details of other resources on participation from China, as well as other general resources on participation and updates from the RCPLA network. See the news from IIED on p. 209 for updates on the analysis of contributors to *PLA*.

About the guest editors

We are delighted to have the expertise and experience of four guest editors – **Johanna Pennarz, Song Haokun, Deng Weijie** and **Wang Jianping**. **Arjan de Haan** was also instrumental in the conception phase and has provided invaluable inputs to the issue.

Johanna Pennarz is lead guest editor. She has been working as a researcher and consultant on poverty and local governance issues in China since 1991. Johanna conducted long-term research on livelihoods strategies in rural Sichuan from 2001-2004, and was based in China as a programme manager and advisor on poverty reduction projects between 1997 and 2004. Johanna was the participation specialist for the PRCDP from 2002. During her time in China, she worked with a number of NGOs on poverty reduction issues and has published several articles from her field-based work on participatory development. Johanna has been based in the UK since 2004, where she works as a social development consultant for ITAD.⁴ We are grateful to Johanna for initiating this issue of *PLA*, giving us expert advice, liaising with the authors and other guest editors, and for com-

²<http://no2.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/aboutchina/nationality/200903/20090306117655.html>

³ Email: songhk@ynu.edu.cn

⁴ www.itad.com

menting on and assisting us with the editing of articles.

Song Haokun is Associate Professor in Yunnan University and an executive member of the council of the Yunnan Participatory Association (formerly PRA Network). His main areas of expertise are rural development and social impact evaluations of construction projects. He participated in the PRCDP in 2004 as Project Coordinator and edited the Participation Manual.⁵ He was invited as a local expert to carry out the impact evaluation of the project. We are also extremely grateful to Song Haokun for his coordinating role with the authors of this issue.

Deng Weijie is Associate Professor at the Sichuan Agricultural University. He has been working on participatory development in China for more than 10 years, as a trainer and facilitator on national and international projects, including the PRCDP and the CWMP.⁶ Deng Weijie supported the Chinese authors throughout the editing process of this issue of *PLA*.

Dr Wang Jianping is Associate Professor in Yunnan University and a member of the Yunnan Participatory Association (formerly PRA Network). In addition to teaching work at the university, she has extensive project experience working with local NGOs, international institutions, the private sector and local government. Her research focuses on the sustainable management of natural resources, poverty alleviation and more specifically on the use of interdisciplinary approaches to evaluate the impact of policy interventions and development projects. Wang also worked closely with the Chinese authors in the editing process.

Arjan de Haan worked as a social development adviser for DfID between 1998 and 2008 – the last three years of which in



PLA 62 guest editor Deng Weijie presents his feedback at the PRCDP Reflections Workshop in Kunming, 2009.

China. He then became a senior lecturer in social policy at the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague and moved to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada in 2011. His main interest is migration, poverty analysis and social policy. Arjan has written several publications on these themes in the context of China.⁷ He provided valuable advice and comments on this issue.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of all of those involved, we would like to thank DfID and the World Bank for funding the PRCDP and the Kunming workshop, thereby providing the *PLA* series with such rich material. DfID-China provided the financial support to enable the guest editors to work with the authors and for this special issue of *PLA* to be disseminated. DfID's bilateral aid programme to China closed in March 2011, so this issue has brought this chapter of DfID's support in the region to a close. DfID's work in China has established strong relationships that have enabled the UK and China to start working together to tackle global poverty. The future focus for DfID UK is on a strategic partnership with China that benefits the UK, China and other developing countries.

⁵ See: www.itad.com/PRCDP

⁶ The CWMP is the China Watershed Management Project (see Part IV).

⁷ Recent publications include *Towards a New Poverty Agenda in Asia: Social Policies and Economic Transformation* (2010), *Narratives of Chinese Economic Reforms: How Does China Cross the River?* (edited volume with Zhang Xiaobo and Fan Shenggen) and *How the Aid Industry Works: An Introduction to International Development* (2009).

We are also grateful to DfID UK, the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), Irish Aid, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (Danida), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) for their core funding to the *PLA* series.

We would like to thank our designers **Smith+Bell Design** for their continued professional layout and design of *PLA* and to **Cath d'Alton** for drawing some of the maps in this issue. We thank **Simon Lim**, **Su Luo** and **Zhiyan Ma** for designing and translating the Chinese illustrations on the cover and section dividers.

Our special thanks go to **Lila Buckley** and **James Keeley** from IIED for their feedback and encouragement. Lila has also contributed an article on participatory policy-making in China in Part VI. As always, we would like to thank our *PLA* editorial board for their support and advice.

News from the *PLA* Editorial Board

While we were in the final stages of preparing this issue for publication, we received the sad news that Dr **Neela Mukherjee** passed away in June 2011. Neela was a valuable member of our board, and one of the leading and pioneering champions of PRA, as well as a very dear friend of *PLA* and IIED. I remember the time she spent at IIED on sabbatical in the early 1990s, and her regular visits to IIED since then, when she always gave us a colourful account of life from the field. Neela also played a large role in this issue of *PLA*, as she worked closely with the facilitators and provincial management groups in PRCDP and inspired many of the practices that are presented here. It was her suggestion to share practices of Chinese practitioners with the wider participation community. We are sad that she will not be able to see this issue in its final form. We will remember her as a source of inspiration and motivation for participation in China and beyond.

Multimedia bilingual DVD – *PLA 61 Tales of shit: Community-Led Total Sanitation in Africa*

We are delighted to enclose with this issue the bilingual (English/French) multimedia DVD of *PLA 61* on Community-Led Total Sanitation in Africa (CLTS). This DVD contains several video documentaries on CLTS, as well as other resource material. Our thanks to the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Plan International, UNICEF, Irish Aid, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as our core donors, for funding this DVD, and to **Maryck Nicolas**, our translator, for doing an excellent job as always of translating articles and other resources into French.

Changes to online subscriptions

For 2011, the *PLA* series is now completely free online – and with no online subscription required. This is because *PLA* is no longer hosted online by IngentaConnect. Instead, all issues of *PLA* are available for free on the IIED website as soon as they are published. This means that subscribers can now access the series online without an online subscription. To download *PLA* online visit: www.planotes.org

New website

We are revamping our website and it will be relaunched towards the end of 2011. Our apologies to visitors to our current site, which has not been able to feature updates and recent issues. We plan to publish general articles and more multimedia resources online. Our web address will remain www.planotes.org

Forthcoming issues

PLA 63 How wide are the ripples? From local participation to international organisational learning

This next issue of *PLA* is guest edited by **Kate Newman** and **Hannah Beardon**.

When a pebble is thrown in the water it has a very visible impact – or splash – and then the ripples spread out, getting weaker

and less defined as they lose momentum. In the same way, a good quality participatory grassroots process can have a strong local impact – for example more representative prioritisation of local spending, more equal power relations within the family or more focused collective action – but the influence and impact naturally dissipates the further away from the original context you get. And yet, the insight and analysis, evidence and stories generated and documented during participatory processes are just the kinds of information which good development policy and planning should be based on.

In this issue of *PLA*, the guest editors and authors share their experiences and reflections of bringing grassroots knowledge and information to bear at international level, and some strategies for strengthening practice. They emphasise the importance of acting as empowered individuals to be a conscious and active part of change. With this issue of *PLA* we hope to inspire other empowered activists working with INGOs to bring about more accountable, equitable and participatory development.

PLA 64 Youth and participatory governance in Africa

In March 2011, IIED, Plan UK and the Institute of Development Studies 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. The idea behind the week-long meeting was to share learning and experiences, build writing skills, form new relationships, and develop a set of articles for a forthcoming special issue of *PLA* in December 2011. The guest editors are **Rosemary McGee** and **Jessica Greenhalf**.

All over the world we are seeing experiments in ‘participatory governance’. But exciting as these new approaches are, are they working for all – or are some voices still left

out? In particular, are they working for the young?

The Nairobi writeshop uncovered the vibrancy, energy, persistence, passion and enthusiasm that youth bring to decision-making processes. Participating in governance and policy processes is re-shaping the way that young people perceive and exercise citizenship in powerful ways. It showed us that young people can drive change in creative and unexpected ways – a particularly promising characteristic for governance work.

We hope the forthcoming issue of *PLA* will highlight how young Africans are doing this – addressing the documentation gap that surrounds youth and governance in Africa and enabling other participatory practitioners – young and old – to learn from their experiences.

PLA 65 Biodiversity, culture and rights

Our new strategic board member, **Krystyna Swiderska**, is in the process of selecting articles for this special issue of *PLA* which will be published in 2012 in English and Spanish and distributed at the next Conference of the Parties to Biodiversity Convention (COP11) in India. This issue aims to capture learning from participatory processes to develop community biocultural protocols and secure the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Other news

IIED is moving offices in September 2011, after 27 years in Endsleigh Street. Our new office will be at 80-86 Gray’s Inn Road in London. We are moving into a 1950s building and we are in the process of improving its green credentials. The extra space in the new building will provide a cafe club area, as well as meeting and workspaces. We look forward to welcoming you!

Nicole Kenton, Co-editor, *Participatory Learning and Action*

REFERENCES

- Bass, S., H. Reid, D. Satterthwaite and P. Steele (Eds.) (2005) *Reducing Poverty and Sustaining the Environment: The Politics of Local Engagement*. Earthscan: UK.

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ARA	Action-reflection-action
CBD	Community-Based Development
CBO	Community Based Organisation (CBO)
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CGCO	Chengdu Gay Care Organisation
CWMP	China Watershed Management Project
DfID	Department for International Development
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPL	Environmental Protection Law
FCPMC	Foreign Capital Project Management Centre
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (UK)
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
MEP	Management of Environmental Protection
MWR	Ministry of Water Resources
NRM	Natural resource management
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PADO	Poverty Alleviation and Development Office
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PP	Participatory Planning
PPA	Participatory Poverty Analysis
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRC	People's Republic of China
PME	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PMO	Project Management Office
PPMO	Provincial Project Management Office
PRCDP	Poor Rural Communities Development Project
RMB	Renminbi (or Chinese yuan) is the currency of the PRC
SLCP	Sloping Land Conservation Programme
VDC	Village Development Committee
VDP	Village Development Planning

THEME INTRODUCTION



Wagging the dragon's tail:
emerging practices
in participatory
poverty reduction
in China

Preface

by ALAN PIAZZA

The Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP) is the fourth of a series of village-based multi-sectoral poverty reduction projects supported by the World Bank in China. The process began with a careful analysis of poverty in China through the 1992 World Bank collaborative study – *China: Strategies for Reducing Poverty in the 1990s*.¹ That study recommended that a multi-sectoral approach was essential to overcoming poverty in China's worst affected areas. This included support for basic rural infrastructure, basic education and healthcare, farm production, and access to off-farm employment. This and the study's other recommendations were put into action in the first two poverty reduction projects:

- the Southwest Poverty Reduction Project (beginning in 1995); and
- the Qinba Mountains Poverty Reduction Project (beginning in 1997).²

The importance of participation was recognised in these first two projects. In fact, the Southwest project was one of World Bank President Wolfensohn's 'participation flagship' projects. However, following a strong emphasis on participation during project preparation and early implementation, the initially heavy focus on participation dissipated.

In 2001, the World Bank's second major study of poverty in China – *China: Overcoming Rural Poverty*,³ called for the more efficient and effective use of available poverty reduction funding in China through 'greater community participation in project design and implementation'. The Chinese government's poverty reduction strategy at that time, *China: Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Programme: 2001-2010*, also called for strengthening the participatory approach in poverty reduction work.⁴ The government's docu-

¹ <http://go.worldbank.org/7OZ1WCW200>

² For more information see: www.worldbank.org

³ <http://go.worldbank.org/MN1DQS5690>

⁴ www.gov.cn/english/official/2005-07/27/content_17712.htm

ment regarded 'the poor as the main body conducting and benefiting from the poverty alleviation and development striving', and noted concrete steps to support empowerment at the village level. Most importantly, a simplified participatory approach was adopted in formulating village poverty reduction plans. Nationwide, all of the more than 140,000 key poor villages established such plans on the basis of the participatory approach. The government's stated interest in strengthening participation in poverty reduction set the stage at the turn of the millennium for a variety of international groups to assist with the evolution and deepening of a strong participatory approach in China.

Leveraging this favorable policy environment, PRCDP has done an excellent job of designing and developing its participatory approach. It has spearheaded participation in large scale projects for all of rural China. Beginning with the first Identification Mission in October 2001, the project's participatory approach has played a central role in the design and implementation of all six project components. It has aimed to empower local communities and promote the inclusion of all disadvantaged social groups throughout the project cycle. The participatory approach has been an empowering process that emphasised the voices and choices of different groups in the community. It built their ownership of – and capacities for – self-reliant community development. A Participation Manual was developed during the project preparation period to provide guidance to management staff and county and township facilitators on how to implement and monitor the participatory approach. The Participation Manual describes the basic principles of the approach, details the main steps in the participatory project cycle, elaborates institutional and management issues in using the approach, discusses its costs and bene-

fits, and provides some resource material on methods and tools.⁵

The provincial project management offices (PPMO) of Guangxi, Sichuan and Yunnan played a key role in testing and developing the participatory approach over the last decade during project preparation, implementation and evaluation. The PPMOs devoted their greatest energy and resources to the participatory approach, and it is striking that their enthusiasm and support for participation grew continually over the last ten years! The county level project management offices and the lower level township and village project work stations also played a vital role in the development and roll out of the participatory approach at the local level. Of course, the 1.4 million project villagers themselves were the key players in participation at the local level. Their passion for PRCDP and for participation has also grown over time. In addition, the central government authorities provided constant support for PRCDP and for the participation throughout project preparation, implementation and evaluation.

The success of participation in PRCDP could not have been achieved without the wonderfully generous support of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID). Not only would there not have been a PRCDP project in the absence of DfID's major grant support, but DfID also provided substantial grants to help design and supervise the evolution of PRCDP's participatory approach and the comprehensive qualitative project participatory assessments over the entire life of the project. The lead ITAD staff joined the World Bank team on each and every PRCDP preparation and supervision mission over the last ten years, which was key to the success of PRCDP's participatory approach.⁶ ITAD's annual qualitative project participatory

⁵ www.itad.com/PRCDP

⁶ The lead guest-editor of this issue, Johanna Pennarz, is a consultant at ITAD (www.itad.com)

assessments also played a key role in the project's success. They provided some of the best documentation of the project's strengths and weaknesses, and set a new standard for qualitative participatory assessments in China. The final report on the participatory impact evaluation of PRCDP is under preparation and will be available soon.

Clearly, PRCDP's participatory

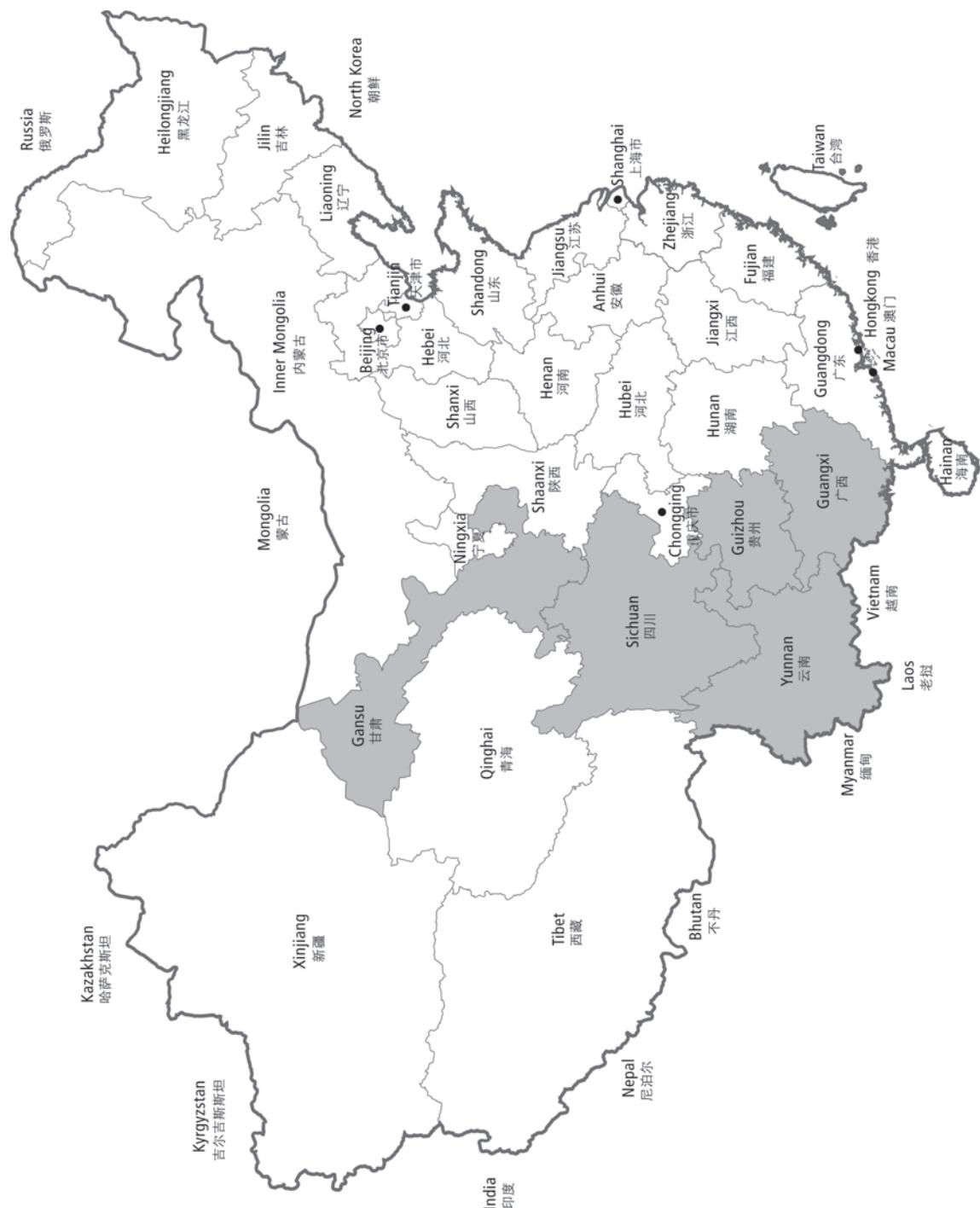
approach was a tremendous group effort. With the sustained support of the project villagers, the PPMOs and project management at all levels, DfID and ITAD and the World Bank team, the PRCDP participatory approach has been enormously successful. In my view, PRCDP is the cutting edge of participation in China and has served to greatly advance community empowerment in all of rural China.

CONTACT DETAILS

Alan Piazza
Senior Economist
Social Development Department (SDV)
The World Bank Group, MC9-355
1818 H Street NW
Washington DC 20433, USA
Email: apiazza@worldbank.org

REFERENCES

- UNDP and World Bank (2000) *China: Overcoming Rural Poverty*.
Rural Development and Natural Resources Unit, East Asia and
Pacific Region. Joint Report of the Leading Group for Poverty
Reduction, UNDP and the World Bank.
World Bank (1992) *China: Strategies for Reducing Poverty in the
1990s*. World Bank: Washington, DC.



**Map of China
showing provinces
(shaded) covered in
this issue of *PLA*.**

Overview: changing government-community interface in China

1

by JOHANNA PENNARZ and ARJAN DE HAAN

Introduction

At a workshop in Kunming in March 2009, practitioners from local governments and community organisations from all over China met for the first time to share their experiences of promoting and implementing participatory approaches in areas such as education, health, rural development and poverty reduction. This was a unique experience, with many of the practitioners presenting their own cases for the first time, and indeed learning about others, showing that there were many champions of participatory approaches working at local levels across the country. It was also an important event because it made individuals and organisations – who often saw themselves working alone as pioneers of innovative approaches – realise that they were part of a wider community of like-minded people trying to address similar challenges and issues within the same system. This workshop took place fifteen years after participatory approaches had first been introduced in China and nine years after they were formally adopted as

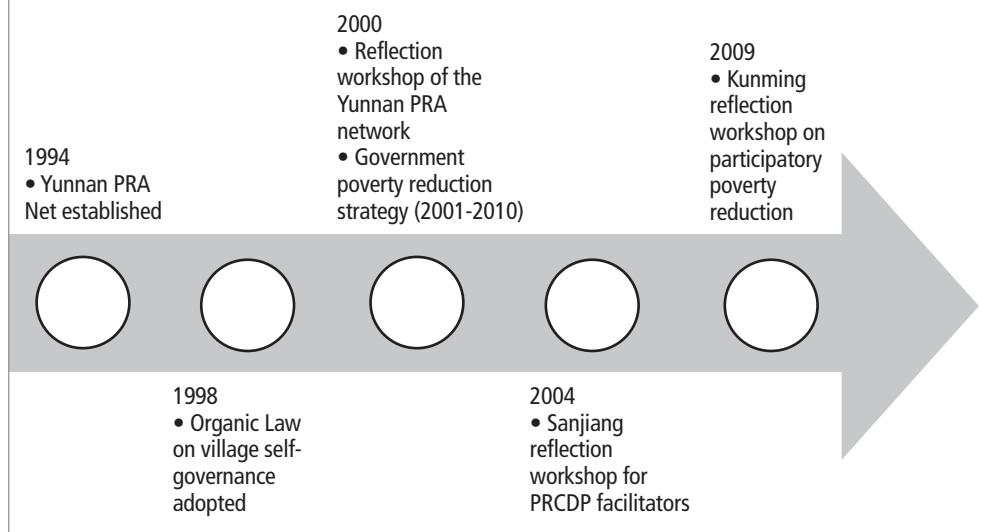
part of the government's poverty reduction strategy (see timeline at Figure 1). The majority of the articles included in this issue are edited case studies of papers prepared for presentation at the Kunming workshop.

Participation and poverty reduction: what are the links?

This special issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* reflects on the journey towards participatory approaches in poverty reduction in China. The country has been tremendously successful in poverty reduction in the past, but it still has a large number of people living in poverty. The issue discusses why and how participatory approaches have been introduced, and why these approaches are useful for addressing issues of poverty in China. The case studies presented show how development and poverty approaches continue to evolve in the specific Chinese political context and its ongoing governance changes, and in line with China's unique ability to experiment with and pilot new

Figure 1 – Timeline

The development of participatory practices for poverty reduction took place over a period of almost 20 years. The timeline shows the main events in this journey that are covered by this issue of *PLA*.



approaches, pragmatically using international experience. The discussion is relevant and important for the global audience that is trying to understand China's unique approach to development and its implication for global poverty reduction, but it is also relevant to understand how and under what conditions participatory approaches become embedded in specific contexts.

It is widely accepted that the poor need and have the right to participate in poverty reduction initiatives, and the beneficial impacts of community-based projects are widely documented. In 2005, Robert Chambers noted that participation had finally been mainstreamed. However, so far there is only limited evidence that broad-based participation in large scale poverty reduction programmes does in fact lead to better targeting of the poor and a more substantial reduction of poverty. Reviews of community-based approaches supported by the World Bank found that projects that rely on community participation have not been particularly effective at targeting the poor. It found some evidence

that Community-Based Development (CBD) and Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects create effective community infrastructure, but no causal relationship between participatory elements and concrete outcomes, including in terms of poverty (Mansuri and Rao, 2004).¹ Less tangible outcomes of participation, such as increased social capital, are often not documented, while negative outcomes, such as elite capture and growing inequality, tend to be more obvious.

By contrast, the Chinese case seems to support the case that substantial poverty reduction can be achieved through a top-down planning approach. The Chinese government remained suspicious about participatory approaches for a long time. More recently however, there is a growing understanding that the benefits from participation outweigh the costs and that participation of the poor will lead to more sustainable poverty reduction. The interest in experiences with participatory approaches in China have thus increased in

¹ <http://ssrn.com/abstract=501663>

the last decade, as increasing inequality, social unrest and the need to improve governance became major concerns for the government. In 2005, the Chinese Communist Party called for a 'harmonious society', a concept that covered an increased commitment to social equity, accountability and public participation. This call was followed by the 'new socialist countryside', a broad government initiative to address inequality and focus efforts on rural development, based on broad public participation, which put agriculture and rural initiatives more prominently on the agenda of China's modernisation drive. The case studies presented in this issue provide important insights into the shift of government thinking that has emerged from an increasing top-level commitment to reduce inequalities and create a 'harmonious society'.

The contributors to this issue are practitioners, many of them government staff, who present their insights and evidence on how they believe participation became effective and led to better poverty reduction. For example, the China Watershed Management Project (CWMP) case study in Part 4 presents insights into how 'social management' was strengthened as a result of this participatory project and how these changes are aligned with the recent policy agenda.

Several of the case studies in this issue compare the outcomes from community-led approaches with those of the conventional government-led approach. From the evidence presented, we conclude that, in the case of China, more equitable relations are being crafted – slowly – with steps back, but steadily.

- **Participatory approaches in China: From PRA to broad-based consultation**

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) was introduced in China in the early 1990s.²

Since then researchers and development practitioners have practiced participatory methods in a wide range of areas and subjects, mostly funded by international donors and NGOs (see the Prologue to this issue on page 24). Only recently, issues of scale and quality have been directly addressed in initiatives aiming to strengthen participatory approaches to poverty reduction. Various initiatives funded by donors such as the World Bank, the UK Department of International Development (DfID) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), have been implemented over the last few years in an attempt to support institutionalising of participation at local government levels.

The PRCDP pioneered a new approach to building capacities, building on local innovation and participatory learning. It was a major challenge to balance the breadth and depth of participation in the process of roll-out. The project therefore focused on the basic principles for participation, while methods and tools were adapted to suit the local context.³ This led to very different ways in which participation was implemented across the three provinces in Southwest China participating in the project (Yunnan, Sichuan and Guangxi). The case described by the Guangxi project office, for example, shows how local government employed a 'learning system' approach to ensure that there was ongoing learning and that practices continued to improve (Part VI, Article 28).⁴ In the case of Sichuan, the method of participatory village planning was used subsequently in earthquake reconstruction efforts (see Part VI, Article 29).

- **The role of pilot projects**

Compared to the large amounts of national funding mobilised for poverty reduction, the amounts of foreign aid to

² The visit of Robert Chambers and James Mascarenas provided the impetus for the Yunnan PRA Network, which was established in 1994.

³ See The PRCDP Participation Manual (available on-line at www.itad.com/PRCDP).

⁴ See also Article 33 on learning systems.



Photo: Guangxi FCPMC

Dong community dance – an opportunity to get together and demonstrate of unity, also used to share news and make announcements (Longsheng County, Guangxi Province).

China are very small indeed, and the role of the (mostly international) NGOs is confined to small pilots. However, international collaboration has played a very important role in sectors as diverse as environmental management, infrastructure, health reforms, education, and poverty reduction, and indeed in the principles of project management itself (World Bank, 2007). Projects funded by international aid, although small in scale, often had important functions in piloting innovative approaches, building capacities and providing useful case studies and reference points for ongoing policy processes. Participatory approaches were introduced in foreign-funded projects first, and many of the practitioners contributing to this issue have learned from their initial experience with these externally-funded projects.

The transition from small (but generously funded) pilot projects to large-scale

government projects operating under ambitious targets and with limited funding for capacity building remains a key challenge. The attempt of the Poverty Alleviation Office to roll out participatory village development plans as part of its poverty alleviation strategy since 2000 (see Part II) has yielded limited success due to the magnitude of the roll-out, lack of familiarity with participatory methods and weak capacities at local levels. As a result, the roll-out of the planning was stalled and only half of the villages ever prepared such a plan (Park and Wang, 2006).

In this issue, several practitioners describe how they struggled to apply methods that had been successful in small-scale pilots to government projects operating on a large-scale. Deng Weijie provides an interesting case on how participatory training methods had to be adapted to cope with the conditions set by government training programmes (see Part IV).

- **Changing roles, attitudes, behaviour and mindsets**

Effective reduction of poverty depends on numerous factors, many of them external to the project, many happening over a longer period, and often difficult to capture. Participatory approaches typically imply a change in attitudes, behaviour and relationships; changes that may happen in the short-term, but often require more time to be translated into effective policies. It is therefore important that we understand those changes of attitudes, behaviour and relationships and how they may (or may not) lead to more effective and sustainable poverty reduction. The case studies, written by local practitioners, are testimony to how the approaches, thinking and attitudes of officials and citizens regarding public policies are changing in China.

Due to their marginal locations, many of the impoverished communities in China had few interactions with the government in the past and if they had these were often experienced as being one sided and disempowering. In Part I of this issue, the articles describe the experience of how communities took charge of a project and how this created confidence and trust in the community's ability to take over responsibility. Nati's case study (article 4) provides a rare account from a community perspective, written by a member of the Lahu ethnic minority, one of the most marginalised ethnic groups in China.

Traditionally, government staff have had little confidence in the abilities of the poor to contribute to their development other than by providing a free source of labour. Several of the case studies written by local government staff describe the shift away from conventional thinking on poverty (see Introduction to Part I; also Wang Baojun's case study (Part IV, Article 19). The case study from the workshop documentation

facilitated by Deng Weijie (Part VI, Article 29) provides a vivid account of the professional biases common within the government system and how they were challenged through the event. The experience indicates the enormous learning processes in which government staff engaged, and their realisation that projects often work better if communities take charge. Both the PRCDP and the CWMP case studies describe how attitudes and mindsets changed within the government as a result of the participatory approach.

The China Poverty Alleviation Offices embraced participation early on.⁵ For example, village planning provided an important tool, particularly for the cross-sectoral nature of their work. It was a particular challenge to introduce participatory approaches to sector departments, whose work is much more dominated by technical standards and targets. The case studies set in the context of reforms in education are therefore particularly interesting, as they indicate a fundamental change in mindset regarding the role of education and importance for citizenship within the rapid transformations in China (see Part V, Article 24). The country's health sector is also undergoing dramatic changes, and the case study here shows how participatory approaches have the potential to make the newly emerging services more people-oriented and equitable (Part V, Article 23).

- **Why it is important to document and share experiences**

As mentioned, the majority of the articles in this issue were prepared for presentation at the Kunming workshop. They provide a first-hand account of how practitioners are struggling to adapt participatory practices and institutionalise principles of participation in today's China. The workshop

⁵ China has dedicated Poverty Alleviation and Development Offices (PADOs) at all government levels which coordinate all poverty reduction programmes under *The 10 Years' Poverty Reduction Plan*. However, funds are disbursed through various departments and technical bureaus.

included participants from all walks of life who had practiced and promoted participatory approaches wherever they were. This included representatives from local communities, some of them members of ethnic minority groups – such as Nati – who had never addressed a national audience before and were excited to share their experience of empowerment. There were also participants from national Ministries who shared their insights into the usefulness of community participation, as part of the wider policy changes. And there were the professionals working in various government departments who immersed themselves in the details of making participation work within the realities of an overwhelming bureaucracy and often under less enabling conditions.

In addition to the workshop material we have included a few case studies from NGO projects to provide a more rounded overview of the range of participatory approaches in China at this point of time (articles by Andreas Wilkes, Wang Jianping and Lila Buckley).

We included Andreas Wilkes' article as a prologue to this issue. The article presents a first reflection on participation in the early 2000s. The reflection took place at a time when a first wave of participatory approaches had been introduced and practitioners saw a need to conduct a critical reflection on the impacts, based on evidence from the field. The aim was to convince government leaders that participation was useful.

In the early 2000s, participation was very much the domain of researchers. In his contribution to *PLA Notes 37*, Lu Xing noted that many researchers regarded participatory approaches as a method of great use in conducting surveys or assessments (Xing, 2000). The strong focus on using participatory tools in the context of research meant that the work of participation practitioners, mostly with an academic background, was often delinked from the approaches used by government staff in

national poverty reduction projects. The focus on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) left a legacy of emphasis on methods, enhancing insights, and soaking up indigenous knowledge, with less emphasis on capacity building, particularly in terms of analytical problem solving and negotiating skills amongst practitioners.

Building capacities for participation within the government was seen as a major challenge by development practitioners, far more than what could be achieved by isolated projects. As Lu Xing noted earlier in the same article, 'The adoption and application of participatory development challenges current development thought in China; its policies, institutional arrangements and working procedures'.

It took another 10 years to address the challenge of integrating the principles of participatory development into the government – gradually – and the remainder of this issue provides insights into how this has been done.

Why an issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*?

We believe that the current publication is important for three reasons.

- First, we are very excited about the way this publication and the preceding workshop enabled practitioners who have been pioneering innovative approaches in their field to share their experiences. We saw with our own eyes how much interest there was to learn from others, how quickly practitioners gained confidence in presenting their experience, and – we believe – can become the champions of participatory approaches.
- Secondly, we hope that this publication will help to create a better understanding amongst practitioners of participation across the world of the experiences that are being developed within China. Its context is unique, but so are all contexts, and we firmly believe that there is much to learn from – and with – China, including in its own newly emerging foreign cooperation programmes.

- Finally, we also believe that these case studies on participation provide a new glimpse into the reasons for China's development success – in which it is responsible for two-thirds of global progress on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 – and its ongoing challenges. While its insti-

tutional structure is unique, enormous changes are taken place at various levels of governance, radically reshaping the social contract between the state and its citizens. The articles in this issue provide a unique set of views from the ground of these dramatic changes.

CONTACT DETAILS

Johanna Pennarz
ITAD Ltd
12, English Business Park
English Close
Hove, BN3 7ET
UK
Email: Johanna.pennarz@itad.com
Website: www.itad.com

Arjan de Haan
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
PO Box 8500 Ottawa, ONK1G 3H9
Canada
Email:arjande@yahoo.co.uk

REFERENCES

- Chambers, R. (2005). 'Ideas for Development', Earthscan: London
 Lu Xin, L. (2000) 'Searching for participatory approaches: findings of the Yunnan PRA Network' in *PLA notes* 37. IIED: London.
 Mansuri, G. and V. Rao (2004). *Community Based (and Driven) Development: A Critical Review*. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No 3209.
 Park, A. and S. Wang (2006). 'Community-based Development and Poverty Alleviation: An evaluation of China's Poor Village Investment Program' Background. Paper for The World Bank's China Poverty Assessment.
 Poor Rural Communities Development Project Participation Manual (2005), prepared by PRCDP with ITAD for Dfid/World Bank.
 World Bank (2007). *China and the World Bank. A Partnership for Innovation*, The World Bank: Washington DC.

2

Prologue: reflections on participation in Southwest China in the early 2000s

by ANDREAS WILKES

ANDREAS WILKES has been working in China promoting participatory approaches in rural development and natural resources management since 1997. Trained in anthropology and economics, he has a PhD in environmental anthropology. Previous positions held include Director of Programmes at the Center for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge (a Chinese NGO), Team Leader for the China NRM programme of The Mountain Institute (a US-based international NGO), and Deputy Country Coordinator for the China & East Asia Node of the World Agroforestry Center (a Kenyan-based research institute). His work currently focuses on rangeland and livestock management, in particular the design of climate change mitigation projects based on improved rangeland management.

Practitioners of participatory approaches are wont to proselytise for the benefits of participatory approaches, mostly drawing on their own experiences and often paying less attention to drawbacks and limitations. In contexts where other approaches have also been demonstrated to be effective in bringing about change – such as rapidly transforming rural China – experience and persuasion are often insufficient to communicate what participatory approaches are, what they can do, and in particular what the benefits of participatory as opposed to other approaches are. Reflection on experiences to identify

lessons – about both benefits and limitations – can help muster evidence to persuade others, and can also transform practitioners' own understanding of issues affecting participatory approaches and their promotion.

In the early 2000s, some 5–8 years after the introduction of participatory approaches to Southwest China, a number of practitioners were involved in a reflection process which aimed to identify what participatory approaches can actually do. This paper reports the main findings of the reflection process and the changes in understanding the process brought about.

Introduction

The Yunnan Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Network was established in 1994, after around fifty people took part in a PRA training workshop facilitated by Robert Chambers (IDS) in Kunming. Most participants were from research institutes and government departments involved in the Yunnan Upland Management Programme, a poverty alleviation programme funded by the Ford Foundation. In the years that followed, most applications and promotion of participatory approaches in Yunnan had some relation with the members of the PRA Network, either through their own research and action projects, their employment with international NGOs, participation in government projects or through consultancy services provided to international donor projects. Practitioners in Sichuan and Guizhou also mostly came from research and education institutes and gained practical experience in internationally funded projects in the mid-1990s. By the end of the century, participatory approaches had been applied in a wide range of sectors, and after some years of internationally supported projects, some local agencies had begun to institutionalise participatory approaches in their work.

In the late 1990s, practitioner networks in Yunnan and Guizhou and regional workshops provided opportunities for sharing experiences, methods and lessons. By the turn of the century, with such diverse experiences among practitioners, there was demand among practitioners in all three provinces to 'take stock' of what had been learnt and to identify common challenges to further promote participatory methods. In 2000, the Yunnan PRA Network convened workshops to enable practitioners from all three Southwestern Chinese provinces (Guizhou, Sichuan and Yunnan) to reflect on and share their experiences and lessons (Wilkes, 2000). About seventy people took part in provincial and regional workshops, discussing a range of themes, such as experiences in learning, training

and promoting PRA, the impacts of PRA, and emerging themes at the forefront of practice. Key issues identified through these discussions included the challenges to further promote participatory methods presented by the institutional contexts of decision-making in rural China, as well as the particular contexts faced by government, donor and NGO projects. With a common identified need to persuade leaders to create institutional space for upscaling and deepening participatory practice, the need to demonstrate and convince leaders of the impacts of participatory approaches came to the fore. PRA practitioners, whether from research institutes or government, also frequently commented on the cost (in terms of human and financial resources) of participatory approaches. Some government projects had already begun to institutionalise PRA in regular work procedures. However the time incurred in PRA activities and difficulties in linking the outputs of PRA with the information requirements of existing planning systems were seen as obstacles. On the other hand, some government departments had already realised the benefits of community participation for project relevance and sustainability. But practitioners still felt that senior officials needed a better understanding of the trade-offs between costs and impacts.

In response to these identified needs, in 2000 the Yunnan PRA Network, with grants from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) *Pathways to Participation* project and Oxfam Hong Kong, supported 14 practitioners to return to project sites where participatory methods had been used, in order to explicitly identify the impacts of using participatory methods. The 14 case studies presented at that time covered a range of sectors, such as natural resources management, water infrastructure, agricultural extension, microcredit, PRA in urban areas and PRA and gender. Some studies were conducted by researchers, and some by staff of the govern-

Table 1: Summary of the impacts, benefits and preconditions for 'voice' and 'influence'

	Impacts and Benefits	Preconditions
'Voice'	1. Improved information generation and sharing 2. Improved relationships 3. Changes in personal attitudes and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect, transparent working procedures • Repeated interaction over time • Gradual learning process; sufficient time; practical experience; availability of full and trustworthy information about the project and the role expected of them
'Influence'	(In general:) 4. Releasing drivers of social energy 5. Changing roles 6. Commitment to follow-through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Villagers have access to full and trustworthy information about their expected role • Open and equitable system for discussion and decision-making • Good facilitation • Alignment of project with villagers' interest • Creation of awareness of common interest • Respect and creation of confidence • Community institutions that provide structures that release energies • Increased awareness amongst villagers of the role expected of them • Gradual and continual learning process among staff and villagers; learning through practice • Community institutions that provide structures that enable shifts in roles • Supporting project management mechanisms • Active involvement in decision-making
Overall	7. Creating institutional structures that support community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community institutions for self-management • Supporting project management mechanisms

Source: Wilkes (2001)

ment agencies that implemented the projects. Most studies did not employ formal controlled comparison methods. But two case studies focused on communities where the same project had been designed twice, once in a conventional way and once through a participatory process. Two case studies compared the costs of conventional and participatory approaches, and several case studies examined the challenges to scaling up, including two studies of the impacts on the quality and results of participatory projects when rapidly scaled up using conventional government manage-

ment approaches. Despite the lack of formal methods used in the studies, this was the first time in China that research was conducted attempting to clarify the impacts of participatory methods, as opposed to simply extolling the virtues of participation as much development literature is wont to do.

To synthesise the findings of the 14 case studies, I employed an interpretive framework based on an understanding of a participatory process as consisting of participants 'having voice' and 'having influence'. 'Having voice' implies that

participants engage in information or knowledge generation and sharing, while ‘influence’ refers to participants being able to have an actual influence on the decisions made in the process. In analysing each case study, I identified what types of impacts or benefits for ‘voice’ and ‘influence’ participatory methods had, and identified the key factors or preconditions which brought these benefits about. The main results are summarised in Table 1. Clearly, this required great oversimplification of the rich detail in the case studies.

Key findings on the impacts and benefits of participation

What can giving or having ‘voice’ do?

The case studies provided evidence that participatory approaches can improve communication and improve relationships among project participants. Several case studies reported that shifting from traditional work styles to a more participatory mode had beneficial impacts on the generation and sharing of information between locals and outsiders (e.g. local officials, technicians, project staff), by enabling direct communication between project staff and villagers, enabling researchers undertaking surveys to avoid subjective biases, reducing survey refusal rates, and allowing the villagers’ own creativity to come into play, such as by drawing on indigenous knowledge. The most common factor that enabled improved communication was the perception by villagers that staff were giving them respect, which also improved relationships among participants. Improved relationships – characterised by equality, cooperation, mutual understanding and mutual trust – were built on repeated interactions that took time.

Changed understandings and attitudes on the part of both villagers and staff were found to be preconditions for changing the roles each played in project and wider development processes. Specific attitude

changes on the part of staff included increased appreciation of the capabilities of villagers, and changing understanding of villagers’ role as the main actor in development. This transformation also depended on changes in villagers’ attitudes towards their own roles in development, such as increasing awareness of their potential role in pursuing self-development and the realisation that they should and can do things for themselves. In most cases, changes in attitude and improvements in relationships took repeated interactions between staff and villagers over time. Sometimes improvements in relationships were noted within a year during which staff made repeated visits, but one example where conflict with nature reserve staff preceded the participatory activities, changes were noted over a much longer period of 5 to 6 years. Transparent work procedures and full and trustworthy information about the nature of the project were also identified as essential preconditions.

What are the benefits of participatory decision-making?

In the 14 case studies, villagers took part in a range of decisions at different stages of project activities, from needs assessment through to post-project management of infrastructure or natural resources.

Several case studies argued that farmers’ participation in decision-making enabled farmers to pursue their interests. It enabled participants to form a common awareness of their common interests and consensus on the importance of cooperation in order to achieve those interests. One case study reported on a process of facilitating villagers to formulate new forest management rules, in which there was no project funding apart from that required to cover the facilitator’s cost. This case showed that interests need not be defined by farmers’ interest in obtaining project funding as is commonly assumed.

Other case studies argued that participatory processes – which give villagers a

sense of respect, a sense of being the ‘host in their own home’, and which draw on their own tangible and intangible resources – enable ‘spiritual energies’ to be released at individual and community levels, and that it is these energies that fuel local participation in development action.¹

Adopting participatory approaches also enabled government staff to change the focus of their work. For example, there was a shift from conflict resolution to service provision and from enforcing rules to facilitating community development. At the organisational level, participatory development implies significant shifts in the roles of government agencies. Along with the decentralisation of some decision-making powers to farmers participating in projects, government agencies were able to focus more on providing services and training, ensuring organisational structures, assisting farmers and providing information.

In general, the case studies suggested that there are several possible preconditions for villagers to take part effectively in decision-making processes, including:

- access to full and trustworthy information on the nature of the project ('informed consent');
- outsiders should trust that villagers can make the right decision;
- villagers should fully understand the expectations of their role;
- the decision whether to participate or not should be voluntary;
- establishing an equitable and transparent system for decision-making prior to making any decision to ensure that 'voice' can translate into 'influence'; and
- good facilitation of negotiations between different interest groups.

Institutional structures and mechanisms were found to be important in enabling and supporting participation. Community management institutions were established in half of the projects analysed.

These institutions were important for enabling villagers to cooperate, access and provide services and for ensuring that activities continue beyond the lifetime of the ‘project’. These institutions put in place appropriate structures, processes and incentives for action. Villagers also stated that the new management regulations and institutions gave them the confidence to develop, as well as an increased sense of responsibility and enthusiasm. Community institutions can also provide structures that enable shifts in roles among project staff and villagers, since some of the tasks formerly taken on by project staff (e.g. planning the location of water tanks, monitoring use of natural resources) could now be performed by villagers.

In the projects documented, participatory approaches were applied as part of a wider range of project management mechanisms. Some mechanisms specifically supported the adoption of participatory methods, such as requiring evidence that technical designs had been approved in community meetings, or linking staff salaries to outcomes of villagers’ activities. Other mechanisms, such as requiring receipts for materials as they passed along each stage of the supply chain and public announcements of fund use, were not specifically designed to support adoption of participatory approaches, but were considered to have helped in creating a transparent operating environment that mitigated potential obstacles to villager participation.

What are the risks and limitations of participatory approaches?

Villagers alone were found to have limited knowledge of technological options and information on market opportunities outside the scope of their available information. Farmers were found to choose projects with which they were already

¹ ‘Spiritual energies’ is used as a catch-all to refer to the excitement, pride, satisfaction and other mostly unmeasurable dispositions in people who have been prompted to individually and/or collectively promote collective action.

familiar and that had low levels of investment and thus lower risk. Most case studies reported ways to resolve this potential limitation, and concluded that participation is not a process of 'bottom-up' decision-making, but a process of 'multi-stakeholder' decision-making in which successful planning is a joint product of villagers' and outsiders' wisdom, or of villagers' preferences or knowledge about their own needs and capabilities on the one hand, and information on market and technological options provided by outsiders on the other.

The cost of participatory approaches – particularly in terms of manpower – has often been raised as a limitation. Three case studies examined costs of facilitating participatory approaches, two of them in comparison to conventional approaches. Costs of participatory components of projects examined were found to range between 0.1% and 3.6% of the total investment cost. Although this seems small, officials were still found to have a clear preference for adopting cost-minimising approaches, especially when there is no special budget item to cover these costs, as is the case in large-scale government projects.

Participatory approaches – as with other conventional approaches – have almost always been introduced in China in a top-down way. Both staff and villagers often begin with a passive attitude to the acceptance of PRA: either they are required to adopt it or they are unsure about the benefits that the approaches will bring for their work. Participatory approaches require a gradual learning process on the part of villagers, local staff and government officials. For frontline staff and for project managers, learning occurs mostly through practice, for which allowing sufficient time is a precondition. The emphasis on gradual learning seems to be extremely important and was a major conclusion of the majority of case studies. If insufficient time and consideration are given to enabling gradual learning, passive

participation may result despite the adoption of participatory approaches. Rapid scaling up may also increase farmers' risk to levels beyond their coping capacity.

The role of reflections in learning about participation

The Southwest China reflection process occurred at a time when many practitioners in Southwest China had just shifted from an understanding of PRA as a set of survey tools, to engagement with participatory approaches as part of a process to support development action. By documenting, analysing and sharing the impacts of participatory approaches in action-oriented development projects, the reflection process and the case studies helped practitioners to deepen their understanding of the potential, preconditions and options for participatory approaches to development action.

The importance of changes in personal attitudes and behaviour, as had been stressed by Robert Chambers (e.g. 1995, 1997), was noted in many case studies. But they also showed that personal attitudes and behaviour are shaped by the position of villagers and project staff in institutional contexts. Incentive systems and decision-making procedures were highlighted as important obstacles to change in government agencies. Case studies analysing the impacts of rapid upscaling of participatory approaches highlighted the importance of wider institutional contexts for supporting participatory approaches. Some practitioners went on to look beyond participation in the project cycle to examining organisational management and development options for institutionalising participatory approaches in departmental work procedures. At a time when China's Village Democracy Law (1998) had just been promulgated, and the first round of village elections were just beginning, several case studies highlighted the importance of building community institutions to support villagers' involvement in decision-making.

The wider governance context of participatory approaches was firmly put on the agenda of PRA practitioners around the time of the reflection process. Both researchers and development practitioners moved 'beyond the project cycle' to examine management issues within implementing agencies (e.g. Wang and Sun, 2002; Han, 2002; Zhao, 2006) and the wider institutional environment that

shapes communities' opportunities to have voice and influence decisions (e.g. Zuo, 2003; Zheng, 2006; He *et al.*, 2007). In this, they have been further supported by some government initiatives, such as the requirement to develop participatory poverty alleviation plans (PADO, 2001), and the many other institutional reforms that have continued to be implemented in China's rural government systems since.

CONTACT DETAILS

Andreas Wilkes
Almondbury
Albert Street
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
UK
Email: andreas.wilkes@yahoo.com

REFERENCES

- Han, W. (2002) 'Practice and lessons of applying participatory methods in poverty alleviation projects.' *Guizhou Agricultural Sciences* 30 (1): pp. 50-53.
- He, J., B. Hillman and J. Xu (eds) (2007) *Rural governance, village autonomy and natural resources management*. China Agricultural University Press: Beijing.
- PAO (2001) *Rural poverty alleviation strategy (2001-2010)*. Poverty Alleviation Office of the State Council (PAO): Beijing.
- Wang, W.Y. and D.J. Sun (2002) 'Research on the function of participatory methods in the development of community science and technology mutual aid groups.' *Yunnan Geographical and Environment Research* 14(1): pp. 1-9.
- Wilkes, A. (2000) 'The practice of and reflections on PRA in Southwest China: a report on the PRA Reflection project in Yunnan, Sichuan and Guizhou.' Unpublished manuscript, Yunnan PRA Network.
- Wilkes, A. (2001) 'What can participation really do? Report of the PRA Reflection Project in SW Yunnan.' (In Chinese, with English summary). Printed Manuscript, Yunnan PRA Network.
- Zhao, Y.Q. (2006) 'The institutionalization of participatory work methods in rural development processes.' In: Yunnan Participatory Development Association (ed) *Participation: Extension and Deepening*. China Social Sciences Press, Beijing, pp. 188-197.
- Zheng, B.H. (2006) 'Participatory development and return of power to the people.' In: Yunnan Participatory Development Association (ed) *Participation: Extension and Deepening*. China Social Sciences Press, Beijing. pp. 152-164.
- Zuo, T. (2003) 'Performance and stakeholder analysis on decentralization of environmental governance in rural China.' *Journal of Central China Normal University* 43 (2): pp. 21-25.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The PRA Reflection Project was supported by a grant from the Institute of Development Studies (UK) and Oxfam Hong Kong to the Yunnan Institute of Geography.



PART I:

Communities taking charge

Introduction

3

by JOHANNA PENNARZ

This section looks at how communities have experienced the gradual change of roles and responsibilities. It shows that although communities are keen to take charge, the transition to new ways of working is a learning process for both the community and government staff involved.

Village communities are the basic social and economic unit in rural China. In the southwest the village ‘community’ may cover a huge diversity of natural settings and economic, social and ethnic groups. There are ‘administrative villages’ – the basic administrative unit with elected representatives (including the village head) and cadres (including the party secretary).

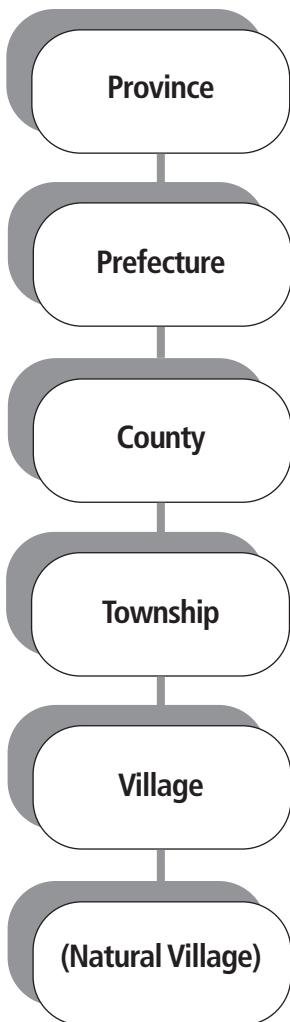
The administrative villages emerged from the former production brigade which was the basic accounting unit during the era of collective agriculture. The brigades included several work teams which owned most of the land. Production brigades were

organised into communes, which were also the basic unit of government. The collective production system was dismantled with the introduction of rural reforms from 1979, which crucially meant a return to family farming.¹ An administrative village will cover a number of hamlets ('natural' villages), which may be scattered over a vast area. The natural village tends to form a more cohesive social unit, where people with a common history and ethnic background live together.

Today, villages still play an important role in the provision of rural infrastructure services, and are involved in poverty reduction activities, social welfare, basic education and public health, particularly in better-off areas. Villages are in theory ‘self-governing’ and central government has emphasised that communities should increasingly take responsibility for their own affairs.

The legal basis for community parti-

¹ See ‘Introduction – a basic guide to development from 1949 to 1989’ (Cannon and Jenkins, 1990).

Figure 1: Administrative structure**Box 1: The Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP)**

The PRCDP was funded by the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (DfID) to reduce poverty in the three Southwestern provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan and Guangxi. It had an overall investment of US\$140 million. The project supported the government's objective of development in western China through a participatory and multi-sectoral approach to the reduction of absolute poverty among ethnic minorities living in extremely remote and resource-deficient areas. PRCDP covered more than 1,000 administrative villages (519 in Sichuan, 305 in Guangxi and 187 in Yunnan), home to about 1.4 million people. Project components included:

- environmentally sustainable mountain agriculture;
- community-based infrastructure;
- basic health, education and other social services;
- project management and support; and
- village-level training.

The overall objective of PRCDP included the aim to 'achieve sustained participation of the poorest rural people'. This meant that PRCDP fully involved poor people from project villages in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of project interventions. During the preparation phase, PRCDP developed an approach to community participation that built on existing experiences with participation in the three provinces, adapted to the context of such a large and diverse region. Participatory Poverty Analysis (PPA) and Participatory Planning (PP) were piloted in Yunnan and Guangxi during the PRCDP feasibility study phase.

The participation approach is documented in the PRCDP Participation Manual,³ which describes the methodology for planning, implementing and monitoring sectoral projects at the community level in a participatory way; it also includes a wealth of practical cases from the provinces.

pation is laid down in the Organic Law.² This outlines principles of grassroots democracy (election of village committees) and public participation. According to the law, villagers should participate in all projects that affect their lives. The central

government sees farmers' participation in project selection for infrastructure investments (*yishi yiji*) as critical. Community participation is meant to improve efficiency, halt unwanted projects and facilitate more responsive ways of investment.⁴

² The 'Organic Law of the Villagers Committee', adopted by the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress at its fifth session on 4 November 1998, provides the legal base for self-governance and elections in Chinese villages (see www.china.org.cn/english/government/207279.htm).

³ See www.iatd.com/PRCDP

⁴ The Decision (CCP Central Committee 2008, pp. 13-14) reiterates the importance of setting village compacts (*yishi yiji*) for individual service provision projects (cited from: Christiansen and Zhang, 2009).

Despite the central government's commitment to increase community participation, the reality is not so straightforward. Local governments and communities are often not clear how the interface between government and society should work in practice. The specific authority of village administration and scope of village finance is largely undefined and varies widely in practice. Local governments are still learning on how delegated responsibility should work in practice (see Part III). Communities often need to build the confidence and skills to assume a greater responsibility in project management.

For the government, greater community ownership and responsibility are expected to solve the problem of maintenance that has previously led to the deterioration of existing infrastructure and repeat investments. In the past, unclear arrangements and lack of ownership often resulted in a lack of follow-up maintenance. Village-level infrastructure was, on the whole, not formally owned by the villages but by the townships. This meant that the villages could refuse to take responsibility. Cases like this have made local governments more supportive of participatory approaches (see **Qin Guozheng's article, Part II, Article 10**).

Internationally funded projects like the Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP) have been very important in shaping the new interface between government and society. PRCDP aimed to involve poor people fully in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of project interventions (see Box 1). This provided a 'safe space' for local government and communities to experiment with new roles and responsibilities, thus moving the participation agenda forward. PRCDP has helped to reshape the roles and relationships at the local level, as the following articles show, describing how communities have taken responsibility once the local government has delegated management functions to villages.

PRCDP's participatory approach has profoundly influenced the communities involved, which have now, often for the first time, taken charge of investments in their villages. Through the project, the relationship between local government and communities has grown with mutual trust and confidence. The three articles in Part I provide an account of these catalytic experiences. They are written by people who were involved in the process as community members and facilitators.

Nati comes from a small village in Ximeng County (Yunnan Province). This is one of the most remote areas in China, close to the border with Myanmar. In recent years, the number of poor people migrating out of these areas into the more industrialised provinces in the east and south has been soaring. Nati's case study shows that the project greatly benefited from the experience of returning migrant workers who contributed their expertise in the process. She describes how the community was actively involved in all aspects of the project and, as a result, was extremely satisfied with the results.

Qin Guozheng is from Luocheng County in Guangxi Province. His case study describes how local government officials were taken by surprise when the community decided to depart from the common practice of nominating members of the local elite. Instead, they elected an ordinary farmer as Project Manager. The community had identified him as a key stakeholder in a proposed irrigation scheme and agreed that his motivation would be key for a successful project. They were right, and the fact that this project was a success has made government officials rethink their common assumption that ordinary villagers are not capable of taking charge.

Song Haokun's case study (from Pingshan County in Sichuan Province) tells a different story. In this case, a conventional management approach was taken and the

management group only included the village cadres: key stakeholders were left out. When members of the community found problems in the implementation process, it was not until they received support from the local government that their complaints were addressed. The article shows how difficult it is to transform community relationships and conventional mindsets into more democratic ways of local governance.

These case studies all highlight the energy at the community level that the

government often oversaw and neglected. Once communities are given the space, individuals and groups quickly recognise this as an opportunity to become active and demand greater responsibilities on behalf of the communities. The articles underline the tensions arising from unclear relationships and insufficient delegation of responsibilities. But negotiation takes place not only around issues of roles, but also on the extent to which responsibilities should remain within the formal governance structure.

CONTACT DETAILS

Johanna Pennarz
ITAD, Hove, UK
Email: Johanna.pennarz@itad.com
Website: www.itad.com

REFERENCES

- Cannon T. and A. Jenkins, eds (1990) *The Geography of Contemporary China*. Routledge: London.
Christiansen, F. and H.X. Zhang (2009) 'The Political Economy of Rural Development in China: Reflections on Current Rural Policy'. *Duisburg Working Papers on East Asian Studies* 81.

How community farmers participated in project planning and implementation

4

by NATI

NATI is a farmer from Muguba village in Ximeng County, Yunnan Province. She is a member of the Lahu ethnic minority. Nati was involved in PRCDP as a community representative. In 2009, she presented her experience of the participatory process to a wider audience at the Kunming workshop. The following is a transcript of her speech, which provides a first-hand account of how her community experienced the process of empowerment in the project. Although the style of her presentation is factual, her presence and contribution made a deep impression on the audience, who had never seen a member of a marginal ethnic community speaking out at a national event. Nati made active contributions to the workshop discussions and gained further confidence through this event, which she then brought back to her village.

Manheng Administrative Village is part of the PRCDP project, which started in 2005. Our village has 85 households and 315 people, and we are all Lahu ethnic minority. Our village is just 1km away from the China-Myanmar border.

In August 2004, our village set up a project working group. We organised the dissemination and participatory planning meeting, which I attended as group leader of Muguba natural village. The project working group was elected by the representatives of different wealth groups. Each group contributed 20% of the representatives. At least 35% had to be women. During

this meeting we used participatory tools, such as group interviews (poor households, women, men) and special household interviews (such as divorced households), to discuss priorities and project ideas.

Women's participation was very weak at the beginning of the meeting, especially during the mixed group discussion by men and women. But gradually women gained respect from both the men and the working group, and they contributed more ideas, especially concerning their vision for a better future.

After the meeting I passed the findings of the working group on to the villagers.



Photo: Johanna Pennarz

Nati giving her speech during the Kunming workshop.

Everybody contributed their own ideas on the main difficulties of the village. When we selected the projects, each household had at least one representative participating in the discussion.

In May 2006, our villagers started implementing the first project; rehabilitation of the drinking water system. Before implementation, county and township project staff had meetings with the villagers to select the water supply sources and identify a suitable site for building the water pool. It was particularly noteworthy that women were consulted consistently during the implementation phase, for example with regard to the location of the taps in their homes. In order to ensure the quality of project implementation, the villagers elected twelve people, including five women, to form a project supervision group. These people often worked as migrant labourers and, therefore, had the

skills to supervise all kinds of construction work.

In the course of the project implementation, we organised the farmers to actively participate by providing labour, such as digging ditches and transporting sand and gravel to the job site. The supervision group members took turns to visit the job site every day and inspect whether the construction materials were up to a desirable standard. If they found any substandard materials, they would promptly request the construction team to take remedial measures.

After completion of the project component, we – including the women representatives – also participated in its final check and certificate (*yanshou*). The check and certificate group also asked the farmers to provide their opinion. The working group then facilitated the villagers to develop the maintenance

rules, so that the project facilities could be well maintained by the community organisation.

To date, we have completed several project components: drinking water for people and livestock has been provided, and three 1.5km ditches have been dug, which can irrigate 200mu of rice fields.¹ All 85 households in the village have been covered by these project components.

PRCDP was implemented in our village with the participation of the villagers throughout the entire project cycle, includ-

ing deciding the components, monitoring and supervision, management and final check and certificate. Compared with the way in which projects were implemented in the past, the villagers feel much more satisfied with PRCDP. The satisfaction of the beneficiaries is an important indicator for the successful completion of any project. The more local people participate in the decision-making, the more satisfied they will be. Good participation means that all groups in the village have an opportunity to participate in the decisions.

CONTACT DETAILS

Nati
Manheng Village
Ximeng County
Yunnan Province
PR China
Contact: songhk@ynu.edu.cn

¹ 15 mu = 1 hectare

5

How an ordinary farmer was elected as project leader

by QIN GUOZHENG

QIN GUOZHENG is a township official at Naweng Township in Luocheng County, Guangxi Province. He worked on PRCDP since the preparation phase, first in the township workstation, later in the country project management office (see his reflections in Part II, Article 10). In this article, he describes one of the catalytic events in the participatory process, which was the election of an ordinary farmer as project leader in PRCDP. His article provides a detailed account of the election process and the considerations the community took into account when electing their leader.

When the local villagers elected the Supervision and Implementation Group for the ditch project of Shepu Village, Naweng Township, the villagers unanimously elected Qin Shenggui as the group leader, a result that came totally unexpected for the county and township facilitators. This is the story of how an ordinary villager became the group leader.

Shepu village has ten natural sub-villages, 11 villagers' groups and a total population of 1,327. It is comprised of 322 households and has a total cultivated area of 957mu, including 807mu of paddy fields. About 50% of the natural sub-villages are located in a semi-hilly area, with residents from Zhuang, Miao, Yao, Han and other ethnic groups. The main sources of income

for the farmers are China fir tree plantations and rice crops.

Within Shepu village, the farmland of Shepu sub-village and Hongdong sub-village is topographically more favourable than the other natural sub-villages, with flatter land.

In the past, the villagers of these two sub-villages had grown two crops of rice a year with quite high yields. When the farmland was contracted to individual households in the 1980s, the village's main irrigation ditch had not been maintained for many years. Several parts had collapsed and weeds had grown everywhere. As a result, the ditch became blocked and was unable to hold much water. The villagers were aware that there were problems with

Photo: Qin Guozheng



Completed ditch, Shepu Village, Naweng Township.

the water provision, but nobody was willing to provide the money or labour to maintain or repair the ditch.

When the ideas of the PRCDP project were introduced to Shepu Village in 2005, the villagers were initially very excited, as the project might bring timely help to undertake the long overdue ditch repair. However, the villagers then had doubts whether or not they would be able to participate in this project and make decisions according to their own needs and capability. Also, the villagers had no idea how to start, since they had no previous experience in repairing ditches.

In order to efficiently involve local villagers efficiently in the project, emphasis was put on the following aspects. Firstly, by using tools such as listening, interviews, field visits and a literature review, the coordinators of the PRCDP project eventually established trust and good relationships with the villagers. Secondly, they intro-

duced the villagers to participatory tools such as village mapping, seasonal calendars, timelines and trend lines, risk matrix and priority setting, causal-flow diagrams and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.¹ By applying these tools to the project, local villagers were able to identify their critical needs, causes of poverty and decipher possible sources and solutions. As a result, the villagers' awareness, knowledge and skills for participation have been dramatically enhanced.

As a result of their inclusion, the villagers became very interested in the project and were motivated to rebuild the ditch. They all expressed the view that as long as the project provided financial and material support, the villagers of both sub-villages were keen to participate in its planning and willing to provide labour inputs into project construction.

While discussing how to build the ditch,

¹ See also Part III for further details on the process of the participatory poverty analysis and planning.

some villagers said that if they were to build it by themselves the problem would be that they did not have the necessary skills. So the construction quality would be difficult to guarantee and the construction schedule would be slow. Also, because it was the China fir timber logging and transporting season, villagers from both sub-villages would not have time to organise the construction. Therefore, they unanimously agreed to contract the construction job to qualified construction teams, and agreed to allow some villagers from both sub-villages to participate in construction on a voluntary basis, so as to manage and supervise the construction quality.

The villagers from both sub-villages then held a meeting to elect members of the Ditch Construction Management and Supervision Group. Each household had to send at least one family member to attend this meeting. They discussed and agreed the criteria to select members and finally elected seven villagers according to the criteria. Their duties were to properly control the construction quality of the ditch project, to ensure the successful completion of the works and to make sure that the project construction met both technical requirements and local realities, from design and implementation to completion. The group included four men and three women who were responsible for managing the materials in the course of construction, supervising the construction quality and participating in the completion check and acceptance (*yanshou*).

The next step was to select a group leader to take on the main responsibilities for the project management and implementation. In general, project management offices and villagers usually elect project group leaders from the village and sub-village cadres or economically active people in the village. Compared to the ordinary villagers, the village and sub-village cadres have more extensive social relations. They often have good relationships with the government and different departments.

They have rich social and managerial experience and they are often regarded as 'talents'. They are, therefore, influential within the village or trusted by the higher authorities.

In this case, however, Qin Shenggui, an ordinary villager, was nominated by one representative at the village meeting, and his nomination was immediately agreed upon by all the other villagers. Qin Shenggui accepted the nomination and was formally elected as the group leader of the PRCDP project in Shepu village and was warmly congratulated. Everybody congratulated Qin Shenggui at his election with a warm applause. Due to the fact that he was neither a village cadre, a sub-village cadre nor an economically active man, Qin Shenggui was nicknamed the 'common people's group leader' by the villagers.

The project facilitators were keen to understand why Qin Shenggui was elected as the group leader. The villagers' answer was unexpectedly simple: the paddy fields of Qin Shenggui's family were downstream of the ditch so if the ditch could not be properly maintained, he was one of the most direct stakeholders of the ditch repair.

It was not until then that the facilitators understood that the villagers all believed that the need for water to irrigate the paddy field would push Qin Shenggui to effectively implement the component, and that his sense of ownership and responsibility over the project was the strongest. Only through Qin Shenggui's hard work and commitment would the project be successful, and he would benefit as well as the villagers of the entire sub-village.

The simplest answer reflected the true feelings of the villagers. The result of the participatory process was that management responsibilities were conferred on someone who had the greatest stake in the project's success. In fact, during the course of the ditch construction, Qin Shenggui worked very hard as the group leader. He organised the Management and Supervision Group to exercise their duties. He

Photo: Johanna Pannarz



Shepu village in Luochcheng, with fields waiting to be irrigated.

undertook all the coordination work required over the course of construction. He noted all the problems that were brought up by the villagers throughout and promptly reported them to the village and township project staff. He then made sure that they were addressed by the construction team. He also reported the project construction status to the Village Project Implementation Group and the Township Working Station.

Not surprisingly, Qin Shenggui and the Ditch Construction Management and Supervision Group faced challenges from the first day. As the common villagers did not have any experience of project management, they lacked both sufficient confidence and capabilities required for such a major project. In particular, some knowledge and skills related to ditch construction were quite new to them, such as engineering, budget management and quality control. And because the role was voluntary, undertaking the work responsibly involved a strong commitment, substantial

investment in terms of time and energy and trade-offs between public service and family duty. Qin Shenggui was also confronted with the huge challenge of motivating his members to actively participate in the project all the time.

Through great efforts by all its members and a complicated ‘learning by doing’ process, the Ditch Construction and Repairing project was finally completed in October 2005, after four months of hard work. In the end, the villagers of Shepu natural village and Hongdong natural village were very happy with the completed ditch, because all households from these two natural villages benefited. The completed ditch made it easy to divert and use water, either for irrigation or drinking purposes, which relieved villagers from worrying about water. So far, the water has irrigated almost 200mu each year, and it has the capacity to irrigate more than 300mu if needed. It ended the cycle of villagers having to ask the government for assistance and fight for irrigation water



Photo: Song Haokun

Poor village in Luocheng.

every year. The villagers from Shepu and Hongdong commented that Qin Shenggui was a responsible 'common people's leader'. They trusted him entirely and were complimentary about his organisation and leadership skills. They were very pleased with the ditch and happy to see the success of PRCDP under the organisation of Qin Shenggui.

For us, the local government facilitators provided a number of important lessons. We found that locally-elected community organisations and group leaders were very committed and took their responsibilities seriously. A democratic voting process

helped to ensure the accountability and transparency of the institutions. But in order to ensure the efficiency and fairness of the election process, the external facilitator had an important role to play by helping local villagers clarify the criteria of a good group leader before starting the election.

We conclude from this experience that if the principles of the participatory approach and the core ideas contained within PCRDP are internalised into the villagers' body of knowledge, this could help guide future project management in the area.

CONTACT DETAILS

Qin Guozheng
Nawen Township
Luocheng County
Guangxi Province
PR China
Contact: songhk@ynu.edu.cn

How farmers claimed their rights to supervise projects

6

by SONG HAOKUN

SONG HAOKUN is an associate professor at Yunnan University and an executive member of the council of the Yunnan Participatory Association (formerly PRA Net). He was one of the first practitioners of participation in the province, as a researcher and project manager. He has worked on PRCDP as a facilitator since 2004. His article presents an interesting case from Sichuan where village cadres have neglected their duty and, as a result, the community has become active in monitoring project quality.

Subconsciously, people always pay more attention to something that is related to their own interests. When a ditch construction project is carried out in a local community, the quality of the work and the actual impacts of the project are the top issues for the local villagers. This article shows how critical it is to establish the relevant institutions to enable efficient information exchange, and how to adapt conflict management to local contexts when various issues are raised.

Project background

West Village, Loudong Township, Pingshan County, Sichuan Province is one of the first villages in Pingshan County where PRCDP was initiated. This large, poor village covers 12 villagers' groups and more

than 420 households. Its basic characteristics are the fragmentary landscape and great variance in altitude. According to different topographical characteristics, the village can be divided into the gully area, semi-hilly area and hilly area. The gully area is relatively flat, but the population density is high and the total area is small. Most cultivated land in West Village is located at a higher altitudes and further away from the river. Therefore it is necessary to pump water for irrigation during the dry season.

Under normal circumstances, each household in West Village spends as much as 200–300 RMB on pumping water every year. With inflation of diesel prices, the pumping expenses also increase each year. Therefore, building a gravity irriga-

tion ditch to divert water from the river upstream was voted as the priority by the villagers. It was finally listed as part of the 2008 Implementation Plan by the Project Management Office (PMO). This irrigation ditch would divert water from a large river with abundant runoff all year round, which is 800m away from West Village. Once the ditch had been completed, only 10% runoff of the river would be channelled to West Village every year, which will meet the irrigation needs of the village without causing too much negative impact to the downstream communities.

Project implementation and supervision

In order to encourage the local villagers to participate in the project process, the project management office decided that this project should be autonomously operated by the villagers. In accordance with this principle, the Project Implementation and Management Group, elected by the villagers, was assigned the responsibility of organising and implementing construction. The members of this group included the village cadres and some village representatives. Having consulted the villagers as well as reviewing some lessons from neighbouring villages which had carried out a similar construction project before, the Village Implementation Group decided that the villagers should provide their own labour to excavate the ditch foundation. Technically demanding jobs like masonry and concrete linings were contracted to local construction teams. Members of the Village Implementation Group and the Township PMO were responsible for supervising and inspecting the construction quality. In order to complete the project, it had to pass the formal acceptance checking, which was jointly conducted by the County PMO and technical department before the Township PMO disbursed the construction funds.

Although it was decided that all members of the Village Management Group were in charge of the day-to-day

supervision and management of the project, it was the village head who ultimately undertook most responsibilities but due to the fact that he was usually occupied by other management duties at the village level, the village head did not have sufficient time to monitoring the ditch project from the start. At the same time, some common villagers showed a strong interest and concern about the progress and quality of the work. The villagers believed that although the village had appointed construction quality supervisors, the members of the Implementation Group were too busy to stay at the job site to oversee construction quality all day long.

One day in September 2008 one of the villagers, Guo Yuangui, passed by a section of the irrigation ditch that had just been laid with concrete. Out of concern for the irrigation ditch, she used a stone to strike the ditch lining. She watched how the concrete ditch walls cracked, with dry sand flowing out. Obviously, an adequate application of concrete would not have created such a problem. She reported her finding to the contractor, but the contractor was dismissive and ignored her complaint. As the problem could not be solved by talking to the contractor, she reported what she had found to the managers of the Implementation Group, expecting them to handle the matter. However, her report was not taken seriously, and somebody even said: 'You did not pay for building the ditch, so it is none of your business.'

Guo Yuangui was enraged by such reply and she argued: 'Why is it none of my business? I did not pay, but I am the beneficiary. If the quality is poor and affects irrigation, I will have to spend money on pumping water.' Frustrated, she called the village party secretary and reported the matter. The village party secretary claimed he did not have time to handle it in person, but he reported the case to Director Wang from the Township PMO.

In less than half an hour, Director Wang came to the site and verified the

Photo: Song Haokun



Guo Yuangui standing on the newly constructed irrigation ditch.

situation together with the villagers, including Guo Yuangui. They reviewed the technical aspects of the job and confirmed that it was an issue related to the construction quality. Faced with the facts, the construction team were forced to agree that this problem occurred as a result of using an uneven concrete mixture. As requested by the villagers and the PMO, the construction contractor had to rework the entire 15m long section. The losses of over 1,000 RMB were covered by the construction team.

The villagers realised that although the problem had been resolved, no-one could guarantee that it would not occur again in the future. After consulting the other women in the group, the women of one village group decided that each household would take turns to input labour and voluntarily supervise the construction quality. The construction team also took on board the lesson, controlled each construction link, and ensured construction quality.

When the work was finally completed,

the farmers were very satisfied, and it successfully passed the technical acceptance check by county inspectors.

Reflections

In fact, villager Guo is just one individual with strong leadership skills who was willing to step forward to be responsible in a situation where wider participation is absent. Compared with the traditional cadre-centred management, the formation of the Project Implementation and Management Group had already made visible changes. However, due to the lack of sufficient participation and unspecified duty assignments, the function and the performance of the Project Implementation and Management Group in monitoring and quality control were very poor. The quality of a ditch would be a serious problem if there was not somebody like Guo playing the monitoring role. Even with Guo's participation, solving the problem was still not easy, because she had not been given a mandate to monitor. This is also the reason why she had to hand over the

problem to the PMO, which has enough power to make changes and did eventually solve the problem. Therefore, the root cause of the problem in this case was the lack of accountability to the community. This problem could be addressed by empowering local people like villager Guo and involving them in the whole monitoring and evaluation procedure.

Lessons learnt

When the community implements and monitors a project, it is necessary to decentralise responsibilities and rights to qualified members. As the main stakeholder in project implementation, the community should not confer all the responsibilities and powers on the Village Implementation Group members, as they are often the village cadres. Because village cadres have so many responsibilities and obligations, they often do not have enough energy to fully accomplish all the tasks they have been assigned. Moreover, when all the powers are conferred on them, they are unlikely to properly perform all their duties. On the contrary, if some responsibilities and powers are decentralised to other farmers, especially principle stakeholders, they could properly undertake tasks such as supervision to safeguard their own interests.

As supervisors, farmers need sufficient power to guarantee effectiveness of

their supervision roles. When farmers from the community find and report problems to the contractor, the latter might reject the farmer's opinions to protect their own interests. On the contrary, if the supervising farmers had certain powers e.g. the contracted works could not pass an acceptance check or be paid for without the supervising farmers' consent the contractors would be forced to listen to and accept the opinions and suggestions of the farmers.

Supervising farmers from the community also needs external support. Supervising construction quality is often technical. Due to limited skills and knowledge, the farmers themselves may not be able to identify specific technical problems, or they may not be able to identify quality-related problems. It may be difficult for them to convince construction teams to make corrections. Therefore, the farmers need support from outside, specifically professional guidance from technical departments, so as to properly supervise construction quality. The transaction costs would be lower if the farmers were involved in ordinary inspection, despite the necessary training that would be needed on the technical aspects of quality assurance. The knowledge would then be retained in the village and could be used again for other projects in the future.

CONTACT DETAILS

Song Haokun
Yunnan University
Kunming
Yunnan Province
PR China
Email: songhk@ynu.edu.cn



PART II:

Changing roles and relationships – the facilitator

Introduction

7

by JOHANNA PENNARZ

This section explores the experiences on the other side of the equation. As local governments are trying to redefine their roles and relationships with village communities, they discover the potentials of communities taking over responsibilities. Townships are the lowest level of the government hierarchies implementing government policies and programmes. They are the critical interface with rural communities.

Projects implemented by the government facilitation of the participatory approach in the Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP) mainly depended on government staff. The key challenge for government facilitators was to overcome the legacy of their relationship with communities, often marred by distrust, as well as biases on both sides. This section includes three short pieces that were written by local government staff, soon after they started implementing the participatory process. The main issue reflected upon is how participatory processes can be best facilitated.

Qin Cheng raises some of the key challenges that are linked to a facilitating role. Traditionally, the government tried to avoid the arguments and conflicts that often go along with open discussions. As facilitators they are required to manage expectations, balance diverse interests and manage conflicts within the communities. Qin Cheng's reflection is about how to achieve consensus and strengthen cohesion within the community. A major conclusion is that any project requires the participation of the community as a whole.

PRCDP used two types of facilitators. During the initial phase, township facilitators introduced participatory poverty analysis and planning in a small number of villages. Later, village facilitators were trained to roll out the approach throughout a large number of villages. During the workshop the participants reflected on the different approaches. **Qin Guozheng** argues that village facilitators are well placed to roll out the approach, because they are trusted by the community and accepted as mediators in case of conflicts.

Township government staff can, on the other hand, play more of an independent facilitation role. But **Meng Shunhui** describes the challenges that township facilitators face, mainly as a result of institutional constraints such as insufficient empowerment and being overburdened with routine management tasks. His case study provides a testimony of the efforts it takes to gain support from higher management levels and other government departments.

NGOs are often seen as honest brokers, more neutral and open to listening to the demands of communities. However, as the case study by **Wang Jianping** shows, as outsiders they often find it challenging to adapt to the local context. Her case study is

an interesting reflection on the limitations (and compromises) that well-meaning NGOs face, and in particular in a challenging ethnic minority setting. The ability to adapt to the cultural and social preferences of the community becomes a key factor for project success.

The case studies in this section reflect on some of the dilemmas of facilitation in China, particularly on how to deal with indigenous structures of power and inequality. Local communities can show a high degree of strength and resilience in dealing with outside intervention. External facilitators are obviously struggling to balance the need for cultural and social sensitivity with their aspiration to help communities develop and change.

CONTACT DETAILS

Johanna Pennarz
ITAD, Hove, UK
Email: Johanna.pennarz@itad.com
Website: www.itad.com

Reflections from the Sanjiang Workshop

8

by JOHANNA PENNARZ

When Guangxi Province conducted a Participatory Poverty Analysis (PPA) in 2004 in preparation for the Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP), it was a ground-breaking exercise that deeply affected the government partners working on poverty reduction.¹ Guangxi Province had a population of 48 million people living in poverty, most of them ethnic minorities living in the Karst Mountains. Through the PRCDP, the provincial Poverty Alleviation Office experimented with a bottom-up approach to participation, where local communities were fully mobilised and involved. This new approach to poverty reduction changed roles and relationships, as the excerpt in Box 1 shows.

Guangxi has gone a long way in building capacities for participation within the government system. During the preparation phase, PRCDP organised a series of training and sharing workshops on participatory approaches in Guangxi. The

Box 1: Excerpt from the provincial report

Governmental projects in the past had been planned projects, which were implemented by the relevant government departments and the townships (towns), and the local people were not 'in the know'. Being influenced by such for a long time, they were unenthusiastic and unconfident about the project implementation, and worried about not being able to afford the collection of money from them, especially the larger, technically intensive projects (...)

During the specific implementation of the project, we only put hands on some directional issues, and left the other work arrangements and fund-using to the decision of all the project community groups. According to characteristics of agricultural production, we completely allowed the community villagers to discuss and decide by themselves on how to smoothly implement the project and complete it as scheduled, without affecting the farm work, and autonomously arrange labour time and the number of labours to be contributed by each household. Once they encountered technical or other issues, they could directly report to the responsible persons of the county or township (town) Project Management

continued on next page

¹ The project targeted six counties within the province.

Box 1 continued

Office (PMO). No matter when, no matter where, we would answer to all their requests, and try every means possible to alleviate their sufferings. Therefore, we further earned trust and cooperation from the community villagers, and laid a foundation for the smooth implementation of the project (...)

We allowed the community farmers to clearly understand and participate in all the links, from project determination to money appropriation, money management and future maintenance of the project. In addition, during the course of project implementation, the community management groups took the lead in posting information sheets on the walls of sensitive issues of concern to the people such as how the money was used, consumption and sources of materials, number of labours the people who contributed, and how the project schedule was followed. They made their own decisions and managed by themselves on whether the project needed to collect money from the people. As a result, such a means of management made the community villagers very satisfied.

Source: PRCDP Guangxi Province Report (2005) on participation in PRCDP (not published)



Photo: Johanna Pennarz

Qin Guozheng (left) at the Sanjiang Workshop.

purpose of these workshops was to support the process of participatory poverty analysis and planning through regular sharing and reflection. The participants, a small number of local government staff, were involved in the entire process. The workshop in Sanjiang in early 2005 was an opportunity to take stock of the process so far. The following three articles are reflections on the participatory process presented at this workshop.

CONTACT DETAILS

Johanna Pennarz
ITAD, Hove, UK
Email: Johanna.pennarz@itad.com
Website: www.itad.com

Facilitating community-level processes

9

by QIN CHENG

QIN CHENG is a township official at Xianan Township in Huanjiang County, Guangxi Province. During the PRCDP preparation phase he was a township facilitator during the Participatory Poverty Analysis and Planning process. The following is his reflection on the process.

I believe that before deciding whether to implement a project in a certain community, it is necessary to find out if it is of interest to the local people and if it is what they urgently need. If the answer is yes, I believe we should convene a meeting, and make the heads of each household sign for commitment. Secondly, we should find out if the project implementation would involve any other sub-villages. If yes, we should first let both sides reach written agreements. Finally, the people should feel 'I need this project, and it is not a project that the higher authorities arranged for me.'

Only after the project funding had been settled were the farmers interested in participating in the discussion of fund management. While considering where to deposit the money and how to use it, what the farmers considered first was how to guarantee their right of control over the use

of the money. Once their right of control was secured, they could consider how the money could be safely, conveniently and effectively used and managed.

There were often various conflicts during the course of project arrangement. Since the community farmers were eager to shake off poverty, they thought that once the investigation was complete, they would gain access to financial supports immediately. However, the farmers who did not benefit were less keen to participate in the project. Some of them even became factors hindering implementation. Therefore, it became necessary to hold a meeting for all villagers, and ask the representatives to give speeches. The representatives had been elected by the villagers in the natural villages and therefore had the mandate to represent the majority of the people. In a plenary meeting, it would usually be the



Photo: Johanna Pennarz

Maonan village community in Huanjiang County, proud of having successfully completed their drinking water projects (Guangxi Province).

representative who would speak. If there were people with different opinions, the township facilitators would need to explain to them why their opinions were not adopted. If there were hard to deal with households which were difficult to deal with, it was sometimes necessary to talk to them outside of the public meeting.

Due to the multi-faceted nature of poverty, I believe that when selecting projects and distributing resources, we cannot only focus on the poorest households,. We also need to consider the feelings and thoughts of the majority. If a certain project is only implemented amongst the poor households, it is very likely that it

would not receive support or help from the other farmers. Therefore, the best solution is that all community members are allowed to participate in the project but that the very poor and destitute households get preferred access to subsidies, labour contributions and exemptions. In this way, the project is more likely to be accepted by the entire village, which will benefit the implementation. This will not only make the farmers in the community more cohesive, but also play an active role in improving the environmental and economic situation in the entire community, which would better represent the purposes of the project.

CONTACT DETAILS

Qin Cheng
Xianan Township, Huanjiang County
Guangxi Province
PR China
Contact: songhk@ynu.edu.cn

The role of village facilitators

10

by QIN GUOZHENG

QIN GUOZHENG is a township official at Naweng Township in Luocheng County, Guangxi Province. He has been working on PRCDP since the preparation phase, first in the township workstation, later in the country project management office (see also his article (no 5) in Part I). The following is from the project preparation phase, when he presented his reflections on the role of facilitating participatory approach.

At the stage of conducting participatory work in the pilot villages, since everybody was quite new to the participatory approach, the County Project Management Office (PMO) transferred all the competent project facilitators to the county and township levels to tackle some initial problems encountered in the pilot villages. A working structure came into being, with county and township project facilitators as the main drivers and village facilitators as the supplementary drivers.

At the roll-out stage, the number of experienced project facilitators was limited and there were quite a number of project villages where participatory assessment was needed. One problem was the lack of sufficient human resources from the county and township level. In

order to solve this issue, our county fully relied on trained village-level project facilitators to play their roles. The County PMO and township working stations were responsible for quality control.

We decided to hand over greater responsibilities to the village-level facilitators. We trained a group of village-level facilitators and improved the participatory capacity of the communities. The village-level facilitators played great roles, mainly in the following aspects.

- They were part of the local community and shared common development needs. The villagers were willing to listen to and trust the village-level facilitators and their feeling of ownership over the project doubled.
- They also had relatively a strong organisational capacity. They had experience built



Photo: Qin Guozheng

Participatory planning process in Luocheng.

over a long period of time working in the rural areas, something which the county and township facilitators did not have.

- They were extremely familiar with the

situations of their villages, which was very favourable for conducting the work.

- Their authority was respected in the mediation of all sorts of conflicts.

CONTACT DETAILS

Qin Guozheng
Nawen Township
Luocheng County, Guangxi Province
PR China
Contact: songhk@ynu.edu.cn

The role of the township facilitator

11

by MENG SHUNHUI

MENG SHUNHUI is a township official from Huishui Township in Longsheng County, Guangxi Province. He has been working on PRCDP as a facilitator since the preparation phase, first in the township and later in the Country Project Management Office (PMO). In this article he presents his lessons as facilitator during the preparation phase.

During the course of piloting village-level participatory project planning and participatory extension, our county adhered to the local mechanisms. Here, I share some of my reflections on the facilitation process.

Remove control and let the township facilitators do the practice

The township facilitators worked hard to introduce the participatory approach to the project villages. After the initial training, the township facilitators organised the villagers and conducted participatory pilot work in the pioneer villages. They mobilised the villagers and convened villagers' congresses, so as to understand poverty and its causes and seek solutions in the area. After almost one month of work, they assembled a participatory poverty relief project planning report.

Provide township facilitators with opportunities for training, and lobby the leaders of the townships

As the township project facilitators were not full-time they also had their own jobs to do too. Therefore, they were very busy. In order to help them handle the relationship between full-time and part-time jobs properly, we actively communicated with their township leaders, trying to get support and understanding from them. The township leaders said they would give their full support to the PRCDP project as long as it was needed. Therefore, no matter what kind of meeting the PRCDP project convened, the facilitators could put all their energies into the project duties. The County PMO always tried to ensure they could attend the meetings, and ensure workloads were relatively stable and



Photo: Deng Weijie

Scoring as part of the participatory planning in Huanjiang County (Guangxi Province).

continuous. The results show that that we were fairly successful in our approach.

Work hard to create a favourable participatory environment for the township project facilitators, and enhance their feelings of ownership

The County PMO tried hard to stress to facilitators the importance of attending all meetings at the county level, so that they could be kept informed of the project progress. In addition, in all the meetings attended by the county leaders and township leaders, the responsible persons of the County PMO often praised the facilitators, giving positive feedback on their working achievements and attitudes. The meeting also showed the leader and colleagues that participating in learning tours could be fun. This helped them to understand that the PRCDP project work was steadfast and that it was worth their time and

energy. In addition, everybody unanimously agreed that the initial work of the PRCDP project moved ahead smoothly, which was attributable to the support of the township leaders and tireless work of the facilitators.

In order to further enhance their feeling of ownership of the project, each time the PRCDP project experts came to Longsheng, we promptly directed them to attend informal meetings, so that they could listen to the opinions of the experts and give feedback to them.¹ Their opinions were valued because they were from the grassroots level and so understood the local context better. We also asked them to remember the opinions of the experts as a reference.

The PRCDP project staff organised the training courses on participatory village-level planning held in our county. They adopted a cooperative approach, which

¹ The author is referring to the visits of the World Bank/DfID missions and consultants.

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Meng Shunhui presents his feedback at the Sanjiang Workshop (Guangxi Province).

included dividing the tasks and each staff member teaching a different topic. The training sessions were very successful. With such an atmosphere and trust from the county, working initiatives were greatly improved.

During the entire preliminary project period, the County PMO mainly took on the role of organising and coordinating services and acting as a go-between, whilst the township facilitators were the specific implementers and operators. Therefore, we also devised our strategy for future work. The higher authorities and PRCDP

contributed so much in the way of human resources, materials and finance on training the township level project facilitators. The projects were mostly implemented at the grassroots level. So we must make full advantage of these resources and train more facilitators. Through this approach we will be able to rely on them taking initiative; we provide more support to their work and learning, and let them truly participate in the entire process of project implementation, so that the PRCDP projects will be more smoothly implemented in the future.

CONTACT DETAILS

Meng Shunhui
Longsheng County, Guangxi Province
PR China
Contact: songhk@ynu.edu.cn

12

Adapting to the local context: lessons learnt from external facilitation

by WANG JIANPING

WANG JIANPING is Associate Professor in Yunnan University and a member of the Yunnan Participatory Research Association (formerly Yunnan PRA Net). She has extensive experience of working with local NGOs, international institutions, the private sector and local government. Her research is on the sustainable management of natural resources and poverty alleviation. This article presents the findings from a study to evaluate the outcomes of a participatory process facilitated by ICRAF.

Introduction

In rural China, the large numbers of government-initiated development projects have visibly changed the traditional resource use patterns and the rural landscape. However, in most cases, the top-down decision-making structures and government-led management of these projects neglected to consult local people. At the same time, some NGOs, civil society organisations and donor agencies have become involved in enhancing local capacity and promoting community engagement. In Pingzhang village in Yunnan Province, the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) played

a significant complementary role to that of the government in facilitating and empowering local communities for social learning, and enhancing the public consultation and monitoring processes.¹

Compared to spontaneous social learning processes, NGO-facilitated capacity building processes are often quicker in terms of introducing new ideologies and notions. Sometimes, when NGO objectives and missions intersect with local interests, local people and groups are more willing to participate in external interventions because they view them as an opportunity to gain greater financial and human resources. However,

¹ The International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) is an autonomous, non-profit organisation established in 1977. See: www.worldagroforestry.org

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



High mountains and deep valleys provide the setting for diverse livelihoods in Baoshan (Yunnan Province).

because both government and NGO-driven projects are based on external facilitation, they have some inherent pitfalls. They do not represent a spontaneous social change process that is based on self-selection and self-identity and there is a risk that they may not necessarily lead to fundamental attitude change. Facilitation of change processes presents a huge challenge and there have been many cases where the local people's behaviour has simply returned to the previous situation, after the programme's interventions have been withdrawn. Some of lessons and challenges are presented below, taken from the example of Pingzhang village.²

Profile of Pingzhang village

Pingzhang village is inhabited by the Yi ethnic group. It includes three natural villages with a population of around 2000. It is located in a mountainous area, 25 kilometres away from Baoshan City. The village rests on the side of a mountain at an eleva-

tion between 1000 and 1800 metres. The community lives in chronic poverty as a result of the restricted amount of arable land, low productivity due to the high altitude and the cold climate, and a high population density.

The total area of agricultural land is 3300 mu. Because 43% of the area is on steeply sloping land the land is mostly dry and there is only limited paddy land. As a result, only a limited variety of crops can be grown in Pingzhang, with only a single crop of rice being planted in the paddy fields per year, and corn and wheat planted in most of crop plantations fields as winter crops.

The land scarcity issue has become more critical in Pingzhang during the last ten years because of pressure from the Government to fulfil quotas for reforestation. This has meant that large areas of sloping land have been converted into forests within a short period of time and planted with a small number of species

¹ This case study is based on interviews in Pingzhang village, October 2006.

during the Sloping Land Conservation Programme (SLCP) period.³

Although many development projects had previously tried to assist this community, the outcomes of these projects were poor. Local villagers still reported only modest changes in their livelihoods. They also reported a lack of meaningful participation in wider-scale management activities. As one villager described it, 'all types of projects have come and gone but none of them has brought us genuine benefits'.⁴

Having realised that insufficient attention has been given to the role and capabilities of local institutions by previous projects, ICRAF then facilitated the Community-based Sustainable Development Project (FCBSD) in Pingzhang village. This project aimed to improve the lives of the poor communities and promote the conservation of mountain ecosystems by introducing a participatory approach and innovative models for agriculture and forestry extension. ICRAF decided to start with the capacity building of local organisations.

Institutional building in Pingzhang

At the start of the project, the Pingzhang Village Administrative Committee was given sole responsibility to guide and implement FCBSD project. However, in order to ensure the funds went directly to households and to avoid unnecessary financial leakage, five independent, natural village-based Executive Village Development Committees (VDCs) were set up after six months of the pilot scheme between 2005 and 2006.

The members and the chairmen of these committees were elected by villagers during village meetings. The responsibilities of these five committees included

participatory planning and resource allocation, such as breeding, sampling, fertilizers and small loans, forest management and conflict management. Although the ICRAF programme had no particular requirements regarding the range of candidates, three of the chairmen among the five VDCs were also members of the Village Administrative Committees at that time.

After two years of piloting, it was reported that the three VDCs which had members drawn from the Village Administrative Committees were working very well. Regulations and rules had been strictly implemented and were monitored by the villagers themselves. The other two committees, however, were facing difficulties. With poor linkages and interactions with both the Township Government and their Village Administrative Committees, these two committees had failed to receive the necessary assistance and support from the current administrative system. The members lost their enthusiasm after one year of voluntary-based work. They admitted that they lacked both the leadership and management experience to carry on the project. At the same time, after several unsuccessful attempts at trying different candidates, villagers had also lost confidence in the abilities of both the Chairman and the members of the executive committee.

Lessons learnt

The project experiences in Pinzhang show that social and cultural acceptance is a key factor for successful capacity building.

Integrate project-based institutional building into social activities

As a small village with only 35 householders, the Lujiadi villagers have a tradition

³ In 1999 the Chinese Government initiated the 'Grain for Green' programme (or SLCP: Sloping Land Conservation Programme). Its aim was to transform steep farmlands into forests or grasslands, and thus reduce erosion in the upper or middle streams of the Yellow and Yangtze rivers. The Government was to give 1500 kilograms of grain and three hundred Yuan per hectare to farmers who transformed their farmland into forests or grasslands. The government also aimed to provide free seedlings or grass seeds to farmers.

⁴ Personal interview with villagers in Pingzhang village, October 2006.



Paddy fields, dry land and wood land are part of livelihoods in Baoshan (Yunnan Province).

whereby they organise a dinner party and worship on the second day of every Chinese New Year. During the dinner, all the villagers sit together and discuss the village development plan and other public affairs. Such gatherings also function as a way to mediate conflicts and initiate collective actions, but in a casual and friendly atmosphere, sometimes making it easier to reach consensus.

The village Head and members of the Village Development Committee reported that they were willing to engage in these sorts of activity, since the activities gave them an opportunity to gain a good reputation by complying with group norms of collective responsibility, and by encouraging and mobilising villagers to attend meetings or collective activities. Because village cadres and committee members attended these social activities as common members, the voices of ordinary villagers could be heard by village officers but in a more casual way, a method much preferred by many villagers as a way to reflect their real needs, without causing offence to the local

authorities. These activities were more socially and culturally embedded. So the public monitoring and moral standards favoured by these traditional norms gave the village officials more of an incentive to be accountable and righteous. VDC members in the Pingzhang case stated that it was easier to convince and elicit community members to comply with committee's missions during the process of collective action or social activities.

Use culturally acceptable ways to strengthen transparency

The Pingzhang case studies showed how important it is to be aware of cultural factors when introducing new financial management methods into the local communities. It was critical in establishing a more locally-adapted financial system. For instance, combining routine reporting systems and efficient auditing systems was introduced to Pingzhang by ICRAF experts. This skill would build the member's trust in their own financial systems. One chairman reported that in

order to make the financial budget more transparent, the Village Development Committee he belonged to had displayed the financial records on the village notice board. However, people were not in the habit of checking the authenticity of this data, nor did they have the knowledge to do so. He said 'People just instinctively assume our hands are not clean, even without any substantial evidence.'

In contrast, more culturally acceptable methods had been applied by another Village Development Committee in Pingzhang. The accountant and cashier of this committee said that he explained the details of the financial records item by item at the annual New Year gathering. Villagers were then able to raise their doubts in a casual atmosphere, which was less likely to upset the group's leader.

The challenge of elite capture

In Chinese rural communities in general, elite domination has been a common phenomenon. Within the local communities, certain groups benefited from the existing institutions more than others. The village elites, including village cadres, rich families and families with extensive political networks or social capital, have generally been able to exert enough power to claim their interests over others. They have more authority in terms of conflict management, resource allocation and local decision-making.

In Pingzhang, the weight of different members' voices varied with their wealth, social status and local authority. The poor continued to be unable to contest with the village elites. In other words, inclusive group membership provided the basis for wide participation, but did not necessarily lead to equitable resource allocations or resource claims. For example, it was reported by Pingzhang villagers that the

village cadres and relatives of the village cadres were much more active in village meetings and decision-making than the common members.⁵

The local concept of 'fairness' does not mean 'egalitarian'

Sometimes, fairness and equality are two different objectives, which cannot both achieve maximum outcomes at the same time. For example, according to a member of the Pingzhang Village Development Committee:

At the beginning of the project, ICRAF provided us with some new species of corn seeds, but nobody wanted to take the risk to test them in their own land, therefore, many seeds were wasted at the first year. Only I and another two or three members of [the] Village Development Committee grew it in small plots. At the end of first year this new species appeared quite adapted to local ecologic conditions and gained [a] high yield. Then, in the second year, all households rush[ed] to us and asked us to share the seeds. The whole amount of seeds provided by ICRAF is far less than the large demands. I suggested choosing several families whose land is close to each other to grow the new species corn for one more year, so we can harvest more seeds. However, nobody wanted to give up this opportunity. As a result, seeds were allocated equally and each household gained a very small amount [of] seeds. As you know, a small growing area is not good for corn's pollination and keeping the genetic purification.

Motivation to participate does not always create sustainable processes

It often happens that some government or donor sponsored development projects are embraced in the first place by local people as a potential source of important financial

⁵ Another example is the International Heifer Foundation. It had promoted a new confinement cattle feeding programme in Pingzhang village after 2004. Several families who had become involved in this programme were either the families of village cadres, or rich families who could afford the initial investment required.

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Transport on narrow mountain roads still depends on animals (Baoshan, Yunnan Province).

resources. One of the Pingzhang villagers said:

No matter what type of projects they are, we will welcome them, [in so] far as they can bring us some financial source or tangible benefit.

The main motive of local people to involve themselves in these initiatives and groups had been the financial resources they might receive from participating. But they lacked the aspiration to maintain the project on a sustainable basis. It was quite a common occurrence that once these groups had been set up, there was little or no incentive for the local people to actively maintain the project in accordance with its objectives. Some of the villagers' inputs were nominal or superficial, particularly when they were paid to attend meetings.

Reflection: building on customary institutions

The experience of the ICRAF project in Pingzhang village showed that external

facilitation was critical in some poor communities. This was especially true when local people displayed a low level of motivation with respect to collective resource management, due to the real or perceived low level of benefits, capacity gaps and weak social capital. Actually, in the Pingzhang case, local development relied heavily on financial and technical assistance from the Government, NGOs, research institutions or other donors. However, it is questionable as to whether these initiatives would be able to sustain themselves after the external assistance has been withdrawn. Was it possible to implement similar initiatives on a larger scale? Without substantial capacity and institutional building, some communities market situations were likely to get worse once external facilitation had ceased.

Evidence from this case study demonstrated that the success of external interventions depended on one key factor: whether or not the local community had a sufficiently strong and enabling institutional structures or whether external proj-

ects had the capacity to re-establish locally-adopted managing mechanisms drawn from customary institutions. Especially for local communities with strong social differentiation, (different income generating activities, different access to natural

resources, as well as diverse interests) it is critical to link capacity building with the customary institutions and to provide incentives and penalties in line with the culturally and socially accepted norms and rules.

CONTACT DETAILS

Wang Jianping
Yunnan University
Kunming, Yunnan Province
PR China
Email: kmynwjp@yahoo.com.cn



PART III:

Management practices – towards fairer and more transparent resource allocation

Introduction

13

by JOHANNA PENNARZ

More than 20 years of poverty reduction in China have seen substantial successes. But there are also notable adjustments in government strategies in targeting the poor. The most significant shift was from area-based poverty reduction to people-centred approaches, with a gradual realisation that poverty can only be effectively addressed if the poor are actively involved.¹ This has been a long journey, but there is an increasing recognition that it is the poor who hold the key to successful poverty reduction.

A major innovation in the recent 10-year plan on poverty reduction was to target poor villages. Under the previous plan, only poor counties and townships were targeted. As a result, few funds have reached the remote and less accessible villages. In an attempt to improve target-

Box 1: New ideas on poverty reduction are trickling through

Mr. Wang Zhi, Director of the Yunnan Poverty Alleviation and Development Office (PADO), pointed out in the Workshop on Poverty Reduction of Yunnan Province (2010) that successful poverty alleviation is:

...to actively motivate social forces to participate in the promotion of poverty alleviation development in all townships; to promote incentives to the general public to fully participate in pilot work; to regard the general public as the decision-making subjects, construction subjects and beneficiary subjects; to motivate them to construct their own homes, and achieve the dual benefits of improving quality of infrastructure and services and enjoying achievements.

ing and better address the needs of the poor, the national Poverty Alleviation and Development Office (PADO) introduced participatory village plans. All designated

¹ The Chinese government has implemented programmes on (area-based) poverty reduction since the 1980s. In 1994, the government introduced the '8-7 Plan' (National Plan for Poverty Reduction), which was meant to lift the majority of the remaining 80 million poor above the government's poverty line during the seven-year period 1994–2000. The 8-7 Plan focused on three main programmes: subsidised loans, food-for-work and government budgetary grants. In 2000 the Government adopted the New Century Rural Poverty Alleviation Plan for the period of 2001–10, which focused on targeting 50,000 designated poor villages.

Box 2: PPA in Guangxi – feedback from a township facilitator

Who were the poor in the communities? Who were the target groups for the poverty alleviation development project? The previous practices were to weigh by the standard of per capita annual net income of the farmers. The households with *per capita* annual net income below 628 RMB were considered as destitute households, and the ones between 628–924 RMB were considered low-income poor households. The net income = total incomes – family operational costs and expenditures – depreciation of production-purpose fixed assets – taxes – hand-outs to rural relatives, etc.

Such a calculation was difficult for ordinary government staff, not to mention ordinary farmers. I had once been to a farmer's home and calculated his family net incomes with him, and we just could not make it in half a day. Therefore, who were the poor? It was totally impossible to define with the previous method. Many township and village cadres determined by estimates, which were highly subjective and biased. Such arbitrary estimations could not be recognised by the communities, and many people fought hard to be recognised as 'poor households.'

Through the PPA, the communities themselves worked out their own criteria for classification of poor households. They soon reached unanimity in defining a poor household which lay a solid foundation for accurately identifying the target groups. We also learnt that the poverty status of community farmers was not fixed. If the normal households, which were defined as relatively better off, once experienced a serious disaster or illness, they might revert to poverty very soon; whilst the poor households, after being supported by projects, might have a better life. In this case, whose lives changed? How effective were the poverty alleviation projects? We used poverty trends and seasonal charts to understand the changes.

Source: Zhou Zhifei (2005).

poor villages targeted by the plan were required to prepare a participatory village development plan as a basis for the investments. However, many villages never prepared such a plan, and where they had plans, they often failed to inform the government department dealing with the allocation of funding (Park and Sangui, 2009).

Linking participatory planning with funding decisions remains a major challenge. Funding for specific projects is usually allocated through a lengthy top-down process, moving through the government hierarchy. Local government may seek to address local priorities, but this is often done on an ad-hoc basis. The interface with village planning is usually not managed in an active and transparent way.

Yang Gang's case from Sichuan Province presents an innovative practice of how funding can be allocated in a participatory and transparent way. A participatory planning process is a prerequisite for all proposals selected through a competitive process. The main achievement of this practice is that the criterion for selection is

open and the process is done in public, thus introducing some accountability in the allocation of funding.

The government does not have an approach to target the poor beyond administrative villages.² This is an issue particularly in the southwest, where administrative villages are large and stretched out, often covering more than 10 natural villages, with very different natural and socio-economic conditions (see also the articles in the earlier section, describing the project background). When it comes to the allocation of funding within administrative villages, these often depend on informal relationships. Village cadres are the main point of contact for local government to decide what is needed most and where. The process of Participatory Poverty Analysis (PPA), which Guangxi conducted in 2004, was a new and different way of identifying the poor.

Qin Zhurong describes how his village identified the poorest natural villages and households. He highlights the fact that identification of the poor may be a contentious process. Because it has impli-

² The poorest of the poor, mostly disabled or single elderly people, are targeted by social protection mechanisms.

Box 3: What is Participatory Poverty Analysis (PPA)?

PPA focuses on the perspectives of the poor and marginalised. It aims at understanding poverty within a local context. Focusing on people's own understanding of poverty means that the analysis is more practical and realistic. It can also help to make policies and projects better tailored to the needs of the poor and assist with better targeting of certain groups, for example women or the poorest households.

Based on the PPA, farmers identified their priorities for immediate project support and planned their projects accordingly. The process of allocating resources was challenging. The facilitators were required to mediate conflicts and learn how decision-making can be facilitated in a transparent and fair way. At the same time, they learnt how to protect the interests of poor and marginal groups for more equitable outcomes.

In the PPA process, attention is paid to the vulnerable groups – women, children and the aged. Villagers use their own criteria and scoring for identifying poverty-stricken households. Then the causality of poverty is discussed.

- The villagers comment freely and their comments are **documented** on a large sheet of paper.
- They also **rank and score** the principal factors causing poverty, as seen by the poor households.
- This is followed by **trend analysis** to learn whether the community is getting poorer or richer over the last five years, in terms of grains, food, income, natural disasters and relevant factors.
- **Seasonal analysis** of poverty is also conducted over food availability, expenditure, revenue, disaster and scored for deficit and easy months.
- This is followed by interviewing and analysing responses from five or six **very poor** households on food availability, clothing, transport and causes of poverty.
- **Women** are also selected and interviewed at random to learn about their position, their views on poverty etc.
- Then **community meetings** are held to facilitate the learning process and validate ongoing analysis.
- PPA is followed by Participatory Planning (PP) so as to culminate PPA into actual village planning.

cations for funding eligibility, it had to be carefully managed. For his village the process was about reaching consensus on who should be eligible, a decision that would have caused much resistance if taken by outsiders.

Community contributions are another contentious issue. Basic infrastructure projects, like those funded by the Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP) require some contribution from

the community, usually provided in the form of labour. The question of whether and how much labour to contribute can result in much discussion and dissent. In PRCDP, local government has learnt that contentious issues like this are rather dealt with through open discussion than avoidance. **Chen Chunyun's case study** (Longling County, Yunnan) describes how two communities have agreed different approaches to the issue of labour contributions.

CONTACT DETAILS

Johanna Pennarz
ITAD, Hove, UK
Email: Johanna.pennarz@itad.com
Website: www.itad.com

REFERENCES

- Park, A. and W. Sangui (2009) 'Community-based development and poverty alleviation: an evaluation of China's Poor Village Investment Programme.' Paper prepared as part of the World Bank China Poverty Assessment.
- Zhifei, Z. (2005) 'The roles of PPA in poverty alleviation development of Ercun Village, Rong'an County.' Presentation at the Guangxi Workshop, Beijing December 2005.

14

From participation inside villages to competitive selection amongst villages

by YANG GANG

YANG GANG is the deputy director of the Poverty Alleviation and Development Office (PADO) in Pingshan County, Sichuan Province. He was the project coordinator for PRCDP in the county. His case study describes an innovative practice to strengthen transparent allocation of funding through a competitive process, which involves communities from the beginning. The practice has since been rolled out to other parts of the province.

Pingshan County is one of the World Bank project counties in Sichuan Province where villages were selected for PRCDP. In Pingshan, we introduced a competitive selection method into the PRCDP project. The aim was to mobilise grassroots groups to participate in the project, improve the project outreach and generate maximum benefits from limited funding. Before finalising the annual project plans, we requested that the villages participate in a competitive process for project selection. We asked the project villages to convene assemblies or congresses to formulate implementation plans. We asked village headmen to act as representatives and to attend the open debate where projects were discussed and to sign letters of responsibility with the PMO once the projects were

agreed. In the following, we describe some of the positive outcomes of this competitive project selection process.

Past experiences and new expectations

In the past, the county issued plans to the project units. We notified them to prepare project implementation plans and organise accordingly. This traditional means of project management has the following disadvantages:

- Decision makers arrange projects based on their personal impressions, which could hardly be fully fair, open and equitable.
- Since projects are arranged by the higher authorities, the attitude of the communities is to simply do things to match the amount of money they get. Communities are passive in organising the participation

of the masses or implementing the project.

- There is insufficient active participation of project farmers. Supervision and management is poor, as are the project outcomes.

- In stressing construction but neglecting management, many projects implemented in the past were not sustainable, because with nobody managing them serious destruction was caused.

Having learnt from these shortcomings, we introduced a competitive selection mechanism into the practices of PRCDP. Its guiding principle was to apply a participatory approach, to release internal energies and allow farmers to participate in the entire process of project planning, implementation, monitoring, management and final check and certificate. Through this process, we wanted to strengthen the capacities of grassroots groups, mobilise the farmers, and engender a change in attitude from 'I am requested to do it' to 'I want to do it'. We wanted to introduce an element of competition into the participation process and in doing so, actively promote participation, thereby strengthening the participatory process itself and promoting democracy as a wider principle.

Innovative methods for funding allocations

Competitive selection is a new method. Based on extensive inquiry into the opinions of the departments and project villages, we formulated the following rules to be carried out in three steps:

Mobilising the masses and preparing the implementation plan

In May 2007, we issued a circular on applying and competing for World Bank projects (PRCDP), based on 1 million RMB of the fiscal poverty alleviation fund and 2 million RMB of loans available for PRCDP in the year. In the circular, the scope, conditions and requirements for competing for the projects were clarified. It stressed that the project villages should convene farmers'

assemblies or congresses to adequately promote democracy and listen extensively to the opinions of the masses. So the first step was to convene plenary meetings in villages, where farmers proposed project components and selected representatives.

Next, the villages convened a farmers' representative meetings, collated the farmers' needs, and voted on the prioritisation of components. They conducted detailed discussions about the prioritised components, prepared an implementation plan and subsequent management method and then submitted their plan to the tendering process. Simultaneously, they wrote the presentation report for participating in the tender for components.

The next step was to criteria for project selection. The PMO took the lead. They listened to the opinions of the participating departments and farmers in the community, and formulated the criteria. These included:

- the technology, feasibility and necessity of the implementation plan;
- whether the project planning design process was conducted in a participatory manner;
- whether the components were proposed after convening the villager's congress;
- how the implementation plan, labour input plan and subsequent management method were discussed;
- whether there were specific labour inputs and a fundraising plan; and
- whether subsequent management methods and guarantee measures were formulated.

To examine the implementation plans, the county established an evaluation committee comprised of experts from 11 project management and implementation departments (such as poverty alleviation, finance, work relief, agriculture, agricultural machinery, animal husbandry, water conservancy, education, public health). They would evaluate and give credits to the implementation plans. A supervision group was also established, comprised of



Photo: Yang Gang

Open debate on the project.

members from County Congress, the Disciplinary Committee and Supervision Committee, with the Audit Bureau sealing and filing the evaluation results.

The next step was to determine the project villages in an open debate. There were eleven project villages eligible for the Pingshan County open debate. Attendees included the leaders in charge of the PRCDP as well as executive directors of PRCDP township working stations from nine project townships. Representatives (village headman usually) came from 11 project villages and more than 50 people from the relevant project implementation departments. The Deputy Party Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Pingshan County Committee, Director of Publicity Department, and Deputy County Governor also attended the meeting and gave speeches, and the Foreign-Funded Poverty Alleviation Project Management Centre of Sichuan Province sent two officials to the meeting. The meeting lasted for four hours.

An anchorperson from the local TV station presided over the open debate, where the 11 village representatives presented their proposals (in an order determined through casting lots). This was followed by a question and answer session, and then concluding statements by the representatives. After this, 11 evaluators awarded their scores according to predefined criteria. The facilitator then ranked the candidates' scores which were then confirmed by all participants. Finally, a final list of project villages was determined and agreements signed with the PMO.

During the speeches there was much warm applause. Afterwards, the Supervision Group opened the sealed documents and announced the scores for the implementation plans from the evaluation committee, adding them to the scores from the open debate. They then selected the top five villages based on the scores: Quanhe, Gaotian, Nianmi, Jieji and Hanxi villages. They were officially selected as priority

Photo: Yang Gang



Open evaluation of the contested plans.

villages for PRCDP and each of these villages obtained 200,000 RMB of national poverty alleviation funds and a 400,000 RMB World Bank loan. The deputy county governor then signed an agreement with the project villages.

The next step was to improve the implementation plans and organise project implementation. Based on the planning and design, all project villages mobilised the masses to support the construction of infrastructure projects. Finally, once the open debate was over, an emotional representative from Zhoujia village, Yachi Township (which did not qualify) said in an interview with reporters: 'I failed to live up to the expectations of my county fellows. However, it is good to adopt such a means. As we failed, it means that we still lag behind. I hope we can be better prepared and participate in such a contest again.'

Significant effects and lessons

The practice of competitive section has led to some remarkable outcomes and lessons:

Mobilising the project farmers

Gaotian village is the remotest village in Loudong Township, close to Shuifu County of Yunnan Province. It is typical of a poor village in a remote area. After the project was officially approved, the villagers' committee met and decided that each person was to raise 500 RMB of funding to support the construction of the 15km main road to the village. Everyone from the village, male and female, young and old, participated in 'building their own road for themselves'. They were very enthusiastic. To fully take advantage of the local resources, the farmers actively secured loans to plant 1,200mu of mao bamboo (*Phyllostachys edulis*) and construct a 'small sea of bamboo at Gaotian'.

Building capacity with grassroots groups

To implement the project, Mr. Chen Shanhong, Party Secretary of Nianmi village, convened a meeting with farmers to discuss the implementation plan. He also specifically went to the County Transportation Bureau and County Water

Conservancy Bureau to consult professionals, study and grasp the technical standards and relevant knowledge about village road construction and water supply projects, which the experts and review committee thought highly of in his presentation. After the open debate, he reflected that:

In order to improve the livelihood situation in our village, we have to make up our minds to carry out the project and to try to do it as early as possible. The masses watch us and expect us to do it as early as possible. Therefore, we must work meticulously, be fully prepared, and we must acquire the relevant knowledge. This competitive open debate promoted me to study, and it is not only a test but also good practice for me.

Demonstrating transparency and fairness in full 'sunlight'

The project management units implemented competitive approval of projects, which was to implement a 'sunlight' project (open, fair, transparent and subject to

review), to avoid decision makers dominating the decisions. The implementation plans were handed over to the PMO and sealed. The plans for which the review committee was lobbied and which were evaluated by the experts were also sealed for secrecy while the Supervision Group monitored the entire process. This process demonstrated the equity, fairness and openness.

The practice drew great attention from the CPC County Committee and the County Government. It was the first trial of project management in our county, which also had wider repercussions throughout society. Everybody believed that it was an innovative poverty alleviation mechanism which respected the will of the masses, was a symbol of constructing a harmonious society and a specific way of ensuring the transparency of administrative affairs. The competitive selection process has now been extensively applied in other governmental agencies, such as the New Rural Construction Projects, self-funded projects, water conservancy and transportation projects.

CONTACT DETAILS

Yang Gang
Pingshan County
Sichuan Province
PR China
Contact: songhk@ynu.edu.cn

Participatory planning and poverty analysis in Guangxi

15

by QIN ZHURONG

QIN ZHURONG is a farmer from the Chenghuang Village, Huanjiang County, Guangxi Province.. He is from the Maonan ethnic minority. He participated in the PRCDP project from 2005, and was elected by the villagers as the coordinator at the village level. Together with other villagers, he facilitated the use of the PPA and Participatory Planning (PP) tools. From 2006, he was one of the members of the Project Executive Team of PRCDP and was responsible for the participatory project implement and monitoring. His case study describes the innovative practice of PPA, which enabled the community to identify those most in need of support and to decide on their priorities for the project.

Village profile and PRCDP project background

Chenghuang administrative village has 10 natural sub-villages, 12 villagers' groups, 210 households and 1,160 residents. The population consists of 71.1% of Zhuang and the rest of Han, Yao and Miao ethnic groups. Chenghuang village is 26km away from the location of the Longyan township government. The total cultivated area is 1168mu, including 796mu of paddy fields.¹ The total forest area is 6216mu, and the most common species are fir and pine. Historically, Chenghuang village is one of the poorest villages in Huanjiang County

due to the poor condition of its natural resources and the land scarcity.

The PRCDP project was to address issues of poverty in Chenghuang village and started in April 2005. The project aimed to enhance the local villagers' capability to make the project self-serving, self-sustained and self-managing in the long term. To do this, it involved local villagers in problem identifying, project planning, implementation and decision-making. The following describes the process of poverty analysis and project planning that was conducted by Chenghuang villagers themselves.

¹ One measure unit (mu) equals 1/15 hectares.

Box 1: The administrative system in China

There are six levels of administrative hierarchy in China: national, provincial, prefecture, county, township and administrative village. The prefecture is the highest level of formal bureaucratic representation in terms of local government. Below the prefecture are the cities, counties and townships, with township government as the lowest level of government in the official administrative structure. A township governs a number of administrative villages, each of which holds a collection of a number of natural villages or hamlets (villagers' groups).

At the same time, and in parallel with the administrative hierarchy, there are several Communist Party line systems well-established in China. Similar to the administrative structure, there are vertical hierarchies with subordinate party committees in all branches of the provincial, prefecture, county, township, administrative village and natural village levels. At the administrative village level, usually the administrative committee and party committee work together to take charge of the planning, instruction, organisation, coordination and supervision functions in general.

Participatory training and publicity

The county, township and village facilitators attended the PRCDP workshop on the application of participatory approaches at the county seat (August–September 2004). Afterwards, they conducted door-to-door publicity about the Participatory Planning (PP) contents of the World Bank Project. In April 2005, the village committee and village party committee agreed to divide the village cadres into two groups. The party secretary and village director who had already attended participatory training were each responsible for a group and would go to all the sub-villages for direction, investigation and to take records.

Classification of poor sub-villages

In May 2005, the first villagers' congress was held for the participatory PRCDP project. In total, 36 people out of 1160 attended, including township facilitators, village facilitators, village representatives and village cadres. Poor households and the elderly were represented and 16 women attended.

At the beginning, individual villagers

had different perspectives about the poverty assessment and they came up with over 30 criteria for poverty. Next, the representatives discussed them one by one, and finally summarised them into four main indicators:

- road access;
- access to drinking water;
- housing conditions; and
- year-round food security.

According to these indicators, all natural villages in Chenghuang were classified into three types:

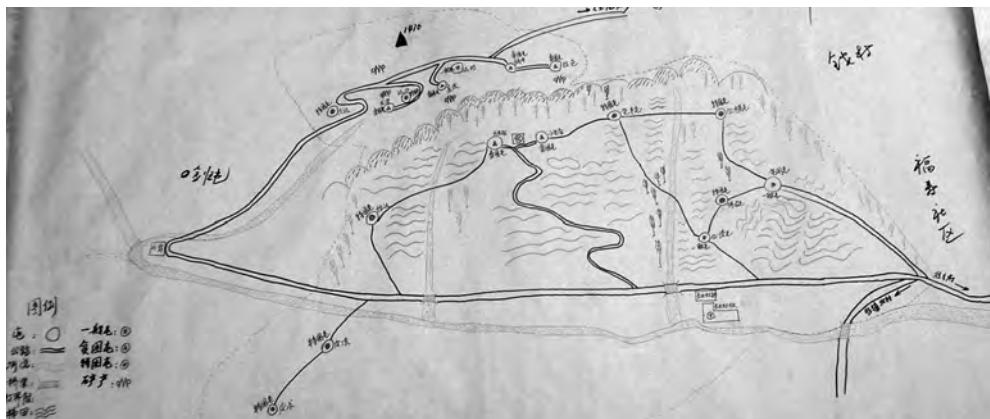
- 'Normal' (meaning 'less poor') natural villages: roads were accessible to vehicles in all weathers; the villagers had no debt; they had no difficulty accessing drinking water; most houses had two floors or higher, and were of brick masonry structure; and the sub-village had considerable amounts of items of agricultural machinery.
- Poor natural villages: e.g. poor access to roads; difficulty in accessing drinking water; the villagers' grain rations were basically secured; the residential houses were not dangerous buildings.
- Very poor natural villages: e.g. no access to roads; being at some distance from the village clinic and school; difficulties in accessing drinking water; insufficient grain yields; shabby housing; weak development potentials.

After clarifying the indicators with all attendants, village representatives were required to classify all natural villages (except for their own) into these three catalogues. They did this by casting votes with corn (poor natural village), stone (very poor natural village) and soybean ('normal' natural village).

Classifying poor households

It was very difficult to reach an agreement on the criteria for poor households among the village representatives at the beginning. The opinions from women, the elderly, minors and other disadvantaged groups were especially different from the others because they were associated with

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Map indicating poor natural villages within Changbei administrative village, prepared as part of the participatory poverty analysis (Huanjiang County, Guangxi Province) – poverty levels vary significantly between natural villages.

their own socioeconomic conditions. Also, the representatives are from different sub-villages could hardly agree due to the various conditions between sub-villages. During a facilitated group discussion, a compromise was reached by allowing each natural village to set up their own criteria according to the real conditions of their village. The criteria were slightly different between villages, but had to consider the following main indicators: the number of labourers, housing and per capita income.

Participants then returned to their own natural village and initiated another villager's meeting. At least one family member from each householder was required to attend this meeting. Women were particularly encouraged to attend. The project facilitators introduced the aims, basic procedures and methods of the participatory approach. To help the villagers understand the core concepts of setting up the criteria, some indictors used by three selected natural villages were used as examples (Jiaozui, Shangjing and Dongou sub-village).

The participants then classified the natural villages into catalogues. The list of village names was then recorded and voted on in the meeting. Again, voting was done by casting votes with corn (poor natural village), stone (very poor natural village) and soybean ('normal' natural village).

Next, the working group and the natural village representatives (two men and two women from each village) counted the classification results. They submitted them to the village committee to summarise. Once there was complete agreement and the results were published on public notice boards.

Although each sub-village set up their own criteria systems which varied depending on the economic conditions and development level of each natural village, some shared indictors came out in the final results that were submitted to the village committee:

- Very poor households: with a limited amount of labour; having some sick family members; living in dangerous buildings; having heavy debts; with a *per capita* income below 100 RMB.
- Poor households: living in fairly good houses; some family members working as migrant labourers with some labour at home; raising some domestic animals; with a *per capita* income below 300 RMB.
- 'Normal' households: living in houses of two or more floors; raising a considerable number of domestic animals; with family members working as migrant labourers and with a *per capita* income of over 400 RMB.

Comparing the criteria used by the Chenghuang village with the poverty line set up by the state Government, we found



Photo: Johanna Pennarz

Map indicating poverty at household level within one part of Changbei village, prepared as part of the participatory poverty analysis (Huanjiang County, Guangxi Province) - this is a larger and more accessible natural natural village where central facilities, like elementary school, are located.

the income standards of poor households in Chenghuang village corresponded with the official absolute poverty line. The standards of 'normal' households in Chenghuang fitted with the Government's definition of people 'who have just enough to eat and wear' (*wenbao*).

Project planning

In August 2005, the Second Villagers' Congress was conducted with 58 attendants, including 21 women, and some elderly, poor households and minors. The meeting aimed to analyse the status quo and identify the causes of poverty. The participants discussed the root causes for poverty, using the Problem Tree tool. The priority results were published on wall posts. Only after all these necessary preparative stages were complete could the PRCDP move on to the next stage smoothly.

Most representatives agreed that one of the root causes for households becoming poor was the lack of access to clean drinking water, so that people often become ill. However they could not afford to see a doctor, which led to a further decrease in labour productivity. The representatives believed that to change such a situation, it was necessary to have access to clean drink-

ing water. At the same time, the development of animal breeding was seen as important to increasing incomes.

Afterwards, the attendants voted on and prioritised the following results in order of importance:

- Drinking water for people and animals.
- Water conservancy, animal breeding and roads.
- Public health, education and capacity building.

Finally, with the participation of the villagers, the project plans were listed. A proposal was created and submitted to the World Bank Project Monitoring Office (PMO) for approval. Before implementation of the village project started, the villagers also democratically elected a Project Implementation Group, as well as a Project Executive Group. Members included representatives of women and poor households.

Project achievements

Today, our village has obtained support from the PRCDP for the construction of five drinking water supply locations, one irrigation water ditch and one village road. All have now been accomplished and have passed the quality acceptance check. At the same time, our village has become one

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Map indicating poverty at household level within another part of Changbei village, prepared as part of the participatory poverty analysis (Huanjiang County, Guangxi Province) - in this remote natural village the higher number of very poor households is indicated through circle symbols drawn onto the houses.

of the first demonstration villages for granting agricultural loans in the entire county. Over 40 households have obtained PRCDP loans for raising pigs, planting mulberry bushes and raising silkworms. The county and the township also successively conducted four training sessions for farmers, covering planting mulberry and raising silkworms, raising pigs, building community capacity and women's health-care. According to one participatory evaluation conducted by the Chenghuang village committee in April 2010, about 99% of the households in Chenghuang village claimed that they have benefited from these projects.

Lessons learnt

- The farmers' participation in the classification of poor sub-villages and poor households makes it possible to avoid the deviations and biases that usually happen when outsiders conduct the classification for them, based on insufficient under-

standing of the village conditions. It also helps to remove the villagers' dissatisfaction with the people who conducted the classification. The classification results reached through the participatory approach were easily accepted by everyone.

- The participatory approach was not only applied to the planning stage, but also throughout the entire project cycle. Villagers were able to determine the priorities for implementation and had the power to make decisions during the project implementation. Consequently, the farmers were more motivated to actively participate, implement, supervise and manage the components they determined.
- In order to ensure that more households could benefit from the PRCDP project in the future, some follow-up efforts are critical, including further investment into mobilisation, institution building and integration with other governmental projects. There have in fact been follow-up investments from national projects.

CONTACT DETAILS

Qin Zhurong
Chenghuang Village
Huanjiang County
Guangxi Province
PR China
Contact: songhk@ynu.edu.cn

16

Different ways for implementation in different communities

by CHEN CHUNYUN

CHEN CHUNYUN is the deputy director of the Poverty Alleviation and Development Office (PADO) in Longling County, Yunnan Province. He was the project coordinator for PRCDP in the county. His case study provides an interesting insight into how local government has handled the contentious issue of labour contributions by using a participatory approach.

Yibashan and Caojiazhai are two neighbouring communities of Lisu people in Huanglianhe River, Pingda Township, Longling County. Both were without access to clean drinking water for people and livestock. This was a common problem for both communities due to the poor investment in those facilities by the Government, as well as poor maintenance by local communities. The villagers of both communities discussed and proposed the installation of water pipes as the priority local development need, facilitated by the local villager head. However, the basic conditions of the two communities were different.

Caojiazhai has 52 households with 203 people and 158 labourers. In comparison to Yibashan, they had more labourers and did

not grow any special cash crops. During the slack farming season, they mainly relied on work as migrant labourers to fund their domestic expenses, and their income from migrant labour was 20-30 RMB per day. Yibashan has 37 households, with 161 people and 78 labourers. Most households planted *Wasabia japonica*, which required an input of 30-40 work days per mu.¹ Some farmers also worked as migrant labourers outside their community. Therefore, there was an issue of labour shortage in the village.

Because of limited funding the PRCDP Project Management Office (PMO) staff agreed that the project could only provide funding to construct pipelines and water ponds. They would also provide support for

¹ One measure unit (mu) equals 1/15 hectares.

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Lisu people in Longling County.

technical construction. All other costs must be covered by the local community such as providing free labour for construction or fundraising.

Caojiazhai implemented the majority of the labour component of the project according to the project design. Farmers in the community contributed labour in proportion to their population. They completed jobs related to excavation for the water pond, which included blasting stones and moving pipelines. Their total input was more than 180 working days. The households with migrant labourers – who could not contribute any work days – hired labourers or paid for the work days to complete their allocated inputs. In this way the villagers of Caojiazhai provided only labour without any cash contributions.

Yibashan community provided more than 30 work days of labour at the beginning of the project. While moving the materials, they realised that project implementation imposed great pressure on the local women. They only had a total labour force of 78 in the community which

included 21 migrant labourers. Out of the 57 remaining, 34 were women, who ended up providing most of the labour. The women also had to manage the production of *Wasabia japonica* and do the house-work. They could not take on any further burdens.

The community held a meeting and decided to change the original approach to implementation. During the meeting they agreed through public voting (by raising hands) to contract out the construction work. The women also agreed to contribute 300RMB per household to cover the additional costs resulting from the change of approach. Villagers could afford this because they had a cash income generated from farming *Wasabia japonica* and migrant work. Finally, the drinking water supply system was completed according to the design.

Summary

Depending on the basic local conditions of the community, the farmers can deal with unforeseen difficulties and problems that



Photo: Johanna Pennarz

Cheng Chunyun with villagers.

might arise in the course of project implementation. They can adjust the means of implementation according to local needs and constraints. This not only guarantees that project activities are implemented, but also that they meet their expected objectives, while suiting to the local conditions of that community. When the farmers have a choice in implementation, they can autonomously decide which tasks are to be conducted by themselves, and which things require hired labour. This case study shows that the farmers were the real drivers of the project implementation and they adjusted their plans to the reality on the ground. If, on the contrary, outsiders impose their implementation plans on the farmers and are not flexible enough, it would not only be against the farmers' wishes, but could also increase the burden on women and make it difficult for the project to be

completed with farmers' participation. It may be difficult for local people to imagine the constraints in implementing projects themselves, especially when they have never implemented such a project in the past. But with more experience, local people become wiser in their decisions and also better managers. This also helps to strengthen project ownership at the local level and hence opens up better scope for sustainability.

From this experience, the PMO and PADO of Longling County have learnt that the community should have the right for selecting and implementing the project according to their specific context. The PMO and PADO of Longling County have learnt that decision-making is the key for local participation. They are now more sensitive to the need of participation and have applied this approach in other projects.

CONTACT DETAILS

Chen Chunyun
Longling County
Yunnan Province
PR China
Contact: songhk@ynu.edu.cn



PART IV:

The China Watershed Management Project (CWMP) – a participatory approach to watershed management

Introduction

17

by NICOLE KENTON

This section reflects on a pilot community-led monitoring and evaluation project – the China Watershed Management Project (CWMP).¹ This project used participatory approaches to evaluate the impact on poverty reduction of the second phase of the Loess Plateau Watershed Rehabilitation Project, which was funded by the World Bank.

The first phase of this large-scale watershed project looked at environmental solutions to rehabilitate the plateau. This mountainous area covers six provinces in northern and western China and has suffered environmental degradation over thousands of years through the over-utilisation of natural resources, causing soil and water erosion and subsequent loss of fertile farming land in the upper reaches of the Yellow River (see Map 1). The CWMP was part of the second phase of the rehabilitation project, known as *Loess II* and was located in Gansu Province. Gansu Province is one of the poorest regions in China, where

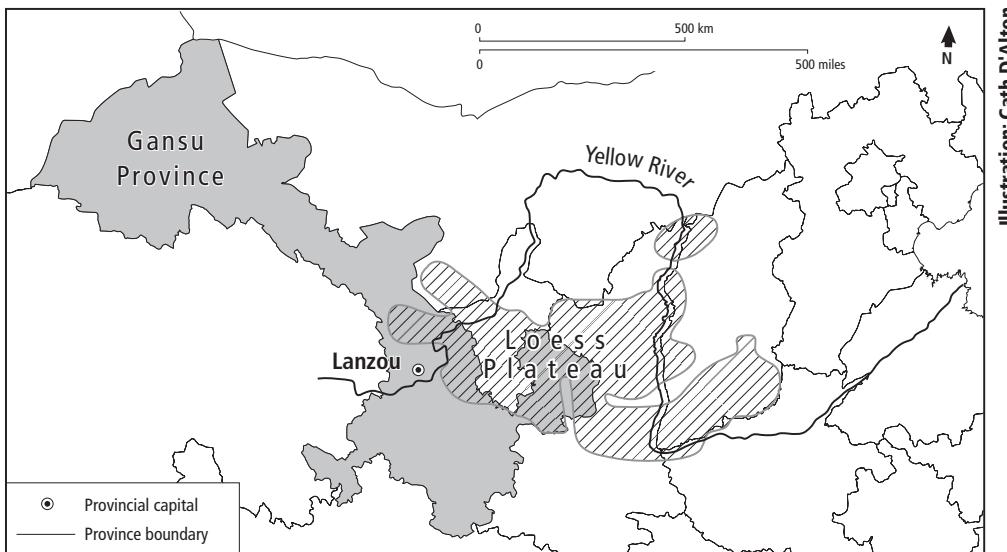
lack of water is a major contributing factor. The province has been given high priority in China's 2011 Plan for National, Economic and Social Development.

Recognition of the role and aptitude that poor communities have in using environmental resources sustainably has made donors increasingly assess how they can work with communities not only to regenerate the environment, but also to alleviate poverty (Taylor, 2005).

The CWMP used a people-centred approach to look at the impact on livelihood opportunities of the watershed rehabilitation, focusing on effective delivery of project benefits to poor households through participatory planning. It aimed to improve systems for participatory monitoring and evaluation and to establish best practice models which could be disseminated to other relevant Chinese and donor programmes.

At the CWMP completion workshop, held in Beijing in 2008, participants,

¹ The CWMP ran from 2003 to 2008 and was funded by DfID. For more information see www.cwmp.org



Map 1: The location of the Loess Plateau.

including farmer representatives as well as project administrators, reach a consensus that 'due to the effective management of administrative sections and the positive participation of stakeholders, CWMP had reached its anticipated goal with emphasis on capacity building and dissemination, and its results were of high value of being sustainable and being popularised.'

So what were the methods used to ensure the success of the approach and how can the model be replicated in other projects in China and elsewhere?

I am now giving the voice to those directly involved in working with communities on this project. This section reflects on the various stages of the project and contains five articles – two are written by Wang Yue from the Ministry of Water Resources, who

first presents an overview of how the CMWP was designed and in the third article in the section, she gives an insight into the Ministry's perspective on the effectiveness of the community approach.

In the second article, Wang Baojun from the Bureau of Water in Gansu Province outlines this innovative approach to watershed management and describes the methods used and the process of community monitoring and evaluation during the planning and implementation stages. He also gives some examples of the benefits of the CWMP, particularly to poor households.

Finally, Liu Yonggong from the Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD) gives a research perspective and looks at the challenges and the lessons learnt for scaling up this approach.

CONTACT DETAILS

Nicole Kenton
Co-editor, *Participatory Learning and Action*
International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)
80-86 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8NH, UK
Email: nicole.kenton@iied.org

REFERENCE

- Taylor, J.G. (2005) 'Environment-Poverty Linkages: Managing Natural Resources in China' in *Reducing Poverty and Sustaining the Environment: The Politics of Local Engagement*, Bass S. et al. (eds), London: Earthscan.

Background and approach

18

by WANG YUE

WANG YUE is section director of the International Exchange Centre at the Ministry of Water Resources. She was coordinator of the CWMP at the Central Project Office. Here she gives some background to the project and its design.

The China Watershed Management Project (CWMP) was designed as a follow-up to the Loess Plateau Watershed Rehabilitation Project, to build on its experiences and address some of its challenges. The Loess Project was heavily focused on physical rehabilitation of the degraded watershed, in particular through terracing and afforestation.¹ The CWMP placed people at the centre of watershed rehabilitation and applied a livelihoods approach.

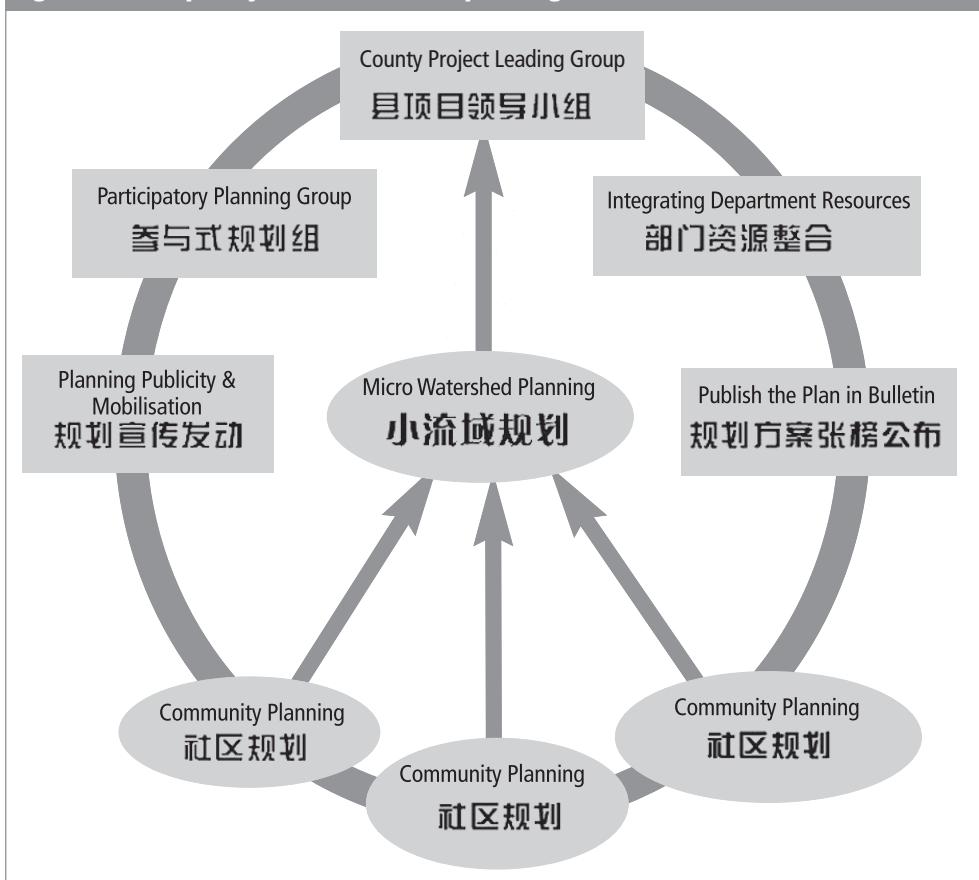
The objective of CWMP was to pilot innovative participatory practices in four districts in Gansu Province (Kongtong, Jingning, Huachi and Huanxian). These included participatory micro-watershed rehabilitation planning and alternative livelihood and environmental rehabilitation. The project also explored and constructed a model of ‘participatory

micro-watershed planning and community-driven micro-watershed rehabilitation and management’. It combined poverty reduction with rehabilitating soil erosion, farmer participation and integrating county-level resources. The approach has resulted in a comprehensive and sustainable rehabilitation of the micro-watershed.

Participatory micro-watershed planning

Participatory micro-watershed planning took micro-watershed as the unit, the communities as the subjects, improving the ecological environment and farmer livelihoods as the objective, and departmental cooperation and integrating resources as the platform. It stressed the active participation of the government, relevant organisations and business

¹ Afforestation is the establishment of a forest or stand of trees in an area where the preceding vegetation or land use was not forest. Source: Wikipedia.

Figure 1: Participatory micro-watershed planning flow

departments – and especially the communities and beneficiary farmers where the project was located. It analysed the problems and their causes inherent in the micro-watershed, the development potential and advantages, sought solutions to the problems, determined the priority projects for improving the ecological environment and means of livelihood, and established effective mechanisms to manage, monitor and evaluate project implementation.

Design of the project

The steps for the design of participatory micro watershed planning included:

- publicity and mobilisation;
- establishing a participatory planning group at county and village level;

- formulating a participatory micro-watershed planning manual;
- a field visit to the watershed and conducting planning by communities – including focus group interviews, identifying and analysing the problems, preliminary planning, integrating resources and finalising the planning;
- proposing a preliminary plan;
- integrating resources; and
- determining the final plan.

By applying a participatory approach, the project developed a participatory micro-watershed planning flow and framework (see Figures 1 and 2) and established a community-driven micro-watershed management model.

The project targeted poor households, attempting to establish alternative liveli-

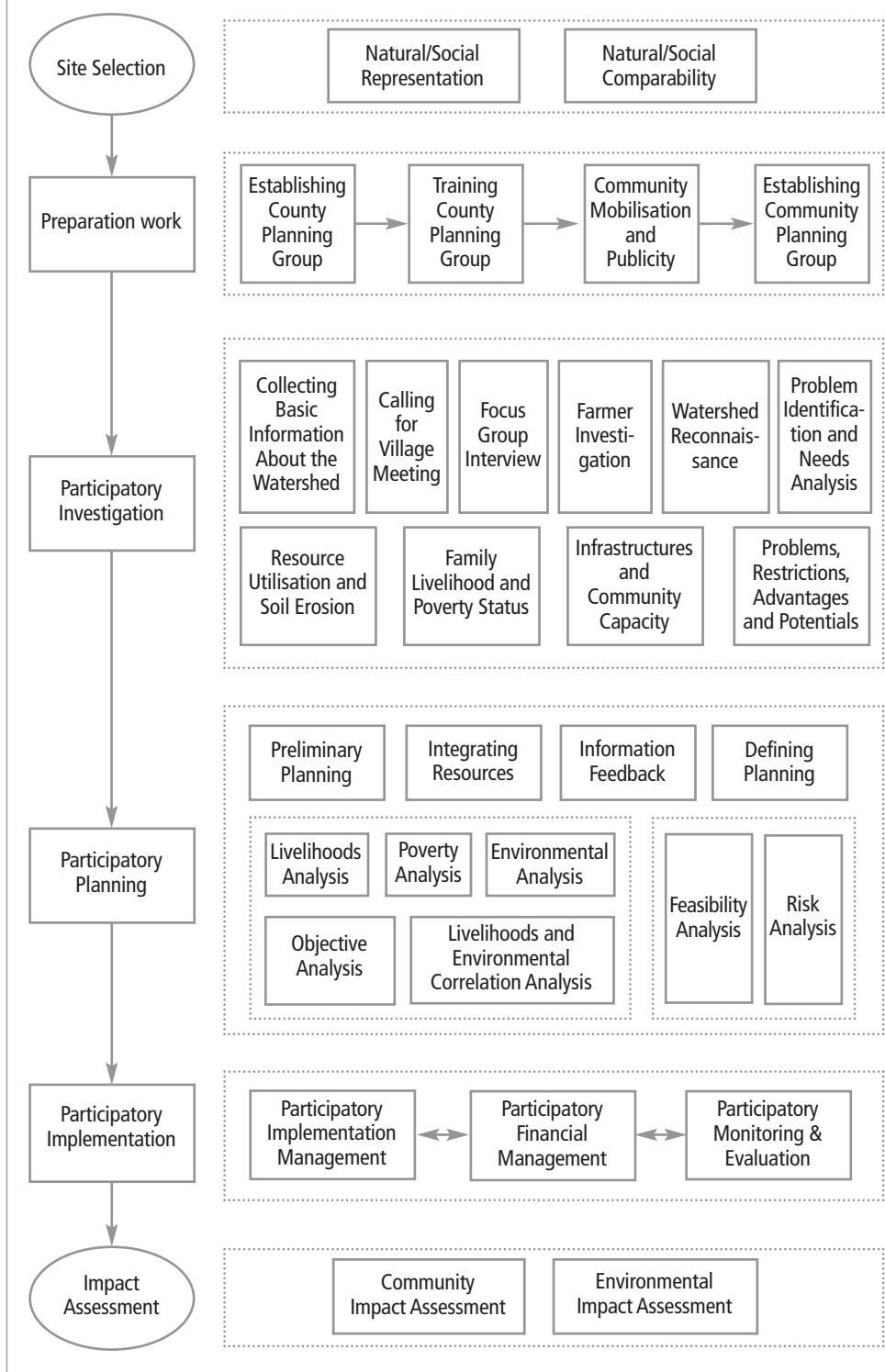
Figure 2: Participatory micro-watershed planning flow chart



Photo: Wang Baojun

Terracing is an important way to conserve land and water resources in the Loess Plateau (Gansu Province).

hood project activities. For example, raising cattle in warm pens and constructing biogas ponds, helping to avoid further environmental destruction caused by animals and vegetation, and contributing to restoring forest and grass cover. Terracing was used to reduce soil erosion in order to improve grain output. Collecting water in water pits reduced surface runoff which in turn improved the drinking water for the farmers.

As a result of the project, the soil erosion status of the project area and forest and grass cover has improved. This solved the difficulties of access to clean drinking water for 62% of households. Income *per capita* increased from 925 RMB to 1,365 RMB. In this way the project established an ‘organic’ connection between ‘poverty and water’ and ‘poverty and capacity building’.

CONTACT DETAILS

Wang Yue
Section Director
International Exchange Centre
Ministry of Water Resources (MWR)
PR China
Email: yuewang@mwr.gov.cn

Innovative, community-led practices

19

by WANG BAOJUN

WANG BAOJUN is a villager and project officer of Ximeng County PADO in Yunnan Province. He was a member of the village project implementation team for CWMP and PRCDP coordinator. Here he describes his experiences of working at village level.

Innovative participatory watershed management practices

The China Watershed Management Project (CWMP) was implemented by the Ministry of Water. Not only did it introduce a number of important innovations – it changed conventional watersheds management in China.

Linking livelihoods with environmental protection

In the past, the conventional watershed rehabilitation approach was to uniformly plan and focus on comprehensively rehabilitating mountains, waterways, fields, forests and roads. However, there were negative consequences. There was little consideration of farmer livelihoods. Farmers were repeatedly forced to herd animals, chop firewood and open up wasteland for farming, producing a vicious circle. The process of rehabilitation was also

destroying the local environment.

During the project planning for the CWMP, there was an explicit focus on improving farmer livelihoods and realising the harmonious development of people and nature. The project introduced a new rehabilitation model: environmental + infrastructure + livelihood + capacity building.

A community-led approach to watershed management

Conventional watershed management was usually government-driven. The government handled the entire process of project planning, implementation, tendering, monitoring and evaluation. The communities were only passive participants. As a result, some project activities were unrealistic. People were very unhappy, making project implementation difficult. The CWMP project introduced a community-led approach to watershed management, in

which project planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation were driven and managed by the communities. The government's responsibility was to guide, supervise, coordinate and service.

Participatory planning methods

Watershed planning in the past consisted mostly of environmental rehabilitation measures, which were finished by a rough investigation by the project technicians. These plans rarely inquired into people's views. The CWMP project applied participatory approaches to project planning. This empowered the communities and farmers, and the farmers participated in all aspects of the entire process. The planning was carried out from bottom-to-top, was directly specific to individual households being open and transparent, fully respected the will of the farmers and addressed farmers' needs. By participating in the project planning, the people learnt methods for analysing their problems and improved their ability to solve them. It helped to change mentalities and strengthened their confidence and awareness.

Transparent financial management

With previous financial project management approaches, project funds were appropriated downwards level by level, with many intermediary links, and so the operation speed was slow. Only a few project managers knew how much funding was reimbursed, and how much was put in place. The funds of the CWMP were directly appropriated from the Project Implementation Office to County Project Management Offices (PMOs) or contractors, then from County PMOs directly to the farmers or contractors, with limited links, and the operation speed was fast. Simultaneously, the entire process of financial management was open by displaying all financial information on the walls of community meeting rooms and shared with communities regularly, so that both the project managers and farmers knew

how much was reimbursed and how much was put in place, and the community members also could monitor the costs with the related implementation process. This meant that the financial management was supervised and any violation of financial management rules was prevented. The transparency process satisfied the community with not only the output and outcome, but also by giving them ownership of the project process.

Community monitoring and evaluation

The CWMP had a focus on community-based participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E), to ensure that local needs were well identified and the quality of implementation was well controlled.

Monitoring and evaluation during project planning

From the outset, the County Project Management Offices (PMO) conducted extensive and in-depth project mobilisation activity, which helped to raise public awareness and understanding of the importance of participation for the comprehensive rehabilitation of micro watersheds. The PMO conducted a project feasibility study, to review the project approach and whether the project ideas and methods were understood and accepted. Based on the feedback from communities, the project plans were revised. Subsequently, the villagers were also informed that the monitoring team will be selected by villagers directly, as well as the process and tolls for PM&E so that most of villagers had been encouraged to monitor the project, especially the implementation of the project.

Tools used during this phase included:

1. Brainstorming and feedback to list all the topics that need to be discussed.

We used various interactive tools – such as self-introduction, playing games, hurrying to answer questions before others, handing out prizes, and providing cigarettes and sweets – that helped to create an equal,



Conducting assessment of the farmers' needs (Gansu Province).

lively and relaxed environment for everybody to talk freely and cordially; the villagers were encouraged to put forward all kinds of problems that they felt restricted local development. Some people said: 'for a long time, we have just been listeners at the meetings, without the opportunity to say anything. Our voices were either neglected, or criticised if we were wrong. But you are different in that you handed out cigarettes and sweets to us, and treated us as friends. We feel warm, and we are willing to tell you what we think.'

2. In-depth analysis of the problems that need to be addressed. The villagers conducted a complete, in-depth and meticulous analysis of the topics listed, found out the causes of the problems and the inter-relationships between different causes, and developed problem and objective trees. The point of monitoring and evaluation was that villagers learned to analyse problems, using tools such as the problem tree³, and

felt motivated to address those problems. Some of the villagers said: 'We did not know until now that our lives in the past were kind of 'muddling through'. Our conditions were poor and we had a hard life, but we only blamed our fate. Most people's attitude was to drift along, and we rarely had any ideas or plans. Through the facilitated analysis, they concluded that 'we not only understood why we were poor, but also learnt the methods for analysing the problems. We have changed our minds, and we believe that our lives will be better.'

Monitoring and evaluation during project implementation

The *Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Operation Manual* defined the basic principles for monitoring and evaluation during project implementation which focused on cooperative monitoring and evaluation by the community and other stakeholders. The focus was on monitoring and evaluating the quality, progress and

¹ See Annex PRA tools of the PRCDP manual www.itad.com/PRCDP/



Photo: Wang Baojun

The farmers participating in field inspection and judging hay cutter quality (Gansu Province).

results of different project measures through M&E cards, tables and books, as well as standardised signing-off procedures. The PMO published the monitoring and evaluation results, payments and the supervision telephone numbers of the county, city, province, implementation office and WB Office in the communities. The farmers were encouraged to supervise each other; this helped to ensure the construction progress, quality and efficiency, and cut down on practices such as favouring friends and relatives, cheating in work, cutting down materials, withholding and diverting information, using poor quality materials etc.

Village M&E groups and beneficiary farmers had an important role in the monitoring and evaluation of road building, pumping stations and quality of young trees; their participation was important for improving construction quality and for the sense of community ownership and responsibility. For example, in the

construction of a pumping station, all the workers were the beneficiaries. When they excavated the dam foundation they dug out many weathered slates. According to the design, the foundation was filled with ground rubble. However, in order to save costs, the contractor used improper means to obtain consent from the supervisors and intended to use the weathered slates instead. The villagers were strongly against it. They reported the case to the County PMO by calling the supervision telephone number, and as a result the contractor had to buy rubble filling, thus ensuring construction quality. A similar case happened during the construction of the road component. When the contractor failed to meet the construction standards, the Village Monitoring and Evaluation Group and the beneficiaries' representatives refused to sign-off the check and certificate form. In this context, the quality of infrastructure had been well controlled.

The Village Monitoring and Evaluation

Photo: Wang Baojun



Accepting terraced-field quality together (Gansu Province).

Group and the beneficiaries' representatives also supervised the quality of young trees, hay cutters and equipment procured from the Technical Service Centre. The Village Implementation Group inquired into prices and the M&E group carried out the quality check. Procurement followed the principle of 'competitive bidding, based on the quality and lowest price'. For example, hay cutters were purchased through local price inquiry. Under the supervision of the County PMO, the community organised the Implementation Group, Monitoring and Evaluation Group and beneficiaries' representatives to form a Bid Evaluation Group, notified three bidders to arrange products and tender offers, and conducted field demonstrations. The Bid Evaluation Group conducted field evaluation, pricing and negotiation for supplies and after-sales service, and signed the contract.

Household-based components such as

terraced fields, cattle pens, water cisterns and flow collecting pools were implemented in a different way. Since farmers had to contribute funding out of their own pockets, there was a risk that they might want to sacrifice quality for quantity. Therefore, in addition to village monitoring and evaluation the County PMO had to undertake some cross-checking and verification. Normally, two ways been applied for cross-checking. One way is the project sites evaluated by PM&E group from outside project villages and all results of evaluation must be opened to all villagers and other stakeholders for feedback, while another one is the Sampling Check by PMO based on the way one, and all results must be opened to all stakeholders as well for confirmation of any complaints. The terraced field component used local competitive bidding for procurement. Once the contractor finished a plot, the

² 'Acceptance' refers to the final technical check of project quality and functionality by supervising bureaus.

Village M&E Group would measure the area and assess the quality. At certain stages, the County PMO would conduct an overall re-inspection and acceptance together with the members of the three community groups, draw sketch maps and fill in the M&E forms.⁴ The farmers would sign-off the project as a precondition for financial reimbursement; they would publish the results in the community and invite the public for inspection of the project. The County PMO would pay the project funds directly to the contractor according to the accepted quantity.

Data collected through PM&E have shown that 100% of households benefited from CWMP at different levels, such as 4 mu of terraced land for each household in average, the livestock project component for poor households only, 50 RMB as extra compensation for poor households for

constructing terraced land. At least 16.23% of the total CWMP fund was allocated for poor households.

Despite these successes, we still had some difficulties and challenges. One was the lack of counterpart funding; some top-down approaches had to be used to ensure availability of counterpart funding. Secondly, there was a lack of coordination between the different agencies working on CWMP which applied different standards and regulations in the project cycle, so that PM&E had to challenge it. Thirdly, the community-based PM&E was conducted well by the communities, but there were some clear limitations with regard to the capacity of the PM&E teams, such as the lack of techniques, the lack of some knowledge, and the fact that no subsidies were available for team members during project implementation.

CONTACT DETAILS

Wang Baojun
Bureau of Water
Huan Xian County
Gansu Province
PR China

The perspective of the Ministry of Water Resources

20

by WANG YUE

WANG YUE is section director of the International Exchange Centre at the Ministry of Water Resources. She was coordinator of the CWMP at the Central Project Office. Here she looks at some of the challenges and at the change in attitudes at all levels.

Introduction

At present, China is carrying out a ‘new socialist rural reconstruction’, promoting the idea of ‘people first’ and ‘constructing a harmonious society’, connecting people’s livelihood with environmental protection. In the past, combining rehabilitation of watersheds with development was mainly focused on the technical aspects of harnessing soil erosion, but paid little attention to the issue of poverty. The CWMP implemented a participatory micro-watershed rehabilitation planning and alternative livelihood and environmental rehabilitation in four counties of Gansu Province. It also explored and summarised the model of ‘participatory micro watershed planning and community-driven micro watershed rehabilitation and management’ by combining poverty reduction with rehabilitating soil erosion and farmer participation, leading to sustainable development

for the comprehensive rehabilitation of the micro-watershed.

Challenges

The two biggest challenges for implementing the project were:

- How to integrate watershed rehabilitation and local poverty reduction;
- How to apply the participatory approaches in the process with local project partners.

After five years of practice, we believe that we have overcome the challenges. The project was significant on a number of aspects:

1. It followed the principle of ‘people first’ and ‘constructing a harmonious society’. It organically combined people’s livelihoods with improving the ecological environment and the construction of a ‘new socialist’ rural area, laying a solid foundation for constructing a harmonious society.

2. It was an example of ‘teaching people how to fish’. The project was community-driven, improving the autonomous management abilities of the communities and the self-development skills of the farmers, and it injected vitality into the sustainable development of the community.

3. It repositioned government service functions. It was designed to coordinate the departments and integrate resources with the relevant departments, changing from a do-it-all type of administration to service-oriented guidance and provision. The PMO provided technical guidance and an information service, guiding the farmers in improving the environment and increasing incomes, and creating the mechanism for the scientific and standardised implementation of the project.

Strengthening community self-management

The project used a participatory approach throughout the project cycle. It established three participatory mechanisms:

Firstly, a **democratic decision-making mechanism** was established, designed to promote the idea of decision-making as scientific. For some major issues which occurred in the course of project implementation – such as raising funds, input of labour, public undertakings – the Village Implementation Group first proposed ideas for the decision-making procedures and methods. After adequately inquiring about the opinions of the villagers by convening village assemblies, implementation was organised and all activities were publicised to the villagers.

Secondly, a **democratic management mechanism** was established, designed to promote the systematisation of management. The villagers’ assembly elected three groups from the community and self-management association, established a performance incentive mechanism throughout the course of the work, carried out a democratic evaluation according to

the completion of tasks and realistic indicators, and offered corresponding remunerations based on performance. It formulated and improved the subsequent project management mechanism, and promoted the construction of a ‘harmonious rural society’.

Thirdly, a **democratic supervision mechanism** was established, designed to promote a procedure for supervision. The county PMO, the villagers and the three groups from the community and self-management association worked together, reinforcing the demonstration of project management, and conducting a publicity approach before implementing each project based on monitoring and evaluation results. Throughout the entire project implementation process, the aim was to integrate project publicity with technical training, livelihood improvements and environmental rehabilitation, to effectuate great changes to the villagers and villages in the watershed, and thus achieve significant effects.

As a result, the project has strengthened the social management system within the community. It strengthened the democratic financing; it implemented democratic election, decision-making, management and supervision at grassroots level; it improved the management system for construction projects such as rural infrastructure; and finally village-level financial affairs became more transparent.

In this process, group discussion, community meetings, and scoring and ranking were applied as key participation tools. The group discussion provided all villagers with the opportunity for sharing their different ideas for implementation and post maintenance, and the community meeting for achieving the consensus, such as the selection of implementation team members, the rate of fundraising, and so on.

Change of mindsets

The project has changed people’s mindsets at all levels: at provincial, city, county,

Photo: Wang Baojun



Carrying out a field survey (Gansu Province).

township, village and community level, and especially with the key members at the different levels. People now believe that participatory watershed rehabilitation management is essential for realising the overall coordinated and sustainable development of the watershed. It also promotes economic growth, liberating minds and changing mentalities, and demonstrates the pressing need to construct 'new socialist rural areas'.

Farmers' minds have been opened. They have seen changes in their clothes, diets, houses and means of transportation since the rehabilitation of the watershed. They now see harmony in the neighbourhood, and culture preserved in the village folk customs.

The villagers' democratic awareness improved. They actively participated in decision-making and the management of the project, and reversed the notion of the villagers not caring about or participating in village affairs. The villagers could now take into consideration overall public interests whilst handling affairs, turning from passive acceptance to active participation in decision-making.

The community learned new methods for solving problems. By introducing participatory ideas and implementing demonstrative components, more and more villagers are able to grasp the idea of 'making decisions for your own business', enabling the effective resolution of many difficult issues.

CONTACT DETAILS

Wang Yue
Section Director
International Exchange Centre
Ministry of Water Resources (MWR)
PR China
Email: yuewang@mwr.gov.cn

21

Challenges and lessons learnt

by LIU YONGGONG

LIU YONGGONG is a professor at the College of Humanities and Development and managing director of the Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD). His research area is rural development studies with a focus on planning and monitoring and evaluation of poverty alleviation, community development and natural resource management. Besides teaching and research at the university, he also works as consultant for national and international development programmes. As a consultant on the CWMP in this article he looks at the challenges and lessons that can be drawn from the approach to the project.

The China Watershed Management Project (CWMP) was implemented in two prefectures of Qingyang and Pingliang in Gansu Province. The project consisted of three components:

1. Development of a monitoring and evaluation system using participatory approaches;
2. Pilot participatory watershed management projects in selected pilot watersheds;
3. Extension and replication of the successful CWMP models.

I was involved in the CWMP project as a national consultant from 2004 to 2007. This article summarises the challenges and lessons learnt from the consultancy practice.

Challenges faced in watershed conservation practice

CWMP faced the following three challenges during its implementation in the pilot province, pilot counties and pilot watersheds:

- Firstly, the CWMP project pilot prefectures of Gansu were poverty stricken areas with very low *per capita* income. In order to sustain their livelihoods, farmers made use of the available land – including the sloping land – for producing grain and cash crops. Overuse of the sloping land caused vegetation degradation and consequently led to severe soil and water erosion. Integrating poverty reduction and improved livelihoods with ecological conservation

was a major challenge for the CWMP project.

- Secondly, besides the Water Conservation Bureau, there are many stakeholders and governmental line agencies involved in the watershed management, such as the agricultural bureau, the forestry bureau, the livestock bureau, the poverty alleviation office, etc. Different line agencies had their own objectives and agendas relating to the use and management of natural resources within the watershed. It is therefore an institutional challenge for the project to coordinate these line agencies and stakeholders who all have different development agendas. It is also difficult to develop a multi-stakeholder acceptable M&E system and a watershed management concept which fits the strategies of all relevant line agencies.

- Thirdly, there are many administrative levels related to catchment and watershed ecological conservation, i.e., the Ministry of Water Resources, Up and Middle Yellow River Bureau (UMYRB) in Xi'an, the provincial water conservation bureau, the prefecture water conservation bureau, the county water resource bureau, the watersheds, township, village, etc. It is a challenge to coordinate all these levels and achieve the same objective. It is also difficult to develop common M&E indicators for all levels.

Experiences and lessons learnt from the practice

To overcome the above challenges, the CWMP adopted innovative implementation procedures and methodologies. Principally, the project adopted participatory planning and implementation approaches throughout the whole life of the project.

Understanding the institutional set up and existing practices for improving the M&E system and introducing an improved conservation model

As mentioned above, small watershed management is a multi-stakeholder and

multi-level related issue. In order to draw up a management strategy, the CWMP consultant team and key counterparts needed to systematically understand and figure out the institutional set up related to small watershed management in the Loess Plateau region – who are the stakeholders, what are their missions and agendas in watershed management and poverty reduction, what are their attitudes and interests in sustainable watershed management, what they have practiced in the past, etc. The institutional survey was also an opportunity for the consultant team to consult with relevant stakeholders on the CWMP concept and M&E system for ensuring the sustainability of the concept. Reviewing and understanding the existing institutional set up and practice also ensured that the improved M&E system and CWMP models would be developed based on the existing models and practices.

Participation and engagement of communities and resource users

Farmers' households and communities within the small watersheds are the resource users and beneficiaries of the watershed management and conservation projects, their active participation and engagement in the whole process of CWMP as well as in the M&E indicator development are therefore preconditions for ensuring the sustainable impacts of the project. It is also the key solution to mediating the potential conflict of interest between the watershed conservation and the livelihoods of resource users. Participatory approaches have been mainstreamed in the whole project implementation cycle: (i) **Community and resource users' participation in the development of M&E system.** The consultant team and the UMYRB jointly prepared the a list of watershed management impact measurement(M&E) indicators, including social, economic, poverty and livelihood indicators and resource and ecological indicators. The recommended indicators were then



Photo: Wang Baojun

Wang Baojun talking to villagers (Gansu Province).

consulted and validated with communities and resource users in the selected pilot watersheds, i.e. Fanzhuang in Huachi County and Hushangou in Kongtong County. At the same time, social and economic data were collected for poverty and livelihood indicators by using interactive and participatory methods.

(ii) Community participation in watershed conservation and management planning and pilot of best practice. Based on the developed M&E system for small watershed management interventions, the CWMP project further conducted participatory watershed management and conservation planning by engaging villagers, poor households and women of the pilot villages. Farmers' active participation in consultation and negotiation ensured the integrated objective of 'conserving the ecological system and improving the livelihoods of resource users.' Methodologically, community participation and engagement reduced the social risk of small watershed conservation programmes and enhanced 'community

ownership' of the project implementation. In addition, the community and resource users' participation also changed the traditional 'top-down' project planning and implementation approach.

(iii) Institutional and staff capacity building and change of attitude of governmental line agencies for institutionalisation and replication of CWMP models. During the project implementation, CWMP always focused on institutional and staff capacity building through multi-stakeholder workshops and training and by subcontracting relevant tasks to governmental and public organisations. For instance, the project subcontracted Gansu Provincial Statistic Bureau to conduct participatory 'quantitative poverty surveys' in two selected small watersheds, and commissioned Gansu Provincial Water Conservation Centre to develop ecological and resource related indicators. The ITAD and the Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD) consultant team provided training to the subcontracted team to ensure their capacity and skills of applying the recom-

mended participatory survey methods. Technical staff of the county water conservation bureau and township water resource agents were involved in selecting pilot watersheds, conducting the survey and the participatory planning process.

The objective of the CWMP was ‘to influence Chinese governmental agencies and international donors to implement improved watershed management approaches which will benefit the rural poor’. Since the government organisations are the major actors in developing and replicating the improved models, changing the governmental attitude to the innovated participatory watershed management procedures and approaches was the key institutional strategy of the CWMP. Through policy consultation with the Ministry of Water Resources and the

UMYRB, policy studies and policy conferences and workshops, the CWMP significantly influenced high level officials’ attitudes toward participatory and pro-poor watershed management approaches.

Governmental attitude change to these innovative approaches is the institutional and policy precondition for long term replicating and institutionalising the best practices, further implementation of the CWMP M&E guidelines, community participatory planning procedures and the ecological compensation policy. Governmental attitude change through the CWMP has also established an institutional and policy framework for policy dialogue with international donors for multi-lateral collaboration for coping with the ecological and social economic impacts of global climate change.

CONTACT DETAILS

Professor Liu Yonggong
College of Humanities and Development
Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD)
China Agricultural University
Beijing 100193
PR China
Tel: +8610 62733098
Email: liuyg@cau.edu.cn



PART V:

Experiences by professionals – participatory approaches in health and education

Introduction

22

by LU CAIZHEN and JOHANNA PENNARZ

LU CAIZHEN is a research fellow at the Centre for Mountain Ecosystem Studies at the Kunming Institute of Botany. Her research areas include: i) poverty studies and rural development; ii) gender analysis; iii) participatory research, participation and local governance; vi) natural resource management and sustainable livelihoods; and v) climate change and local adaptation. She uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches and has published several papers in international academic journals.

The quality of human agency is enhanced by better education and health (Anand and Sen, 1997).¹ However, in China, both health and education services have met major challenges during the process of rapid growth and transition, in particular in rural areas (Khan *et al.*, 1999). In rural areas health and education services were traditionally provided through the collectives.

After the dismantling of the collective economy (from 1979), local health and education services have faced major challenges with regard to funding and staffing. Poor quality of education and excessive school fees were seen as main reasons for keeping poor children out of school. A simi-

lar story emerged from the health sector. While the wealthier section of the Chinese population has benefited from advanced health technologies, the poor have lost access to even the most essential services. Rising fees have forced the poor and low-income population groups to minimise their use of health services. Failure to seek medical attention when unwell has increased the risk for entire communities to spread diseases (WHO, 2006).²

There have been a number of projects trying to address these problems since the late 1990s, but it was not until the 11th Five Year Programme (2006-2010) that the government has paid increasing attention

¹ Human agency is the capacity for human beings to make choices and to impose those choices on the world. Source: Wikipedia.

² WHO, China State Council Development Research Center: China – Health, poverty and economic development. Beijing, 2006.

to the delivery of basic public service.

In the education sector ‘quality of education’ became an important theme from 1999. Since 2002 the government pushed to achieve compulsory education for all children in rural and urban areas. Under the 11th Five Year Plan (2006-2010) the government implemented a compulsory education finance reform to address inequalities in the education sector. This included measures to target individual poor students (rather than poor areas, like under previous policies), in particular through the two exemptions for all students (from miscellaneous fees and school book fees) and one subsidy (boarding subsidies), targeted at poor students.³

Projects supported by World Bank and DfID focused on the introduction of a demand-led approach, in particular the demands of teachers and parents for better education services. It was understood that if the quality of school services improve more children will attend schools. The Gansu Basic Education Project (GBEP) was designed in 1999 and completed in 2006. It was a highly successful project which piloted a complex set of innovative methods and approaches to improve quality of basic education in poor areas of Gansu Province. The basic approach was to focus on school development, participatory training methods and specific measures to target disadvantaged children. The project concept included principles of community involvement and participation in the new curriculum reform and development which were later incorporated in the promotion of ‘nine-year basic compulsory education programme’. An important element was the so-called ‘school development plans’

which were seen as important tools to close the gap between top-down allocation of priorities (through the Five Year Plans) and local needs.⁴ Another important innovation was the introduction of participatory teaching techniques as described in Li Jianru’s case study.

The following three cases show how the transition to a demand-led approach has changed the attitudes, roles and even behaviour of the professionals .

Yu Denghai describes an innovative approach which enables women to participate in public health planning in Zhenning County. The article explores participatory institutional building and maintenance and ways of integrating health knowledge into local people’s lives. In Zhenning, the local health sector does not target local women except via one or two clinic doctors at the village committee level. However, these busy doctors seldom have time to educate local women about health issues. This article explores how Health Promotion Groups and ‘demonstrative households for health promotion’ are helping to educate local women on ways to protect their health and improve their quality of life.

Li Jianru explores how participatory teaching in big class is challenging the traditional style of ‘cramming teaching’. She describes how she changed from a traditional paternalistic teaching style to a more facilitating role. Students were no longer passive learning recipients, but actively involved in learning. Li Jianru’s approach aims to promote communication and break the psychological gap between teachers and students. By bringing participation in their lives, Li Jianru aims to help open students’ minds, encourage their creativity

³ See: World Bank. 2008. Review of 11th Five Year Plan. World Bank. 2009: China – Education Sector Review.

⁴ World Bank Education Sector Review (2009, p. 42). School development plans take into consideration not only the regular functions and operating cost, but also the specific needs of the school and the community (e.g. the number of left-behind children served, the problem of drop out among girls), and the required resources to carry out the strategy to address the problem. The school development plans’ budget can be aggregated to the county level and then eventually aggregated up to the province for submission to the central government for allocation.

and bring about positive change for the future.

Wang Jun, Wang Xiaodong, Yang Dou, Yu Fei, Lin Shu, Lin Xiaojie, Wen Yi and Yang Yu present a case study about the Chengdu Gay Care Organisation (CGCO). This article reflects an even more decisive shift in within the participation continuum. The article describes how men who have sex with men (MSM) were involved in policy-

making to address their needs and priorities. The most successful aspect of the case study is that the project created opportunities for them to become involved in the process in the first place – and that these usually vulnerable and marginalised groups became active participants and actors. The article also describes how participants were able to build their capacity through their involvement in the project process.

CONTACT DETAILS

Dr Lu Caizhen

Centre for Mountain Ecosystem Studies (CMES)
Kunming Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences

World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)

China ProgramMe; Heilongtan, Kunming 650204
China

Tel: +86 871 5223014

Email: lucaizhen@mail.kib.ac.cn;

Website: www.chinaagroforestry.org; <http://cmes.kib.ac.cn>

Johanna Pennarz

ITAD, Hove, UK

Email: johanna.pennarz@itad.com

Website: www.itad.com

REFERENCES

- Anand, Sudhir and Amartya Sen (1997) 'Concept of Human Development' Human Development Papers, Human Development and Economic Sustainability. World Development, Vol 28, No 12. P. 2029-2049.
- Khan, Azizur Rahman, Keith Griffin & Carl Riskin (1999) 'Income Distribution in Urban China during the Period of Economic Reform and Globalization' *American Economic Review*, American Economic Association, vol. 89.

23

Improving the health of rural women through participation

by YU DENGHAI

YU DENGHAI works in the Public Health Bureau of Zhenning County, Guizhou Province. In 2006, he participated as project coordinator in the two-year Health and Gender Equity project. This participatory project was sponsored by the Overseas Development Department of the Swedish Embassy. Here, he describes his experiences.

Introduction

According to a 2005 Government survey, 60% of the labour force in rural China consists of women. However, 70% of married women suffer from some kind of gynaecopathy. Improving the health of rural women is not only important for women's development. It can also make a huge contribution to the well-being of their families.

The Health and Gender Equity Project took place in Muyi Township and Benzai Township of Zhenning County between August 2006 and August 2008.¹ The project was designed to demonstrate a feasible model for women to participate in public health planning. It aimed to improve the public health administration and technical

workers' sense of responsibility and enable health services to better respond to and address women's health needs.

Participatory approaches used in the project

A participatory approach was adopted to mobilise women to participate in project implementation, and improve their abilities to actively participate in social affairs.

Involving local women in project implementation

At the start of the project, village representatives were elected at a village meeting. It was important that the representatives were both active and passionate. Together with the village directors, the head of the

¹ The project was funded by the Overseas Development Department of the Swedish Embassy, with the Foreign Loans Office under the Ministry of Public Health.

women's federation and village doctors, they formed the Village Women's Health Promotion Group. At the same time, village meetings also elected several families as 'demonstration households for health promotion' to participate in the advocacy of health knowledge. The families were selected if they had a potentially strong influence in the villages – in terms of positive thinking, good interpersonal skills and health awareness. It was expected that they would set a positive example and persuade other families to follow.

Participatory institutional building and maintenance

At the village meeting, it was agreed that the project activity funds would be autonomously managed by the Village Health Activity Groups. The funds would be implemented under the supervision of the township and county project leading groups. The use of funds was collectively decided by the Village Health Activity Groups, and signed by the group leader, operator and accountant.

The Village Health Promotion Groups now meet with the demonstrative households for 'free and cordial' talks at least once a month. Here, the elected households learn about gender equity, hygiene and health, for example. In turn, they share what they have learnt with other villagers according to their realities.

The establishment of the health and identifying of the local needs

The Village Health Promotion Group has established 'health homes' based in the demonstration households. They have held irregular meetings with the villagers for 'free and cordial talks'. The groups used participatory methods they believed were effective and popular to share information about health and gender issues with the villagers. An example of this was adapting and singing folk songs (see below).

At the same time, the demonstrative households are responsible of collecting information about the villagers' health service needs. They communicate these with the health administrative department through an established reporting mechanism, aiming to improve both health services and better provide for the health of the villagers.

Integrating health knowledge into local people's lives

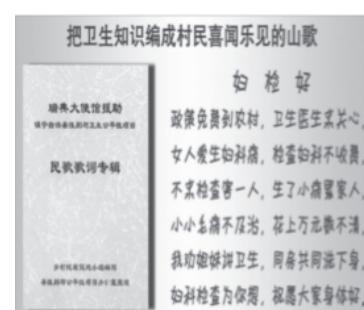
While conducting project activities, project facilitators discovered that folk songs were popular amongst local people. The Village Health Groups and demonstrative households adapted existing folk songs and took the lead in singing them. Health information that had been seen as 'dull' was incorporated into people's daily lives, helping to spread and improve people's knowledge about health issues (see Box 1).

Box 1: The advantages of gynaecological examinations

A folk song adapted by the Village Health Promotion Group (translated by the editor).

'Thanks to Government policy and the doctors' efforts,
Gynaecological examinations are now free.
It is normal for women to have this examination.
Please come and check, otherwise it might do harm,
Not only to your but also to your family.'

If you do not want to spend a fortune,
It is better to cure it before it becomes more serious.
It is better that you and your husband
Wash your genitals before having sex.
Please have the gynaecological examination for your own benefit,
And we wish you and your family good health.'



Adapting multiple health participation activities to local conditions

During the spring festival, many local people who work as migrant labourers return home. Having realised this, every Village Health Promotion Group organised the migrant labourers to hold 'free and cordial talks'. During the meetings they also shared information about how to prevent HIV/AIDS infections.

On national holidays, the Village Health Promotion Groups organised large-scale contests of folk songs. Participants were also asked different questions related to health. In these questions and answer sessions, health knowledge was more widely spread. In addition, the demonstrative households also shared health knowledge with the villagers during weddings, funerals and when working in the fields.

Providing medical care for pregnant women and new mothers

Village Health Promotion Groups autonomously established rescue teams for pregnant women in their village and also persuaded women to go to hospital to give birth. Village doctors and the demonstrative households also advocated appropriate healthcare to pregnant women and new mothers.

Calling for professional assistance to maintain reproductive health

As required by the Village Health Promotion Groups, the County Project Leading Group organised the clinic team from the County Maternal and Child Health Hospital to visit project villages. They conducted extensive reproductive health examinations and treatments. They found that most women had reproductive health problems of varying degrees. The Village Health Promotion Groups organised an advocacy campaign about reproductive health. They handed out medicine to women with genital duct infections and persuaded seriously ill women to go to hospital for treatment.

Box 2: Demonstrative households: the case of Liu Zhengmin

Liu Zhengmin is an ordinary, kind-hearted rural woman from the Gelou Villagers' Group, Fenji Village, Benzai Township. She was so shy that her face turned red while encountering strangers on the way to the street market. Mobilised by the Village Health Promotion Group, Liu Zhengmin's family became one of the 'demonstrative households'. Inspired by the training, she often helped her neighbours.

In January 2007, a child of Mr Wei in the same village had a terrible stomach ache. With the knowledge learnt from the training, Liu Zhengmin judged that the child was very sick and needed to see a doctor immediately. She asked the village doctor to send the child to the hospital. The child had an acute intestinal obstruction. Due to a quick rescue, he was promptly treated and avoided serious intestinal necrosis, and he soon recovered.

In April 2007, Liu Zhengmin's neighbour Wei was pregnant. Liu Zhengmin often visited her, and passed on knowledge about pregnancy healthcare she had learnt from participating in the Health and Gender Equity Project. She convinced Wei to visit the township hospital for a prenatal examination, and accompanied Wei and her family to the county hospital to give birth. After this, the village women trusted Liu Zhengmin deeply and always came to her for help about private matters.

What did the project achieve?

Strengthening women's participation and health awareness

After several rounds of training, the Village Health Promotion Group, the demonstrative households and the villagers have a much better understanding and awareness of health issues. Incentives for participating in project activities were high. Driven by the demonstrative households, all of the pilot villages conducted many activities aimed at upholding women's rights and spreading health knowledge. Project evaluation data in 2008 year indicated that 97.7% of interviewees believed that the project activities had improved women's abilities to participate in social activities.

Women's health has improved

At the beginning of the project implementation, over 70% of women in the pilot

villages had genital duct infection symptoms. The results of the final project evaluation indicated that more than half of married women of child-bearing age in the pilot villages exhibited symptoms of genital duct infection. This figure was 8.7% lower than the comparison villages and 20.8% lower than the baseline survey.

Local health organisations are more responsive to women's needs

In order to improve health services for women in the pilot villages, the township hospital improved the department of obstetrics and gynaecology and the department of examinations. It promptly sent staff from these two departments for higher level on-the-job training. The hospital also supported village health staff in conducting prevention, treatment and consultation services for genital duct infections.

More responsible healthcare and equitable resource allocation

By implementing the project, healthcare decision makers deepened their understanding of maintaining women's health. The newly revised 'New Rural Cooperative Medicare Compensation Method of Zhenning' (2008)² offered a compensation subsidy to parents of newborn babies that did not join the cooperative scheme and so did not have the first year insurance. For rural households who use birth control after giving birth to two daughters or one boy, the subsidy rate will be increased by 15%. At the same time, county and township family planning service stations were incorporated into the organisations responsible for cooperative Medicare. This expanded women's reproductive health services and greatly increased the opportunities of fundraising for these services. As a result, medical equipment was purchased, such as ultrasonic equipment, laboratory

instruments, obstetric tables and sterilising carts. Medical professionals from the department of obstetrics and gynaecology also organised on-the-job training at higher level hospitals.

More cohesive communities

The project established a bridge for interpersonal exchanges in the pilot villages. This reinforced communications amongst neighbours, helped to reduce conflicts and enhanced social harmony. According to participants, they had more opportunities to talk to their neighbours. As such, their community has become more cohesive.

Main lessons learnt

The role of local government in project implementation

At the start of the project, we provided gender knowledge training to the county and township leaders and relevant departments. The aim was to improve their understanding so they could actively support project activities. This strategy proved to be very efficient. During the course of the project, the village committees consistently supported the project activities. Their extensive organisational experience was invaluable in assisting the Village Health Promotion Groups to carry out their work.

Professional health training was critical

The members of the Village Health Promotion Groups and demonstrative households were autonomously elected by the villagers. However, they still lacked basic health knowledge and working skills. During the initial project stages, we needed to provide them with basic health knowledge and how to integrate this science-based knowledge within the indigenous knowledge system.

² China has gradually introduced the New Rural Cooperative Medical Care system since 2002. Unlike the old cooperative system participation is voluntary. Households are able to join the system through payment of a membership fee. Members can then claim all medical expenses from the scheme.

Electing Village Health Promotion Groups and demonstrative households

One of the key success elements was establishing the Village Health Promotion Groups and the demonstrative households. Only by allowing the farmers to autonomously elect village representatives could the project activities be effectively implemented. Village representatives need to be active and passionate about collective activities and have lively and cheerful characters. They must be willing to devote their free time to the project and be representative of rural women. They must also lead healthy lifestyles themselves, in order to function as demonstrative households and participate in the Village Health Promotion Groups.

Although many members of the Village Health Promotion Groups and demonstrative households were not well educated, they were able to use their knowledge of local folk songs and facilitate face-to-face 'free and cordial talks' to root project activities into local people's lives. They visited friends and relatives and offered their homes or fields as places for 'free and cordial talks'. They exchanged stories and case studies and 'telling the truth' so as to spread health knowledge to countless people within their communities.

These are the people who can change the health habits of villagers by adapting health theory to the local context. It proved to be an efficient method for adapting our activities appropriately.

CONTACT DETAILS

Yu Denghai
Public Health Bureau of Zhenning County
Guizhou Province
PR China

Applying participatory teaching in big classes – experiences of a primary school teacher

24

by LI JIANRU

LI JIANRU is a Chinese teacher at No. 2 Primary School in Yumen, Gansu Province. She was a teacher for more than 10 years before she participated the China-UK Nine-year Compulsory Education Project in 2006. She has explored the potential of integrating participatory teaching into primary school education ever since. In October 2008, Li Jianru was granted the first award in teaching in Gansu for her outstanding achievements.

In July 2007, I attended the training workshop for the China-UK Elementary Education project. Here, I learnt about the concept of participatory teaching for the first time in my life. I was deeply impressed and enlightened by its democratic core, its new class organising strategies and diverse teaching methods. In order to explore the potentials of this participatory approach for improving teaching quality, I decided to start a pilot project in my own school. I began to apply some of the methods I had learnt from this workshop to my Chinese teaching class.

‘Participatory teaching is not applicable to teaching in big classes.’ This was a conclusion reached by many teachers involved in participatory teaching. The reason was that there were too many

students in the class, making it difficult to control and ensure a high level of participation. However, if the teachers believed that participatory teaching was simply to play games, perform or engage in group discussion, they were wrong. I believe that the key to participatory teaching is to see if the students actively participate, explore, think and practice during the learning process.

Based on my two year pilot experience in integrating a participatory approach into the Chinese teaching at the primary school level, I realised that it is practicable to apply participatory approaches in a large class. The results showed that it could be a very efficient teaching method. Here are some lessons learnt from my pilot project.



Photo: Li Jianru

Student playing the 'little doctor' correcting spelling mistakes.

Creating a relaxed and psychologically-safe environment

While teaching, to help facilitate a relaxed environment for the students, the teachers must learn to squat on their heels when engaging with the students – to observe the world from the students' perspective, and engage with them on an equal footing. They should tolerate students' mistakes, appreciate their brightness, solve their problems, stimulate their desire to express themselves, broaden their views, and encourage them to have unique understandings. This helps to facilitate effective communication between the teacher and student. Teachers should also try to narrow the psychological gap between the teacher and student, and promote the establishment of a new type of teacher-student relationship.

The teaching methods I describe below can help to:

- create a friendly and relaxed environment and stimulate students' interest;
- encourage questions, and foster students'

abilities to think for themselves; and

- promote classroom democracy, and encourage students to actively respond by using rewarding words.

Teaching methods which encourage active student participation

Role play

One role play game I have used I call 'little doctor'. One student plays the 'little doctor'. The 'doctor' makes a diagnosis of their 'patient' – a piece of writing – looking out for spelling and grammar errors. The 'little doctor' then prescribes a 'cure' – in other words, they correct the piece of work. By playing these roles, the students more actively participate in studying, and with greater interest.

Another game that my students were very much interested in is the 'little tour guide'. In the course of reading about folklore and human landscape, the students play the role of 'little tour guides' to inspire them to participate in learning by

Photo: Li Jianru



Students playing the role of 'tour guides' leading through a landscape video.

'guiding' them through the videos or pictures showing landscapes or cultural customs.

My students were deeply involved in the game of 'little teachers' too. I ask the 'little teachers' to teach everybody new words, and all the students join in and provide comments. Playing teacher and student roles in reversed injects a fresh air of democracy, equality and harmony into the classroom.

Learning by doing

In my pilot class, I applied different types of participation activities during the class.

Select wonderful contents from textbooks for students to 'draw'

There are many articles and paragraphs describing scenery or things with beautiful words in the text. Allow your students to

use their imaginative power, and 'turn the words into pictures' based on their own understanding of the language and words. The students can deepen their understanding of language in the course of participating in reading, thinking and drawing, and feel the fun of creative writing in Chinese and the beauty of arts.

Practicing with their hands and allowing students to 'try'

The experience of the participatory teaching process enabled students to become active explorers of knowledge. For example, we taught the story 'Crow Drinking Water'.¹ We asked the student to do an experiment. They increased the water level in a bottle with small stones. We then asked them to figure out why this happened, in order to understand how the crow was able to drink the water.

¹ A traditional Chinese children's story. A thirsty crow uses his beak to fill a water bottle with tiny stones so that the water in it gradually rises until the crow can finally drink. The moral of the story is that when facing difficulties, you can learn from the crow and manage to find a solution to overcome them. Source: <http://resources.echineselearning.com>.



Photo: Li Jianru

Students performing the 'crow drinking water' story.

Groups discussions and letting students 'talk about it'

How can you guarantee the effectiveness of cooperative study in large groups? How do you mobilise an entire class to use their initiatives? This is key for study and learning improvement in big classes.

I conducted a preliminary group studies exploration, looking at 'homogeneity between groups and mixed abilities in the group'. I found that in order to guarantee the effective participation of students in a big class, the key is proper group allocation, specific role assignment and process-based evaluation.

Create mixed ability groups to work together
I divided the 64 students in my class into 16 groups, with four people in each group. I created mixed ability groups which each included students with different levels of academic achievement. Mixed ability groups were good for the students, allowing them to cooperate, debate with and learn from each other. The organisational and studying abilities, studying results, thinking and sexes

between different groups were basically even, creating homogeneity between the different groups. This made for equitable competition between them.

The groups implemented a group leader responsibility system. They autonomously assigned the roles of members and proposed self-discipline requirements, which laid a sound foundation for cooperative learning in the classes.

Effective participatory processes

Enabling every student to fully participate in the group is very challenging for the teachers when designing the study content. The questions we ask the students should be open enough to inspire the student's interest in participating. I have found it is very useful for the students to taste the happiness of success by using sharp-thinking activities such as group discussions and brainstorming.

Appropriate group evaluation methods
Teachers need to develop a scientific and

Photo: Li Jianru



Students performing 'cat and mouse'.

reasonable evaluation mechanism for students' learning. From our experience, our advice on appropriate group evaluation methods is:

- Comment on the group's performance instead of the individuals.
- Give careful feedback both on the learning processes used as well as the results.
- Diversify the means of providing feedback. Use e.g. observation, discussion, analysis of school assignments, awarding students with 'appraising stars' and examinations.

Encourage students to participate in-depth by providing an open learning environment

Student-centred learning activities

Student-centred learning activities allow students to select learning activities according to their interests. If driven by their interests, students tend to autonomously look up relevant information, organise discussions, and work with their own hands. In this way, the students command

the relevant knowledge. They are able to practise their exploring abilities and innovative thinking.

Create an exploring and learning environment for children

I taught my class the story called 'Story of a Small Village'. Since it was an article about environmental protection, I designed a class called 'Advocacy for Environmental Protection on Campus' based on the realities of the school. I allowed the students to use different means of exploration and practice activities. Students drew advocacy pictures, designed slogans, wrote proposals and produced handwritten newspapers about environmental protection at school. In this way, all the students were able to participate. It also promoted their awareness of environmental protection issues.

Encourage students to continue exploring after classes

Effective class teaching requires student participation before, during and after



Teacher interacting with students during group work.

classes. In this way, we provide the students with more opportunities for participation. We provide guidance on how to continue their explorations and be creative outside of the classroom – building on what they have learnt at school, so that it becomes more integrated with their lives.

Conclusion

Teachers need to mobilise, guide and enable

their students to participate freely, actively and deeply in the learning process. Only in this way can teachers help the students to adopt better studying and learning habits, use their intelligence, develop their potential and accumulate knowledge.

I firmly believe that as long as we truly understand the core concept of participatory teaching, it will shine in big classes with dazzling splendour!

CONTACT DETAILS

Li Jianru
No. 2 Primary School of Yumen City
Gansu Province
PR China

Participation based on empowerment: the Chengdu Gay Care Organisation

25

by WANG JUN, WANG XIAODONG, YANG DOU, YU FEI, LIN SHU, LIN XIAOJIE, WEN YI, YANG YU

WANG XIAODONG is the director of the Chengdu Gay Care Organisation (CGCO). WANG JUN, YANG DOU, LIN SHU, YU FEI are section directors. They have been responsible for implementing a DfID funded HIV/AIDS prevention project. The CGCO was established in 2003 as a community-based organisation (CBO) by local men who have sex with men (MSM). Empowerment has always been its guiding principle. The role of CGCO has steadily developed in regional and national policy-making and in speaking for the rights of MSM in decision-making at the national level. CGCO has also played a leading role in establishing a regional and national network of CBOs (the China Male Tongzhi Health Forum).

Empowerment – the core of participation

Over the past decade much importance has been given to participatory approaches to development. However, the involvement of target populations is often merely symbolic, especially in developing countries. Despite many 'participatory' projects having been implemented, the status and situation of target populations have not been greatly improved, as real participation has not taken place.

According to a UNAIDS summary report (Roey, 1999) the participation of target populations can be divided into six levels, from low to high:

- target audiences
- contributors
- speakers
- implementers
- experts
- decision makers

The power of the different levels varies correspondingly. The target audience is generally weakest and the decision makers the most powerful. The reason why target populations reap little benefit from programmes is that they tend to be confined to the first three levels and are rarely equipped or given the opportunity to be implementers or experts.

True participation must have empower-

ment at its core. The target population should be given the right to have their say in programme design and implementation from the very start. They should be regarded as experts who provide an important resource of information, knowledge and skills. Their suggestions should be given the same value as those of other policy and planning experts. In this way members of the target population can be cultivated to become the real owners of the programme. They are able to progressively expand into other locally-owned work, with other organisations being supporters and co-operators. Only in this way can the participatory approach be sustainable and make a real change.

The CGCO is an excellent example of this approach. CGCO implements HIV and AIDS prevention and care work among the MSM community. The target population participates in all aspects of CGCO's work as a genuinely self-managed CBO.

How to empower the target population

The target population manages the programme autonomously

When DfID first began preparing its support for the prevention and care of those with HIV and AIDS among the MSM population in Chengdu, it decided that the self-formed CGCO should take full responsibility for the design, execution and management of the programme. DfID provided funds, technical support, supervision and evaluation.

CGCO core members were already acquainted with the local MSM population. This became the most important and influential resource in the process of the programme design. The programme had a high level of acceptability from the beginning. It paid special attention to relating its goal to the needs of the target group. It was also able to avoid problem places which might have led to difficulties for the target population. Many of the MSM have not only accepted the services provided by



Volunteers and community representatives deliberated and passed the constitution of the organisation at a community conference.

CGCO, but also participate actively as volunteers in its work. In less than three years CGCO provided services for over 10,000 local MSM and enrolled the help of over 200 volunteers.

Using the knowledge of the MSM population as a basis, CGCO set up a new model for HIV and AIDS prevention and care. This model is firmly rooted in the gay subculture and is comprehensive in its range of interventions and services. It is not limited by conventional technical theory and international precedents. This model raises the standard of service of HIV and AIDS prevention and care programmes among the local MSM population. It has also established examples for other developing countries to follow.

DfID further contributed to the level of participation by the target population by supplying CGCO with professional skills, capacity building in programme management and organisational development. To CGCO, the support for organisational development has been crucial.

Expand community members' participation through open and democratic governance
It has to be emphasised that a self-formed CBOs such as CGCO must continuously foster active participation from the target population. Power and control of resources should not be concentrated merely with the person in charge or a core group within the organisation. It would only be empty participation without real influence. This approach would have blocked others from participating in policy-making at CGCO,

Photo: CGCO



CGCO submits work statements and financial reports annually at a community conference and is questioned by community members.

Photo: CGCO



CGCO mobilises community members to join its programmes by organizing their favourite activities.

despite the fact that the organisation had originally been formed in an inclusive way and its leaders are mainly from the target population. There needs to be a governance structure and process that entails genuine power sharing among the community.

CGCO has paid a lot of attention to this matter, with support from DfID. CGCO formulated its constitution in a participatory way through a community conference. It involved a wide range of volunteers and community representatives, who both reviewed and approved the constitution. The community conference also elected a board to supervise the daily work of CGCO. Also, in order to perpetuate the community conference, CGCO submits work statements and financial reports to it annually, and asks volunteers and community representatives for suggestions. During these conferences rewards are presented to outstanding volunteers. This greatly increases the level of the whole community's participation and inspires greater enthusiasm.

Drawing more target population members into the policy-making process

From 2006 onwards DfID supported CGCO to engage in regional networking and policy-making.

First, with DfID assistance, CGCO conducted research into the current situation of HIV and AIDS prevention and care among the MSM population within Sichuan Province. In light of the research results, CGCO then tabled a proposal to the Sichuan Provincial Government. It proposed that the Prevention and Care of

HIV and AIDS Programme be implemented throughout the entire province.

The Sichuan Government gave great importance to the suggestion. Afterwards, the programme was implemented on a provincial scale, with CGCO making a major contribution.

CGCO has also helped to build community organisations in 11 cities, with DfID support. CGCO helps these organisations build working relationships with local governments and professional institutions and at the same time provides long-term technical assistance to the local organisations. During this process of extending its work across the entire province, CGCO pays special attention to the principles and processes of the participatory model and empowerment, insisting on local ownership of the programme and ensuring the independence of the local organisations' daily work. CGCO tries hard to create a working network that embodies equality and mutual help.

As CGCO has grown in ability and experience, it has increasingly taken part in higher level meetings. In 2007, China's National Centre for AIDS Control and Prevention (NCAIDS) engaged a writing group of four experts from communities affected by HIV and AIDS. The group worked with experts from the China Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to formulate a national HIV and AIDS prevention and care programme. Two of these experts came from CGCO and undertook the main writing task. In the same year, the Director of CGCO, Wang

Xiaodong, was invited onto the national advisory committee by NCAIDS as the member representing the MSM community. In 2008, CGCO was entrusted with drafting advice for China's MSM AIDS prevention and care strategy.

CGCO has also joined in efforts to initiate the China Male Tongzhi Health Forum (CMTHF). So far, CMTHF is the only national association of MSM community organisations in China. The network also serves as a platform where the MSM population can participate in policy-making at the national level. The CMTHF includes more than 20 gay community organisations from across the country. As an important member of CMTHF, CGCO also provides staff members. The former publicity chief of CGCO, Wang Jun, was appointed Secretary General of CMTHF. CGCO also provides venues and hardware support for the forum. At present the administrative support for the CMTHF secretariat is provided jointly from the CGCO office.

Conduct research that is led by target populations

DfID took steps to support the target population's own applied research initiatives. Collaborating with professional organisations and with support from DfID, CGCO has conducted research into issues such as the size of the MSM community, the risk factors for HIV infection and various intervention models and their effectiveness. The research results have proven more useful than the more academic research conducted by other experts. This is because the CGCO research takes the practical situation of the MSM community into consideration, together with the social, political and economic factors which influence the behaviour of MSM. Hence the research is more practical in its applicability.

Current situation

DfID is no longer the largest sponsor of CGCO and may gradually withdraw its

funds. But thanks to the model of development it offered and the capacity building work it did, CGCO has established itself clearly as an independent organisation. It is becoming one of the most prominent leaders in the field of HIV and AIDS prevention and care in China.

The next stage in the development of CGCO is to become more professional in the area of social work. This will mean training volunteers from the MSM community to become full time social workers and to develop a more sophisticated division of labour and allocation of responsibility within the organisation. A greater degree of specialisation in social work will require the target population to acquire more professional knowledge. Community affairs will be better managed, with more enlightened participation by the target population. This in turn will enable the MSM community to develop more sustainably.

Conclusion

This success story of DfID's approach in supporting CGCO's development demonstrates that the core of the participatory model must be empowerment – the endowment of rights to the target population. Plans and processes must always be focused on the objective of transferring power to the target population. But the effective use of this power is dependent on the community being well enough equipped with the right skills and institutional arrangements. So capacity building of the target group turns out to be the most important task to ensure that they can govern and manage their own community effectively.

To assess the programme, we need to observe and study the following aspects:

- How has the programme improved the abilities of the target populations?
- Are the target populations endowed with more power and better able to exercise their rights?
- Has the participation level of the target population risen?
- Has the scope of the participation risen?

(Local/ regional/ national/ international scope)

- Is there any power-sharing mechanism established within the target population's community?
- Has the target population acquired more

information and knowledge for policy-making?

Only by investigating these issues can we find out whether greater participation of the target population has been truly realised.

CONTACT DETAILS

Chengdu Gay Care Organisation
No.88 Xinkaisi Street
Chengdu
Sichuan
PR China
Tel/Fax: +86 28 8662 7577
Email: cd_homoheart@yahoo.com.cn

REFERENCES

Roey, J. (1999) 'From principle to practice: Greater involvement of people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS (GIPA).' *UNAIDS Best Practice Collection*: Geneva, Switzerland.



PART VI:

Scaling up – ways of institutionalising participation

Introduction

26

by JOHANNA PENNARZ

Scaling up presents a huge challenge in China, not just because of the sheer size of the country, but also because of the complex and complicated way government works. Since the failure of the Village Development Planning (VDP) roll out (see Part I), there is a general understanding that participation cannot be implemented by decree from above. It requires changes of attitudes, mindsets and behaviour – and learning from practice.

Pilots are an integral part of policy learning in China, and it is often from small-scale pilots that large scale change is initiated. Chinese policies like to use evidence from practical demonstration projects to support the political agenda. What works in practice can be referred to and will be disseminated to promote further change.

The Kunming workshop took place at a time when experiences with participation were emerging from a range of sectors and institutions. However, the critical step of institutionalising practices and behaviour still remains to be done. During the

Kunming workshop, participants noted the potential benefits and the challenges for scaling up participation. Central government policies are generally more in favour of citizens' participation than they used to be. The Kunming workshop noted the central government's policies on the 'new socialist countryside'/'harmonious society', the Organic Law and the shift towards greater service orientation as enabling factors. In this issue, **Wang Yue's** case study already showed how participatory pilots are viewed as legitimate and useful against the background of the central government's policy agenda (see Part IV). At the same time workshop participants highlighted the major institutional challenges.

The financial resources in particular for capacity building, but also for extensive consultation are often not sufficient. **Deng Weijie's** case study provides a compelling example on the gap that often exists between government ambitions and actual resources (see Deng's case study in this section).

As a result, previous attempts to roll out participation have failed due to capacity constraints. The Guangxi case study presents an innovative approach to overcoming capacity constraints through institutionalised learning. Guangxi has placed strong emphasis on capacity building and learning through a decentralised and practice-oriented learning approach. Participation has been scaled up in Guangxi and has started to influence another poverty reduction project (see **Huang Chanbin** and **Zhou Qing**'s case study in this section).

Like most policies that are passed down through many levels, the higher levels provide the basic principles and targets, while local levels retain space to define the details of implementation. The Guangxi case study provides a good example of how the requirement to follow a participatory approach is handed down from provincial to county levels. This is done through an official document that is general on the process, but specific on how roles and responsibilities at the interface are defined. The approach is essentially pragmatic: local government is provided the space to work out the practical details based on what works best for them. By providing the space for innovative practices, the province has gained a wealth of experiences on

participation which they have shared through their learning system.¹

A major challenge for rolling out multi-sector poverty reduction programmes in a participatory way is how to coordinate the various initiatives implemented by different sector departments in a way that they respond to the comprehensive needs and priorities of a community. The present fiscal system does not support coordination and alignment of sector programmes (also see case studies in Part III). The World Bank-supported Community Driven Development (CDD) approach presents an attempt to overcome public finance constraints through direct disbursements of funds to communities. It tries to address issues of financing since it disburses funds directly to communities and allows them to spend them according to their integrated development plans (see **Li Hui**'s case study in this section).

Issues of accountability are not yet addressed. Local governance presents a particular challenge for poverty reduction. Previous assessments noted the concerns about channelling larger volumes of central funds to local governments, in particular the lack of adequate financial management systems and monitoring and oversight capacity to ensure that the funds are well-spent (see World Bank/DfID 2009).

CONTACT DETAILS

Johanna Pennarz
ITAD, Hove, UK
Email: Johanna.pennarz@itad.com
Website: www.itad.com

REFERENCE

'From poor areas to poor people: China's evolving poverty reduction agenda' *An assessment of poverty and inequality in China*,
World Bank

¹ See also Tips for Trainers, Article 33, in this issue.

Exploring community-driven development (CDD) in Chinese poverty reduction

27

by LI HUI

LI HUI is deputy head of section in the Foreign Capital Project Management Centre (FCPMC) under the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development (LGOP). The LGOP is a politically influential body, guiding poverty reduction policies at central government level. The FCMC is the management arm coordinating internationally-funded poverty reduction projects at central level. The implementation of pilot projects, like the CDD pilots, at this level is potentially significant because of the influence on policy processes. Li Hui was the coordinator of the CDD pilot, funded by the World Bank. Her case study investigates how the institutional constraints (such as those described in Part III) can be overcome by this innovative approach to project funding and management.

Background

Entering the new century, the Chinese government formulated a series of policies to 'strengthen agriculture and benefit farmers and social security'.¹ In the following years, the process of poverty reduction was further accelerated, and great achievements were made between 2001 and 2005. But five main obstacles to poverty alleviation were persisting at the community level:

- Levels of participation were low in the traditional poverty reduction projects and

mostly confined to cash and labour contributions;

- Community capacity building was very slow and skills for self-organisation, self-management, self-development and self-supervision were insufficient;
- Development funds for poor communities were insufficient;
- Problems with targeting the poor population remained unresolved; and,
- There were no permanent mechanisms for sustainable development at community level.

¹ The China Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Outline (2001–2010) www.gov.cn/english/official/2005-07/27/content_17712.htm

Box 1: Community-driven development in the World Bank

Community Driven Development (CDD) is an approach to development that supports participatory decision-making, local capacity building, and community control of resources. The five key pillars of this approach are community empowerment, local government empowerment, realigning the centre, accountability and transparency, and learning by doing. With these pillars in place, CDD approaches can create sustainable and wide-ranging impacts by mobilising communities, and giving them the tools to become agents of their own development. Support to CDD usually includes: Building capacity of community groups; promoting an enabling environment through policy and institutional reform (decentralisation, sector policies, etc.); and strengthening local governance relationships, including forging linkages between community based organisations and local governments. Within the World Bank, CDD programmes are usually financed through Social Funds. Social Funds directly finance small community managed projects and allow poor people to become actively involved in the development of their communities.

<http://tinyurl.com/2epuxzp>

To address these problems, the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development cooperated with the World Bank in the Community-Driven Development (CDD) pilot projects, starting in May 2006. The total project investment was about 44 million RMB, covering 60 key poor villages in four counties of four provinces (Jingxi County in Guangxi Autonomous Region, Jialing District in Sichuan Province, Baishui County in Shaanxi Province, and Wongniute Banner in Inner Mongolia). These projects were scheduled to be finished by 30 June 2009. These projects covered three main areas: small community infrastructure and public services, community development fund, and community natural resources management and environmental improvement.

The specific objectives of the project were to apply the tools of community-driven development, explore establishing sustainable mechanisms of self-organisation, self-management and self-development, by mobilising the potential social capital of the communities and improving governance at the local level.

Innovations and main activities of the project

Based on the principle of ‘respecting the subject status of the farmers and giving play to their creative spirits’, and based on both the international experiences of community-driven development and the

Chinese domestic context, the innovations and main activities of the project were in the areas of the control of funds, decision-making processes, transparency, support systems, and capacity strengthening, which is described in further detail below.

The right to control funds

This pilot project was the first poverty alleviation project in China that directly handed over the right to control project funds to communities. Their right to control these funds was the key to community-driven development. To ensure that the communities could control the funds and safely use them, the project developed rules and regulations for the use of funding, based on the following principles:

1. The villagers autonomously discussed and formulated the fund management methods, and democratically elected the managers.
2. Special community supervision groups were established to inspect how the funds were used at any time.
3. In natural villages or villagers’ groups, the communities established their own project accounts to manage the funds.
4. Subject to the communities meeting all the necessary requirements, the county PMOs have to grant the funds unconditionally to the community accounts on a lump sum basis.
5. The account, passbook and passbook password are held by three different

people, and money must be withdrawn jointly by the three people to ensure its safety.

6. The community must be notified promptly that money has been used and they must supervise its use.

The right to make decisions

The CDD project was also the first poverty alleviation project in China in which all the decisions were made autonomously by the communities. It was up to the communities to decide what to do and how to do it. The communities established project organisations through democratic elections. These organisations comprised the project implementation group, the project supervision group and the project management committee of the natural villages. They were responsible for implementing, organising, managing, and maintaining the projects as well as for project supervision and assessment of projects during the selection process and decision-making. The communities formulated the systems, supplemented with a publicity and complaint mechanism, and all major matters had to be discussed and decided through plenary meetings.

Open and transparent publicity and complaint mechanism

The publicity system ran through the entire course of the pilot project, and was able to ‘publish everything that needs to be published.’ During project design, the use of funding and the major decisions were published in the community, to ensure the communities’ right to know and decide. Secondly, a special complaint mechanism was established. Responsibility to handle complaints was allocated to named individuals at the World Bank, Central PMO, Provincial PMO and County PMO, and the relevant details (contact address, telephone and fax) were made available to the communities. The channels for complaints were made public. There were also procedures and regulations for the handling of

complaints, which protected the legitimate interests of those making complaints and gave prompt feedback to the communities on the actions taken and outcome.

Community service system to support capacity building

The CDD project was aware of the gap between the ideal of community-driven development and the realities of community capacity. The project established and improved a service system for community-driven development to strengthen community capacities for self-organisation, self-management, self-development and self-supervision. The project allocated a facilitator to each administrative village for disseminating project rules and information, and to provide assistance in carrying out work in the community. The key functions of the County PMOs were service, coordination, tutoring and supervision and being responsible for examining and accepting the facilitators’ work. Also, the project creatively introduced international NGOs to provide training and technical guidance to the County PMOs and facilitators, such as Plan International, Action Aid and World Vision. Project supporting groups at county and township level, drawn from relevant government departments, provided the communities with technical support and training.

Exploring new mechanisms to improve capacities

The CDD project explored new mechanisms to build capacity throughout the process. Through continuous practice, the communities and farmers accumulated experiences and gradually built their capacities for self-organisation, self-management, self-development and self-supervision. The project was implemented in cycles, and the purpose was to gradually improve the capacity of the community by repeating the process of project application, evaluation and selection, implementation, management and supervision. Community organi-

Figure 1. Comparison of participation levels between traditional poverty approach and a community-driven development approach.

Contents	Nianli village (CDD project)	Qilong village (traditional project)
1. Planning		
Interviewed villagers involved in the planning process	100% involved	69% involved
Baseline survey	98% interviewed villagers are clear on the project objectives, contents and investment	31% interviewed villagers are clear the project objectives, contents and investment
Development of project management rules	100% involved in by discussion	24% involved in different ways
2. Implementation		
The priority of local villagers?	98% agreed	35% agreed; but 27% just follow the one assigned by higher authorities
The project fund management	98% satisfied with the transparency	35% satisfied with the transparency. 27% knew nothing about the fund management
The interest of local participation	High participation by 83% interviewed	High participation by 24% interviewed; but general by 37% interviewed.
The fund raising by community	100% agreed for their priority only	14% agreed, but 45% disagreed or thought it was too difficult
3. Monitoring and Evaluation		
Monitoring	98% involved in the monitoring, and 100% are clear the fund is well monitored by the independent community monitoring team	24% involved in the monitoring, and 29% are clear the fund is well monitored by the independent community monitoring team
Ownership	100% agreed	31% agreed
Complain channel	96% knew the telephone number, 85% knew where to find the number, and 85% satisfied with the treatment	27% knew the telephone number, 22% knew where to find the number, and 33% satisfied with the treatment

sations became stronger and they gradually improved their self-organisation and self-management capacities.

Project effects and impacts

After almost three years of piloting, the project has achieved significant results, with improvements in living conditions, and enhancement of productivity and farmers' standard of living. Community

cohesion and the desire of the wider population for participation were reinforced, and the self-organisation, self-management, self-supervision and self-development capacities of the communities significantly improved.

Village-based decision-making has led to stronger motivation and ownership. Since communities were given the right to

discuss and decide, they became more engaged and active. They changed from the traditional mentality of 'waiting, depending and begging', and developed an increasing sense of responsibility. As one villager of Jingxi, Guangxi said, 'In the past, it was the government who built the roads, and they wanted me to participate in their affairs, so I wanted to be paid for working. Now it is us who are building the road, and the government helps us, and it is the government who participates in our affairs. Therefore, it is our responsibility to build the road properly.' A comparison of participation levels between a village that implemented the traditional poverty reduction approach project in Qilong Village and a village that implemented the CDD project (Nianli Village) in Jingxi, Guangxi, illustrates the high levels of participation achieved through the CDD approach.² (See Figure 1).

Village-specific decision-making has reached the poor and addressed their needs

The communities controlled the resources and made the decisions, which changed the traditional top-to-bottom decision-making mechanism. It was people-oriented, respected the farmers' wishes, and solved the most relevant, urgent and immediate problems of the farmers. It made the government's public products and services better aligned with people's needs. Our inquiries at Guangxi found that 98% of the interviewees believed that the projects implemented were the most needed projects that they selected by themselves and 100% would actively raise the funds to support them. Hejiazhuo villagers in Baishui, Shaanxi Province pointed out that

the project procedures were way too extensive, but that the process could solve the realistic problems for the people.

The village-based fund management has been more cost-efficient

By directly handing over the management of project funds to the communities, the sense of responsibility and ownership of the communities was reinforced. The communities actively mobilised the internal resources, including contributions of labour, money, technology and other social assets. There were more self-constructed projects, which led to lower costs and more efficient use of funding. For example, in Guangxi the construction of a water pond would normally cost 150,000 RMB. With labour contributions by the villagers, it would cost only 40,000 RMB, less than 30% of the original budget. The technical department commented positively on the quality of construction.

Both internal and external supervision has ensured safe use of funds

The complaints system highlighted a range of challenges: Some community funds were controlled by a few people inside the Implementation Groups, fund use was not transparent, the quality of project implementation was rather poor, the process for the selection of contractors was not transparent, and people were suspicious about the construction works. The PMOs at the national, provincial and county levels undertook detailed investigations into the reported problems and resolved them promptly, so that the community's interests were safeguarded, and confidence restored.

² The survey was carried out by the Foreign Capital Project Management Centre of the Poverty Alleviation Office of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region by questionnaires on 23-24 September 2008. The two villages are located in two adjacent towns. Their basic village conditions are similar, for example, the geological conditions, the national, production and living conditions, the level of poverty, the living habits, etc. The two communities had both implemented road projects. 49 questionnaires were sent and 47 were returned in Nianli village, and 50 questionnaires were issued and 49 were returned in Dragon Village. The sample household is about 15% of the whole village households. The questionnaires are done by the rich, medium and poor households randomly.

The process approach has strengthened capacities for self-development

The communities have undertaken a wider range of management tasks as part of the project cycle. They established a community monitoring group and publicity and complaint mechanisms, and practiced supervision. The communities also improved their self-development capacities through financial management training, tendering, engineering design, supervision/management and other managerial skills, and planting and breeding technologies. The Implementation Group of natural village, Baishui County, Shaanxi Province reported that 'we can create our own project proposals now, and we have gained a lot of financial, tendering, purchasing and engineering knowledge. In future, we can conduct projects by ourselves without even the assistance of the community facilitators.'

The process has strengthened grassroots democracy

The use of practices such as democratic election, decision-making, democratic and autonomous management and supervision has strengthened governance and capacities of grassroots organisations. Moreover, more honest and capable people keen to advance public welfare were encouraged to participate in the public affairs of communities, and the project management organisation eventually became part of the villagers' committee and party committee. Thus, more extensive democratic engagement was achieved and the wider community became involved.

CDD has reduced conflicts and promoted harmonious development

Principles of openness, equity and transparency were followed and the publicity system and complaint mechanism were applied during the process. It was also ensured that there were rules to follow for the community decision-making, project management and supervision. Thus the project prevented individuals promoting

their private interests under the guise of serving the public. Through this, the project has built mutual trust, especially trust in the project organisations, the government and those implementing the project. The government did not make decisions for the masses, but instead provided the communities with support and services. The party secretary of Nianli Village, Jingxi said, 'Through this project, I have become more authoritative in the village. The project was open and transparent, the masses trusted in us, and no longer scolded us anymore. With the implementation and management committee and implementation group in place, my job became a lot easier, as it was they who organised the masses to hold meetings and implement the project. Moreover, everybody came up with the idea through discussion.' Many villagers said that future projects should also adopt the CDD ideas and methods.

Lessons learnt

After three years of practice and exploration, we believe that the application of community-driven development ideas and methods in poverty alleviation can effectively solve the problems of targeting, participation and insufficient capacity in China. These experiences are worth replicating and rolling out. The main experiences of the pilot projects were that:

Good communication and dissemination are crucial. The CDD project used various means to disseminate project ideas, methods and contents to the communities, such as calling for villagers' meetings, publicity boards, radio broadcasting, door-to-door interviews, group discussions, mobilising CPC members and key teams. By extensively disseminating information, the community was informed of the essence and core of the project, and the community was motivated to participate.

Substantial efforts must be spent on training: The national PMO trained the county PMOs and NGOs, NGOs trained

county PMOs, and community facilitators trained the community-based grassroots organisations, while the community facilitators trained the communities. Multi-perspective and multi-content training was conducted, including ideas for and methods of community-driven developments, project flow charts and requirements, participatory working methods, technologies, management, finance and procurement. Training was done in many different ways; such as special-topic training classes, meetings as training, field investigation, field training, and partner education.

Mindsets have to change on all sides: The government had to consider the masses and establish a service-oriented awareness. It also needed to clarify the duties of all stakeholders, strengthen their relationships, and ensure standards. The farmers also had to change their mindsets. By transferring the right of financial control and management and introducing a competitive mechanism, the ‘waiting, depending and begging’ mindset of the farmers became ‘I make my own decisions for my own businesses.’³

A system has to be in place to safeguard the principles: Clear rules about the core content and project procedures have ensured the smooth implementation and extension of the CDD project. This included clarification of the duties of all

parties as an institutional guarantee to hand over the right of decision-making to the communities. It was also necessary to formulate definite fund management methods, and to ensure rights of financial control for the communities. Finally, it was necessary to ensure the implementation of such systems as competition, publicity and complaint, and to ensure equity, openness and transparency.

Concluding remarks

Community-driven development has started to show effects in poverty alleviation, development and even in the construction of new socialist rural areas in China. It has been widely popular amongst farmers, scholars and government at different levels. In just three years, the CDD project has gone from pilots in 60 villages in four counties of four provinces, and expanded to almost 1,000 villages in more than 140 counties of nine provinces. It has been extended from the field of poverty alleviation to other agriculture-related and socio-economic fields, and it has been expanded from the use of aid funds to the use of government funds. However, as to whether it could be extensively rolled out and applied in poverty alleviation, development and the construction of the new socialist rural areas, even to upgrade it to policy level, would require more study and extensive practices.

CONTACT DETAILS

Li Hui
Foreign Capital Project Management Centre (FCPMC)
Email: sarahui@sina.com

³ As CDD project funds are directly transferred into administrative village accounts, the process of project application, evaluation and selection at the level of the natural village is in competition with the whole administrative village.

28

A participatory learning system in Guangxi

by HUANG CANBIN, ZHOU QING

HUANG CANBIN is the deputy director of the Foreign Capital Project Management Centre (FCPMC) of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and project manager of the PRCDP in Guangxi. ZHOU QING is a project officer in the same centre and she worked on PRCDP from the preparation stage and has organised a series of trainings and workshops. The FCPMC prepared several manuals on participation, including: (i) Handbook for participatory village planning, (ii) Handbook for participatory project implementation and monitoring and (iii) Handbook for participatory check for acceptance and evaluation. These books have been widely referred to and used as the main guidelines for participatory project management in Guangxi. In this article, Huang Canbin and Zhou Qing summarise how FCPMC has institutionalised learning, using a decentralised and practice-oriented approach. Through this approach, the FCPMC has successfully scaled up participation throughout a large project area and is now starting to influence the national poverty reduction projects.

Background

In 2005, the Guangxi Poor Rural Community Development Project (PRCDP) used participatory ideas and working methods throughout the course of designing, planning, implementing and managing PRCDP. One of the main objectives of this project is developing participatory skills of project organisations and the local villagers. By organising and establishing a participatory learning system, participatory ideas and methods were continuously

applied to project construction, and played a significant role in project implementation and management. The following are some descriptions of how this participatory learning system was established and how it functioned during and after the project period.

Building capacities and establishing a team of facilitators: Since project preparation, the project implementation and management organisations at all levels of province, county and township in Guangxi

PRCDP were extremely concerned about team building, and adopted multiple measures to consolidate and stabilise the team of facilitators within the leadership. As a result, despite the administrative changes, all counties and township organisations were able to keep their group of key facilitators of participation within their project management positions.

Training of the facilitators' team and improving their participatory and professional skills: This included formal training on participatory skills, facilitation skills, planning skills, participation in the course of project implementation and management, monitoring and evaluation. Equally important was talking about the participatory approach at all types of meetings and training sessions. Nowadays, talking about project participation has become part of the working routine in the development sector.

Learning, sharing, and promoting participation throughout the project area: The participatory village planning experiences and case studies were summarised, shared, and documented as methodologies for dissemination, like the *Participatory Village Planning Operation Manual for Project Areas in Guangxi* to guide participatory village planning in the project areas. Similarly, experiences with participatory project implementation and case studies were summarised, shared and formulated in the paper, *Participatory Project Implementation and Management Operation Manual for Guangxi PRCDP (Proposed)*, which was officially issued to all relevant project organisations to standardise participation in project implementation.

Establishing a platform for participatory information exchange and constantly promoting the construction of a participatory learning system: Measures such as compiling participatory project implementation cases, publishing project work bulletins, exchanging information on the poverty alleviation informa-

tion website, organising working meetings, exchange meetings, special workshops, inter-province and inter-county learning tours, and holding training classes, had been applied to constantly promote the construction of a participatory learning system.

Reinforcing co-operation with the international organisation, and draw participatory working experiences from foreign countries: Before this project Guangxi had no previous experiences with participatory approaches. The cooperation with international organisations like ITAD and Hong Kong-based NGOs such as Oxfam, Partnerships for Community Development (PCD) and World Vision was therefore important. They organised various training sessions and supported pilot projects on community-based development through which the facilitators gained a lot of practical experience. Since most trainers and experts from these international institutions possessed previous experience in rural China, they were able to provide the local participants the information and skills they mostly needed. According to the feedback, most participants agreed that the ideas and methods they had learned from the trainings provided by international organisations, such as risk matrix and priority setting, semi-structure interview, question tree, etc., could be adapted to the local context very well.

The project promoted empowerment and capacity-building, mobilised the initiatives of the people in the communities, and strengthened the sense of project ownership and responsibility of the farmers in the communities: The farmers were provided with communication platforms and channels through which they could express their opinions and suggestions, such as routine village meetings, group discussion, informal gatherings, etc. and directly participate in decision-making on project components. Villagers claimed that they were willing to



Photo: Guangxi FCMC

Yao community in Guangxi – Yao are among the poorest groups in Guangxi, living at higher altitude and in remote locations.

involve into these activities because they could receive and confirm some useful information through communication, such as the contents of the project, who and how to benefit from the project, and how to make sure the project was effective.

During project preparation, the farmers in the local community actively contacted the PMO, and applied to start projects as early as possible. They also actively coordinated land use and organised workers. During the implementation stage, they actively provided labour and raised funds for the work to be undertaken by the communities. Simultaneously, they actively consulted each other on issues arising throughout the course of implementation. For example, the community of Xiaojiang Village, Longsheng County held more than ten internal meetings on a single road issue. After completion of the project, they all agreed that the community should have a management and maintenance system in place to guarantee that the project results

could be sustainably utilised. Later, the local villagers contributed labour and money for maintenance and management.

Participatory working practices enabled project staff at all levels to accept the participatory idea and practices, promoting project development. This project had an influence on the attitudes of the project officers from the local government. By participating in the participatory planning process, the county and township project facilitators had a new understanding about the significance of the participation of the local communities and poor households in project implementation. Eventually, their attitudes have changed - from disbelieving the analytical capacity of the local communities to acknowledging and respecting the capacities of the communities; from being unwilling to communicate with the local communities to conscientiously learning from the local villagers and listening to their wishes; from daring not to empower local people to

Box 1: How roles and responsibilities were defined in Guangxi

The *Guangxi Project Operation, Implementation and Management Manual* clarified the basic principles and requirements for participation, and the county and township PMO staff believed that 'these requirements were reasonable, and what they actually did were more than these requirements.' Moreover, all six project counties explored specific operation methods for the farmers to participate in the implementation process.

The way roles were defined depended on the project contents, but the following arrangements were used:

- The county PMOs led the contracting and the contractors implemented the project, while the township PMOs and farmers' representatives from the communities participated in calling for tenders, inspection and acceptance;
- Township PMOs led the contracting and the contractors implemented the project, while the county PMOs and farmers' representatives from the communities participated in calling for tenders, inspection and acceptance;
- The communities led the contracting and the contractors implemented the project, while the county and township PMOs offered assistance and participated in inspection and acceptance;
- The communities were responsible for implementation, while the county and township PMOs offered assistance and participated in inspection and acceptance.

Regardless of the means of implementation, there was the participation of the farmers and farmers' representatives from the communities. Moreover, all counties had been exploring and summarising the different management arrangements and different ways of participation. In the villages where the project scale was small and there were many people with technical abilities in the community, they autonomously implemented the project, such as building a clinic.

A system for the community to participate in quality supervision and acceptance was established. During the course of implementation, somebody from the community management group participated in supervising the schedule and quality. For critical technical links, the county sent technicians for supervision and control. During the course of community supervision, if any problem was found, they could call the county and township PMOs directly, who would then send facilitators or technicians to investigate and handle the issues reported by the villagers.

The PMOs assisted the communities in establishing systems for final check and acceptance, and the subsequent maintenance. The contracted component had to be assessed and accepted by the communities before the county and township PMOs could organise official acceptance. This institutionally guaranteed the right of farmers to participate in monitoring.

allowing them to make autonomous decisions. The facilitators' roles changed as well. Through the participatory poverty analysis and participatory planning processes, county and township facilitators felt that rather than dominating the whole procedure, project facilitators should have several roles: namely as assistant, catalyst, and servant. They should adopt a positive driving role to participatory project implementation.

Project practices had an impact on improving domestic poverty alleviation approaches and formulating a new development mechanism: The participatory ideas and methods were so widely accepted by government leaders that they made a requirement that those working on poverty reduction must learn from the project's experience. Therefore, in Guangxi, the

practice of farmer participation in procurement was adopted widely. Farmers' participation in supervision and acceptance checks of infrastructure projects was promoted. Communities were encouraged to settle disputes over compensation for land losses through participatory discussions.

The Guangxi PRCDP participatory learning system also applied more capacity building tools such as training, actual operation, sharing experiences, summarising good practices and extending implementation. By doing so, the team of facilitators was enlarged, and the participatory approach was constantly scaled up as project implementation progressed. For these large, comprehensive, community-driven poverty alleviation projects with a loan-based nature, the establishment of a

multi-layered participatory learning system was a positive experience. With several years of practice, we have noted the following insights:

- It is very important for a project to engage with governments at all levels. Well-designed and stabilised project management structures have helped to ensure the application and sustainability of the participatory approach.
- The project conducted a lot of advocacy and mobilisation; it allowed farmers to actively participate in needs assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation-related decisions and actions. As a result, it made true changes to the local communities with regards to their increased knowledge, abilities and their self-development.
- The project established a platform for all kinds of information exchanges, reinforcing training efforts, constantly promoting a participatory learning approach and improving the capacity of project management organisations and local communities, which are the keys to guaranteeing the sustainable use of participatory approaches in the project.
- The formation of official documents and guidelines such as the *Participatory Village Planning Operation Manual for Project Areas in Guangxi*, the *Guangxi Project Operation, Implementation and Management Manual*, and the *Participatory Project Implementation and Management Operation Manual for Guangxi PRCDP*, provided an institutional guarantee for scaling up the participatory approach and replicating together large, comprehensive, community-driven poverty alleviation projects.

CONTACT DETAILS

Huang Canbin
 Deputy Director
 Foreign Capital Project Management Centre
 Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
 Guangxi Province
 PR China
 Email: hcanbin@yahoo.com.cn

Zhou Qing
 Project Officer
 Foreign Capital Project Management Centre
 Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
 Guangxi Province
 PR China

Adapting participatory methods to the government system: the Wenchuan Earthquake Rehabilitation Project

29

by DENG WEIJIE

DENG WEIJIE is associate professor at Sichuan Agricultural University. He has been working on participatory development in China for more than ten years. He has worked as trainer and facilitator on both national and international projects. In his case study he highlights the differences of approaches to capacity building in national and international projects, which require adaptation of participatory methods.

Background

I have been working as a trainer on participatory methods in China for a long time. I also have worked with the government on poverty reduction over many years. I worked on both the PRCDP and CWMP which are presented in this issue. Both projects are presented in this issue. But it was only recently that I was invited to carry out training on participatory methods for government staff, funded by the Poverty Alleviation and Development Office (PADO). This was a new experience, which required adaptation of common participatory methods to the government context.

Adaptation of training methods

The PADO has been exposed to participatory training methods for more than twenty years, and I have been involved in

this process. However, the use of participatory training methods was usually confined to projects funded by international donors, which provided more enabling conditions (see Table 1) than the national government funded projects. Under those conditions, common participatory training tools include: group exercises, role play, warm up (energisers), games and organised debates. All these tools require time and space.

However, the conditions for training within the government system are very different. They are mostly determined by ambitious government training targets, which aim to stretch limited funding to cover a large number of participants within a very limited time. Also, there are limited capacities for organising and facilitating adult learning processes and training workshops. This means that there is

Table 1: A comparison of training in international and government projects

Training in international projects	Training within the government system
Small number of participants for each workshop, usually less than 40;	Too many participants for each workshop, sometimes more than hundred;
All participants with a similar background, such as villagers, township government and county government staff;	Participants with a broad range of backgrounds;
Junior officials as main target groups, only a few senior officials;	Staff from different levels (county, municipality, province and national) all lumped together into one training event;
Generous time for training, around 3-5 days;	Limited time allocated for working meetings such as training workshops;
Generous (physical) space for training and group exercise; movable furniture, including the tables and chairs.	Standard meeting venues are big meeting rooms where tables and chairs are fixed and cannot be moved.

limited space and opportunity to apply tools such as group exercises, role plays and games. However, there are still some participatory learning tools that can be used within such a constrained setting.

The Wenchuan Earthquake Rehabilitation Project

This case study describes how participatory methods were used in the context of training government staff working on the reconstruction after the Wenchuan earthquake.

In 2008, a devastating earthquake hit Wenchuan county and the neighbouring areas; more than 20,000 people died and more than 10 million people were directly affected. The international community provided timely aid and support not only for the immediate rescue operations, but also for the rehabilitation. In addition government and civil society mobilised substantial resources. In an attempt to integrate rehabilitation efforts the national PADO initiated Participatory Reconstruction Planning, Implementation and Monitoring in 19 impoverished pilot villages affected by the earthquake in Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi Provinces in late 2008. In order to share the experience and lessons learnt from that and to improve the

effectiveness of reconstruction in another 40 poor villages for the second phase, the national PADO organised a meeting on the Second Demonstration of Poor Villages on the Post Wenchuan Earthquake Reconstruction Planning & Management in Sichuan Province on 4 March 2009.

I was invited to facilitate a session on participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). The conditions for this training were as follows:

- More than two hundred participants from national, provincial, municipal and county PADO attended;
- Some participants had experience on participatory approaches; most of them had no previous experiences with participation;
- Only two hours was allocated for a ‘Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation’ session in a big meeting room, where all facilities are immovable;
- Only a flipchart was provided as training material; a blackboard and printing paper were also available for this meeting.

The national PADO requested clearly that participatory methods should be used in this two hour event, in order to promote participation and effective sharing. The PADO particularly emphasised the impor-

Photo: Deng Weijie



Large groups of participants and formal seating arrangements provide challenges for a participatory training event.

tance of achieving a consensus on participation in planning, monitoring and evaluation for the post Wenchuan earthquake reconstruction in China. It was obvious that the national PADO understood the benefits of participation and wanted others to learn and apply a participatory approach in the second phase of village reconstruction. The purpose of the workshop was therefore to raise awareness and acceptance of participation; it understood that this would not be sufficient for an effective training on participatory methods. Despite the large number of participants, they did not want this to be a formal lecture. Typically in these kinds of events the trainer would speak for most of the time and participants would be in a passive listening mode only. We wanted to facilitate an interactive process, which would enable participants to actively contribute.

Based on those requirements, I designed the two hour training on PM&E for post-earthquake reconstruction and conducted it through the following steps, using participatory methods:

- 1) The participants were seated in rows, the usual **seating order** for official meetings (shown in photo above);
- 2) As an **icebreaker** I started with a maths exercise; each participant had to select a three-digit number which through some calculation steps was turned into the same result for all. Everyone did the calculation by itself, without talking to each other. Once completed, all participants announced their result at the same time. People were thrilled and they wanted to understand, why everyone had the same result. The atmosphere had warmed up immediately;
- 3) This was followed by **brainstorming** within the plenary. Participants discussed why all had the same answer despite starting from different data? Then we made the link to understanding poverty data and the root causes of poverty. Participants understood that the appearance of poverty might be the same, but the root causes leading to poverty are very different. Therefore, only the poor will know what the exact root causes are, which is similar to the individ-



Photo: Deng Weijie

Group presentations during the training workshop.

ual participant who knows which number he/she selected initially. The participants therefore agreed that the poor know more about their lives than outsiders (officials). This means that target groups must be involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation process;

4) Then the topic moved on to PM&E for reconstruction, and we had a plenary discussion on 'Are communities able to monitor and evaluate the reconstruction' (Yes or No, but Why)? Most of participants said No since the villagers are not knowledgeable on PM&E, and that technicians or specialists should take on this role rather than local villagers, while other participants said that villagers do know what they want and what they already benefitted from even if they are not formally educated.

5) Towards the end of the plenary discussion the participants were divided into two groups; the ones who said No in the right hand group and conducted a facilitated debate with the ones who said Yes in the left hand group; then the ones who said No in the left hand group argued with the ones who said Yes in the right hand group. This was a challenging process which brought

up all the arguments about PM&E for post-earthquake reconstruction. In the end consensus was achieved that villagers are able to monitor and evaluate the reconstruction in their own ways. I pointed out that the participatory approach had been actually applied in the First Demonstration villages in 2008, and some of practitioners had participated in this meeting so we were able to share and learn from each other;

6) Then the participants from Sichuan, Gansu and Sha'anxi Provinces were divided into provincial groups to discuss the experiences from the first phase of pilot reconstruction villages. The participants recognised that the amount of money spent does not make a pilot, but planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation provided valuable experiences. Participants agreed that there should be more participation in M&E. The participants from the First Pilot Villages then presented their experience and lessons learnt in 2008, and they explained that it is easy to conduct PM&E with a skilled facilitator, but local PADO staff still need to learn how to facilitate this process;

7) Finally, I presented a photo slide show

about the PM&E (baseline survey) process in August-September 2008 which provided some practical illustration of the PM&E steps. This has further reduced barriers and helped to convince participants that PM&E is practical and doable. The feedback from participants and national PADO was that participatory training is much better than formal lectures, which were used previously. Some participants said that previously there was no interaction with participants during the training events. The experience of participation in training made people understand that it is much easier to embrace new concepts such as PM&E if this is done through active learning rather than just listening. Practical examples and reflective discussions helped to create a basic understanding and overcome mental barriers on participation. This could hardly have been achieved through a conventional lecture approach.

The international experience shows that participatory approaches could function more effectively by using only a limited number of trainees and having about twenty participants in each training workshop. But it is almost impossible for the Chinese government at different levels to organise such a small conference or training workshops, since 'Meeting as Training' has been the norm for governmental authorities for many important events, such as the 'Reconstruction Meeting' where there are more than a hundred participants. I am convinced that participatory

approaches should be tried even under challenging conditions and tools can be effective if they are adapted to the conditions. I found the following tools useful in the context of large training events:

- **Icebreakers:** for encouraging all participants' participation at the beginning;
- **Brainstorming:** for enabling all participants to share their experiences and ideas on specific issues;
- **Cards:** for all participants to share their personal perspectives;
- **Paired discussion:** for sharing among the participants;
- **Mosaic group discussion:** for the participants who sit together but usually come from the same organisation or region to share their different perspectives;
- **Argument:** for clarifying some key issues easily as well as promoting the atmosphere of participation;
- **Case study:** presentation of experience and lessons learnt;
- **Voice of photo:** for providing participants with the opportunity to understand the story and evidencing the case which was presented by the facilitator.

A major lesson from this event is that the facilitator must be confident and take up the challenge to apply participatory methods even under less than favourable conditions. It is important that the trainer knows the background of participants, the training facilities and especially the space provided for the training, so that he/she can devise an effective training strategy and design.

CONTACT DETAILS

Deng Weijie
 Associate Professor
 No.288, Jianshe Rd. Dujiangyan
 Institute of Tourism Study (ITS)
 Sichuan Agricultural University
 Sichuan
 PR China
 Email: dweijie2007@yahoo.com.cn

30

EIAs go public: creating new spaces for participation

by LILA BUCKLEY

LILA BUCKLEY is senior researcher on China at the International Institute for Environment and Development. Previously, she was assistant executive director of the Global Environmental Institute in Beijing. She has studied in the Environmental Change Institute at the University of Oxford, IUP Tsinghua University, Beijing and Middlebury College, USA. This paper draws upon an article that first appeared in the China Environment Series, Issue 8, in 2006, published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars under the title 'Public Participation in Environmental Impact Assessments in China'.

In resource scarce China, people's ability to move – and stay – out of poverty relies heavily on their ability to participate in the sustainable management of their resources. This is especially true in rural areas where the majority of residents rely on agriculture and other land-based practices for their livelihoods. Tackling resource scarcity and degradation in China has therefore long been both an ecological issue and an arena for public participation – often at the interface between wealthy and impoverished. Within this context, the development of environmental legal frameworks such as China's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) law has provided opportunities to strengthen policies for public participation as well.

Like other cases of participatory poverty alleviation approaches explored in this issue, developing China's EIA law involved pragmatic use of international experience and financial support (from the World Bank), as well as unique piloting and experimentation with participatory processes, even involving a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the drafting of the law itself. This process resulted in a series of public participation requirements within China's EIA legal framework that remain an ongoing arena for experimentation around the role of participation in poverty alleviation. Participatory in its creation, this EIA law provides an example of how participatory

approaches are gaining traction beyond small-scale pilot projects to be integrated into the structure of China's development institutions.

In this article I share insights into the participatory policymaking process from the founding director of the Chinese NGO involved in the drafting of the EIA framework. This organisation was the Global Environmental Institute (GEI), where I worked as Assistant Executive Director from 2005-2008. Though there are still governance questions surrounding public participation practice in China, the law helps to address some of the accountability issues facing participatory processes in other levels of development and poverty alleviation work in China.

Grounding China's EIA rhetoric in public participation

Though the concept of conducting assessments of the environmental and social impacts of development projects has existed in Chinese policy circles for more than three decades, avenues for public participation in this process have lagged behind. Where they have been introduced, Chinese and international NGOs have played an important role.

One of these NGOs was GEI, a Beijing-based Chinese environmental NGO founded in 2004. GEI's founding director, Mrs. Jin Jiaman, recalls that when the EIA concept first entered policy in 1979 as part of China's national Environmental Protection Law (EPL), proponents saw it as an important tool for achieving sustainable poverty alleviation and diffusing conflicts between local people and developers over resources. However, explains Jin, early EIA law proved to be pure rhetoric, providing no concrete stipulations or methodologies for its implementation. A channel for applying this law was theoretically opened a decade later with the first mention of individual environmental rights in the revised version of China's EPL, in which Article Six clearly stated, 'All companies

and individuals have a duty for environmental protection, and have the right and authority to report and bring suit to those companies and individuals committing environmental damage and pollution.' Unfortunately, this too lacked clauses for implementation and, according to Jin, was thus largely ignored. Nearly another decade later, then, when the concept of EIAs was reintroduced by the State Council in a 1996 Article Two of the 'Rules and Regulations for Management of Environmental Protection in Construction Projects', there were still no provisions for public input.

Despite this slow start, the policy rhetoric finally began to achieve some grounding under a 1994 law that permitted the registration of NGOs. The first groups to be formed focused on environmental issues, and according to Jin, these groups began drawing links between Chinese policies and communities affected by China's increasingly severe pollution and degradation. In this way, the creation of officially registered NGOs gave public participation in the environmental sphere its first legitimate access point. 'Growing activism of NGOs and increased pollution protests around China during the 1990's' recalls Jin, 'further contributed to the push towards more specific provisions for public participation in EIA legislation.'

These included a 2002 amendment to the EPL which stipulated that, 'the country will support companies, experts and the public in using appropriate methods to participate in environmental impact assessments.' It also addressed the concepts of stakeholder forums, public hearings and other methods of public participation for the first time. Then in 2003, China passed a new stand-alone EIA Law that was a significant departure from the earlier drafts. The new law broadened the scope of EIAs to include all development and construction projects, and legally secured the public's right to conduct analysis, prediction, and evaluation of environmen-

tal impacts from all development projects and plans. With EIAs now required for all projects and procedures, and protections for the right to public participation in the assessment process, the conceptual framework was set for a meaningful implementation of EIAs with public input.

International engagement and participatory policy-making

With this initial framework in place, GEI found itself in the middle of a much wider policy-making process which engaged a wide range of actors, from Chinese government officials and construction companies, to other NGOs and the World Bank. In 2006, the World Bank reached an agreement with China's EIA Centre of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA, now the Ministry of Environmental Protection) to carry out a programme on 'Public Participation in China' and invited GEI to take part.

In a series of meetings to draft the law, participants discussed the value and approach of public involvement in the EIA process. Jin remembers negative reaction to her suggestion that true public participation must include multiple stakeholders. 'It felt very lonely,' recalls Jin, finding herself the sole NGO in an environment where her organisation and ideas were viewed as a threat to development and progress. 'I began to wonder how we could really help the government achieve its goals when the very concepts of NGOs and public involvement in environmental regulations were so foreign.' She explains that many in the group felt that her emphasis on public participation in the development process was unrealistic, leaving her feeling frustrated in the initial meetings. 'While I felt the central government had very good intentions in writing these regulations,' she remembers, 'I knew that actually creating

and enforcing strong public participation regulations would be a very long process.'

This initial team dynamic was a microcosm of the challenges such regulations face in China, in an atmosphere where NGOs and the general public can feel they have little voice. Despite the team's steep learning curve, it did succeed in producing draft regulations, which themselves were subject to wider public feedback and further editing before being issued by SEPA in March 2006.

The resulting 'Interim Public Participation Law for Environmental Impact Assessments' formulated the goals and scope of public participation in EIAs and clarified the rights and obligations of the developers, environmental groups, and the public.¹ These were then followed a year later by a clause on 'Environmental Information Disclosure Measures' providing the normative framework for information disclosure on environmental impacts of development projects.²

Remaining challenges in China's EIA

Despite the significant progress made to include public participation in the EIA process, many challenges still remain. While today's law provides clear and concrete steps and requirements for public participation, many grey areas in the implementation process need clarification. For example, the law fails to formally delegate authority or clarify the jurisdiction of the public in the process of participation. Nor does it define the scope and jurisdiction for true veto or policymaking power on the part of participants. Furthermore, there are no provisions for supporting human resource and other expert assistance required for public participation in hearings and monitoring of the EIA process.

At the institutional level, the organisational structure for EIA enforcement

¹ For more information on the Interim Public Participation Law for Environmental Impact Assessments see Moorman J.L. and Z. Ge, 2006.

² For an unofficial translation of the disclosure measures, see www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/Intellectual_Life/Ch_OGI_Regualtions_Eng_Final_051607.pdf

Photo: Simon Lim



Conflicts around resource use are becoming a critical feature of development and it is important that communities are able to engage with government decisions.

continues to be weak, understaffed, and inadequately centralised. MEP's EIA Centre, which is composed of highly experienced environmental scientists, is responsible for writing EIA-related regulations, licensing independent EIA agencies, and overseeing the work of regional EIA offices. These regional offices depend on funding from local governments, which generally prioritise economic development over environmental protection. Independent EIA agencies are dependent on development contractors for their survival, which opens the door to corruption during the assessment process, as these agencies are free to demand higher prices to downplay environmental problems.

Road ahead for institutionalising participatory poverty alleviation

Thus, while these documents represent an important step forward for China's sustainable and equitable development, the hard work of institutionalising participatory processes and building participatory capac-

ity – especially among impoverished groups – is still ongoing.

Over the past several years multiple actors have continued working to put pressure on destructive companies and foster participation capacity among local communities. For example, capacity building workshops targeting journalists and grassroots NGOs have involved mock public hearings for EIAs to build capacity and explore avenues for engaging residents in environmentally damaged regions to participate in development decisions. In addition, NGOs have worked to directly tackle industry through information disclosure and litigation. One coalition of NGOs known as the Green Choice Alliance focuses on global supply chains to pressure large corporations towards environmental performance-based sourcing.

News media has also proven itself a useful mechanism for empowering citizens and NGOs on EIA issues. For example, news journalists drew attention to ecologically destructive development in the Old

Summer Palace (Yuanmingyuan) and a wetland reserve outside Beijing, soon after the laws were passed. In both cases, informed citizens, NGOs, and scientists rallied to stop the development projects.

This brief essay has provided a glimpse into one NGO's experience engaging in China's legal infrastructure. GEI's inclusion in the drafting of the EIA law is a positive attempt to create space for multi-stakeholder involvement in the country's policymaking. NGO involvement in the drafting of future laws, however, should not be seen

as an end goal in and of itself. Indeed, NGOs themselves cannot be assumed to represent the voice of the public. Rather, GEI's experience highlights the potential – and the need – for a much more participatory policymaking process. China's EIA law and regulatory framework needs to be strengthened. But improved regulation alone is not going to achieve equitable development. The challenge now is to create wider space for public policy-making and provide all people – not just one NGO – the opportunity for informed participation.

CONTACT DETAILS

Lila Buckley
Senior Researcher on China
Agroecology and Food Sovereignty Team
Natural Resources Group
International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)
80-86 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8NH, UK
Email: lila.buckley@iied.org

REFERENCES

- Moorman J.L and Z. Ge (2006) 'Promoting and Strengthening Public Participation in China's Environmental Impact Assessment Process: Comparing China's EIA Law and U.S. NEPA', *Vermont Journal of Environmental Law*, Vol 8.

PART VII

Conclusions



Changing spaces at the interface of government and citizens

31

by JOHANNA PENNARZ

This issue has presented a wide range of very different experiences from various sectors, organisations and regions in China, in experimenting with and using participatory approaches. The overarching themes of the contributions have been to engage with the government around issues of participation and how to make a 'government-led' approach to participation workable and credible. Although some of the practices and reflections may seem basic, the experiences presented have significant implication for the wider discourse of governance issues in the Chinese context. The articles in this issue revolve around the recurrent theme of how relations at the government-society interface can be transformed, a topic which is at the heart of the overall development and reform agenda in China, thus directly impacting the well-being of hundreds of millions of people.

Emerging issues

The contributions present various facets of participation in the context of China's most impoverished regions. Common themes

emerging from the articles are:

- There is the lack of clarity on **roles and responsibilities**, both on the side of the government and the community. New forms of engagement require greater responsibility on the community side, but communities often do not understand what these responsibilities should include and there is reluctance on the side of the local government to let go of control. There is a feeling of gratitude and excitement on the side of the communities who experience a sense of responsibility (as demonstrated forcefully in Nati's article (Part I, Article 4), but there are also questions on who – outside of the formal power structure – should take responsibility (see Qin Guozheng's article – Part I, Article 5) and how (see Song Haokun's article – Part I, Article 6).
- A concern that impacts communities and government alike, driving their joint engagement in the process, revolves around issues of **transparency and accountability**. Participation is regarded, on both sides, as pivotal to achieve a more



Photo: Deng Weiye

Miao women participating in participatory poverty monitoring in Huanjiang, Guangxi Province.

transparent allocation and use of funding.¹ This features strongly in the case studies by Qin Zhurong, Yang Gang, and Song Haokun. The desire to be more transparent and accountable in the use of poverty reduction funds puts pressure on community leaders and local government officials – from above (higher government levels) and below (community levels).

- There is general willingness on the side of the government to engage with the poor, but they experience difficulties in finding appropriate ways to **engage effectively**. A particular challenge has been to go beyond the idea of the community as a whole, and reach out to marginal groups within the community. Particularly in multi-ethnic settings, facilitators are searching for effective ways of communication, often working through intermediaries, usually community representatives in positions of power. The facilitation of internal disputes about distributional issues, and building consensus is challenging and community leaders are usually expected to resolve conflicts with-

out interference by government officials (see Qing Guozhen's article – Part II, Article 10).

- Related to this are **equity** issues. Communities are often seen as homogeneous units where equalising forces, like strong values for equal distribution of benefits or mechanism for mutual exchange, are at work. Issues of social inclusion and issues of distribution (e.g. of project benefits) within the community are seldom raised. It is often readily assumed that communities themselves will be able to achieve fair distribution in line with their egalitarian practices and values; thus little is done to address elite capture within the community (see Wang Jianping's article – Part II, Article 12).
- Issues relating to **indigenous culture** and organisation are adding an additional layer of complication. Facilitators are often struggling to overcome cultural and language barriers, which make it particularly difficult to engage effectively. Among ethnic minority groups, there is a longstanding tradition of *de facto* autonomous livelihoods, with

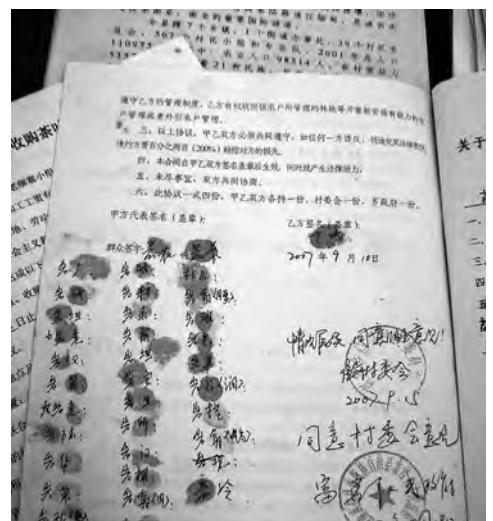
¹ The impact evaluation of PRCDP finds that communities see the improved transparency as the most important outcome of the participation process (ITAD, forthcoming).

limited, or contentious interaction with the government and hence a lack of trust and mutual understanding.² A number of case studies revolve around how – through the process of participation – relations of trust and understanding are built (see Li Hui (Part VI, Article 27), Qin Guozheng (Part I, Article 5), and articles in Part II).

- Related to this are issues of **cognitive justice** and how it can be put into practice (see Maruja Salas' article, Tips for Trainers, Article 32). The key challenge is around taking the views of the poor seriously and how to develop sustainable strategies for poverty reduction, based on a better understanding of the realities of poverty. Practices of participatory poverty analysis are leading to a contextualised understanding of poverty which puts the perspectives of the poor at the centre (see Qin Zhurong's article, Part III, Article 15).

Emerging trends: What has changed? Who has changed?

The introduction of participatory approaches has been a journey of almost 20 years, and is continuing. The issue provides a vivid testimony on how myriads of practices are gradually moving the agenda on participation. Change is happening, albeit gradually, through transformative practices and through direct engagement with the government, which has happened over a long period and often not without tensions. There is plenty of evidence that participatory approaches are increasingly integrated into government policies and practices (see articles in Part VI).³ Naturally, interpretations of participation vary, but the government has a strong tendency to align



Contract with a tea processing company signed by all farmers of the community; previously contracts were signed by community leaders only.

the discourse with its own political agenda. This is likely to give way to a particular 'Chinese' interpretation of participation.⁴ The government agenda had at certain times given strong support of grassroots or self organisation and mobilisation of the masses, which entailed forms of consultation at various degrees.⁵ What appears to be new in the recent agenda is the strong commitment to improve (pro-poor) services, while also addressing issues of accountability.

The reform of government services has created a space, which is gradually being populated by local players. It is however not easy for poor communities to claim this space. Limited resources and capacities to effectively organise and express themselves are part of the problem and they are often taken as excuse to withhold delegation of power. The reflections in this issue show that

² For a history of ethnic minorities in mainland Southeast Asia (including Southwest China) see Scott, 2009.

³ Limited evidence of the effectiveness of participatory approaches is an issue though. Some evidence has been presented in the early PRA Net reflection workshop (see contribution by A. Wilkes in the Prologue to this issue). The CDD pilot project has undertaken a survey to assess the effectiveness of the CDD approach (see contribution by Li Hui, Part VI, Article 27). A more comprehensive final evaluation of the participatory approach in PRCDP, based on five annual surveys, is underway.

⁴ Previous discussions of participation often focused on the 'strangeness' of the concept and the 'differentness' of the understanding and application of participatory practices in China, which would make it difficult to adopt or disseminate given the politic-economic context. (See for example Plummer and Taylor, 2004).

⁵ See for example Caizhen, 2010.

existing power relations are an important variable, but they are not fundamentally questioned. The articles talk of changing roles, attitudes and mindsets on both sides of the equation and the need for communities to take over greater responsibility for their own development. Power relations within the community are assumed and utilised, but not fundamentally transformed. The underlying authoritarian paradigm assumes that community leaders and elite groups are the key players to enable wider participation. As far as government-community relations are concerned, it is the government who delegates responsibility and creates the space for communities to raise their voice. In a typical Chinese way of squaring the circle, this is giving way to a depoliticised discourse on governance which focuses mainly on technical issues. Within the discourse, the government has retained its central role in defining the space for participation.

Thus a reflective approach to interrogating practices – as it has been documented in this issue – presents a big step forward towards widening the discourse and includ-

ing the voices of those who are – with and without power – involved in the frontline of participatory practices. Now that the focus has shifted from doing the practice to reflecting on the practice, the discourse has become a transformative experience for those immediately involved and those learning from it. As soon as the underlying issues that influence people's thinking and practice on participation are made explicit there is a growing chance that concerns are openly discussed. From the articles we can see that the discussion has increasingly focused on ways to put basic principles of participation into practice for the benefit of the poorest and most marginalised groups. As basic values of genuine participation are gradually being internalised, the discourse is moving on, from the mechanistic application of tools towards a creative process of negotiating practices, processes and relationships.⁶ The incremental changes resulting from this process are part of moving the agenda forward – they provide ideas, concepts, values and practices for interpreting and defining the changing space at the government-citizen interface.

CONTACT DETAILS

Johanna Pennarz
ITAD, Hove, UK
Email: Johanna.pennarz@itad.com
Website: www.itad.com

REFERENCES

- Caizhen, L. (2010) 'Comparing participation in China to the participatory discourse in development studies', ISS Dev. Issues Articles. Den Haag.
- Plummer J. and J.G. Taylor (2004) *Community participation in China*. Earthscan: London.
- ITAD (forthcoming) *Towards a more responsive approach to poverty reduction? Participatory impact evaluation of PRCDP* (final report). ITAD: Hove.
- Scott, J.C. (2009) *The Art of Not Being Governed*. Yale University Press.

⁶ The tokenistic application of participatory practices was often interpreted as a capacity issue (see Plummer and Taylor, 2004).

PART VIII

Tips for trainers



Why participatory research and how participatory?

32

by MARUJA SALAS

MARUJA SALAS is a Peruvian anthropologist who has worked in Southwest China with a number of research organisations and NGOs on issues of indigenous knowledge and participation since 2000. She has dedicated her professional efforts to creating participatory learning events for trainers, researchers and farming communities. Her field of practice includes teaching participatory research and action at university level, designing community planning processes, as well as facilitation of different types of decision-making sessions. In her approach to participation, she has been influenced by the Latin American school of thought, mainly represented by Paolo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda. Maruja shares the conceptual understanding that we are all knowledgeable subjects, that groups can empower themselves through a flow of action-reflection-action and that there is an inextricable link between knowledge and power that can liberate the mind and society from the roots of injustice. Learning in a participatory way is a process of unlimited creative transformations!

My training tips are related to two epistemological questions: why participatory research and how participatory?¹ These tips are aimed at a team of trainers or facilitators who are engaged in building the capacities of development workers in participatory action research (PAR).

The main reason to train in participatory methods is because you and your team of facilitators believe in **cognitive justice**. You have seen with your own eyes the disturbing impact development has had on people's lives when action has been planned without previously consulting all

¹ Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and scope/limitations of knowledge. It addresses the questions: What is knowledge? How is knowledge acquired? How do we know what we know? Much of the debate in this field has focused on analysing the nature of knowledge and how it relates to connected notions such as truth, belief, and justification. It also deals with the means of production of knowledge, as well as scepticism about different knowledge claims. Source: Wikipedia.

actors involved. You do not want to do the same. You want to ensure that development is self-determined by people's visions and contributes to fulfilling their lives.

Participatory research training is a pedagogical approach concerned with making true the statement **knowledge is power**²? That means if people's ideas are expressed and reflected there is a greater potential to transform learning into action. Having the trainees' full consent to learning is an essential ingredient in this approach. The philosophy of participation is based on freedom of choice – a right that is very seldom considered in development. **Cognitive justice** means that learning is designed so trainees experience how invaluable people's knowledge about the reality they live in, in order to agree upon the transformations that can take place.

Action, reflection, action

Create ongoing opportunities to learn from **action, reflection, action (ARA)**. This will help your team of trainers to move away from more conventional development research approaches. Instead of collecting data, which is then interpreted by a group of experts, ARA is an interactive flow that moves human beings forward in life. It allows them to gain insights and draw their own conclusions. It is the chance to learn about how diverse reality is perceived and constructed by different actors and how this complexity is expressed in multiple voices.

To integrate ARA into your training, divide the available time into learning sessions (45 to 90 minutes). With your team, use exercises, games and group work to gradually explore the concepts and methods that form part of the training process. For example:

- Introduce the concept of participatory research.
- Organise a session of 30 minutes to explore this concept more deeply.

- Visualise one by one statements like: 'knowledge is a social construction', 'knowledge is power', 'participation involves a common understanding of a diversity of ideas', 'true participation encompasses mind, heart and action', 'voting is the most clear expression of agreement on an issue', 'no one knows everything but everybody knows a little bit'.
- Ask participants to express their agreement or disagreement with the statement and why.
- Repeat by discussing other different statements concerning the conceptual world of participatory research.
- After several rounds, ask participants to share their concluding thoughts in **buzzing modality**: divide the plenary into pairs giving them ten minutes to exchange their ideas and to come to a conclusion.
- Ask them to visualise their conclusions as reminders for the next learning unit. Be sure you give each pair a long card and a marker to write down one conclusion in a visible and legible form. Invite each pair to come to the front, read the conclusion aloud and pin up the card on a board.

ARA opens up opportunities to deal with a topic intellectually in an interactive way. It helps generate new ideas to guide your next steps. Enabling trainees to experience the flow of ARA includes allowing time to visualise their learning from experience. It should be flexible enough to go back and forth, in an iterative fashion, as in life. Such training is empowering. It helps to build self-awareness as it mirrors what should happen when trainees come to apply their learning in the field.

Tools for exploring perceptions of time, space and knowledge

The following participatory tools are designed to create space for your trainees to think about three dimensions of life in which every human being is immersed: time, space and knowledge.

² Pedagogy is the study of being a teacher or the process of teaching. The term generally refers to strategies of instruction, or a style of instruction. Source: Wikipedia.



Photo 1. Lisu calendar, illustrating the main agricultural productive activities for each month.

Time tools

Time tools help to illustrate how people organise their lives according to daily, weekly, monthly, yearly and other cycles. Trainees will find that for many communi-

ties, these cycles are probably very different to their own. For example, a yearly agricultural calendar will give the overview of farming in a community.

Space tools

Space tools deal with how people structure their life within their homes, their gardens, the community, the region, the world, the cosmos and other categories that might be completely new to you. For example, a transect walk diagram will generate more insights about how e.g. resources and crops are distributed according to altitude ranges and how are they used by community members.



Photo 2. Transect diagram locating different agricultural resources in space.



Photo: Timmi Tillmann

Photo 3. Biography of a Yi bimo (shaman) from Meigu County, Sichuan Province. On the right side are the basic elements of Yi cosmopolitanism and history, which form the concept of Yi culture.

Knowledge tools

Knowledge tools deal with ideas, feelings, sensual perceptions (we have at least five senses), opinions, memories, intuitions and visions that are individually different. You might find commonalities in a group. For example, the biography of a local knowledge specialist will show how a member of the community perceives and understands reality in that community's own cultural terms.

Triangulation or the rule of three

The rule of three (Robert Chambers calls this 'triangulation') is an approach that I have learnt from my experience as a trainer.³

- The structure of a training session should

cover at least three parts: concepts, methods and practice.

- Each trainee should learn to use at least three tools for covering each of the dimensions of time, space and knowledge.
- Each tool has three important aspects: its purposes, advantages and limitations.
- Each tool provides trainees with at least three opportunities for action, reflection and action: during the introduction, the visualisation exercise and while discussing the results.
- A tool can depict at least three pictures of reality: past, present and future.
- Each tool should be used to explore the viewpoints of at least three generations: e.g. youth, adults and older people.
- For political purposes consult at least

³ Triangulation is often used to indicate that more than two methods are used in a study with a view to double (or triple) checking results. The idea is that one can be more confident with a result if different methods lead to the same result. By using three methods to get at the answer to one question, the hope is that two of the three will produce similar answers, or if three clashing answers are produced, the investigator knows that the question needs to be reframed, methods reconsidered, or both. Source: Wikipedia.

three different types of groups in society, e.g. development workers, scientists, farmers.

- Explore opinions of at least with three different types of people according to power relations: the powerless, the powerful and those gaining power.
- Include at least three different types of 'knowers': those with common knowledge, knowledge specialists and those that others consider to be wise.
- If you have any training tips that follow

the rule of threes, please add them to the list.

And finally...

A trainer should always acknowledge the intellectual contribution of trainees by treating them as 'knowers'. This helps trainees to recognise how empowering that experience is in reality – and to learn to recognise others as 'knowers' in turn.

Thank you, good luck and enjoy being a trainer!

CONTACT DETAILS

Dr Maruja Salas
Gomaringerstr. 6
D-72810 Gomaringen
Germany
E-mail: mas49@gmx.net

33

Learning is more than training – experiences from PRCDP

by JOHANNA PENNARZ

When the Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP) began the implementation phase, it was confronted with an enormous task of capacity building due to the size of the project (covering 18 counties in three provinces) and the number of project staff involved. The project soon realised that it could only address this challenge through institutionalising a process of ongoing learning and practice on participation. The idea of a 'learning system' was born.

What is a learning system?

A learning system means institutionalising learning processes and sustaining them as part of an organisation's development. The purpose of a learning system is to build experience-based knowledge and capacities on participation. The key elements of a learning system include:

- **Emphasis on action and practice:** Practical application and field-based experience is at the heart of learning on participation. Practice of methods and tools during training and exchange of

experiences among practitioners help to develop an understanding of how participation could work and how it could contribute to better projects.

- **Ongoing reflection and sharing on practical experiences:** Ongoing reflection is important to deepen the existing knowledge, to draw conclusions from practice and to share working experiences. Reflection means to look into assumptions and patterns of behaviour, to analyse failures and successes and from that to abstract further insights and conclusions. Documentation of good practices is an important element of learning on participation. Reflection can be done best in like-minded groups that share a common background. Ongoing reflection can and should be something that individuals do. People will become reflective participation practitioners, with a habit of reflecting on the participatory aspects of what they are doing in their work while they are actually doing that work. This continual learning process develops individuals' knowledge.
- **Draw lessons for the future and incor-**

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Practical field exercise in a Miao community – as part of a training course for government project staff in PRCDP.

porate them into future action: Reflection on challenges, achievements and good practices helps to draw lessons for the future. Practical lessons should be taken forward to the next stage. Learning is not a single cycle of train – do – reflect. There needs to be a series of learning loops – after reflection, lessons should be taken forward into further action. Participatory practices improve after each learning loop.

The most important aspect of a learning system is that it takes a progressive approach, starting from lower levels and aiming for ongoing improvement in all aspects of the organisation. While in principle this is an infinitive process it is important to ensure that learning is not happening by default, but that it is part of a systematic approach to capacity building and organisational change.

Methods for learning in PRCDP

In PRCDP, the project provided a platform for learning through the continuous docu-

mentation and sharing of experiences and practices, both within the project and with other projects. The purpose of the learning system was to build experience-based knowledge and capacities within PRCDP which will enable and improve the innovative approach to participatory poverty alleviation.

The basic elements of the learning system in PRCDP were:

- **Systematic training on methods and skills for facilitation:** Country staff have provided several cycles of training for township and village facilitators throughout the project areas. They developed their own training material and adapted their methodological toolbox to local practice.
- **Horizontal sharing of practical experiences among facilitators:** The provinces and counties organised regular meetings and workshops to share experiences as well as study visits to other project counties and provinces.
- **Local ‘pilots’ and cases on innovative**

Box 1: What is 'good practice'

'Good practice' can be defined as an affordable and practical approach that has been effective in particular situations to support development processes and has been assessed, validated and documented for possible use by other communities, counties or provinces.

Validation of good practices through joint peer review is part of the learning and sharing on participation in PRCDP. The review should not only focus on what worked well and what did not and why; it also needs to establish the extent to which a practice should inform other practitioners and decision makers.

practices: PRCDP actively encouraged innovation and documentation of practices which were shared during regular meetings, newsletters and progress reports. Good practice notes (see Box 1) became an important tool to support innovation and learning.

- **Monitoring for sustained and improved quality of participation:** A team of external facilitators monitored the quality of participation through annual surveys. An important part of the monitoring component was the feedback sessions where facilitators from all counties participated.

CONTACT DETAILS

Johanna Pennarz
ITAD, Hove, UK
Email: Johanna.pennarz@itad.com
Website: www.itad.com

RESOURCES

The PRCDP Participation Manual (see In Touch, p. 194) includes a wealth of good practice notes.¹
The Foreign Capital Project Management Centers (FCPMCs) of all three project provinces (Sichuan, Yunnan and Guangxi) prepared a large number of good practice notes.²
The proceedings of the Kunming workshop include a number of case studies on good practices, some of them included in this issue of *PLA*.
The Guangxi office contributed an article to this issue of *PLA* on its experiences with the learning system (see Part IV, Article 28).

¹ www.itad.com/PRCDP

² www.fcpmc.org

Training in the Chinese context: tips and resources for trainers

34

by WANG JIAPING, DENG WEIJIE, SUN DAJIANG and JOHANNA PENNARZ

Introduction

Being an effective participatory rural appraisal (PRA) trainer requires more than just being familiar with PRA theories and tools. Developing a good training programme takes careful planning and an understanding of the organisation's and individual learner's needs and, most importantly, the local context – culturally, socially and economically. This section draws on Chinese PRA trainers' experience in training and developing materials, and offers a collection of resources and useful links for other PRA specialists, trainers and facilitators.

The training materials and publications introduced here were designed and developed by leading research institutions and NGOs in China that have been actively involved in integrating PRA concepts and theories in the Chinese context and have contributed greatly to the popularisation of the PRA approach in China over the last few decades.

Three evident phases can be identified from the development of these institutions

and the shifting of their training strategies. From the late 1980s to the early 2010s, most institutions focused mainly on translating and importing the new concepts and methods of PRA, as well as introducing some advanced experience from other countries into China. Workshops and trainings at this time were usually delivered by professional trainers invited from well-known international institutions, such as the United Nations or universities from the UK or the USA.

From the early to later 2010s, based on years of intensive project experience in China, some institutions in China were able to summarise, reflect and develop some localised teaching materials that were more suited to the Chinese context. Compared with the teaching materials translated from English, the materials developed during this period were proven to be more practicable by emphasising the integration between classic PRA theory and the local context. A good example is the *Handbook for health education in Chinese rural community*

developed by the Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family in X'ian (SRAWF). Some methods such as 'peer education' and 'targeting middle school' were combined with traditional PRA methods.

From the late 2010s to the present, some more experienced institutions in China started to specialise in capacity building. A number of professional training institutions were established, designing training programmes, developing training materials and curricula – for example, the Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD) in Beijing and the Gender Development Solution (GDS) training team in X'ian. These have highly qualified trainer teams, and have broadened the targeted learner groups, and adapted training methods and contents to specific training needs to provide efficient capacity building experience. The *Handbook for female village officers* was developed by GDS.

Although all organisations mentioned have incorporated PRA methods into their activities and strategies their objectives as well as their target learner groups vary. Most of the organisations have more expertise in providing consultancy services to various national and international development projects, such as the Community-Based Conservation and Development Research Centre (CCDRC) in Guizhou, and the Rural Development and Biodiversity Conservation Centre (RDBCC) in Gansu. Usually these organisations provide PRA training to local project partners, village organisations or farmers, as part of the necessary capacity building element of the project. Therefore, materials prepared for these trainings are mostly issue-focused and student-centred, using simple graph or pictorial explanations and focusing more on the PRA tools and procedures and less on theoretical discussion. This also explains why most of the material is not formally published or openly available, but rather provided as part of the training/consultancy service.

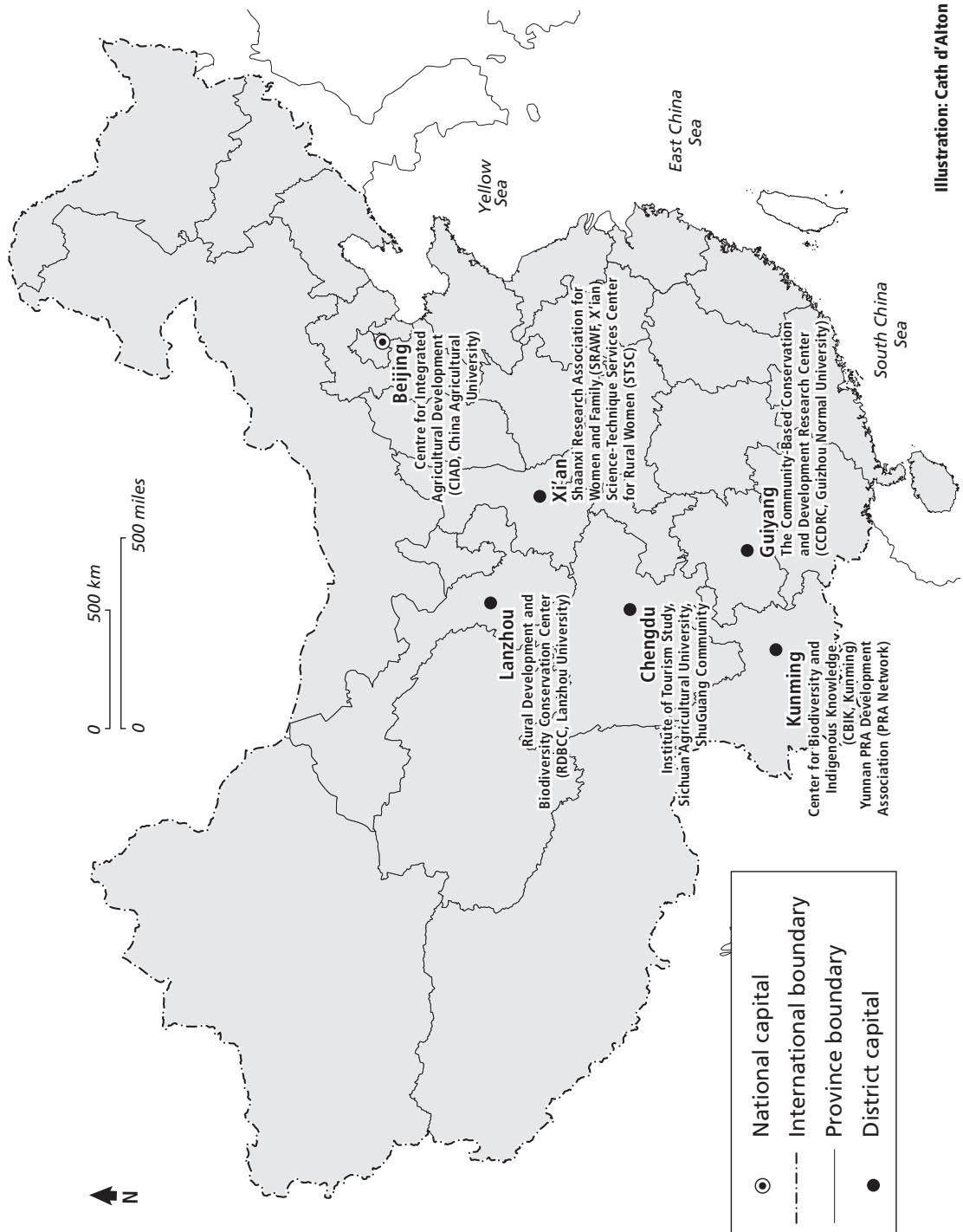
Others are more research and education focused, such as SRAWF and the Science-Technique Services Centre for Rural Women (STSC) in Shaanxi. Because their target groups are mainly trainers, NGO staff and project managers, more structured and comprehensive PRA training and teaching materials were developed to meet the needs.

Due to the small number of organisations in China that have sufficient professional experience in development, as well as solid and broad cooperation and partnership with both international development organisations and local governmental organisations, their capacity to advocate the participatory approach on a larger scale and make concrete changes through the institutionalisation of participatory methods within the formal governmental system is still comparatively weak. Mostly, rather than working directly on advocating PRA concepts, they opt to broaden the impacts of participatory development approaches through development consultancies or research, occasionally providing training for governmental officers. This type of organisation includes CIAD and the Yunnan PRA Development Association.

Most of the training materials mentioned in this section do not just introduce the concepts, theories and tools of PRA to learners, they also move one step further by combining PRA with socially and culturally-appropriate teaching methods to meet specific training needs. These materials show how the Chinese trainers offer an interactive approach, engaging learners in the learning process to achieve efficient capacity building.

The profiles of the PRA training organisations give some background on each institution, their strategy, mission and specialised fields, and, where available, information on training materials. The contact information is listed at the end of each profile.

We have included some other useful books and references relating to the PRA approach in China in our In Touch section.



The geographical distribution of the institutions actively involved in PRA training in China.

CONTACT DETAILS

Wang Jianping
Yunnan University
Kunming, Yunnan Province
PR China
Email: kmynwjp@yahoo.com.cn

Deng Weiße
Associate Professor
No.288, Jianshe Rd. Dujiangyan
Institute of Tourism Study (ITS)
Sichuan Agricultural University
Sichuan
PR China
Email: dweijie2007@yahoo.com.cn

Sun Dajiang
Gender Specialist
Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences Kunming
Yunnan Province
PR China
Email: dajiang38@hotmail.com

Johanna Pennarz
ITAD, Hove, UK
Email: Johanna.pennarz@itad.com
Website: www.itad.com

CENTRE FOR INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (CIAD), CHINA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY

The Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD) was established in 1988 and is the first non-profit institution in China with integrated rural development research, training and consultancy activities. With its team of 40 professional staff members, CIAD plays a major role in institutionalising participatory development approaches in China.

Working closely with many international development organisations and international NGOs over the past 22 years, CIAD has developed a participatory, development needs-oriented and multi-disciplinary methodology package and built up a professional reputation in the field of rural development in China and internationally.

Main activities

Development research: developing appropriate approaches and methodologies for rural development in China;

Development training: training rural development workers and staff in participatory approaches;

Development consultancy: providing development policy consultancies to governmental organisations and overall project consultancies for Chinese rural development programmes.

Besides providing consultancies and developing research as a knowledge pool for methodology innovation, CIAD has demonstrated that training is an effective instrument for disseminating knowledge and expertise to various target groups, and it is also an approach for institutional

capacity building and human resource development for development projects, governmental institutions and private sectors. During the last two decades, CIAD has delivered a number of training workshops to participants from different sectors and on different levels, including government officials, researchers, technicians and extension workers, social workers, NGO staff, farmers and community leaders.

Areas of training:

- Methodology and tools for participatory development studies (PRA for rural development)
- Project planning, project management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
- Gender and rural development
- Management of local resources
- Micro-finance for poverty reduction and rural development
- Training of trainers for development planners and community workers
- Rural extension
- Inter-cultural communication
- Presentation and moderation techniques
- Leadership and strategic planning for business management

Training methods

Participatory and interactive training methods have been developed and applied by CIAD trainers. These methods include:

- Multimedia aided presentation
- Visualisation of the training contents by using pin boards and meta-plan cards, etc.
- Participatory workshops
- Group work for case studies
- On-site methodology exercise in pilot communities

CONTACT DETAILS

Prof Dr Li Xiaoyun, Director
 Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD)
 China Agricultural University
 No. 2 West Yuammingyuan Road
 Beijing 100193
 PR China
 Phone: +86 10 62731061, 62733098
 Fax: +86 10 62731027
 Email: Xiaoyun@cau.edu.cn

SHAANXI RESEARCH ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN AND FAMILY (SRAWF)

The Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family (SRAWF) was founded in 1986 and has over 100 members including 20 full time and part time staff. Its core mission is to deal with the difficulties and obstacles rural women face in poverty, health, education and participation in community affairs, and it aims to empower women. In particular, it works to improve the status of rural women by providing emotional and legal support to those women dealing with marriage and family problems. SRAWF promotes public awareness on gender issues as well as empowering women, in order to promote gender equity and create a supportive social environment in China to nurture civil society organisations that deal effectively with domestic violence.

Training programmes and materials

Over the last two decades, with the aim of integrating the concept of participatory approaches, empowerment and capacity building into projects, more than 50 training programmes have been designed and delivered by SRAWF to team members, volunteers, project managers, government

officers, local partners as well as targeted groups and other stakeholders. At the same time, SRAWF has developed localised teaching materials for workshops, such as:

- *Handbook for health education in the rural community.*
- *Handbook for teaching assistants in rural women's health schools.*
- *Handbook for improving women's capability in participating in political decision-making.*
- *Handbook for community capacity building.*

Gender development

Based on the existing rural community development team, health development team and civil society team of SRAWF, a new institution – the Gender Development Solution Studies (GDS) was founded in 2008 to respond to its commitment to gender development and providing more professional training. In 2011, the GDS training team was founded, specialising in designing training programmes, developing training materials and curricula. After four years, GDS is now a leading non-governmental organisation for research, intervention and communications on gender development in China.

CONTACT DETAILS

The Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family (SRAWF)
 Room 502 Taoyuan Building Shiji Square
 No.93 Heping Road Xi'an
 Shaanxi 710001
 PR China
 Telephone: +86 29 7427076, 7427026
 Fax: +86 29 7427078
 Email: gaoxian@public.xa.sn.cn
 Website: www.westwomen.org

SCIENCE-TECHNIQUE SERVICES CENTRE FOR RURAL WOMEN (STSC)

The Science-Technique Services Centre for Rural Women (STSC) was founded by female agriculture technical specialists from the Northwest Agriculture and Forestry (A&F) University in 1997. Currently 128 volunteers are working in STSC, the majority of whom are agricultural science and technology experts.

The focus of STSC is gender-based participatory technology application for promoting women's development. The strategic vision of STSC is using participatory learning approaches to share agricultural technology and advocate equal opportunities and gender equality.

Since its foundation, STSC has been dedicated to the provision of training. During the last ten years, more than 38 training events and workshops on gender

sensitive participatory technology for agriculture extension workers have been delivered by STSC. It has also conducted participatory training on rural women's leadership building in 62 villages and participatory farmer associations in 87 villages.

Training materials

- *Training manual for gender sensitive participatory technology extension*, 2002, Northwest A&F University Press.
- *Training manual for participatory farmers' associations*, 2010, Northwest A&F University Press.
- *Participatory training manual for gender and women leadership building*, 2010, Northwest A&F University Press.
- *Theory and practices of participatory technology extension*, 2009, Northwest A&F University Press.

CONTACT DETAILS

Professor Huiyan Zhao
Director
STSC
Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University
Xi'an, Shaanxi
PR China
Tel: +86 29 87092085
Website: <http://en.nwsuaf.edu.cn/>

RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION CENTRE (RDBCC)

The Rural Development and Biodiversity Conservation Centre (RDBCC) has been based in the School of Economics at Lanzhou University in Gansu Province since its foundation in 2004. It aims to integrate community sustainable development with biodiversity conservation through community participation, and has been involved in various development projects. RDBCC has received strong support from the Chinese National Environmental Protection Bureau, the Chinese National Philosophy and Social Sciences Fund, the China Ministry of Forestry, as well as some international institutions, such as the European Union and Care International. RDBCC has carried out several projects, including public participation in environmental impact assessment in Xigu, Lanzhou, community-based natural resource management; social benefits evaluation in official nature conservation areas using participatory approaches; community action on biodiversity conservation, PME practices in natural protection areas

in Gansu, evaluation for community-based conservation, etc.

Training programmes and materials

Over the last few years, the centre has carried out several training events and developed corresponding training materials.

- Training course on participatory social investigation for university students
- Training on PRA concepts and methods in Northwest China, particularly in Gansu Province
- Training on participatory conservation of species for the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF)

Training materials were developed for the courses, including:

- Case studies for community-based forestry resource management
- Participatory planning for forestry-based community development
- Assessment on agricultural nature resources in rural China
- Assessment on rural eco-systems in China
- Teaching course on rural environment science
- PRA theory and practice for poverty and poverty reduction in China

CONTACT DETAILS

Professor Huilan Wei, Director
RDBCC
Lanzhou University, Gansu Province
PR China
Email: huilanw@vip.163.com

CENTRE FOR BIODIVERSITY AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE (CBIK)

Background

The Centre for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge (CBIK) in Yunnan was established in 1995 as a membership non-profit organisation. CBIK is a participatory learning organisation, with over 100 members, including research professionals, development practitioners and resource managers. The organisation is dedicated to biodiversity conservation and community livelihood development, as well as the documentation of indigenous knowledge and technical innovations related to resource governance at community and watershed levels.

CBIK aims to explore alternative development approaches, working directly with indigenous people and communities to enhance their livelihoods and maintain cultural and biological diversity through the application of indigenous cosmovision, knowledge, and innovative technology in the environment of rapid change and uncertainty faced by local people in Southwest China.

CBIK also works to promote local and regional intersectorial and intercultural dialogue and communication among rural communities, NGOs, academia and governmental agencies. For this purpose, it conducts interdisciplinary research, facilitation for participatory development, consultation for cultural identity, networking for information sharing, and capacity building for watershed governance and livelihood development.

Methodologies

From 2003 to 2006, CBIK promoted participatory approaches to technology

development and extension workers in the animal husbandry sector and forestry section in Yunnan. Participatory Development Technology (PTD) was developed since the **farmer first** (Chambers *et al.*, 1989) concept which was first introduced in the late 1980s. Later on, as a farmer-centred research or more widely called participatory research method, it received increased attention and recognition (Jiggins and De Zeeuw, 1992).¹

Training materials

The Field Manual on Participatory Technology Development: Linking Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity for Sustainable Livelihoods was written by three CBIK experts, Maruja Salas, Xu Jianchu and Timmi Tillmann, to aid field practices within ethnic communities in Southeast Asia and Southwest China by providing training materials for the capacity building of community facilitators, researchers and technicians. It is based on an adaptation of the PTD approach in a learning process undertaken in eight villages in Xishuangbanna, a tropical rain forest in an area of Yunnan populated by several ethnic minorities whose livelihoods are undergoing externally driven changes. PTD aims to strategically enhance indigenous knowledge as a means of generating indigenous innovations and to support indigenous innovators in their sociocultural and biophysical contexts.

The manual outlines the key processes of PTD which consists of six major steps. It also highlights how PM&E is adopted in each step. The manual adds a special focus to the existing PTD literature by prioritising the potential of indigenous people's knowledge as a means for improving rural livelihoods in Southwest China. It provides

¹ The basic idea of PTD is that farmers and professional researchers have different knowledge and skills, which may complement each other and that by working together the two groups may achieve better results than by working alone (Hoffmann *et al.*, 2007). Ideally, the strengths of one group would compensate for any constraints and limitations of the other groups. Thus, it is developing ways to involve farmers in processes for generating economically and environmentally sound technologies, and managing natural resources more sustainably, and more equitably (van de Fliert and Braun, 2002).



practical tools and methods to support the implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity and its regional counterpart in the Yunnan Initiative by promoting

indigenous knowledge.

It outlines each step of the PTD process and the procedures required to carry out and motivate development institutions to interact creatively to improve the livelihoods of local farmers and ethnic minorities based on their own knowledge and decisions.

CONTACT DETAILS

CBIK

3rd Floor, Building A, Zhonghuandasha

Yanjadi, Kunming

Yunnan 650034

PR China

Tel: +86 871 4123284, 86-871-4123519

Fax: +86 871 4124871

Website: www.cvik.ac.cn/Get/English/index.html

REFERENCES

- Chambers, R., A. Pacey and L.A. Thrupp (eds.) (1989) *Farmer first: Farmer Innovation and Agricultural Research*. Intermediate Technology Publications: London
- Hoffmann, V., K. Probst, A. Christinck (2007) *Farmers and researchers: How can collaborative advantages be created in participatory research and technology development?* Agriculture and Human Values, 24:355-368
- Jiggins, J. and H. de Zeeuw (1992), 'Participatory Technology Development for Sustainable Agriculture'. In: *Farming for the future; an introduction to low-external input and sustainable agriculture*, Macmillan: London, UK.
- Van de Fliert, E. and A.R. Braun (2002) *Conceptualizing integrative, farmer participatory research for sustainable agriculture: From opportunities to impact*. Agriculture and Human Values 19(1): 25-38.

YUNNAN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (PRA NETWORK)

Background

The last decade has witnessed a growing recognition of the need for socio-economic development programmes to take into account the needs and aspirations of local people. As a result, there has been a rapid expansion of efforts over recent years to apply participatory approaches to promote policy change in China. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), with its focus on identifying and addressing local people's needs and empowering them in the development and planning process, has formed a major part of this.

The concept of PRA was first introduced to China by Robert Chambers at a workshop hosted by the Yunnan Rural Development Research Centre (RDRC) in November 1993. In October 1994, the Yunnan PRA network was established with the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation and in March 2010, the Yunnan Participatory Development Association was set up with formal approval from local governments, indicating a new phase in the practice of the participatory approach in China.

Training materials

Handbook on PRA Training (Available in Chinese only)

Written by the members of Yunnan PR network, this handbook shows the use of the participatory approach as a tool for empowering rural individuals and communities, and is a product of inputs from various individuals and institutions, including several universities and research institutions in Yunnan who have been actively involved in PRA practices in Southwest China over the last ten years.



This handbook was commissioned to fill a gap in the current Chinese literature on PRA training. It is a practical guide to setting up and running PRA training projects in China. Based on the authors' experiences using PRA tools in rural areas of Southwest China, it offers an outline for facilitators to explore how to use teaching materials to encourage a lively, efficient learning process. It provides several case studies that illustrate in practice the process of conceiving, designing and implementing PRA. They list results of these approaches, providing examples and detailing successes and challenges.

The methodology and tools proposed by the PRA handbook have been tested in several training workshops held in Yunnan, including the Social, Gender and Mainstreaming workshop, Project Management workshop and Farmer's Association workshop. While the handbook is primarily an educational and reference material to be used during training workshops for PRA in China, it can also be used as a guide for PRA work in general.



Handbook on Whole Village Advancement, Poverty Alleviation and Development Planning (Available in Chinese only)

The Whole Village Advance programme was initiated by the Chinese government in 2001 as an important measure for poverty alleviation. It aimed to improve the landscape of poor rural areas, narrow the urban and rural development gap and build a harmonious society.

The handbook was written by two PRA experts – Mr Song Haokun and Ms Wang Wanyin from the Yunnan RDRC. They realised the significance of integrating the participatory approach into the programme to enhance community

¹ See also the Prologue to this issue for more background information.

engagement and enable the local community to benefit from this critical event.

The methodology described in this handbook outlines ways of involving local people in decision-making processes.

It specifies the activities, participants, outputs and action tips related to the whole planning process. It presents a step by step approach to participatory planning, starting from programme initiatives, village meetings, followed by poor householder meetings and villager congresses, then ends with the feasibility study, primary planning, plan adjustment and modification, examination and approval. In this way the reader is able to see how local people can plan, implement, supervise and monitor the whole planning process. It also looks at message and discussion theme creation as well as the principles of participatory approaches, methods and tools used in the planning process.

The processes described in the handbook have been tested in several case studies undertaken in rural Yunnan. Development workers who read this handbook will learn how to transform and use this framework to design and implement participatory approaches appropriate for their project situation. In addition, they should be able to set up a management system for training field staff, monitoring and documenting the implementation of the strategy and tools.

By integrating the participatory approach into specific village planning, the handbook filled the gap of training manuals in the Chinese language. It provides practical guidance and ideas for carrying out participatory planning in local communities and gives a framework of planning and tips that can be used in the context of China.

CONTACT DETAILS

Yunnan Participatory Research Association
Room 701, Zhizhen Building
Yunnan University of Nationalities
Yunnan
PR China
Tel/Fax: +86 871 5031503
Email: ynpra@163.com
Website: www.ynpra.org.cn

THE COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE

Background

The Community-Based Conservation and Development Research Centre (CCDRC) was founded in 1999 and is based in Guizhou Normal University. It aims to explore participatory theories, methods and tools and promote the PRA approach to extend to the field of environment protection. It has implemented many development projects related to community-based conservation and development through cooperation with local nature reserves. At the same time, the centre works closely with several national and international NGOs and foundations, such as the Canadian Civil Society Project, Ford Foundation, Oxfam Hong Kong, International Crane Foundation (ICF), World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) and the Environmental Protection Bureau of Guizhou Province, to promote and popularise the PRA approach in biodiversity conservation in Guizhou Province.

Training methodologies

CCDRC uses participatory methods when developing projects related to sustainable natural resource management, environmental management, biodiversity

conservation, based on community development with particular focus on communities within and around natural reserves in China. So as to build the capacity of the government agencies working on environmental protection, CCDRC has developed a set of simple, practical analysing and training tools to train local government agencies. Training topics range from PRA tools, project management, PM&E, gender training, and leadership training.

Training manuals

A series of training manuals has been developed, including:

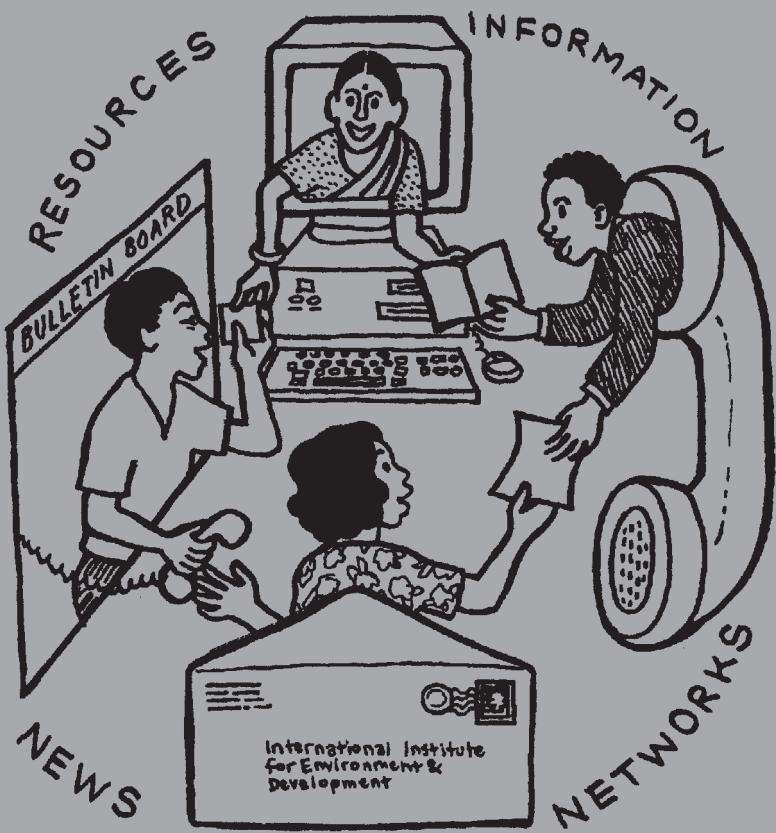
- *Handbook for rural development and management* (2003).
- *PRA training material and curriculum for 10 years planning for the poverty alleviation in Guangxi poverty alleviation office, Guangxi Province* (2002).
- *Handbook for project management* (2006).
- *Handbook for Guizhou environmental protection and sustainable development management* (2008).

The Guizhou Provincial Forestry Department and the Nature Conservation Bureau are becoming interested in participatory environmental protection and are beginning to hold related trainings on participatory protection.

CONTACT DETAILS

CCDRC
Guizhou Normal University, Guiyang
Guizhou 550001
PR China
Tel: +86 851 677634, 6754106
Fax: +86 851 6779634
Email: gzpra@public.gz.cn

IN TOUCH



Welcome to the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*. Through these pages we hope to create a more participatory resource for the *Participatory Learning and Action* audience, to put you, as a reader, in touch with other readers. We want this section to be a key source of up-to-date information on training, publications, and networks. Your help is vital in keeping us all in touch about:

- **Networks.** Do you have links with recognised local, national or international networks for practitioners of participatory learning? If so, what does this network provide – training? newsletters? resource material/library? a forum for sharing experiences? Please tell us about the network and provide contact details for other readers.
- **Training.** Do you know of any forthcoming training events or courses in participatory methodologies? Are you a

trainer yourself? Are you aware of any key training materials that you would like to share with other trainers?

- **Publications.** Do you know of any key publications on participatory methodologies and their use? Have you (or has your organisation) produced any books, reports, or videos that you would like other readers to know about?
- **Electronic information.** Do you know of any electronic conferences or pages on the Internet which exchange or provide information on participatory methodologies?
- **Other information.** Perhaps you have ideas about other types of information that would be useful for this section. If so, please let us know.

Please send your responses to:
Participatory Learning and Action,
IIED, 80-86 Gray's Inn Road,
London WC1X 8NH, UK.
Email: pla.notes@iied.org

Books & other resources

CHINA



Green China: Chinese insights on environment and development

● Edited by James Keeley, forthcoming 2011, IIEG
ISBN: 978-1-84369-816-6

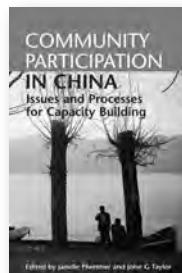
China's economic transformation over three decades has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. But impressive economic growth rates in the world's largest country have come with heavy environmental costs. The air in many of China's major cities is the most polluted in the world. The water in many major Chinese rivers is unfit for irrigation. Soils in key agricultural regions are contaminated by heavy metals. Scarce arable land and water resources and important biodiversity are being lost. China's carbon and nitrous oxide emissions are having serious impacts both in China and at a global scale.

China urgently needs to shift to a more sustainable economic model. Future growth will need to deliver jobs and additional poverty reduction without further undermining ecosystems and the natural resource base. This means rethinking links between energy and climate change and land and water use. But changing institutions, policy and practice to support this is far from easy. This book, which brings together writings from China's leading thinkers on sustainable development, reflects on experiences to

date, such as experiments with Green GDP accounting, and implementation of Green for Grain, the world's biggest reforestation programme, as well as China's role in climate negotiations. Clear ideas are presented on what needs to change in China (and elsewhere), and on how to deliver economic development with better social and environmental outcomes.

The book is produced by IIEG and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, with the support of the Ford Foundation.

■ Available from Earthprint:
www.earthprint.com
For more information visit
<http://pubs.iied.org/17509IIED.html>



Community participation in China: issues and processes for capacity building

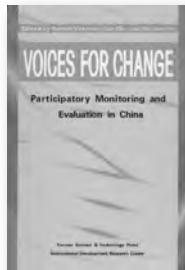
● Janelle Plummer and John G. Taylor, 2004, Earthscan
ISBN: 9781844070862

This publication looks at the key issues necessary for the implementation of participatory approaches in China today and in particular at capacity building. It includes of case studies by principal Chinese academics and practitioners in forestry, natural resource management, rural development, irrigation and poverty alleviation.

At the core, the book is about strengthening local government as a key player in the development of participatory

initiatives. It is an invaluable text for development practitioners, donors, researchers and students seeking to understand the opportunities and constraints for participation in China, and for those working to institutionalise participatory processes in a complex rural context.

■ Available from Earthscan, Taylor & Francis Group Ltd, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxford, OX14 4RN, UK
Tel: +44 20 7017-6000;
Fax: +44 20 7017-6699
Email: orders@earthscan.co.uk;
Website: www.earthscan.co.uk



Kunming, and International Development Research Centre, Ottawa
ISBN: 0-88936-994-1

Also available in Mandarin, published in 2003, ISBN 7-5416-2167-6/S-346
This book is about the experience of two research teams in Yunnan and Guizhou Provinces in Southwest China who joined forces to strengthen their participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) capacity. Focusing on participatory field research in the area of community-based natural resource management, the book contributes to the literature on PM&E, especially around conceptual, methodological, and capacity-building issues.

Integrating PM&E in ongoing research in Yunnan and Guizhou opened a new window on research practice. It strengthened the learning, accountability, and effectiveness of the research efforts of the two teams, in particular through the realisation that what matters is not only

what is assessed, but who does the measuring and assessing. In addition, the experience gained during the PM&E activity has contributed to a better understanding of how different concerns and interests are represented and negotiated in a research process.

The PM&E training and fieldwork contributed greatly to a better understanding by researchers and local government officials of the interests and needs of both women and men farmers. It also strengthened farmers' participation in the research process in Yunnan and Guizhou and catalysed the introduction of a self-monitoring mechanism among farmers in Guizhou for the management of their local water system, thus enhancing local governance.

The book describes in detail the field learning experience of both teams including methodology and tools, achievements and challenges. It also reflects critically on the capacity development process.

■ Available to order or download at http://cmsweb.idrc.ca/cfp/ev-26686-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html



Beijing, and International Development Research Centre, Ottawa
ISBN: 0-7619-3463-4. Also available in Mandarin (published in 2007; ISBN: 978-7-109-11544-6) and Mongolian (published in 2007; ISBN: 978-99929-0-118-7).

The sustainable management of natural resources, including biodiversity, requires the involvement of multiple social actors or stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement refers to the active and meaningful

Social and gender analysis in natural resource management: learning studies and lessons from Asia
● Edited by Ronnie Vernooy, 2006
Sage, New Delhi, China Agricultural Press,

participation of small farmers (both men and women), large farmers, entrepreneurs, local authorities, local groups, NGO staff and policy makers in decision-making processes concerning the use, management and conservation of natural resources. This includes the analysis of problems and opportunities, the definition of research and development initiatives, and the monitoring and assessment of action and plans. It often also includes working together to reconcile conflicting or divergent points of view and interests. In particular, the active involvement of NGOs, local governments, grassroots groups and farmer associations is now a feature in many participatory, natural resource management initiatives. In such an approach, it is imperative to address both the ecological and sociological aspects of natural resource (management) dynamics.

This usually means looking at larger landscape units, such as a watershed or a micro-watershed, a community forest or rangeland. It requires dealing systematically with the changing and often complex interactions among components of a natural resource system or a production system, such as farming, fishing, forestry, herding, collecting edibles or combinations of these.

It also requires considering the historical, socioeconomic and political forces that influence these interactions. These forces in turn are defined by such variables as class, gender, age and ethnicity. Foremost, it implies learning from the women and men living in marginal areas, who are struggling to make a living under often very difficult conditions. The key questions to answer are: How do these people construct and perceive what is happening in their community, watershed or region? How do they view what we call the management of natural resources? What is their interest in participatory action research processes and do they see them as a way to create more room to manoeuvre? Are local women farmers and

fishers interested in joining professional researchers in a collaborative effort to analyse their situation and to design, test and assess new or adapted management practices?

These considerations lead to exploring such processes as the generation, distribution and use of knowledge. Of particular interest is the study of the social and gender relations and configurations that condition access, tenure, entitlements, claims and rights to natural resources, including the social dynamics of change, adaptation and resilience. It also raises the cultural and political nature of research methods and practices.

This book documents and reflects on an initiative that recognises the steps that researchers are already taking to implement social and gender analysis (SAGA) research including questions of class, caste and ethnicity in natural resource management. It presents learning studies from six diverse research teams from India, Nepal, China, Vietnam and Mongolia.

■ Available from Sage Publications Ltd:
www.uk.sagepub.com/books/Book229297

Emerging forest associations in Yunnan, China: Implications for livelihoods and sustainability

● *Horst Weyerhaeuser, Shao Wen, Friedrich Kahrl, 2006
 IIED, London*

ISBN 978-1-84369 607-0

Yunnan is one of China's poorest and least urbanised provinces, with 73 of its 129 counties below the poverty line. With the largest total area of collectively-owned forest among China's 31 provinces, forestry development continues to play an important role in Yunnan's rural economic development. This report assesses the competitive challenges that small and medium forest enterprises (SMFEs) face in response to China's huge rural to urban demographic transition, growth in trade and increasing environmental concerns. It

describes the evolution of some of the emerging associations that will help SMFEs cope, such as the Yunnan Provincial Forest Products Industry Association. The reorientation of this association into a more independent industry body could provide a new model for SMFE coordination around Kunming. But in less industrial areas of Yunnan, the development of SMFE associations is likely to require greater catalytic support at the village level.

■ Download at
<http://pubs.iied.org/13524IIED.html>



ISBN 978-1-84369-646-9, ISSN 1605-1017

Supplies of good clean water where, and when we need it – this is taken for granted by some, and is a pipedream for others. For most it depends in part on what people are doing up in the hills. The land in the hills may be used in ways that reduce the quantity and quality of water we get downstream. To get the water we want, we have traditionally relied on regulation, exhortation, cooperation or just keeping our fingers crossed.

What about some cold hard cash? What if the downstream beneficiaries of wise upstream land use and ecological management paid for these benefits? This is the idea of payments for watershed services.

But who will sell, who will buy, and under what conditions? Can this be good for ecosystems and for reducing poverty too? There is lots of theory about this. This report explores the evidence. It describes what the protagonists in a range of watershed sites around the world have learned in their efforts to set up such payment schemes. It concludes that these schemes are difficult to set up. But where they have been set up, they

are generally beginning to do some good (there is not much evidence that they do any harm). More significantly, payment schemes or efforts to set them up have brought the current winners and losers into the open, and kicked-off debate on what can be done. What is now needed is for more ‘buyers’ to step forward, and for the shapers of payments for watershed services schemes to put hard-learned lessons from experience into practice at larger scales and ensure buyers get what they pay for, sellers get a decent price – and watersheds get a fair deal.

■ Download or order at:
<http://pubs.iied.org/13535IIED.html>

China's post-reform urbanization: retrospect, policies and trends

● *Anthony G.O. Yeh, Jiang Xu, Kaizhi Liu, 2011*

Urbanization and Emerging Population Issues 5, IIEG, London

ISBN 978-1-84369-815-9

This paper provides a broad and updated overview of urban growth in China, its determinants and its consequences. The main section of the paper quantifies key trends in the Chinese process of urbanisation and links these to evolving policy stances, and especially to economic reform. The paper also describes how urban planning has evolved in unique directions over time in order to accommodate policy changes and how, as urbanisation has accelerated and the urban economy has been restructured, new challenges have emerged. Regulations and laws have been issued and amended in response to the growing need for coordination and control of urban growth. However, there remain alarming issues such as the loss of agricultural land and related issues of environmental degradation. The anticipated large increase in rural migrants to cities, plus increasing car ownership and housing prices as a result of rising per capita income, will be growing challenges for city governments in China. The central point that must be recognised, however, is that

urbanisation has been central to China's economic miracle, and needs to be improved but not inhibited.

■ Download or order at:
<http://pubs.iied.org/10593IIED.html>

Migration and small towns in China: power hierarchy and resource allocation

● *Bingqin Li, Xiangsheng An, 2009
 Human Settlements Working Paper, IIED, London*

ISBN 978-1-84369-740-4

Small towns play a significant role in the economic growth and urbanisation of China, attracting migrants from rural areas and other urban centres. Between 1978 and 2007, small town residents as a proportion of the urban population increased from 20 percent to 45 percent. While migrants contribute to the local economy, they also bring new challenges. With a focus on the role of local government, this paper examines how small towns in China cope with migration flows using a power hierarchy-resource allocation framework. The key argument is that how well small town authorities deal with migration is a combined result of the power they may enjoy in the government hierarchy and the resources they are able to acquire to promote local economic development and provide public services. Drawing on four case studies of small towns in Shanxi Province, the authors examine how power hierarchy and access to resources can constrain the ability of small towns to turn migration into a force for development and how these small towns have coped.

■ Download or order at:
<http://pubs.iied.org/10575IIED.html>

Rural-urban migration in China: policy options for economic growth, environmental sustainability and equity

● *Gordon McGranahan, Cecilia Tacoli, 2006
 Human Settlements Working Paper, IIED London*

ISBN 978-1-84369-617-9

In China, as in many other countries undergoing rapid economic growth, increasing socio-economic inequalities and environmental damage are the main threats to sustainable urbanisation.

Drawing on international experiences, this paper describes the key issues in urban change in China and identifies the types of policy approaches that could support more sustainable urbanisation. Urbanisation and urban growth in China are closely linked to economic growth strategies and their uneven spatial dimension. Hence, despite the fact that China is one of the few countries in the world implementing a household registration system with the explicit aim of directly managing population distribution, rural-urban migration, much of it temporary or unregistered, is currently the main factor contributing to urbanization. The paper presents a number of policy options, the first of which would bring economic benefits, the second environmental benefits and the last three equity benefits. None of these options involve prohibiting or promoting migration; rather, they aim to improve the quality of migration for the migrants themselves, their home areas, the environment and the economy.

■ Download or order at:
<http://pubs.iied.org/10535IIED.html>



Community-driven grassland development – perspectives, approaches and actions

● *Deng Weijie and Hans Wei, 2010*

Available in Chinese only

Participatory approaches are not common in grassland development in China, even though these approaches are getting more and more attention from governmental agencies and NGOs. The application of participatory approaches in grassland development is similar to the experience in forestry development. There are few

guidelines and training materials for this sector, so this resource fills a gap.

It was developed for local NGOs by Deng Weijie and Han Wei in Oct 2010 with support from the Ford Foundation. Deng Weijie is from the Institute of Tourism Study at Sichuan Agricultural University; Han Wei is from ShuGuang Community (a local NGO in Sichuan). This resource is also of relevance to government organisations as well as university students with an interest on grassland development, including eco-tourism development in grasslands.

■ For more information contact Deng Weijie: dweijie2007@yahoo.com.cn

Guidelines for village committee driven participatory village development planning

● *Deng Weijie, 2010*

Available in Chinese only

Participatory Village Development Planning has been well and widely applied in poverty alleviation and rural development in China, but most has been carried out directly or facilitated by outside consultants by cooperating with local partners, including local communities, and Village Committees. These committees have been involved as community organisers in China and as the key stakeholders of participatory planning (PP).

Participatory planning has been recognised by Chinese central government, and it is being scaled up to the national level for the 12th Five Years Development Plan in 2011-2015. Sichuan Province has been nominated as the pilot site. In this context, it is impossible to scale up PP by using the conventional PP or the consultants-driven PP due to the time limitation and limited resources. The Village Committee has been identified and recognised as the main force of PP, and these guidelines have been developed accordingly.

Based on the support of Sino-German Post Earthquake Rehabilitation for Sustainable Community Livelihood, Mr.

Deng Weijie and his team from Sichuan Agricultural University, the key partner of the project, drafted these guidelines which have been accepted by the Sichuan Poverty Alleviation and Development Office, and will be applied in more than 2000 villages in Sichuan Province in 2011, as the pilot site in China, and will be modified after the pilot.

■ For more information contact Deng Weijie: dweijie2007@yahoo.com.cn



Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP) Participation Manual
● Prepared by
PRCDP with ITAD for
DfID/World Bank,
2005

The Participation Manual was developed during the preparation phase of the Poor Rural People's Development Project (PRCDP) in 2004, based on pilot experiences with the project. Describing a participation approach in a manual seemed like an impossible and even controversial task, since participation is an open, creative and localised process which cannot possibly be described in a prescriptive manual. It was therefore not surprising that the three provinces involved in PRCDP (Sichuan, Guangxi and Yunnan) were rather keen to develop and own their distinctive approaches to participation in PRCDP.

The purpose of the manual was *not* to design a participation approach, but rather to offer elements for sustained learning on participation. The manual follows the following approach:

- it encourages a **diverse, localised and creative** approach to participation.
- It focuses on the **general principles** defining participation in PRCDP and it will include indicators to monitor the quality of participation.
- It suggests **practical steps** and includes **good practices** from the provinces which

help the practitioners to put these principles into practice.

A key component for the project was to strengthen the depth and breadth of participation during all phases of the project cycle. Previously too much emphasis had been placed on participatory planning procedures only. The manual thus covers the entire project cycle and is structured according to the main phases. For each phase the manual presents the key principles together with practical examples and indicators to monitor the quality and scope of participation. In addition, the manual includes a wealth of good practices which are of wider interest for practitioners. The annex also includes material to encourage further learning on participation and the creative development of this approach.

■ Available to download in English and Chinese at www.itad.com/PRCDP/

China Watershed Management Project: development of a monitoring and evaluation system

● ITAD, 2006

This report looks at the framework for developing a comprehensive and sustainable social and environmental monitoring and evaluation system for the China Watershed Management Project (CWMP), with an emphasis on participatory approaches. The objective was to improve project monitoring so as to better evaluate project benefits for poor and disadvantaged groups. Monitoring and evaluation focused on the effect the project is having on different vulnerable groups in project villages, including changes in incomes and the wider impacts on people's livelihoods. Ways in which the poor may have been disadvantaged by project implementation were also evaluated, and those missing out on project benefits were also identified. See Part IV of this issue for more information on the CWMP.

■ Available on request (electronic version) from IIED. Email planotes@iied.org

Guidance on participatory watershed management (Chinese only) *Canyushe xiaoliuyu guanli peixun jiaocheng* ● *Zhongguo Jihua Chubanshe, 2008*



● *Gansu Province CMPO Project Office, 2006.*

■ Available on request from IIED (electronic version). Email planotes@iied.org

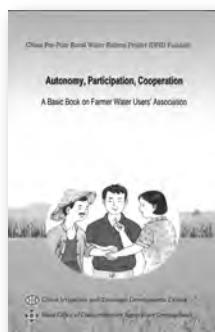


The implementation and management of participatory subwatershed pilot project Bilingual

(Chinese-English) version

● *Gansu Provincial Project Management Office, 2007*

■ Available on request from IIED (electronic version). Email planotes@iied.org



Autonomy, participation, cooperation – a basic book on farmer Water Users' Associations ● *China Irrigation and Draining Development Centre/ State Office of Comprehensive Agriculture Development*

■ Available on request from IIED (electronic version). Email planotes@iied.org

Telling the story of Farmer Water User's Association

● *China Irrigation and Draining Development Centre*

Guidelines on Implementation of Participatory Rural Water Supply Projects
 (Chinese only) *Canyushe nongcun gongshui gongcheng shishi zhinan*
 ● International Cooperation Centre at MWR. 2008

Participatory Technology Development for Incorporating Non-Timber Forest Products into Forest Restoration in Yunnan, Southwest China

● He, J., Z.M. Zhou, H. Weyerhaeuser and J.C. Xu
Forest Ecology and Management. 2009. Vol 257: 2010-2016

Participatory Rural Development Theories and Method Applied in China

● He, J. and He P.K
Journal of Academic Exploration. 2004, Special Issues: 82-85

Participatory Approach in Rural Natural Resource Management

● He, J. in *Forestry and Society, 2003 61(4):1-4*

PRA Approach Applied to Biodiversity Conservation in Guizhou and Their Impact

● Ren Xiaodong, 2003, *Landscapes of Diversity: Indigenous Knowledge, Sustainable Livelihoods and Resource Governance in Montane Mainland Southeast Asia.*

Feasibility of the application of the Cao Hai experience to other areas: a survey of Fanjingshan, Dashanbao, Yezhong, and Changshun in Wumengshan Region

● Community-based Conservation and Development -Strategies and Practice at Caohai, Ren Xiaodong, et al., 2001 *Guizhou Ethnic Press*

ISBN: 7-80662-412-0

Seeds and synergies: innovation in rural development in China

● Song, Yiching and R. Vernooy (eds.), 2010

Practical Action Publishing, Burton on Dunsmore and International Development Research Centre, Ottawa.
 ISBN: 978-1-85339-705-9.
www.idrc.ca/cp/ev-154688-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Seeds of empowerment: action research in the context of feminization of agriculture in Southwest China

● Yiching Song and R. Vernooy, 2010
Gender, Technology and Development 14 (1): 25-44.

Using evaluation for capacity development: community-based natural resource management in Asia

● Campilan, D.; A. Bertuso; W. Nelles; R. Vernooy (eds.), 2009
Los Banos, Centro Internacional de la Papa-UPWARD
 ISBN: 978-971-614-044-6. (Includes 3 case studies from China)

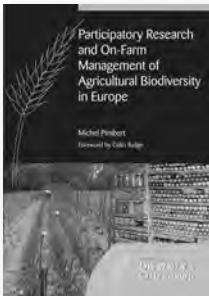
Introducing participatory curriculum development in China's higher education: the case of community-based natural resource management

● Qi Gubo, Xu Xiuli, Zuo Ting, Li Xiaoyun, Chen Keke, Gao Xiaowei, Ji Miao, Liu Lin, Mao Miankui, Li Jingsong, Song Yiching, Long Zhipu, Lu Min, Yuan Juanwen, R. Vernooy. 2008
Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension, Vol. 14, Number 1: 7-20, March.

The power of participatory monitoring and evaluation: insights from Southwest China

● Vernooy, R.; Sun Qiu, and Xu Jianchu, 2006. *The power of participatory monitoring and evaluation: insights from south-west China.'Development in Practice 16(5): 400-411.*

GENERAL



Participatory research and on-farm management of agricultural biodiversity in Europe

● *Michel Pimbert, Foreword by Colin Tudge, 2011*
Reclaiming

Diversity and Citizenship series, IIED London

ISBN 978-1-84369-809-8

Drawing on experience in Europe and the wider literature, this paper offers some critical reflections on how - and under what conditions - the European Union might support the development of innovative participatory approaches for the management of agricultural biodiversity in Europe.

Recommendations for the EU and its citizens are offered on how to address three challenges in particular:

i) transforming knowledge and ways of knowing for the local adaptive management of agricultural biodiversity and resilience in the face of climate change and uncertainty;

ii) scaling up and institutionalising participatory research and innovation in plant breeding, varietal selection, and agroecological research; and

iii) policy reversals for the participatory management of agricultural biodiversity.

This EU-wide transformation is all the more necessary now given that resilience, mitigation and adaptation to climate change directly depend on supporting innovative participatory approaches for managing agricultural biodiversity at the farm and landscape levels. The construction of a new modernity for food and farming in Europe also depends on such a transformation.

■ Available to order or download at
<http://pubs.iied.org/14611IIED>

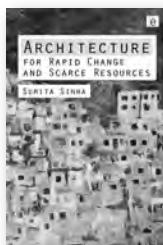


The Participation Reader

● *Edited by Andrea Cornwall, 2011, Zed Books, ISBN 9781842774038*

This book explores the conceptual and methodological dimensions of participatory research and the politics and practice of participation in development. It contains a collection of classic and contemporary writings on participatory development from leading participation theorists and practitioners, exploring definitions, principles, methodologies and case studies from around the world.

■ Available from: Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London, N1 9FJ, UK.
 Website: www.zedbooks.co.uk



Architecture for Rapid Change and Scarce Resources

● *Sumita Sinha, forthcoming 2011, Earthscan*
ISBN 9781849711166

Architects, development practitioners and designers are working in a global environment and issues such as environmental and cultural sustainability matter more than ever. Past interactions and interventions between developed and developing countries have often been unequal and inappropriate. We now need to embrace a new paradigm for architectural practice based on respect for diversity and equality, participation and empowerment.

This book explores what it means for development practitioners to practice architecture on a global scale and provides guidance for developing architectural practices based on reciprocal working methods.

The content is based on real situations - through extended field research and

contacts with architecture schools and architects as well as participating NGOs. It demonstrates that the ability to produce appropriate and sustainable design is increasingly relevant whether in the field of disaster relief, longer term development or wider urban contexts whether in the rich countries or poor countries.

Written in an accessible style, each chapter ends with some points for discussion. *PLA* readers will be particularly interested in the chapter on participatory design.

■ Available from Earthscan, Taylor & Francis Group Ltd, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxford, OX14 4RN, UK
Tel: +44 20 7017-6000;
Fax: +44 20 7017-6699
Email: orders@earthscan.co.uk;
Website: www.earthscan.co.uk



Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation into Development Planning: A Guide for Practitioners

- UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative, 2011

Climate change adaptation is an area of growing concern and engagement for many developing countries. The myriad and uncertain effects of a changing climate pose significant risks for development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Numerous initiatives and financing mechanisms aimed at assisting countries with climate change adaptation have been rolled out and are being implemented. Efforts tend to concentrate on developing specific adaptation measures, with a focus on the ones that correspond to countries' most urgent and immediate needs. Increasingly, countries are coming to realise that, in the long term, climate change adaptation needs to be supported by an integrated, cross-cutting policy approach.

This guide provides practical, step-by-step guidance on how governments and other national actors can mainstream climate change adaptation into national development planning as part of broader mainstreaming efforts. It is aimed at public decision makers and practitioners in developing countries dealing with climate change adaptation.

The guide draws on substantial experience and lessons learned by the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative in working with governments to integrate environmental management for pro-poor economic growth and development into national development planning and decision-making.

■ Available to download at:
www.unpei.org/knowledge-resources/publications.html

Training Kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication

Kit de Capacitación sobre Manejo y Comunicación Participativos de la Información Territorial

- DVD-ROM, 2010
CTA, The Netherlands/IFAD, Italy
ISBN: 978-92-9081-446-7

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) has been spearheading a series of initiatives aimed at sharing lessons learned, identifying gaps and building on institutional and methodological synergies in the field of participatory mapping. The 2005 Mapping for Change Conference, organised by CTA and the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), represented a landmark event where 154 practitioners from 45 countries convened to discuss the state of the art, potential and constraints, as well as the opportunities and threats of participatory spatial information management and communication. *PLA* 54 on *Mapping for Change* was published in April 2006 as an output of this Conference.

Further demand was identified for training material to ensure the spread of good practice and in response to the Conference and subsequent on-line surveys, CTA, launched a project entitled 'Support the spread of good practice in generating, managing, analysing and communication spatial information.'

The output of the initiative is a freely available multilingual, modular, multimedia Training Kit to be used in face to face capacity building events. The kit has been published in English and Spanish. Brazilian-Portuguese and French versions are planned.

The Training Kit contains 15 modules, each presented through a series of units. Modules cover the entire spectrum of good developmental practice – from mobilising communities to developing a communication strategy based on the outcome of participatory mapping activities.

The modules touch on topics such as the fundamentals of training, ethics and community groundwork and processes as well as the more technical low-, mid- and high-tech participatory mapping methods. The Training Kit culminates in a module on



Men and women of different age groups participate in drawing a sketch map. Dhaka, Bangladesh.

networking, communication and advocacy – the pillars upon which maps become effective media and negotiation tools.

The Kit can be tailored to meet your needs, and is now available online.

■ <http://pgis.cta.int/pgis-training-kit>

Events and training

Training from BOND

BOND is the UK membership body for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in international development.

Learning and Training: NGO Effectiveness Impact assessment: what difference did we make?

● 27-28 September 2011, Central London, UK

NGOs are increasingly required to report on the impact of their development or humanitarian interventions. This practical course is aimed at those responsible for impact assessment and will enable participants to design an impact assessment process, based on their own case studies, which can be put into practice in project work and used to help demonstrate effectiveness and value for money.

Areas covered in the course include:

- what 'impact' is and why it matters
- what makes impact assessment different from, and complementary to, monitoring and evaluation
- the approaches used to assess impact
- key challenges and how to work with them
- theories of change and spheres of influence
- the tools and systems you can use to understand your contribution
- how to use the results of an impact assessment

■ For more information on this and other training courses, and to sign up for regular updates visit www.bond.org.uk BOND, Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL, UK.

Participatory Training

Participatory Training is a UK-based organisation run by John Rowley and Kate Gant. They provide training and support for people who want to use participatory methods in their work to involve and engage others. This includes community consultation and research by involving community members in identifying priorities, developing solutions and action planning. Areas of training covered are:

- Participatory appraisal (PA)
- Participatory approaches
- Community involvement
- Participatory methods
- Training programmes

Training programmes are designed to meet the needs of a specific group of trainees. The training is linked to a practical project or task. The workshop programme is then devised to fit the task and the practical needs of the trainees. In the basic training participants get:

- a practical understanding of the importance of involving local people in community consultation;
- knowledge and understanding of the process underpinning community consultation; and
- an understanding and experience of participatory tools and techniques that help to involve people in identifying key issues that affect their communities.

■ For more information please contact Participatory Training. John Rowley; Tel: +44 1865 456074; Email: john.rowley@participatorytraining.co.uk. Kate Gant, Tel: +44 121 778 5695; Email:

kate.gant@participatorytraining.co.uk
Website: www.participatorytraining.co.uk

Training from the Grassroots Institute

Grassroots Institute (GI) is a community of practitioners who provide education and training to in intercultural understanding and global development. GI is based in Himachal Pradesh, India. It offers international quality and professional education opportunities for leaders, managers and staff of NGOs and other civil society organisations. All programmes are built on the participants' prior development work experience and their ability to contribute directly to strengthening the capacity of their own organisations.

Grassroots Institute also offers a series of practical Intensive Field Training (IFT) programmes specially designed for development workers and professionals. IFTs use participatory techniques and approaches and build practical knowledge, perspectives, skills and ideas for young people by providing them with opportunities for leadership development on a range of technical subjects, disciplines and themes.

■ For more information contact: Head Office, Banjar, 175 123 Kullu (HP) India. Tel: +91 1903 201201; 222803; +91 9418133427. Or: Delhi Office, Post Box 9726, New Friends Colony, New Delhi, 110 025 India. Tel: +91 (011) 26955452, +91-9868993710.
Email: grassrootsinstitute2@gmail.com
Website: www.grassroots.org.in

Training from IISD

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) at Colorado State University provides innovative training in community-based development (online and face-to-face), consultation, evaluation, and project support services for individuals and governmental, international non-governmental and community-based organisations around the world.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation – online course

● 30 September – 4 November 2011

Duration: 5 weeks

This course stresses participatory methods in monitoring and evaluation for community development, where multiple stakeholders are involved in the process of planning, collecting, interpreting, communicating and using information. This approach emphasises a regular monitoring process that leads to continuous improvements. The course uses a case study and team discussions to illustrate the participatory monitoring and evaluation process. Upon completion of this course participants will be able to:

- Plan a monitoring and evaluation project.
- Develop evaluation questions that address stakeholders' needs.
- Select the most appropriate data collection method for a given situation.
- Effectively communicate monitoring and evaluation data.
- Use the monitoring information to achieve continuous improvement.

■ For a complete list of IISD online courses available, please visit:

www.colostate.edu/Orgs/IISD/Calendar.html
. To learn more about course requirements: visit: www.colostate.edu/Orgs/IISD/Requirements.html
International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), W110 Engineering Research Center, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, 80525, USA. Tel: +1 970 237 3002; Fax: +1 970 491 2729;
Email: jamie@villageearth.org

Training from ICCAD, Bangladesh

Planning, Implementing, and Mainstreaming Adaptation in Government Programme

● 13-19 November 2011

ICCAD, Independent University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) is a

new centre and the first international centre in a developing country that links development and climate change, and aims to build capacity for those faced with the challenges of adaptation in the context of development. ICCCAD is a partnership between Independent University, Bangladesh, Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). ICCAD delivers high-quality short courses to staff from NGOs, universities, government departments and individuals in Bangladesh and other countries.

As climate change becomes recognised as an important issue to be incorporated into national development planning and implementation, governments in many developing countries are beginning to develop national and sectoral climate change plans and projects in different ministries and departments. Since climate change is a new subject for most of the government officials having to develop and implement such plans, there is a need for training on how to plan, implement and ultimately mainstream climate change into national and sectoral development plans and programmes. This short course at ICCCAD is designed to provide such training for government officials from developing countries.

The seven-day intensive course uses a combination of lecture, group work, individual workplans, one-on-one mentoring and field visits.

Topics will include real life examples of national, sectoral and local level planning and integration of climate change into developed activities from Bangladesh, Nepal and Kenya.

■ To apply, please send an email to the Office Secretary of ICCCAD, Md. Gazi Mahmud Alam:
 mahmudsabuj11@gmail.com
 Or download the application form from the website: <http://centers.iub.edu.bd/iccad>

Training from MOSIAC

Stakeholder Participation in Planning, Needs Assessment, Monitoring & Evaluation

● 6-11 February 2012, Mexico

Participacion de Co-Actores en Diagnostico, Monitoreo y Evaluacion con metodos de PRA/PLA y SARAR, 6-11 febrero 2012 en Mexico

Registration includes three months of post-workshop online mentoring and coaching to facilitate the application of tools in the workplace.

Gender Training

● 16-20 July 2012, University of Ottawa, Canada

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation with 2 day community fieldwork

● 23-28 July 2012, University of Ottawa, Canada

■ For more information contact Françoise Coupal, Mosaic.net International, Inc., 705 Roosevelt Ave. Ottawa, Canada K2A 2A8. To obtain an electronic copy of the brochure visit www.mosaic-net-intl.ca or email wkshop05@mosaic-net-intl.ca

Web 2.0 Learning Opportunity

● 12-16 December 2011, Center for Virtual Learning Lab (Yombo Lab), College of Information and Communication Technologies (CoICT), University of Dar Es Salaam (UDSM), Tanzania

Technological innovation is taking place at a breath-taking pace. Simple, open source internet-based applications and services designed to enhance on-line collaboration are now available to the wider public at little or no cost at all.

These new online technologies known as Web 2.0 applications - sometimes called 'social media' - enable people to collaborate to create, share and publish information.

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation EU-ACP (CTA) has a mandate to facilitate access to and

dissemination of information in the fields of agriculture and rural development in 78 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP). Supporting the adoption of Web 2.0 applications represents a great opportunity for meeting it.

The University of Dar Es Salaam (UDSM), in collaboration with CTA will host one 5-day Web 2.0 Learning Opportunity starting on Monday 12 December 2011. Participants will be introduced to selected web 2.0 applications and will learn how to use them hands-on.

The Learning Opportunity will cover advanced online searching, getting information served via alerts and RSS, collaborating remotely using wikis and Google Docs, using VoIP, online mapping and social networking. Participants will get a chance to see what others have done, get hands-on experience on how to use innovative applications, and assess how they could adopt these innovations within the context of their work and organisation.

These Learning Opportunities form part of CTA initiatives that support development partners in networking, accessing and disseminating information more effectively.

Participation in the Learning

Opportunity is free of charge, but subject to acceptance by the organisers. 25 participants will be accepted for the event.

Eligibility criteria: be computer literate and conversant with browsing the Internet; have regular access to a computer (ownership of a computer is an advantage); be competent in the use of the English language; have an active e-mail account; be actively engaged in agriculture and rural development / natural resource management / biodiversity conservation in the domains of ICT for development (ICT4D), policies, markets; publishing, communication and media; be in a position to take along a WIFI-enabled laptop to the training; be resident of Tanzania.

Accepted participants will be responsible for all costs related to their travel to and from the venue at the University of Dar Es Salaam (UDSM) their accommodation, breakfast and supper, their daily subsistence allowances and for bringing their own WIFI-enabled laptop to the Learning opportunity.

If you are interested in applying, please click on the link to complete the online form: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/web2-LO-udsm-2>

Deadline for application: Sunday 30 October 2011.

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:

RCPLA Coordination and North Africa & Middle East Region: Passinte Isaak, Center for Development Services (CDS), 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, 10th Floor, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt.
Tel: +20 2 795 7558
Fax: +20 2 794 7278
Email: pisaak@cds-mena.org
Website: www.cds-mena.org

Asia Region: Tom Thomas, Director, Institute for Participatory Practices (Praxis), S-75 South Extension, Part II, New Delhi, India 110 049.
Tel/Fax: +91 11 5164 2348 to 51
Email: tomt@praxisindia.org
Website: www.praxisindia.org
Jayatissa Samaranayake, Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID), 591 Havelock Road, Colombo 06, Sri Lanka. Tel: +94 1 555521
Tel/Fax: +94 1 587361
Email: ipidc@panlanka.net

West Africa Region: Awa Faly Ba Mbow, IED-Afrique, BP 5579 Dakar Fann, Senegal. Tel: +221 33 867 10 58
Fax: +221 33 867 10 59
Email: awafba@iedafrique.org
Website: www.iedafrique.org

European Region: Jane Stevens, Participation, Power and Social Change, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK.

Tel: + 44 1273 678690
Fax: + 44 1273 21202
Email: participation@ids.ac.uk
Website: www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip

Participatory Learning and Action Editorial Team, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED),
80-86 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8NH,
UK.

Tel: +44 20 3463 7399
Fax: +44 20 3514 9055
Email: planotes@iied.org
Website: www.planotes.org

East Africa Region: Eliud Wakwabubi,
Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya
(PAMFORK), Jabavu Road, PCEA Jitegemea
Flats, Flat No. D3, PO Box 2645, KNH Post
Office, Nairobi, Kenya.
Tel/Fax: +254 2 716609
Email: eliud.w@pamfork.or.ke

Update from the RCPLA coordinator

Deepening Participation for Social Change

The RCPLA Network has had to put activities on hold due to limited funding, but we are seeking the means to revitalise the role of the RCPLA and take a step towards realising the network goal of *Deepening Participation for Social Change*. Activities identified by members include:

- **A Participatory Audit Tool:** to be used by development practitioners and organisations to assure that participation is applied in an effective way. The tool would help organisations identify where and what participation is applied throughout a development process and how can it be taken further to create social change. A draft tool would be developed and then piloted regionally to fine tune and identify regional characteristics.
- **Critical Evaluation and Learning from Large Scale Participatory Experiences:** This critical review would look at the cost benefit analysis of large projects from the perspective of the poor to determine how they regard the benefits and affect to their livelihood. Review of the impact of using participatory approaches in the last 20 years.
- **An E-Learning Platform:** Promoting participatory approaches through the network.

Implementing these activities will enable information to be shared in appropriate formats and help promote effective participatory approaches at local, regional and international levels.

Welcome to our new RCPLA member!

The Yunnan Participatory Development Association (YNPRA) joined the network earlier this year. As mentioned in this issue of *PLA*, the YNPRA (www.ynpra.org.cn) is a local NGO in China that promotes community participation and carries out research in participatory development processes. It was set up in 1994, following training in participatory rural appraisal

(PRA) methods by Robert Chambers, who introduced these methods in Kunming. See the news from IIED on p. 208 about the proposed collaboration with YNPRA on translating back issues of *PLA* into Chinese.

News from the Asia Region: Update from Praxis

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.

The Workshop'11

The Workshop 2011

15th Praxis Annual Commune on Participatory Development

Praxis will be hosting its Annual Commune on Participatory Development from 12-21 September 2011 in Siloam in the North-Eastern state of Meghalaya in India. This being a landmark 15th year for the workshop, eight modules have been lined up for those interested in enhancing their knowledge of participatory tools. These include Participatory Methods and Approaches, Community-Led Local Level Planning, Community-led Monitoring and Evaluation, Public Accountability, Social Equity Audits, Facilitating Networks of Marginalised Identities, Participatory Theatre and the Art of Leading Community Participation. The details are up on www.theworkshop.in. For more information, email info@theworkshop.in

Social Equity Watch

Praxis, which is the secretariat of Social Equity Watch (SEW), is mapping exclusion in the government's provision of

village-level infrastructure as part of the National Infrastructure Equity Audit (NIEA) exercise. It has completed data collection in the five selected states of Bihar, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Orissa. The data analysis is on and the findings was shared with other organisations studying exclusion and the media at a consultation in July 2011 in New Delhi. SEW also conducted a fact-finding study on the sexual harassment of women from the North-East in Delhi. For further details, visit: <http://socialequitywatch.org>

Praxis Chennai and Patna

The Praxis team in Chennai is involved in studies and campaign work on urban poverty focusing on powers vested with urban local bodies towards planning and implementation of pro-poor urban reform. The Patna team was involved in a participatory evaluation of the National Alliance for the Fundamental Right to Education as well as a landscape study of community mobilisation in eight districts of Bihar. It has taken up a project involving the study of the life and working conditions of sanitation workers to feed into a national-level draft policy.

Work with sexual minorities and injecting drug users

Praxis is associated with a programme over five years 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 the above community. Data collection for the third successive year began in July 2011.

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

News from IIED

Moving offices

As mentioned in the Editorial, IIED London will be moving offices in September 2011. From 12 September 2011, our new address will be 80-86 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1X 8NH. The move presents an opportunity to get all London-based staff back into one building, and to refresh our ways of working, update our IT systems and provide a welcoming space for visiting colleagues. For more information on the move visit: www.iied.org/general/about-iied/move-grays-inn-road

New team name

The Food and Agriculture Team at IIED has been renamed the Agroecology and Food Sovereignty Team, which gives a better description of our activities. We are pleased to have Lila Buckley, a senior researcher on China, who joined IIED recently, in our team. Lila has been involved in cross-cutting research work, building IIED's strategy and actions on engaging China across the Institute's work and building partnerships in China. She also carries out research on Chinese agriculture and resource issues in Senegal and elsewhere. Lila contributed an article in Part VI on Scaling up and provided valuable comments on early drafts of all articles in this issue of *PLA*.

Collaboration with the YNPRA

Following on from our collaboration with China for this special issue, we are very pleased that Dai Cong, the Coordinator of the Yunnan Participatory Research Association (YNPRA) approached us to request permission to translate some back issue articles from issues of *PLA*.

Together with the network members, the YNPRA proposes to select papers according to the needs of members and colleagues in PRA groups in Guizhou, Guangxi and Sichuan Provinces. These cover almost the whole of Southwest China, including many poorer and ethnic minority administrative areas. YNPRA will organise the translation work, with experienced members reviewing each paper after translation. The translated papers will be uploaded to YNPRA's website (www.ynpra.org.cn). Those YNPRA network members who are interested in the papers will be invited to comment, and it is hoped that this will stimulate discussion among all the PRA networks in Southwest China and among experienced and newer members.

We look forward to taking this forward and keeping *PLA* readers updated.

Gender and generation at IIED

Understanding gender and generation has crucial implications for conceptualising poverty and formulating initiatives to reduce poverty and inequality. The ways that gender and generation interact with each other and with all other dimensions of development are fundamentally diverse and location-specific, defying the generalisations that still underpin much policymaking. This calls instead for a greater role for local organisations in understanding, representing and acting on issues of gender and generational equity in poverty reduction.

IIED has formed a cross-cutting research team to increase coherence across the institute's work and develop our capacity to analyse and integrate gender and generation issues in all our activities and areas of focus. We plan to develop a

research and advocacy agenda with partners.

As part of this initiative, we are carrying out an analysis of the extent to which gender concerns are addressed in *PLA* and at the lessons that can be drawn for IIED and for a wider audience in the following areas:

- (1) Bringing Southern voices, particularly those of women, into global debates on policy and practice. How successful is *PLA* in encouraging Southern women to contribute to *PLA*? What specific measures could it adopt to increase the proportion of Southern female authors?
- (2) Gender-sensitive participatory research and development practice, drawing on the articles published in *PLA* over the past five years. How has gender (and other forms of 'difference') been addressed in participatory work? How can we ensure that women can participate and be heard? What tools have been developed to deal with conflicting priorities? Is it clear who participates? Who decides? Who benefits? Are there any examples of participatory work which tries to change unequal gender relations?
- (3) Gender-sensitive working practices at IIED, drawing on the experiences of the three-member all-women *PLA* collective that edits the journal.

A paper has been drafted focusing on the first part of this analysis: how far Southern women contribute to *PLA* and what can be done to encourage more contributions. Subsequent paper(s) will consider the other two aspects identified above.

For more information and to read some of IIED's current research work with partners, visit: www.iied.org/governance/about/making-gender-and-generation-matter

Order form

All back issues can be downloaded
free of charge from our website:
www.planotes.org

Quantity
required

Order no:

Issue 63: Sep 2011 US\$32.00	14606 IIED	How wide are the ripples? From local participation to international organisational learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 62: Aug 2011 US\$32.00	14605 IIED	Wagging the dragon's tail: emerging practices in participatory poverty reduction in China	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 61: Jun 2010 US\$32.00	14579 IIED	Tales of shit: Community-Led Total Sanitation in Africa	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 60: Dec 2009 US\$32.00	14573 IIED	Community-based adaptation to climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 59: Jun 2009 US\$32.00	14563 IIED	Change at hand: Web 2.0 for development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 58: Jun 2008 US\$32.00	14562 IIED	Towards empowered participation: stories and reflections	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 57: Dec 2007 US\$32.00	14558 IIED	Immersions: learning about poverty face-to-face	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 55: Dec 2006 US\$32.00	14523 IIED	Practical tools for community conservation in southern Africa	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 54: Apr 2006 US\$32.00	14507 IIED	Mapping for change: practice, technologies and communications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 53: Dec 2005 US\$32.00	14505 IIED	Tools for influencing power and policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 51: Apr 2005 US\$32.00	9526 IIED	Civil society and poverty reduction	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 50: Oct 2004 US\$32.00	9440 IIED	Critical reflections, future directions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 49: Apr 2004 US\$32.00	9312 IIED	Decentralisation and community-based planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 48: Dec 2003 US\$32.00	9284 IIED	Learning and teaching participation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 47: Aug 2003 US\$32.00	9260 IIED	General issue (Mini-theme: parti-numbers)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 46: Feb 2003 US\$32.00	9224 IIED	Participatory processes for policy change	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 45: Oct 2002 US\$32.00	9218 IIED	Community-based animal health care	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 44: Jun 2002 US\$32.00	9216 IIED	Local government and participation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 43: Feb 2002 US\$32.00	9133 IIED	Advocacy and citizen participation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 42: Oct 2001 US\$32.00	9113 IIED	Children's participation – evaluating effectiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 40: Feb 2001 US\$32.00	6345 IIED	Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 39: Oct 2000 US\$25.00	6344 IIED	Popular communications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 38: Jun 2000 US\$25.00	6341 IIED	Participatory processes in the North	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 37: Feb 2000 US\$25.00	6335 IIED	Sexual and reproductive health	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 35: Jun 1999 US\$25.00	6154 IIED	Community water management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issue 34: Feb 1999 US\$25.00	6150 IIED	Learning from analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>

Return to: Earthprint Ltd. PO Box 119, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 4TP, UK.

Tel: +44 1438 748111; Fax: +44 1438 748844;

Email: orders@earthprint.com; Website: www.planotes.org or www.earthprint.com

First Name: _____ Surname: _____

Organisation: _____

Address/PO Box: _____

Postal code: _____ Country: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Full set of back copies only US\$500 plus postage and packaging (counts as one item). Order number: 6098IIED

Please note that due to cost restrictions we are unable to supply, or respond to requests for, free copies of back issues.

Shipping charges: UK US\$5 for the first item; US\$2.50 for each additional item; Europe US\$6 for the first item; US\$3 for each additional item Rest of the world US\$10 for the first item; US\$5 for each additional item (counted as one item).

PAYMENT INFORMATION

I enclose an international money order or US\$ cheque drawn on a US bank account to the value of: US\$ _____

I enclose a UK cheque to the value of (use an exchange rate of US\$2 to £1): £ _____

Cheques should be made payable to Earthprint Limited

Please debit my credit card to the value of: £ _____ VISA Mastercard American Express

Credit Card Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____

Holder's Name: _____ Signature: _____

Card Address (if different from above): _____

Please send my institution an invoice

Do you wish your details to be disclosed to others? Yes No

Subscriptions order form

Published twice a year, *Participatory Learning and Action* (formerly *PLA Notes*) is the world's leading informal journal on participatory approaches and methods. *PLA* is written by participatory practitioners – for participatory practitioners.

All back issues are also free to download online: www.planotes.org

Subscribe for free if ...

- You work for a local or national organisation in Africa, South America or Asia (excluding Japan).
- You are based in Africa, South America or Asia (excluding Japan) and not supported by an international organisation.
- You are a community or voluntary group with little or no funding.

Please note that free subscribers will be asked to renew their subscription every 3 years. We request that where possible, organisations share a free subscription or ask their organisation's library or resource centre to subscribe. If you have any questions, please get in touch.

Please pay if...

- You work for – or are supported by – an international organisation.
- You are based in Europe, North America or Australasia (except for community or voluntary groups with little or no funding).

Subscription prices

- We keep our subscription prices low and ask that you pay if you can afford to – and help to support our free subscribers.
- We offer cheaper rates for individuals. Please opt for the personal rate if your subscription is not reimbursed by an organisation.
- Paying an organisation rate? Save 50% if you order 5 or more institutional subscriptions sent to one address.

PRICES:

Individual subscriptions: One year: US\$56 or £30 Two years: US\$94 or £50 Three years: US\$132 or £70

Organisation subscriptions: One year: US\$150 or £80 Two years: US\$262 or £140 Three years: US\$375 or £200

Organisation bulk subscriptions: One year: US\$75 or £40 Two years: US\$132 or £70 Three years: US\$188 or £100

ISSN: 1357 938X. Shipping included in price.

Any questions? Please get in touch with our subscription managers: Research Information Ltd.

RETURN TO: *Participatory Learning and Action*, Research Information Ltd, Grenville Court, Britwell Road, Burnham, Buckinghamshire, SL1 8DF, UK. Tel: +44 1628 600499; Fax: +44 1628 600488. Email: info@researchinformation.co.uk

OR: subscribe securely online: www.researchinformation.co.uk

First Name:

Surname:

Organisation:

Address/PO Box:

Postal Code:

Country:

Tel:

Fax:

Email:

PAYMENT INFORMATION

I would like a free subscription

I enclose an international money order or US\$ cheque drawn on a US bank account to the value of: US\$ _____

I enclose a UK cheque to the value of: Cheques should be made payable to IIED

Please debit my credit card to the value of: VISA Mastercard

Credit Card Number:

Expiry Date:

Holder's Name:

Signature:

Card Address (if different from above):

Please send my organisation an invoice

Please indicate what type of organisation you work for:

Please indicate what your area of work/interests are:

Guidelines for contributors

For a full set of guidelines, visit our website
www.planotes.org

Types of material accepted

- **Articles:** max. 2500 words plus illustrations – see below for guidelines.
- **Feedback:** letters to the editor, or longer pieces (max. 1500 words) which respond in more detail to articles.
- **Tips for trainers:** training exercises, tips on running workshops, reflections on behaviour and attitudes in training, etc., max. 1000 words.
- **In Touch:** short pieces on forthcoming workshops and events, publications, and online resources.

We welcome accounts of recent experiences in the field (or in workshops) and current thinking around participation, and particularly encourage contributions from practitioners in the South. Articles should be co-authored by all those engaged in the research, project, or programme.

In an era in which participatory approaches have often been viewed as a panacea to development problems or where acquiring funds for projects has depended on the use of such methodologies, it is vital to pay attention to the quality of the methods and process of participation. Whilst we will continue to publish experiences of innovation in the field, we would like to emphasise the need to analyse the limitations as well as the successes of participation. *Participatory Learning and Action* is still a series whose focus is methodological, but it is important to give more importance to issues of power in the process and to the impact of participation, asking ourselves who sets the agenda for participatory practice. It is only with critical analysis that we can further develop our thinking around participatory learning and action.

We particularly favour articles which contain one or more of the following elements:

- an **innovative** angle to the concepts of participatory approaches or their application;
- **critical reflections** on the lessons learnt from the author's experiences;
- an attempt to develop **new methods**, or innovative adaptations of existing ones;
- consideration of the **processes** involved in participatory approaches;
- an assessment of the **impacts** of a participatory process;
- potentials and limitations of **scaling up and institutionalising participatory approaches**; and,
- potentials and limitations of **participatory policy-making processes**.

Language and style

Please try to keep contributions clear and accessible. Sentences should be short and simple. Avoid jargon, theoretical terminology, and overly academic language. Explain any specialist terms that you do use and spell out acronyms in full.

Abstracts

Please include a brief abstract with your article (circa. 150–200 words).

References

If references are mentioned, please include details. *Participatory Learning and Action* is intended to be informal, rather than academic, so references should be kept to a minimum.

Photographs and drawings

Please ensure that photos/drawings are scanned at a high enough resolution for print (300 dpi) and include a short caption and credit(s).

Submitting your contribution

Contributions can be sent to: The Editors, *Participatory Learning and Action*, IIED, 80-86 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8NH, UK. Fax: +44 20 7388 2826; Email: pla.notes@iied.org Website: www.planotes.org

Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network

Since June 2002, the IIED Resource Centre for Participatory Learning and Action has been housed by the Institute of Development Studies, UK. Practical information and support on participation in development is also available from the various members of the RCPLA Network.

This initiative is a global network of organisations, committed to information sharing and networking on participatory approaches.

More information, including regular updates on RCPLA activities, can be found in the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*, or by visiting www.rcpla.org, or contacting the network coordinator: Ali Mokhtar, CDS, Near East Foundation, 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, 10th Floor, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +2 2 794 7278; Email: amokhtar@nefdev.org

Participation at IDS

Participatory approaches and methodologies are also a focus for the Participation, Power and Social Change Team at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This group of researchers and practitioners is involved in sharing knowledge, in strengthening capacity to support quality participatory approaches, and in deepening understanding of participatory methods, principles, and ethics. For further information please contact: Jane Stevens, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK. Tel: +44 1273 678690; Fax: +44 1273 621202 Email: J.Stevens@ids.ac.uk Website: www.ids.ac.uk

62



This special issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* reflects on the journey towards participatory approaches in poverty reduction in China. The country has been tremendously successful in poverty reduction in the past, but it still has a large number of people living in poverty. The issue discusses why and how participatory approaches have been introduced, and why these approaches are useful for addressing issues of poverty in China. The articles show how development and poverty approaches continue to evolve in the specific Chinese political context and its ongoing governance changes, and in line with China's unique ability to experiment with and pilot new approaches, pragmatically using international experience. The discussion is relevant and important for the global audience that is trying to understand China's unique approach to development and its implication for global poverty reduction, but it is also relevant to understand how and under what conditions participatory approaches become embedded in specific contexts.

This issue draws on case studies from projects funded by the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development, including the Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP). It also includes other articles which reflect on participation in China, as well as relevant resources and tips for trainers.

Participatory Learning and Action is the world's leading informal journal on participatory approaches and methods. It draws on the expertise of guest editors to provide up-to-the minute accounts of the development and use of participatory methods in specific fields. Since its first issue in 1987, *Participatory Learning and Action* has provided a forum for those engaged in participatory work – community workers, activists, and researchers – to share their experiences, conceptual reflections and methodological innovations with others, providing a genuine 'voice from the field'. It is a vital resource for those working to enhance the participation of ordinary people in local, regional, national, and international decision-making, in both South and North.



ISBN: 978-1-84369-800-5

IIED Order No: 14605IIED



International Institute
for Environment
and Development

80-86 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8NH, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7388 2117
Fax: +44 (0)20 7388 2826
Email: pla.notes@iied.org
Website: www.planotes.org
IIED website: www.iied.org

The International Institute for Environment and Development is a global leader in sustainable development. As an independent international research organisation, we are specialists in linking local to global. In Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South America, the Middle East and the Pacific, we work with some of the world's most vulnerable people to ensure they have a say in the policy arenas that most closely affect them – from village councils to international conventions. Through close collaboration with partners at the grassroots, we make our research and advocacy relevant to their needs and alive to their realities.

