pla notes

participatory learning and action

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Advocacy and citizen participation

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**International
Institute for
Environment and
Development**

Editorial

Welcome to Issue 43 of *PLA Notes*.

Special theme

Although this issue was intended to be a general one, we had an offer of a special theme that was too good to refuse – Advocacy and Citizen Participation. This is an area of work that has become increasingly important for civil society groups as more attention is paid both to popular participation in decision making at all levels and to holding those in power accountable.

The theme is based on a workshop which took place in the USA in November 2001, which brought together 48 activists, development workers, and researchers from 18 countries. The workshop arose from a feeling that advocacy is often viewed as primarily a technical exercise concerned with influencing formal policies and laws, in which all groups have equal opportunity and space to put forward their views and lobby for change. Participants felt that insufficient attention was paid to power dynamics which prevent the voices of certain groups from being heard or which never allow certain issues onto the agenda. They pointed out that some power is visible – for example processes of socialisation that perpetuate exclusion and inequality by making it appear 'natural', as in the case of women and certain racial minorities. The participants believe that advocacy needs to be 'reclaimed' and recognised not just as policy change but also longer-term processes of organising, consciousness-raising, political empowerment, and social transformation, with the aim of creating a more just and equitable society.

The guest editors for this special issue are Jethro Petitt and Beth Harrison of the Participation Group of the Institute of Development Studies, UK, and Valerie Miller, Lisa VeneKlasen and Cindy Clark of Just Associates, USA, a network-based organisation promoting learning and action partnerships for social justice.

Jethro Pettit works with the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex. Previously he was education director and international team leader for World Neighbors, a people-centred development NGO. He has worked on development, social justice and human rights issues in Latin America and Asia with Oxfam America and with the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and has been active in the US and UK on justice, peace and environment issues.

Beth Harrison works in the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies and also teaches English to asylum seekers. She was recently travelling in Canada where she worked in a cultural centre on the Hay River Dene Reserve, Northwest Territories. Previously, she has lived, studied and worked in France and Italy.

Valerie Miller has worked on issues of advocacy, international development, gender, popular education and human rights for over 30 years. Currently co-director of Just Associates, she has worked with many organisations, including UNICEF, the Washington Office on Latin America, the Highlander Center, Oxfam America, the Institute for Development Research, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the Global Women and Politics programme of the Asia Foundation, and Women Law and Development International.

Lisa VeneKlasen is co-director of Just Associates. Until recently she led an advocacy capacity-building programme with the Asia Foundation's Global Women in Politics Programme. Previously, she has worked in many countries with Women, Law and Development International, and lived for six years in Harare, Zimbabwe, where she helped form Women in Law and Development in Africa, a regional network committed to women's rights.

Cindy Clark worked with PARTICIPA, a Chilean NGO, on citizen participation programmes in Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay, and Peru. She is currently an associate of Just Associates, until recently concentrating on the production of the *Action Guide*. She is also Programme Coordinator at Women, Law and Development International where she coordinates a capacity-building programme in women's human rights advocacy.

I would like to thank all the guest editors for their enormous efforts and dedication in bringing together this issue over such as short timescale. Thanks also to IDS for their financial contribution for this issue. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the team at IIED, especially Cristina Zorat and Holly Ashley, for their efforts behind the scenes.

I hope you find the resulting articles as thought-provoking and enlightening as the editorial team have done in reviewing and editing them.

General section

This issue's general section includes three articles on very different themes.

Jane Dodman writes about organisational strengthening programmes in Jamaica which aim to increase the capacity of local community groups to plan and implement their own community projects. In the planning and management module, the participants, all members of community organisations, compared four different methods for determining community priorities and discussed their relative merits as planning tools. The conclusion was that each tool – priority ranking, individual voting, scoring and pairwise ranking – provided for a different form of decision making and that the most appropriate would depend on the context. For example in priority ranking the whole community has to come to a joint decision about the ranking order, which may not be easy if different parts of the community have very different priorities.

Saxena and Pradhan write from Uttah Pradesh about the problem of dependency and erosion of values. In their article they share their experiences with farmers' organisations, using a participatory process which reinforces human values that has helped farmers to keep themselves on the path of self-reliance, and has enabled them to judge and pursue what is in the interest of themselves, their organisations, and society.

Finally, Chimaraoke Izugbara writes about a very different situation in which participatory approaches were used, that of conflict between two communities in Nigeria. The conflict broke out as a team of researchers investigating local knowledge of HIV-AIDS arrived in the community. Izugbara describes the process of facilitating negotiations to resolve the conflict, and draws together lessons for successful mediation, for understanding local traditions and culture, and the behaviour of the mediators.

This issue also includes a feedback section in which readers can challenge, react to or comment on articles and other material in *PLA Notes*. This feedback from Levis Kavagi is a response to an article in *PLA Notes* 40, 'Introducing PRA techniques in the learning of environmental education in Southern Peru' by Sonia Gomez Garcia and Jose Pizarro Neyra. Levis draws on his experience with the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) Environmental and Education Training Programme to develop some of the issues raised by Garcia and Pizarro. He argues that, for environmental education to make a difference, it must be based on practical participatory activities to solve the real problems of the school and surrounding communities from which pupils are drawn.

Regular features

This issue does not include the usual 'Tips for Trainers' article. Instead, we have added four extracts from Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller's new book, *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation* (World Neighbors, Oklahoma City, OK, 2002) in the special themed section. The four articles – (i) The advocacy debate, (ii) Causes, consequences, and solutions, (iii) Assessing entry points, and (iv) Power and empowerment – present innovative tips for trainers and facilitators of participatory advocacy.

Other regular features of *PLA Notes* are included as usual. These consist of the Resources section containing information about books, websites, and workshops, including those related to participatory advocacy, and the RCPLA pages.

I hope you enjoy the issue. As ever, your feedback and comments are very welcome.

Angela Milligan, Editor

Overview – making change happen: advocacy and citizen participation

Cindy Clark, Beth Harrison, Valerie Miller, Jethro Pettit and Lisa VeneKlasen

Advocacy and citizen participation are now widely accepted by civil society, donor and government institutions as means of ensuring greater transparency and accountability. Yet in practice, much of what is done in the name of both advocacy and participation is quite shallow. Advocacy is often seen as a systematic and technical exercise that assumes an open and pluralist environment relatively devoid of conflict, risk, and power abuses. Citizen participation, likewise, is regularly woven into existing procedures and policy making as a limited form of public consultation. In both cases, there has been a tendency to reinforce, rather than change, the models of development and governance advanced by the International Financial Institutions, donor agencies, or unresponsive state elites.

At the same time, the world is full of creative advocacy and citizen participation initiatives that are contributing to profound processes of change. This issue of *PLA Notes* is an effort to document and share such examples from Asia, Africa and the Americas. The spark for this collection came from a workshop held in November 2001, involving diverse activists and thinkers from around the world with a shared commitment to equity and social justice. The workshop's goal was, in essence, to *reclaim* advocacy and citizen participation as deeper, longer-term processes of organising, consciousness raising, political empowerment, and social transformation.

The workshop participants were concerned, foremost, with examining what we really mean by participatory advocacy. How does it differ from mainstream concepts? How is it linked with other strategies and processes of social change? What key elements of citizen education, training and organising are involved? What competencies and skills are required? What challenges and dilemmas are encountered? How do we handle issues of representation and accountability in advocacy movements? What are the strategic entry points for participatory advocacy (on local, national, global levels)? Where should we be working to deepen citizen participation, and where should we be wary of the dangers of misuse and cooptation? How do we measure success and failure?

Participants explored these questions through rich and varied exchanges over four days. Throughout, there was a conscious effort to examine the dynamics of *power* and *conflict* that arise in advocacy and citizen participation efforts. How do we understand and confront power relations in participatory advocacy? What are the dynamics of including the excluded? How do we embrace and understand conflict as a critical part of political change? How can participatory advocacy build and use alternative forms of power?

In response to these questions, participants shared case studies, strategies, methods, and personal experiences, analysing them for their theoretical lessons and practical insights. This issue of *PLA Notes* presents this shared learning, some written by workshop participants and others submitted afterwards by co-workers. The articles are enriched by excerpts from a recently published field guide entitled *A New Weave of Power, People, and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation*, written by two of the workshop's facilitators, Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller (see In-Touch section in this issue for publication details).

Taken together, these case studies, articles, and practical tools underscore important lessons for all of us engaging in citizen participation and advocacy work. While all of the cases reveal the nuances of political process and the determination of citizens to influence decisions that affect their lives, they also affirm that advocacy and citizen participation strategies do not come in a one-size-fits-all formula. Each context presents a unique set of actors, opportunities, risks, and challenges for citizens to navigate for change.

Overview of this issue of *PLA Notes*

Throughout this issue, we have placed a selection of key frameworks and examples from the *Action Guide* that can help advocates navigate the complexities of social change, power, and empowerment. The first excerpt, 'The advocacy debate', is a brief advocacy story that vividly spells out the need to understand advocacy not only in terms of policy changes but also as changes in structures, values and people. The second, 'Causes, consequences and solutions' is a useful planning framework that helps groups dissect problems in order to develop targeted organising and policy responses that address root causes. The third, 'Assessing entry points' highlights some key issues that can help advocates determine whether an

opportunity to engage with decision makers is truly a meaningful chance for influence and change. The final selection is a discussion about levels of power and processes of empowerment, and uses two charts – 'Chaz' and 'Power, political participation and social change' – to explore both practical and theoretical issues and to reflect key lessons from gender work.

Definitions of advocacy abound. As pointed out in the *Action Guide*, these varying definitions 'reflect different assumptions about how politics and power operate, and how change happens.' John Samuel, in the opening article, provides a useful introduction to the concept of participatory or people-centred advocacy that emphasises the direct role marginalised groups must play if equitable power relations and advocacy victories are to be sustained. He highlights the main differences between advocacy viewed as a systemic process of policy change, and advocacy understood as a process of social transformation. The latter, as many of these articles illustrate, involves long-term efforts to re-shape societal attitudes, values, and power relations. Samuel identifies key elements of this approach that resonate throughout the case studies, such as the role of a robust and culturally sensitive approach to communication and popular education; the importance of media advocacy; the need to build strong alliances and networks; and the pivotal issue of power relations.

> *Advocacy is not just about getting to the table with a new set of interests, it's about changing the size and configuration of the table to accommodate a whole new set of actors. Effective advocacy challenges imbalances of power and changes thinking.*
> VeneKlasen, L. with Miller, V. (2002) *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation*, World Neighbors

South Asia

Two case studies from India, provided by activists working with ActionAid, explore the process of mobilising citizen action around the right to information. Backed by India's 93rd Constitutional amendment guaranteeing the public's right to information, there have been many efforts to expose corruption and injustice, and to make government and businesses more accountable. Mohammed Asif and his colleagues document a recent experience with a participatory social audit carried out with highly marginalised villages in Orissa suffering under a less-than-transparent *panchayat* (local government). A campaign involving participatory action research, popular education, training and alliances among people's organisations, NGOs, sympathetic government officials and the media, led to exposure and prosecution of corrupt *panchayat* officials.

Arundhuti Roy Choudhury charts the course of a broader advocacy initiative to curb the misuse of public grain and food-for-work resources, much of which do not reach the poor and hungry for whom they are intended. Using a combination of direct citizen advocacy and legal action, public interest litigation was filed in Rajasthan naming 14 Indian states with high inefficiencies in public food distribution. A successful Supreme Court ruling was obtained, and its implementation is now being monitored by a broad-based national campaign. These Indian examples demonstrate the potential of advocacy rooted in the power of *knowledge* and *information*; and show how participatory research, direct advocacy and legal action can use information as a lever for change. Local people's organisations, NGOs and pressure groups played important roles in both cases, as did linkages with allies in government, the media, and various professions.

Two case studies from Pakistan explore national-level advocacy efforts to open up space for greater participation of civil society and citizens in governance. In a context of entrenched military and authoritarian rule, Pakistani activists have taken steps to use the available legal and political processes to nurture democratic participation. Irfan Mufti describes the creative use of legislative advocacy to protect the rights of civil society organisations. Threatened with a proposed law that would limit their freedoms of association, expression and assembly, a core group of NGOs formed a national coalition to campaign against the law and to draft alternative legislation. The Pakistani NGO Forum (PNF) now represents more than 3500 organisations, and plays a pro-active role in defining the code of conduct and standards of accountability for NGOs. Its success in blocking draconian laws was due to a well-crafted and representative coalition, and to strategic alliances with the wider civil society, sympathetic politicians, and the media.

Rashida Dohad charts the story of another nation-wide advocacy effort in Pakistan, this time building on political space opened up by the government's devolution measures. The 'People's Assemblies' process was initiated in 1998 to provide a platform for normally excluded voices to debate and to be heard in shaping politics and decision making. Again taken forward by a nation-wide coalition of civil society organisations, a process of open debate on critical issues of governance was held in 40 locations nationwide. While far from perfect, the people's assemblies helped to revitalise a culture of debate, analysis, and popular participation in politics, and were remarkable for their creative efforts to ensure that women could participate – in one instance from behind a curtain.

Central America

Guatemala, like Pakistan, is attempting to emerge from an authoritarian past. But Paty Ardon provides a far less optimistic assessment of the possibilities of meaningful 'participation' in a context of extreme inequality and ethnic diversity. After decades of civil war, violence, and military rule the idea was to hold a 'national consultation' to reform the constitution, as a means of implementing the country's recent peace accords. This effort was

severely hampered, however, by Guatemala's immense social, economic, cultural, and linguistic differences, and by the limited rights and literacy of indigenous people. Ardon describes a flawed process in which the national referendum process was steered by political and economic elites, all in the name of participation. She highlights the weakness of a 'participatory' policy process that does NOT include strong elements of popular education, communication, and consciousness raising, and that fails to create an agenda rooted in public awareness, common demands, and organised political power.

East Africa

As participation is 'mainstreamed' by governments, often under pressure from bilateral donors and from the International Financial Institutions, new arenas of consultation have arisen with mixed results. The World Bank's requirement that countries develop Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) with broad 'stakeholder' participation has become a new form of conditionality for loans, with uncertain outcomes for marginalised people. Daoud Tari Abkula describes the experience of pastoralists in Kenya in their efforts to express their needs in the crafting of Kenya's PRSP. Pastoralists make up a fourth of the country's population, and are among the poorest, with little political influence. Yet they have strong traditional networks, and have mobilised these for a widespread and participatory needs assessment. Through advocacy and negotiation, many pastoralist priorities were ultimately reflected in the PRSP, which was approved and commended. Yet the World Bank never released its loans because other corruption issues were not being addressed. Abkula draws important lessons from both the hope and disappointment of pastoralist people as they engaged in this formal process of participation.

Southeast Asia

Indonesia is in a process of moving from authoritarian to democratic rule, and to more decentralised forms of governance. Nani Zulminarni sheds light on efforts to open space for women's participation in politics through the work of PPSW, a Jakarta-based women's NGO. She reveals the painstaking and long-term process that is required to strengthen women politically: this is the sort of advocacy that involves education, consciousness raising, and empowerment at the most basic and individual level. In effect, PPSW's strategies help women to change the way they think about themselves, and to analyse and understand gender relations at all levels of society from the household to national government. This critical awareness provides a foundation for organising, political education, and leadership; which in turn enables grassroots advocacy on women's issues. This transformative process demonstrates the way in which social values and attitudes must shift in order to confront 'invisible' power.

North America

Advocacy has a long and rich tradition in the United States, and US models and concepts of legislative advocacy have often been exported in a somewhat simplified pluralist form, with little effort to adjust them to the stark realities of political power, conflict, and risk in other countries. In reality, many US politics and citizen advocacy campaigns have also been messy and risk-prone, and have required multiple strategies to confront very real imbalances in power. Two case studies of US advocacy campaigns are included here. Valerie Miller describes a 15-year battle by a poor rural community to stop industrial pollution of their water supply, and reveals the multiple strategies used by the people of Yellow Creek to hold powerful government and corporate interests accountable. As in India, key elements of success included the uses of participatory research (including scientific research), freedom of information provisions, and the legal system, as well as strategic alliances and genuine partnerships with supportive and respectful NGOs.

David Cohen analyses a well-known but little-understood example of citizen advocacy in the US: the popular movement to stop the Vietnam War. Like Miller and many other authors in this issue, he shows that multiple strategies are often needed to create change. 'Protest and electoral politics alone are never enough,' Cohen concludes. 'Ongoing public education, organising and a variety of congressional actions were also key in building the force to end the war.' It was a mixture of street protests and political pragmatism – including alliances and deals with key politicians – that worked in the end.

Measuring and monitoring advocacy

NGOs and donors are increasingly putting their time, efforts and resources into citizen participation and advocacy efforts – recognising that ultimately it is political change, rather than projects, that will reduce poverty. As advocacy emerges as a major sector of programming – and funding – so too has the challenge of measuring and evaluating the impact of advocacy efforts. Jenny Chapman outlines ActionAid's 'work in progress' in exploring these monitoring and evaluation issues, and shares a useful framework for looking at possible outcomes and impacts of advocacy work. She explores some of the trade-offs inherent in advocacy work, where for example investment in capacities for 'professional' advocacy (to achieve quick policy results) may undermine efforts to enhance the direct voices and representation of marginalised people. There is also the risk that smaller civil society groups with limited resources may get 'squeezed out' of debates as larger organisations dominate advocacy campaigns. Chapman urges greater attention to the power dynamics within and among civil society groups, in order to safeguard transparency, legitimacy, representation, and participation in decision making.

Lessons learned

A number of important insights and lessons emerge from these examples of advocacy and citizen participation, and from the methods and strategies in the *Action Guide*. These insights were captured succinctly by the *Making Change Happen* workshop's participants in their concluding statement, part of which we include here:

- *Social transformation.* Advocacy for policy change is often disconnected from longer-term efforts for social and economic transformation. As a result, many new policies fail to be implemented and the impact on exclusion and poverty remains slight. For sustainable results, efforts to influence policies should be more closely connected to social change movements that build critical awareness, understandings of basic human rights and long-term visions of social change among citizens.

- *Understanding power.* There is a need to re-inject understandings of power and politics in mainstream advocacy work. Power must be addressed in its many dimensions, in its visible and hidden forms, and in its social and ideological facets, including divisions of class, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, age, and gender that lead to extremism and exclusion.

- *Strengthening capacities.* The capacity of civil society groups to engage in advocacy needs to be strengthened, including the ability to assess power and to decide whether, how and when to engage in the opportunities that arise for participation and engagement. In human rights work, there is a need to build the direct advocacy of marginalised groups, and to protect their rights to participate, to dissent, and to organise.

- *Active citizenship.* Active citizenship can only be claimed and defined by people as 'makers and shapers' of rights through their own processes of constituency building, advocacy, and change. The legal framework for citizen rights is important, but is not sufficient to ensure democratic participation. We are concerned that definitions of citizenship are often being imposed externally, both by states and by transnational institutions of power.

- *Accountable states.* In addition to active, democratic citizenship there is a need for effective, accountable, and proactive states that can advance and uphold social justice and equity goals. Such states must be effectively and continuously accountable to poor and excluded people, while providing transparent legal and administrative governance. The challenge of the politics of the new century is to build strong, responsive states combined with strong, responsive civil societies.

- *Rethinking global security.* In the aftermath of 11 September, global security has been defined increasingly as a political-military challenge, rather than one of ensuring basic economic needs and human rights. Yet it is clear that poverty, discrimination, and repression fuel cycles of violence and of fundamentalism. In some parts of the world, including the US, space for citizen expression and dissent appears to be narrowing. Yet debate about these issues is crucial to finding lasting solutions and is at the heart of citizenship. We need a vision of global security founded upon increasing equality and justice in the world, and upon the free and active involvement of all people in decisions which affect their lives.

Ways forward

Participants in the *Making Change Happen* workshop resolved to take action to address these diverse challenges. We now invite readers of this special issue of *PLA Notes* to reflect upon ways to deepen and strengthen commitment to more meaningful advocacy and citizen participation. We offer five priority areas of action identified in the workshop:

1. The development of *clear guidelines for engagement*. Using such guidelines, citizens and civil society groups can better decide when, whether, and how to engage in policy processes. To ensure accountability, we need to establish engagement strategies informed by our mandate and principles that include specifics on negotiable and non-negotiable items. We need to assess the opportunity costs for participation, and to develop mechanisms of validation, communication, and accountability.

2. Strategies which *link policy change efforts to strategies of social and economic transformation*. To be effective in reducing exclusion, poverty, and injustice, policy changes need to be reinforced by long-term social change efforts that challenge underlying power relations and that empower and strengthen marginalised groups within society. Such links will go a long way towards improving accountability and reducing the 'implementation gap'.

3. Greater *capacity building for civil society to engage in advocacy*. Stronger capacities are needed for power and risk analysis; for self-reflection; for accountability and representation; and for engagement, negotiation and collaboration with donors, governments, and the private sector. Capacities are also needed for developing longer-term visions and strategies in which advocacy is linked to wider empowerment objectives.

4. Broader ways of *defining and assessing success* in advocacy and citizen participation. Progress is often measured according to narrow, quantitative, and externally defined indicators. Systematic efforts are needed to develop alternative tools and methods which enable people to define their own indicators of success and to learn from their experience.

5. Attention to issues around *representation, legitimacy, and identity*. Both within organisations and groups, and across levels of advocacy activity, there is a need for greater accountability with regard to citizen voice. Particularly important is to address who legitimately speaks for whom at local, national, and global levels, and how those voices are held accountable.

In pursuing these issues there is a need for continued processes of documentation, analysis, and learning about effective strategies of advocacy and citizen participation. Similarly, there is a need to create and strengthen networks and linkages for sharing experiences and for mutual support, and to engage in dialogue in order to broaden definitions and understandings of advocacy, citizen participation, power, and social change. We invite you to join us in this endeavor to 'make change happen,' and to contact the authors and editors with your own views, case studies, and experiences of advocacy.

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Note and acknowledgments

Recommended resources

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What is people-centred advocacy?

2

John Samuel

We have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and non violent pressure… Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.

Martin Luther King

Be the Change you want.

Mahatma Gandhi

Advocacy means amplifying the voice, but the fundamental question facing activists is whose voice and for what purpose. Across the world large numbers of people are marginalised and unheard in the corridors of power. Advocacy can work to amplify their voices, however, this aspect of advocacy is often less understood or put into practice. Advocacy is more often perceived as a systematic process of influencing public policies. Yet, while policy change is *necessary,* it is *not sufficient* to transform the structures, attitudes, and values that are at the root of societal inequities and injustice. Instead a more people-centred approach focused on social transformation is needed.

Characteristics of people-centred advocacy

People-centred advocacy is a set of organised actions aimed at influencing public policies, societal attitudes, and socio-political processes that enable and empower the marginalised to speak for themselves. Its purpose is social transformation through the realisation of human rights: civil, political, economic, social, and cultural. People-centred advocacy is by the people, of the people, and for the people. Hence, it is the spirit of democracy that drives the very idea of people-centred advocacy.

A 'people-centred' approach acknowledges the critical role of citizens. However, it seeks to go beyond the framework of a 'State-Citizen' axis to the arena of the people that include both citizens as well as disenfranchised people not recognised by the state as citizens. That is why the term people-centred, instead of citizen-centred is preferred. As Mikhail Bakumin pointed out 'No state, however democratic… is capable of giving the people what they need: the free organisation of their own interest from below upward, without any interference, tutelage or coercion from above. …no state… in essence represents anything but government… by an educated, and thereby privileged minority which supposedly understand the real interest of the people better than people themselves.'[1] Hence, people-centred advocacy is about mobilising *the politics of the people* to ensure that the *politics of the state* is accountable, transparent, ethical, and democratic. It is a mode of social and political action.

Ethical choices

In people-centred advocacy *being* is as important as *becoming.*

- Unless one believes in a cause, one cannot advocate for that particular cause. Integrity and legitimacy of advocates are what provide moral force to advocacy. Hence, it seeks to bridge the gap between the words and the deeds; theory and practice; rhetoric and real life experience. It stresses that unless you challenge and change yourself, you cannot change others.

- People-centred advocacy stresses the *compatibility of means and ends*. Unjust means can never be used for a just end. In this sense, people-centred advocacy seeks to change unjust power relations through non-violent direct action.

Rights-based approach

People-centred advocacy encompasses a rights-based approach to social change and transformation.

- People are not passive beneficiaries or charity seekers of the state or government. The state's political and moral responsibility is to guarantee all human rights to all human beings; particularly the right to live with dignity. Hence people have a right to demand that the state ensures equitable social change and distributive justice.

- Citizens are the owners of the state. Hence, the state should be transparent and accountable to citizens and defend human rights. People-centred advocacy

[1] M. Bakumin (1873) *Statism and Anarchy*, translated and edited by Marshel S. Shatz, Cambridge University Press, 1990. p. 24.

mobilises people and civil society against societal violations of human rights.

- It seeks to bridge the gap between micro-level activism and macro-level policy change. It stresses a bottom-up approach to social change rather than a top-down approach through macro-level policy change. It seeks to strengthen people's participation in the process of policy making and implementation.

Political perspective

- People-centred advocacy seeks to go beyond the idea of *advocating on behalf* of the marginalised to the practice of enabling and empowering the *marginalised to speak for themselves*.

- A value-driven process, it works to challenge and change unjust and unequal power relations, e.g. patriarchy at every level of society; from private to public, from family to governance. Values of social justice and human rights are at its core.

- It seeks to go beyond a state-centred approach to social change and politics to one shaped and led by the people. Grounded in the right to democratic dissent, it also includes the responsibility to work for just and viable political and policy alternatives.

Integrating principles

The three integrating principles of people-centred approaches are: *participation, communication and legitimacy*. They integrate its politics and ethics as well as the various arenas of advocacy.

Participation

Participation is not a mere strategy to manufacture consent, manipulate consensus or extract cheap labour. Participation is a principle based on an *inclusive* moral choice; participation means sharing power, legitimacy, freedom, responsibilities, and accountability. Participation is both a principle and means to include as many people as possible in the process of social change. Built on a deep respect for plurality, tolerance, and dissent, it also involves an ability to understand and appreciate differences. Transparency is a pre-requisite for true participation. In people-centred advocacy, participation is a crucial means to initiate, inform, and inspire change in all arenas of advocacy.

A deep sense of participation and communication help promote solidarity. Strong social movements sprout from a cause and identity common to large numbers of people sharing a vision and passion for change.

Communication

Advocacy is a communicative act and a set of actions that involves communications designed to promote social action. Community, collectivism, and communication are closely interwoven. The process of advocacy involves

different elements. These include: *Communicate to Convince; Convince to Change; Change to Commit; and Commit to Convert to the cause.*

Communication is not merely the use of language. It is an attitude – a willingness to share; to learn; to reach out; and to speak. The clarity of the message is as important as the choice of medium. An effective communication strategy involves the creative use of symbols, language, information, knowledge, poetry, prose, and politics. The commitment of the communicator is as important as the message. Such a process involves learning from people, sharing with them, and inspiring and being inspired by them. Advocacy communication needs to be consistent, continuous, creative, compelling, and convincing.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is not merely about legality; it is both about ethics and politics. Legitimacy is not something one assumes, but something one acquires. Connected to the perception of power, legitimacy is derived over a period of time through a series of actions. It is the sense of deep commitment, accountability, communicability, and action that help to derive legitimacy. It is both relative and dynamic, and fosters credibility. Each arena of advocacy demands a particular type of legitimacy.

Arenas of people-centred advocacy

Defining the arenas of people-centred advocacy helps clarify the roles and strategies of different set of actors in bringing about social change. As Figure I shows, there are four arenas of people-centred advocacy – a) People b) Public c) Network/Alliance, and d) Decision-makers – that are linked to each other and overlap at certain points.

People

Key to the process is the arena of *people*:

- those who are directly affected by an issue;
- those with whom an organisation or movement is directly working; and,
- those who identify with a particular cause or issue.

Advocacy work in this arena involves educating people on an issue, mobilising people around an issue, and organising a particular group or community for long-term social transformation. Mobilisation is a continuous process of interaction, learning, critical awareness, and collective action. It needs to educate, enable, and empower the people. Such a process needs a clear political perspective and a long-term strategy for communication and participation.

Public

'The Public' is one of the most used yet least understood terms. People-centred advocacy defines the public principally as the middle class, opinion makers, intellectuals, and media. Whether as perpetuators or

Figure 1 Arenas of people-centred advocacy
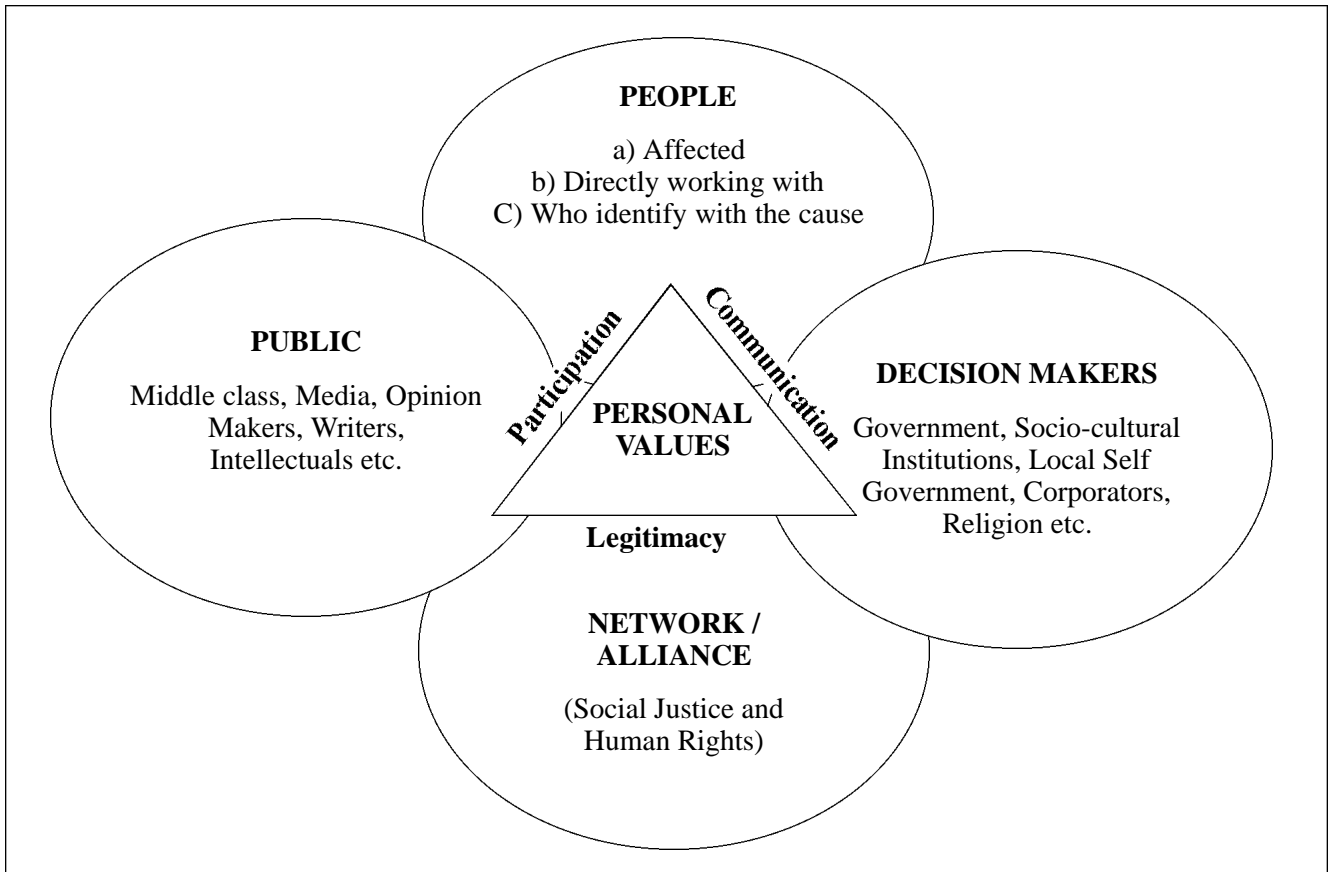
challengers of the status quo, they play a substantial role in shaping the political agenda and have the means to amplify the voice of the voiceless. To be effective, advocacy needs to tap a critical mass of the public.

Media Advocacy is the strategic use of communication and mass media to bring an issue into the public arena and the political discourse. It has two aspects:

• creating news through building collective action; and,
• articulating views through the media (see Box 1).

Knowledge-based activism is an important factor that influences the public. In the information age, it is not only the emotional appeal of an issue that matters, but the overall rationale based on a knowledge-based argument that makes a decisive impact.

Networking and alliance

The arena of networking and alliance is important for sharing resources, coordinating multiple strategies, and involving a large number of actors in advocacy. Networking widens the outreach and helps to build up a multiplier effect in terms of impact and public discourse. Advocacy seeks to integrate power of knowledge and the power of networking. Advocacy is also a process of negotiating with various institutions, including institutions of governance. Such a process requires long-term commitment and optimal institutional and financial

Box 1

Both **poetry and politics** can play a role in developing communication strategies. In a campaign against a Hydroelectric project in Silent Valley, a virgin forest in Kerala India, our experience validates the power of poetry in influencing the public. The Silent Valley campaign (1978-83) was basically meant to protect bio-diversity and to raise critical questions about the nature of development. No community was to be displaced by the project. The entire media, political establishment, and trade unions were for the hydroelectric project. Yet over a period of time four poets and five poems changed the public mood and political context. The poems caught the imagination of the young people, and many were mobilised through the People's Science Movement. Media could not afford to ignore the concerns of such a large number of middle class youth nor the opinion of poets, writers, and intellectuals. This created one of the first public discourses on the environment and sustainable development in India during the late seventies and early eighties. Advocacy strategies focused on the public arena can influence all other arenas substantially.

resources. Networking is an important means to synergise the strengths of both institutions and individuals that identify with the advocacy cause. Clarity of goals, compatibility of perspective, and convergence of interest are crucial for any sustainable networking. It seeks to bridge the gap between micro-level activism and macro-level policy initiative, developing multiple voices and diverse efforts in favour of the advocacy cause.

Decision makers

The decision makers are those who have authority to make decisions and influence power relationships. This includes not only state policies, but also those who have the power to make decision in socio-cultural institutions, corporations, religious institutions, etc. There are multiple arenas of power and institutions that influence public policies and social attitudes. For instance, many of the religious institutions and practices perpetuate discrimination on the basis of gender and cast.

Lobbying is a strategic process of convincing those in the corridors of power to make decisions or to exert their influence in favour of an advocacy cause. It is a rational process of making a convincing argument, using information and knowledge. However, the real bargaining power of a lobbyist comes from people, the public, as well as the process of networking. A people-centred perspective insists that lobbyists should be grounded in real life experience, and have an organic relationship with grassroots movements and the credibility and legitimacy that comes from that relationship.

Power, politics, and policy

Public policy is a function of the dominant politics. Politics is a dominant set of power relationships, so there is a need to understand the link between public policies and political process on the one hand; and political process and power relationship within the society on the other hand. An issue needs to be framed the way people feel and perceive it. An issue is a social, economic or political concern or phenomenon, which affects a large number of people over a long period of time. It needs to be understood in terms of power relationships within the society, politics of the state, and policy priorities.

One of the key problems in most of the countries in the Global South is the increasing gap between policy rhetoric and real implementation. Radical sounding language is increasingly used to gloss over deprivation, injustice, and inequality. Through the co-option of language, symbols, and institutions that claim to represent civil society and the marginalised, decision makers tend to create more and more **policy mirage.** Policy mirage is a public policy statement, which articulates a lofty vision and principles for change, without any clear programme to move toward that vision and without any budgetary allocation to implement the policy. Such policy mirages create illusions of change while perpetuating the status quo. Hence, there is a need to understand and change a public policy in terms of policy direction, relevant legislation, accompanying programme, implementing mechanisms, and most importantly, financial allocation.

People-centred advocacy always considers every aspect of policy, process, and negotiation in terms of the real impact it can bring to the lives of the poorest. Every action needs

to be inspired and informed by Mahatma Gandhi's talisman:

I will give you a talisman… Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.

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The advocacy debate: changing policy, changing people

3

Lisa VeneKlasen with Valerie Miller

Why will not policy change in itself bring about social change? Policy change can set up new rules of engagement, shift priorities, and resources, or codify rights and commitments. This is significant, but advocacy concerned with social justice, basic rights, and participation has to also address values and behaviour that do not change simply because law changes. Changing policy is about changing people – in civil society, government, and in the private sector. Unless strategies are aimed at people explicitly, political decisions will often not be realised on the ground. The case from Zimbabwe in Box 1 below may help groups understand the importance of the different dimensions of advocacy strategies.

The following questions provide some ideas on how to conduct discussion on this case as it relates to policy and social change.

- What does this story tell us about social values and legal change?
- What does this story tell us about the impact of legal change on the public? On custom and cultural beliefs?
- What alternative legal reform strategy might lessen the possibility of backlash and resistance?

Box 1 The Legal Age of Majority Act, Zimbabwe

In the early 1980s, soon after the Rhodesian apartheid state was dismantled, the new government of Zimbabwe embarked on a number of important legal and policy changes. Influenced by leading human rights lawyers, the country passed the Legal Age of Majority Act which made all women legal adults at the age of 18. Prior to that time, women were perpetual legal minors, unable to have a bank account, get a licence, have custody of their children, or make any other legal decision without approval from their husbands or fathers.

The passing of the Act was mired in controversy. When the news of the new law reached villages, especially in rural areas, many men and women rejected it outright. Many mothers (and fathers) were angry because the law meant their daughters could get married at 18, with or without their permission, and whether or not *lobola* (brideprice) was paid to the girl's family. There was very little public consultation about the Act, outside of the main urban areas, before it was passed. Rural people felt this was yet another imposition from city folk who did not respect custom and family. Few people – women particularly – understood the law's benefits.

Part of the reason the Act was passed quickly was that the party in power wanted to expand the number of voters, including women and men between the ages of 18 and 21, as the law also previously made men legal majors only at 21. Unfortunately, the opposition to the new law deepened resistance by women and men to all subsequent women's legal rights-related reforms. This became a serious obstacle to further progress on women's rights for the following two decades. Some people said that the law aggravated the generation gap among women, and contributed to conflicts within families. Others argued that these tensions were inevitable, and that legal change was needed sooner rather than later for such an urgent human rights matter.

Samajik Samikhya: a social audit process in a *panchayat* in Orissa

4

ActionAid India, Bolangir Team

Accountability and transparency are the buzz words of development today. However, in many developing countries, where pro-people development is still largely planned and implemented by the state and its bureaucracy, their realisation is a major challenge. One important development in this context has been the use of social audits.

A social audit is a process in which details of the resources, both financial and non-financial, used by public agencies for development initiatives are shared with the people, often through a public platform.

Social audits allow people to enforce accountability and transparency, providing the ultimate users of services and projects with an opportunity to scrutinise development initiatives. It is a form of citizen advocacy based on the power of knowledge and is grounded in the right to information.

The right to information movement in India, particularly the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti (MKSS) has lobbied the state for more than a decade to make social audit of all state-sponsored development a statutory requirement. In 1993, with the adoption of the 93rd Constitutional Amendment by the government, it has become mandatory. Village communities are now empowered to conduct social audits of all development work in their respective villages and the concerned authorities are duty bound to facilitate them. However, because of lack of clarity on how to conduct a social audit, most citizens in rural India are unable to effectively exercise their powers.

This article presents a unique initiative by the people and activists in one of India's village clusters to evolve a model social audit process. Locally called the *Samajik Samikhya,* it involved the active participation of nearly 100 social activists from across the country and more than 3000 local villagers.

The location

Jharnipalli is a *gram panchayat* (GP – a local self-government unit in India) consisting of nine villages, located in Bolangir district in the State of Orissa, Eastern India. Bolangir is infamous for its recurring drought and mass starvation, and high levels of distress migration are witnessed year after year.

Villagers in Jharnapalli say that they have been raising their voice against corruption in the GP for many years but officials have never acted. Two s*arpanchs* (head of the GP) have been dismissed/suspended in the past, but on the ground that they had more than two children rather than because of corruption.

In April 2001, ActionAid India held a Training of Trainers (TOT) in Balangir and the idea of a social audit was discussed. Thus started the process for the first pilot social audit in Jharnipalli.

The process

Preliminary rounds of discussion with local activists in Jharnipalli revealed that people wanted a social audit primarily because they wanted to know the exact reasons for the dismissal of the two s*arpanchs*. Local community-based organisations (CBO), particularly the Gayatri club and a CBO-NGO network, Collective Action for Drought Mitigation through Community Mobilisation (CADMB), were supportive, as was the administration at the district level, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and the MKSS.

As a first step, a street play (*geeti natya)* was enacted by some villagers and CBO members to inform people about the right to information through social audit and that such an audit was to be held in their villages. Songs were composed for this purpose and performances arranged in all the villages. The awareness-raising process started in the month of May and continued until the day before the audit. Two rounds of awareness programmes (street plays) were held in each of the nine villages to convince people of the importance of the audit. Periodic visits by teams from CADMB also helped to sensitise and mobilise the villagers.

Information collection

Soon after the decision to hold a social audit was taken, an introduction letter and request for information was circulated to all government offices and NGOs working in the nine villages. As expected, there was reluctance by many to cooperate. However, with the District Collector backing the process it was difficult for officials to withhold information. The team started collecting information related to various works in the villages completed during the past three years, namely 1998–99, 1999–2000, and 2000–01.

Information was collected relating to various development works and this continued until the very day of the audit. Access to information related to many development initiatives such as the public distribution system (PDS), non-timber forest produce (NTFP) such as Tendu leaves, Social Forestry and DPEP, was refused, and within the records made available, there were gaps. Measurement books were not available for engineering works, and utilisation certificates were missing for all the works, although two days before the social audit a few of these became available.

Once collected, all the information and records had to be sorted and filed village-wise. Each public work had a separate file created, with all papers related to the work put together, and the file cover containing a top sheet with all details. Documents inside usually included sanction letters, resolutions, recommendations of the GP, work orders to contractors, forms of undertaking by the contractor, and in some cases, muster rolls, running account bills and vouchers, and estimates of the works.

Information analysis

The next step in the process was to analyse the information available. For instance, muster rolls which come as records of a week's work, or a fortnight's work, had to be converted into worker-wise records so that verification with individual workers was feasible. Similarly, records were studied for violation of norms and guidelines for minimum and equal wages, execution of works by contractors (banned by a Ministry's Order), breaching of estimates, and so on. The team also converted technical data into information that could be easily triangulated with the villagers, for example, cubic meters of measurement of concrete were converted into equivalent number of tractor trips.

The next stage was to visit the villages. A team of volunteers from various organisations and villages stayed in each village for four days in order to:

• Assess the extent and instances of corruption, by sharing information with the villagers, by physically verifying whether works had taken place, and by cross-

Volunteers organising information from the government

Analysing the information received

checking muster rolls, bills and vouchers with villagers.
• Instil confidence in people to participate actively in the audit process, and to activate the village-level committees set up for the purpose.
• Focus on the poorest in the villages, and assess the support reaching them or not reaching them (social security, PDS, employment and livelihood security, etc.).

All the team members had attended a pilot exercise so that they were familiar with the process. A 'roving team' of three was formed to oversee and coordinate the village-level exercise.

Often, villagers asked questions such as, 'What if no action is taken after the social audit – after we gather enough courage and confidence to point out discrepancies in the social audit meeting. Wouldn't the culprits of corruption become stronger than ever?'. The villagers also wanted to know why there was no information or records from the NTFP Department, when it was such an important source of livelihood for the poor in these villages. They were vigilant about overseeing the process – when one of the team had not prepared a re-tabulated muster roll in the case of earth works in one village taken up by Gayatri Club, one of the partners in the social audit, some of the villagers pointed out that we were being 'partial' in our work.

During this period, a volunteer engineer checked the physical works that had been claimed in the past three years, and gave his own assessment of the expenditure incurred and of deviations from the plans. A chartered accountant studied the accounts of the GP to check the entries as well as to rearrange the data.

The last few days

Two days before the social audit, the District Collector visited the 'camp' where he was appraised about the preparations for the audit. The Collector assured all the village representatives who had gathered to hear from him, that action would definitely follow the audit, and anyone found guilty would be punished. This helped in instilling a good deal of confidence in all the sceptics.

After sitting with the people for a couple of hours the collector went to the *panchayat* office where he made available all relevant, available *panchayat* records (to the

social audit team) – information that was so far unavailable and inaccessible. After himself going through the *panchayat* records such as the cashbook, the collector found many irregularities on the basis of which he issued a warning to the *panchayat* secretary and sealed the GP office. This news spread to all the villages and gave further confidence to people who wanted to point out irregularities.

The last three days saw intense activity in the villages. A last round of publicity was carried out. A vehicle equipped with a public address system went into all the villages and invited people to take part in the audit process, and at the Jharnipalli weekly market a play was staged and pamphlets distributed. Finally, together with the local people's organisations representatives, an MKSS team went into the three most 'difficult' villages, from which most of the important GP officials came, and encouraged greater participation and involvement.

A day before the audit a preparatory meeting with all the teams was held to finalise the schedule for the social audit day. A sequence of presentations was agreed upon with the aim of breaking the ice as well as exposing trends of corruption in the GP. The day before the audit was also spent in preparing charts presenting the audit findings in the local language.

The day of the social audit

The audit formally began at around 10am on the 30 October 2001. Around 2500 people mostly belonging to the villages under Jharnipalli GP and other parts of Bolangir, gathered to participate in the first opportunity they had ever had of holding people in power accountable for their actions. It started with group songs by local people's organisation and MKSS members. People were then given time to read the visual presentations. Some asked for clarifications on information pertaining to their village, and the records were checked again.

The teams from each village and village presenter then made presentations about their findings, and this was followed by testimonies from other villagers. The panellists spoke and raised questions now and then and media

The village gathering for the social audit

representatives also posed questions. The areas covered included:
• road works
• Gayatri Club activities
• CARE Food For Work programme
• construction works, e.g. school buildings
• GP accounts for three years – presentation and clarifications

The questioning and the issues raised provided many insights into the ineffectual functioning of the GP. 'Does this *panchayat* have meetings at all?' people were left wondering. The opaque fashion of functioning was obvious. The Secretary of the GP was called to the microphone in some cases to elaborate on a particular issue. For instance, it was discovered that all the ghost works had something in common – they had all claimed to have used the same tractor (and its driver) for transporting materials into various villages… with the same vehicle number, the same village, the same driver who signed on receipts. One of the *gram sabha*[1] members informed everyone that this was the Secretary's own tractor! Subsequently, it was also revealed that the tractor had not been with the Secretary over the three years, though it appeared consistently on the records. There were many muster rolls read out where false names were recorded, including names of people who had migrated out of the village years back, and of elderly people who were incapable of working anymore. There were muster rolls where the wages recorded were higher than the amounts actually paid to the labourers!

The failure of the local bureaucracy to monitor and check the possibilities of corruption was also brought out. There were many instances when they were in collusion, for example, the junior engineer had certified 'ghost works' through his measurement books.

But what was really heartening was to see many from the *dalit* (untouchable) community coming forward to speak, and better yet, women willing to testify. In one instance, when an entire village kept quiet out of fear (of a GP member and a couple of powerful contractors in the village), it was two *dalit* women who boldly came out with the truth.

It has to be pointed out that women were not actively drawn out to participate during the first quarter of the audit. Until somebody pointed out that the facilitators needed to address the women too, they were ignored. Once they were encouraged to start speaking, they were bolder than the men in pointing out various problems. The culture of silence definitely got broken in Jharnapalli on that day.

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[1] The *gram sabha,* which is the assembly of all the adult residents of a village, is the ultimate repository of power over development decision making and local bureaucracy. The *gram sabha*, thus, is a political institution that seeks to place political power in the hands of the people, without the mediation of elected representatives. It is believed that the active functioning of g*ram sabhas* can ensure a vibrant democracy.

Village women testifying

The strengths of the social audit process

• **An empowered people's organisation.** The Cluster Level Committee (CLC) of the people, facilitated by Gayatri Club in the GP, was empowered enough to take up this audit. The members have put a lot of effort into making it successful.

• **The district administration**. Where it has taken years for information to be collected for a social audit in other places, thanks to a supportive district administration in Bolangir, information collection was easier. District- and block-level officials provided us with records and the District Collector stepped in at a crucial stage just before the audit to instil confidence in the people about the audit process.

• **MKSS experience**. Years of invaluable experience gained by MKSS in their struggle for the right to information proved to be very helpful in this social audit. MKSS volunteers spent nearly two weeks prior to the audit providing guidance.

• **The support of a large network.** The presence of the CADMB network of 19 NGOs/CBOs from all over the district of Bolangir lent a great deal of support to the villagers of Jharnipalli.

• **The ongoing fight against corruption.** Many villages of Jharnipalli had been raising issues of corruption in the GP for several years. They took part in this process very actively, and found it a good opportunity to raise issues that concerned them.

• **The location of the village.** By virtue of being located in one of the 'KBK'(Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput) districts of Orissa, this *panchayat* and its social audit also provided an opportunity to link up the process to wider advocacy agendas centred around food and livelihood security. The fact that there is inadequate resource allocation for development works in the area,

and that even the meagre sums that come in end up in the hands of contractors, was apparent to see after the social audit. Failure of the government on many fronts like employment generation, social security, and food security came to the fore.

• **A large team of volunteers** working in a camp mode within the GP limits, and being accessible at all points of time to the villagers was also an advantage. So was the presence of the volunteers' teams in the villages during the last five days of the process. The villagers were free to come and check the records anytime during this period, and would also drop by to inform us about the latest dynamics unfolding in the village.

• **Women's participation**. Large numbers of women from all villages participated actively in the audit despite pressure not to do so from many sides.

After the audit

The situation became slightly tense after the social audit in the villages. Threats were issued to the members of local people's organisations involved in the process. Members of CADMB and the field office staff of ActionAid kept visiting the villages after the social audit to assess the tension around and take pre-emptive actions if necessary. The District Collector instructed a special audit of the Jharnipalli *panchayat* by the district *panchayat* auditor. The Secretary of the *panchayat* has been issued with a suspension notice with a recovery from him of Rs. 68,000, and criminal proceedings are also planned.

The Jharnipalli case was a social audit 'on test', a pilot. Thus the primary objective was to learn from it. It is clear that social audit is indeed a powerful tool in the hands of the people, but the pilot also indicated the challenges in implementing the right to information processes. It has to be preceded by people's capacity building, both to carry forward this intensive process, and to protect the vulnerable from the wrath of the powerful. The relative lack of participation in the meeting of people from the poor and marginalised sections can only be speculated on. Lack of political awareness and marginalisation of specific groups are issues that need to be addressed to make such processes successful.

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Note

Causes, consequences, and solutions

5

**Lisa VeneKlasen with
Valerie Miller**

Advocacy strategies look for solutions to real problems. For advocates, a problem is a negative situation affecting a specific group of people. Examples of problems are poor healthcare, corruption, unemployment, gender violence (Figure 1), crime, or environmental degradation. Each problem is made up of a variety of different issues. A 'good' advocacy issue is focused enough so that it can be linked to a clear policy/political solution and can be easily communicated to many people.

Choosing priority issues from among many urgent problems is not an easy task. It is a multi-step process involving analysis and negotiation within a group. One challenge in this analysis is that there are many different causes of problems. The causes can be interconnected and even contradictory. There are numerous tools to help structure and guide problem analysis and prioritisation. One example is the Causes, Consequences and Solutions Tool presented in Box 1. Mapping the causes, consequences, and solutions of a problem can be a good way to begin analysis because it produces a comprehensive map of a problem.

Source for Box 1: Adapted from VeneKlasen, L. with Miller, V. (2002) *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation*, World Neighbors, Oklahoma City, OK: Ch.9.

Figure 1 Slicing a problem into single issues…

Marcelo Espinoza (KCat)
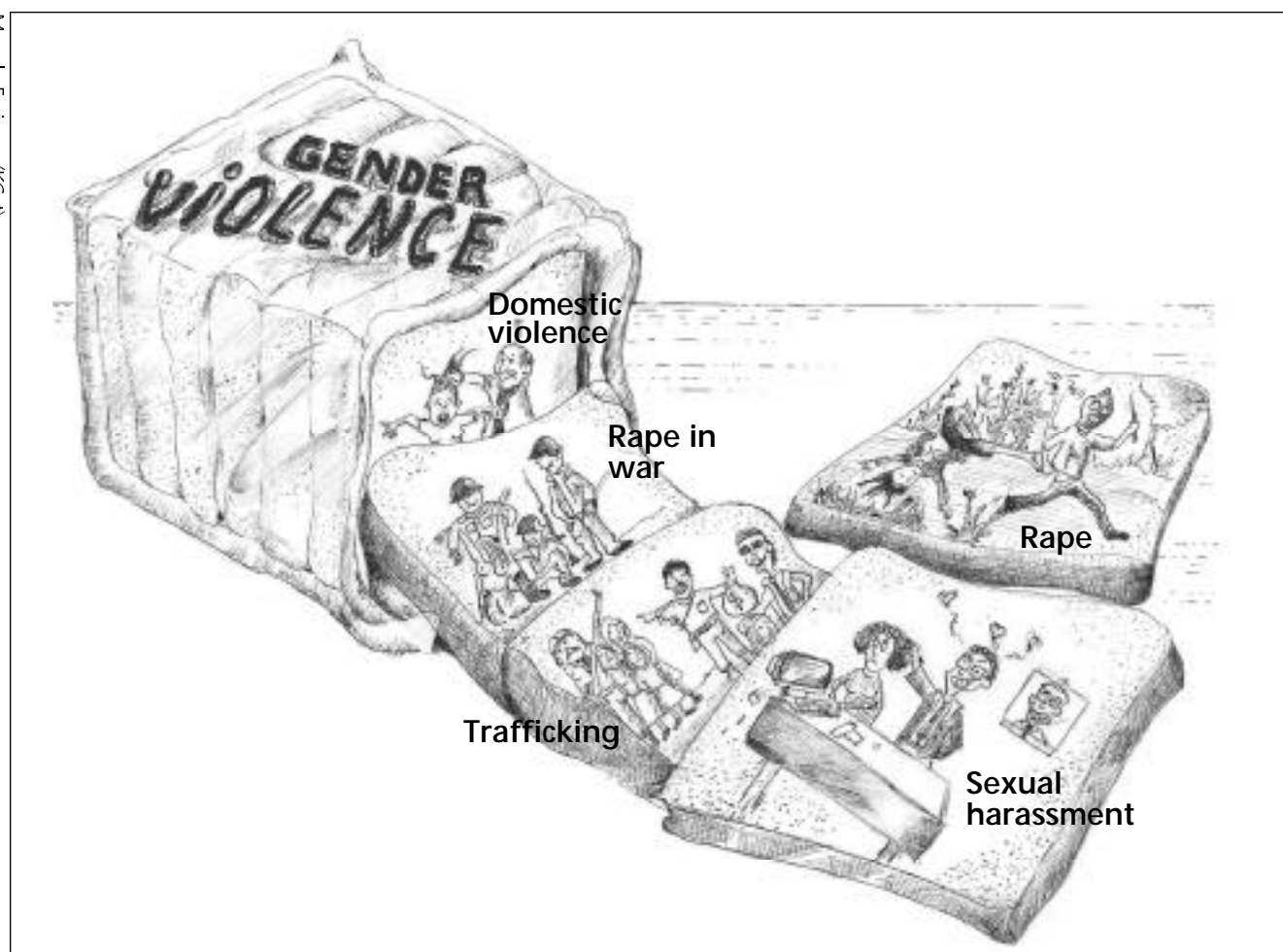
Box 1 Exercise: causes, consequences and solutions

Purpose

This framework helps analyse problems by making the links between causes, effects and solutions. It encourages discussion of a wide range of solutions and emphasises the need for social and political, as well as policy, strategies.

Process

This analysis is best handled in small groups that allow each individual to contribute. If your group is working on several problems, divide the groups up by the problems that interest them. (Time: 1-2 hours)

> *The consequences column shows how problems affect people 's lives.This helps in identifying constituencies. It also helps later on in choosing the targets and messages for outreach.*

1 For each problem, make a chart with three columns. The headings of the columns are: Causes, Consequences and Solutions.
2 Begin by identifying the causes of the problem. Write each cause in the first column of the chart.
3 Repeat the process for consequences, and then solutions. Sometimes there are not clear cause-effect relationships between causes and consequences. So the cause, consequences, and solutions do not have to be linked or related horizontally. That can be part of the follow-up analysis.

Discussion

- Are the causes listed the *main* causes of the problem?
- What are the social attitudes and power dynamics that contribute to causing this problem?
- How do the causes and problems affect people's lives? Who is affected, and how?

- What are the main solutions proposed? Do any of them address social attitudes?

Tips

- Before beginning the analysis, go through the process in plenary with a different problem to show how the framework works (see example below).
- Before starting, explain how causes and consequences are different: a consequence is the result of a problem, while a cause helps create the problem.
- This framework can be extended by adding a fourth column which shows who is responsible for each solution, and if there are scarce resources, which are the priorities for them to focus on. If the advocacy will involve government, an international donor agency, the private sector, or somebody else, the fourth column can be used to link solutions with different decision-making arenas and institutions.
- During discussion, always look for the main causes. For example, sometimes groups focus on low funding as a cause when, in fact, it is not the primary cause.

Example

The matrix below is an example of how a Ugandan NGO working on debt relief and budgets applied this tool to a big problem: corruption. The second matrix shows how, after selecting the more focused issue of poor primary healthcare as it relates to corruption, the group applied the framework to that issue. The group originally listed low motivation of healthworkers and said that healthworkers were lazy. After discussion, they understood that many healthworkers work long hours in poor conditions with little pay, and that these factors contribute to corruption in healthcare as well.

Problem: Corruption

Causes	Consequences	Solutions
• Wide spread poverty • Greed • Profit-centred priorities • Competition • Lack of transparency • Desire for power and domination • Lack of checks and balances • Lack of effective laws and regulations to punish • Desire to manipulate the system • Breakdown of moral values • Peer pressure • Inappropriate inherited systems	• Increased poverty and marginalisation of the poor, the powerless, and minorities • Loss of confidence in the system by the people/growing indifference • Unsustainable debt burden • Poor social services • Breakdown of moral values • Growth of powerful • Donor dependence • Emergence of dictatorship • Wasteful spending on white elephants	• Increased transparency and accountability • Increased community participation in decision making at all levels • Civic education for family and community • Stiff punishment for offenders • Political consciousness • Increased media involvement • NGO advocacy

Problem: Poor and inadequate primary healthcare

Causes	Consequences	Solutions
• Understaffed clinics • Low motivation of health workers (low wages, some poorly trained) • Too few facilities; badly located • Poor health policy and planning • Inadequate funds for healthcare given needs of population (e.g. AIDS prevention alone is costly) • Unregulated drug use • War • Government has other priorities and poor who need healthcare most don't make demands	• High mortality rate (infant/maternal rate highest) • Poor child development • High prevalence of infectious diseases • Inadequate healthcare • Effect on productivity (GNP) • Low quality of life of poor • Drug abuse • Corruption by healthworkers • Most vulnerable people who need healthcare most are most abused	• Formulate clear, rational health policy emphasising primary and preventative • Monitor health expenditure • Increase pay and qualifications of basic healthcare providers • Punish embezzlers • Educate people about their right to healthcare • Encourage denouncement of bribe/extortion • Strengthen national drug authority • Increase health budget

Engaging people in right to food and work litigation

6

Arundhuti Roy Choudhury

The context: scarcity amongst plenty

A striking fact in India today is the coexistence of huge public stocks of food grain with abject poverty on a large scale. According to the 1993–4 official estimates, 244 million people are below the poverty line in rural India alone, and there are very high levels of casual employment at very low wages. Hunger is widespread, especially in drought-affected areas, and many cases of starvation deaths are reported across the country.

Despite the enormity of the problem, one is confronted with enormous state neglect in ensuring that food reaches the poor through social welfare schemes. Despite the existence of nine major central government-supported social welfare schemes, relief programmes have been very limited in most states. Although the government has long been expressing its commitment to the 'right to work', no action has been forthcoming. Increasingly, the state seems to be abdicating its responsibility towards the well-being of the people.

There was a need to bring the issue back on the national agenda and establish that the State is duty-bound under the Constitution to provide food and work for the poor and marginalised, not just as a short-term relief but as an entitlement.

Rights to food and work campaign

On 9 May, 2001 the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Rajasthan, filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on the 'Right to Food and Work' with the highest judiciary body of India, the Supreme Court. The petition drew attention to the State's responsibility towards people experiencing or at the edge of chronic hunger.

The PIL was initiated by a group of people's organisations, lawyers, and intellectuals including PUCL, the Socio-Legal Information Centre, Akal Sangrash Samiti, and economists such as Jean Dreze. By adopting people-centric processes and strategies it is increasingly becoming a strong campaign which can influence state agencies and policies.

The objectives of the campaign were to:

• Place the right to food and work on the national agenda, and to establish that the state is duty-bound

under the Constitution to provide work and food for those sections of the population whose food security is threatened. Also, this is not charity but a right and entitlement of the poor and marginalised sections of society.

• Build group support and cooperation between groups, peasant organisations, people's movements, intellectuals, and researchers working on these issues all over the country.

• Search for workable long-term drought and hunger mitigation strategies and undertake policy and media advocacy on the same. The long-term policy intervention would move towards ensuring:

– a guarantee of employment for all able-bodied people at statutory minimum wages.

– food as an entitlement for non-able-bodied people, along with infants, children, widows, the aged, etc.

– Public Distribution Service (ration shops) as an entitlement.

The campaign covered 13 areas: Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharastra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Orissa, and Delhi.

The process

If the campaign was to be successful, there needed to be huge resource mobilisation both at the centre and at state level to collect field data, monitor compliance with Supreme Court orders at the field level, report back to the Supreme Court with hard facts, and build pressure groups to influence State and central government agencies for policy change.

A central core group was informed, but it was also important to develop networks of local organisations to carry out research, build support, and put pressure on government agencies. The campaign's strategies were based on four guiding principles:

• Ensure the participation of the grassroots
• Ensure direct advocacy

- Build local solidarity groups between directly affected people, citizens groups, intellectuals, and the media
- Take the judgement to the community so that the poor actually benefit from it

Strategies were regularly reviewed based on the reflections and response coming from the grassroots. In order to get concrete grassroots feedback, the lawyers of the Public Interest Litigation (Colin Gonsalves and Yug Choudhury) went from state to state and meet the various people's organisations and groups. During their visits, meetings bringing together various people's groups were organised in each of the state. It was here that they shared their experiences.

These principles were translated into action through participatory research, local solidarity and pressure groups, a national campaign and media advocacy.

Participatory research

To take the litigation process forward it was necessary to provide professionally acceptable data to the Supreme Court bench headed by Justice B.N. Kripal. At the same time, the data collection process had to be participatory, non-extractive, and an important tool to mobilise people. As well as extensive research and collection of secondary material from government and NGOs, situation analysis of and by the directly affected people was done through a combination of conventional and non-conventional methodologies. Group discussions and public meetings bringing together the directly affected people, social researchers, grassroots activists, government officials at the central and state levels were all important methods of analysis. These are also important tools of mobilisation of groups and individuals.

Groups of state level have developed various approaches to collecting the views of the people. One example comes from the district of Balangir in Orissa where the process is being facilitated by Collective Action for Drought Mitigation (CADMB), a people's movement composed of several local community-based organisations and NGOs. CADMB works through a three-level structure.

First, local-level organisations take responsibility for collecting data at the village level since they have a good understanding of the local situation. The organisations facilitate a process of micro-level planning (MLP) in which the affected people themselves do a situational analysis, and come out with solutions to the problems being faced. The basis of MLP is that it is people-centred, and relies on people's decision.

Second, a project advisory committee acts as a support agency for the CADMB network, and reports to it as well. The committee comprises of representatives from each of the partners in the CADMB network and includes teachers, media persons, political representatives, and government officials.

Third, the resource centre situated at Balangir puts together the data collected by the group and sends it across to the centre in Delhi. The data is then presented to the Supreme Court. Personal affidavits by directly affected people have also been used, enabling people to speak of their real-life experiences.

The pooled efforts of the various groups in the regions in collecting authentic state and village-level data, provided the basis on which counter-arguments to the state governments' affidavits were submitted to the Supreme Court.

Developing local solidarity and pressure groups

In each state, local solidarity groups have been initiated. People's groups, NGOs, academicians, independent researchers, lawyers, and sensitive media persons, who have been working on these issues at the grassroots level, have been brought together. The idea is to form regional networks in each of the 14 states.

These state-level solidarity groups work upwards from the village to the state level by collecting concrete research data (primary and secondary), and by listening to the voices and the opinions of directly affected people. Based on these, they can then suggest actions and policy alternatives (such as an employment guarantee act, interstate migration act, etc.) and work as a pressure group to influence the various state agencies and media.

In each state, just as in the case of the centre, attempts have been made to form a core group. For instance, in Kolkata a group composed of various organisations – Jana Shakti Kendra, Mallarpur Uthanau , INSS, Sundarban and ActionAid (West Bengal) – has come together and is now trying to establish a large network, as well as being engaged in media and policy advocacy in West Bengal. Similar processes are being carried out in other states, including Karnataka, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. In Rajasthan, the Akal Sangarh Samiti is closely associated with the process of mobilising people, media, and state officials. The organisation has a history of working at the grassroots level on the issue of hunger, and a strong people's movement has already developed.

National campaign for the right to food and work

It was also felt that there was a need to mobilise the strength of the networks to apply pressure at national level. Representatives from state-level networks formed an alliance at the national level, and these representatives brought the voices of the regions to the centre. The idea was to try to encourage groups from the various regions to act with unity of objective, evolve national consensus, and develop a strong national pressure group and campaign for influencing policy change at the centre.

Media advocacy

Systematic attempts were also made to mobilise the media at regional, national, and international levels. The PIL and the issue of hunger received wide coverage across the country, and features and lead articles have appeared in most of the regional and national newspapers. Press conferences were also organised where the media had a direct interface with the affected people. Similarly, attempts were made to organise press tours to the affected areas.

The participatory process has created a lot of awareness and recognition among people. It was a good way of making the PIL a live issue. It worked well, leading to cooperation among different segments of civil society – economists, social researchers, lawyers, grassroots activists, and the directly affected people. These participatory efforts made some significant achievements possible.

The Supreme Court order: the turning point

The Supreme Court looking at the hard data and situation analysis expressed serious concern about the increasing number of starvation deaths and food insecurity that were occurring, despite overflowing food warehouses across the country. Making the central and state governments responsible, the court directed all state governments to ensure that Public Distribution shops were kept running. It also ordered them to file replies explaining ways of overcoming the problem of distributing grain. There was also much discussion on the mechanisms of decision making, accountability, transparency, and people's right to information. The Supreme Court noted the need to form state-level committees composed of credible NGO representatives and sensitive and responsible government officials to monitor the working of the various social welfare schemes.

The turning point in the case was the 28 November 2001 Supreme Court order. The order effectively converted the provisions of eight food security schemes into entitlements (rights) of the poor. In a strong interim order, the Supreme Court directed all state governments to provide cooked midday meals in all government schools by January 2002 under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). When the counsels of some state governments tried to object on the grounds that financial resources were lacking, the bench, headed by B.N. Kripal, swept their objections aside: 'We cannot compromise on school meals,' he said. 'Cut out the flab somewhere else.'

To ensure people's right to information and transparency, the Supreme Court directed that the order should be translated into local languages and displayed in all *panchayats* (local self-government). Details of all the nutrition-related schemes, including lists of beneficiaries, are to be made available to the public for inspection. The court has also directed the State-owned media to ensure adequate publicity for the order.

Orders from the highest judicial authority in the country requiring that the various welfare schemes be implemented under close supervision in every state has the potential to go a long way in achieving fair play, equity, and justice. A small indication of this is that in 2000, the states had taken only about 20% of the central allocations for various food related schemes. In 2001, up until the last order of the Supreme Court, this had gone up to 50%, largely on account of the various compliance reports that the state governments were being asked to file by the Supreme Court.

Implementation and monitoring – the challenges and lessons

The PIL has demonstrated that, with all its limitations, the judiciary can prove to be a useful weapon for the poor to make the State more accountable and transparent in nature. Today, the Supreme Court, through its orders, has secured greater accountability than in over a decade from central and state governments in its basic duty to ensure food to every person.

The order is a significant success for the Right to Food and Work Campaign, and represents a definite movement forward in the collective struggle for the right to food. Although it is just one step, it opens up a real opportunity for the campaigners to ensure that the benefits of the welfare schemes reach poor and marginalised people. However, in order to achieve this, there is an urgent need to:

- monitor the implementation of the Supreme Court orders at the ground level
- communicate these entitlements to their intended beneficiaries

There is also a need to move towards searching for alternative policies and acts, such as an employment assurance act and an interstate migration act.

Finally, a very important lesson from the campaign is that the creation and acceptance of new policies and laws relies heavily on the prevailing force of public opinion. There is thus a need not only to sustain but also to strengthen the momentum of the campaign.

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Struggle of civil society organisations in Pakistan for pro-people legislation

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Irfan Mufti

Over the past decade, successive governments in Pakistan have tried to change the existing legislation governing civil society organisations (CSOs). In 1995, a new bill, the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies Regulation and Control (Amendment) Act was introduced in parliament. Under the bill, NGOs (both intermediaries and community-based organisations) would have to register with the state authorities and could be suspended or dissolved, thus violating citizen's fundamental rights to association, expression, and assembly. According to government sources, the reason for introducing the law was that some NGOs were involved in sectarian and ethnic clashes and anti-state activities. They also argued that there were inadequate checks and balances in the existing law governing NGOs, and that state authorities did not know about the nature and scope of activities carried out by the various organisations.

The proposed bill was strongly opposed by NGOs on the grounds that it violated the fundamental freedoms available to citizens of Pakistan under the constitution. They argued that that powers of registration, suspension, and dissolution of NGOs given to the Department of Social Welfare were bound to be misused and would discourage independent social thinking and citizen action. They began to develop strategies to oppose the bill.

Phase I: Developing strategies

A group of 20 NGOs (mainly support organisations) joined together to initiate a process of consultation and dialogue among NGOs. The first meeting of this core group decided to adopt a four-pronged strategy:

- Analyse and develop a comprehensive critique and alternative position on the government's proposed bill.

- Form a task force to give legal input on the bill and develop alternative, supportive legislation.

- Form different committees to:
  - mobilise NGOs all over the country
  - engage with relevant government departments to convey the concerns and demands of the NGO community
  - negotiate with the ruling political party as well as opposition parties who might support the NGOs while the legislation was under discussion

- Engage in a consultative process with a wide range of organisations from all parts of the country.

The core group felt there was a need to mobilise civil society and build a broad-based movement to oppose the law and suggest alternatives, but there was no formal representative body of civil society that could engage government and political parties on their behalf. Most NGOs operated with a welfare mindset and considered advocacy to be too 'political'. There were also strong differences of opinion at the very beginning of the campaign, in part because development NGOs had no experience in this kind of legal activism, and there was some pro-government NGO influence. The members of the core team also realised that there was little support for their position from parliamentarians, either in the ruling party or the opposition. The media was very hostile and, with the blessing of the government, regularly slandered the NGOs and their campaigning NGOs in the press.

The NGOs started the campaign at various levels but the focus was on mobilising the larger community to highlight the negative impact of the proposed bill and negotiate with government, especially the relevant ministries.

Phase II: Engaging with civil society organisations

The core group started to mobilise the NGO community to create a strong and representative voice against the proposed bill. As a result, five coalitions of NGOs and CBOs were formed in all four provinces of Pakistan to publicise the negative effects and legal problems in the proposed bill, and advocate for the alternative legislation. These coalitions then formed a national forum called Pakistan NGO Forum (PNF), the first representative NGO body in Pakistan. The Forum also gained the support of some important politicians and civil servants.

At the same time, the NGOs held several dialogues with government, which resulted in government's agreement to the basic principles of the NGOs position. When a bill was sent to the senate committee for its approval, the NGOs had a feeling of victory, especially in the PNF, until they learned that the senate committee was sent the same old bill that the NGOs had rejected. The PNF was shocked.

After the government was illegally dissolved, NGOs held another round of meetings with the senate committee and the new government. But with the PNF in place, there was a qualitative difference in the campaign: less effort, more results. The NGOs had learned to be more effective. To stay a step ahead, PNF took responsibility for preparing an NGO Bill with the help of prominent lawyers and its own technical committees. A consensus bill was drafted after a debate at the provincial and national level where a large number of diverse NGOs were involved.

Principles of the consultations

Throughout the campaign PNF consciously adopted the following principles of consultation:

- All member and non-member like-minded organisations should be engaged and consulted before developing alternative laws and policies.

- Member organisations, regardless of their size, nature of activities, rural or urban profile, new or established, will be given equal status in the consultations. Each comment or suggestion received from these members will be taken seriously and on merit.

- The process will be bottom-up and not top-down. Comments and suggestions received from the lowest tier coalition will be used as basis for further consultations at the provincial and national levels.

- Language and format will be kept simple and conform to local situations, so that the maximum number of groups can be involved in discussions without the risk of alienating them because of complexity of format or language.

- All suggestions and comments should be properly recorded, documented, and reflected in other forums.

- Concerns of community and indigenous groups (who are in the majority in Pakistan) should be given priority in the final process.

- For all consultations with government, political parties, and media, the PNF delegation should include members from those organisations working at the grassroots so that they can directly articulate their concerns to the policy makers and opinion leaders.

- There should be decentralisation of power.

- There should be no permanent secretariat but rather a permanent coordinating mechanism.

- Any federating unit can invoke the coordinating mechanism when needed.

- The mechanism will under no circumstances serve as a go-between for donors and NGOs.

Achievements

The final version of the law prepared by PNF was submitted to the senate committee and the government to consider. For the most part, the proposed bill was well received. Thus far, no decision has been made because two governments have been dissolved during this time. However, with the consensus bill in the Senate, it will be difficult for any future government to legislate without considering the draft submitted by PNF or without consultation with PNF.

This is the first time in the history of Pakistan that any government has willingly accepted the views of civil society in formulating legislation. This success helped to set a precedent for others to follow.

The PNF, which emerged to protest against bad legislation, has taken on a life of its own, much beyond a movement against a single law. PNF is now considered an important player in the civil society movement in Pakistan. It has a membership of 3500 large and small NGOs spread all over the country.

Representatives from the original five coalitions unanimously decided that they needed to federate themselves into a national body. At the same time, there was a serious concern that this national structure could lead to a concentration of power in the centre while depriving NGOs in the periphery of genuine representation. Principles of parity and participation of all stakeholders on equal terms helped in creating a culture of tolerance, acceptance of each other's points of view, and promoting larger consensus building.

Since there are several thousand NGOs/CBOs in the country, their concerns are numerous and it is not possible to incorporate all of them into the objectives of the federation. But it was considered important for the NGO sector to develop structures to preserve its ability to function independently of government and donor pressures. For this purpose, unity among NGOs is necessary.

While the threat of government control of NGOs through the NGO bill has increased, other equally dangerous threats have also emerged. The NGO representatives felt the need to unite, not only to counter the government's attempts to control them, but also to resist donor agencies' tendencies to determine or direct NGOs' agendas. There was a clear need for greater networking among NGOs and a coordinating mechanism for PNF to accomplish its objectives.

Due to persistent pressure and consistent advocacy at the national level the federal government decided to shelf the bill. In the meanwhile, due to changes in the government, the process on the bill was stopped for some time. Apart from this, PNF started functioning as an independent body, raising its voice on economic and socio-political

issues, organising seminars on issues such as state brutalities and religious intolerance. PNF currently plays an active role for civil society organisations by providing a platform for discourse and collective action.

PNF progress since the campaign

Since the campaign, PNF has organised at the provincial and national levels, and the membership of the Forum has increased. Dialogue has been initiated at various levels of the Forum on the challenges facing NGOs. The Forum has also engaged in policy advocacy with government, opinion makers, and parliamentarians. It organises media dialogues and conveys its position on current issues to the media. PNF devised a legal framework for NGOs through a panel of experts and NGO leaders as well as a code of conduct for the Forum and its member organisations. It organised dialogues with government departments at provincial and national levels, lobbied government on the proposed law, and held several meetings with members of parliament to press for PNF demands. PNF also gathered data on NGOs that had been dissolved by the government and worked to restore the active status of these NGOs.

Lessons learned

• In the last ten years, PNF has been mainly involved in facilitating dialogues among government, support organisations, and CBOs to resolve issues concerning civil society and the rights of the marginalised. In recent years, PNF has realised that without engaging media in this struggle to convey its point of view to the larger public, the required support cannot be achieved.

• Similarly, all the discussions and debates should be held in a more transparent and participatory manner. Winning the trust of members is essential for the health of the campaign and for retaining the integrity of members.

• Consultations with grassroots organisations enhance their confidence in the process and increase their ownership. This was critical to building a strong campaign with broad-based support throughout the country.

• As PNF ensured participation of all groups on equal terms, the NGOs and CBOs from smaller provinces felt empowered and contributed generously in the national process.

• A culture of dialogue, debates, and consultation is essential to building and using collective strengths to further common interests.

• In order to win public trust and confidence, PNF also initiated debates on formulating principles of accountability, transparency, and self-regulation within the NGO community. The self-adopted code of conduct by PNF member organisations helped in cleaning its own ranks and winning people's confidence.

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People's Assemblies on Devolution of Power: a case study on popular political participation in Pakistan

8

Rashida Dohad

The context: social and political exclusion

'Power must be devolved to the local level so that people can participate in governance,' said a farmer in rural Multan. 'Women should have 50% representation in local government,' recommended an old, turbaned man in the conservative town of Bannu. 'We want local government but this government will not be able to stop the feudal class from grabbing power through it,' feared a young student in urban Karachi. 'What will happen to our recommendations, will anyone listen to them?' doubted a female teacher in Balochistan. These are voices of ordinary citizens in Pakistan that were given space for expression through the People's Assemblies on Devolution of Power.

Ordinary citizens in Pakistan are socially and politically excluded. Since the state's creation in 1947, a certain political class, the bureaucracy, and the military have dominated politics and governance in Pakistan. The interests of ordinary citizens do not define the agendas of the main political parties. The bureaucracy remains elite-focused and unresponsive to the needs of ordinary citizens. The military is structurally incapable of enabling popular participation in decision making. Distanced and disillusioned with mainstream politics, ordinary citizens believe they cannot affect policies and action that affect their lives. Most are passive bystanders, understanding politics but not able or willing to participate in it. Declining membership in political parties and diminishing voter turnout are some of the indicators of this apathy.

Mobilising for change

The People's Assemblies process was initiated in 1998 to mobilise individual and collective participation of people in the political process. 'People's Assemblies will change the relationship between citizens and the state,' claimed Omar Asghar Khan[1] who conceptualised the process and provided leadership to it. The People's Assemblies aimed to serve as a platform for citizens to debate and analyse their issues and define their own political agenda. They sought to build coalitions among non-elite groups and create constituencies of support for implementing their agenda. Their key objectives was to mobilise and organise citizens to form a robust and vibrant civil society in Pakistan that is able to effectively assert itself and engage with the state.

In 1998, Pakistan's civil society was severely threatened as the state attempted to control and constrain its independence through coercive legislation and other disabling measures, including deregistration of nearly 2400 NGOs. This provided further impetus to the People's Assemblies. Within a short span more than 50 civil society organisations formed its nationwide coalition. In the autumn of 1999, however, the process faced a crippling challenge and an exciting opportunity. In November, Omar Asghar Khan was inducted as a Federal Minister in General Musharraf's government. Without his leadership the People's Assemblies lost direction and momentum. At the same time General Musharraf's government focused on formulating a policy for devolving authority to create a local governance system. Unlike the previous democratically elected government, the military regime of General Musharraf recognised the role of civil society in bringing to an end the repression against it.

In January 2000, the nationwide coalition of the People's Assemblies regrouped and decided to pick up its momentum. They collectively decided to initiate a process of public debate and action focusing on the impending policy on local government. There were two reasons for this decision. First, effective devolution of power is recognised as an essential ingredient for democratisation, which continues to be the overarching objective of the People's Assemblies. Secondly, there was public interest in the impending policy and an expressed need to influence it.

People's Assemblies on Devolution of Power

Beginning in February 2000, the People's Assemblies on Devolution of Power were designed so that public debate began at the village/town level. Forty People's Assemblies were held at this level all over Pakistan. Public opinion from this level was synthesised at the provincial level with an Assembly held in each of the four provinces of Pakistan. The process culminated with a National People's Assembly in July 2000. The process involved over 15,000

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[1] Omar Asghar Khan was then the Executive Director of SUNGI Development Foundation, a leading NGO with an impressive ten-year track record of struggling for people's rights.

citizens from the local village to the national level. About 30% of participants were women. The profile of the participants included farmers, labour, political workers, social and human rights activists, business persons, trade unionists, media persons, professionals, teachers, and students. The numbers and profile of participants are significant within the context of Pakistan's political culture that traditionally does not include citizens, particularly women, in policy dialogue (see Box 1).

Box 1 An example of a People's Assembly

9:00am 18 May 2000, Kotri, Sindh: It was a very hot and humid morning. In an open ground in the centre of town there was much hustle and bustle. Preparations for a People's Assembly were underway. The traditional *shamiana* (like a tent cover) and rows of red plastic chairs added colour to the dusty backdrop of the town. People were trickling in, in ones and twos. The local organisation hosting the Assembly, the Sindh Development Society (SDS), had spent weeks contacting and mobilising people from many parts of Sindh. It had also successfully held the pre-Assembly session in which about 100 women and men did an in-depth analysis of the issues related to democratic decentralisation. Their critique and recommendations would be used as a basic document to facilitate the public debate at the People's Assembly.

But today people were nervous, 'I don't know if people will turn up, as the local traders are on strike against the levy of the General Sales Tax,' said a worried *Ghaffar* of the SDS. But by 10:30am when the chief guest, the Federal Minister Omar Asghar Khan, arrived to begin the Assembly, the entire ground was packed. There were about 1000 people who had come from all over Sindh and had travelled at their own cost to participate in the Assembly. Participants included farmers, labourers, trade unionists, political workers, industrialists, the media, and professionals (including lawyers, doctors, and teachers). About 30% of participants were women. 'No Federal Minister has ever come to hear us before,' said a participant.

There was much support for effective devolution but there were some reservations too, 'We want devolution but not at the expense of losing provincial autonomy,' stressed a participant. There was also much public demand to minimise elite dominance, and the comment that 'the elites already have a lot of power, devolution must not increase their power,' was an oft-made recommendation.

Recommendations were made on what the functions of the proposed local government should be, on its electoral process, on who should be given representation in it, on how a system of transparency and accountability should be instituted in it. The assembly was to be concluded by 12:30pm. It continued until 2:30pm, even though lunch was not served and the temperature had reached about 40 degrees Celsius. The Federal Minister listened attentively to the voices of citizens. At the end he answered many queries, and also promised to take recommendations to the Cabinet. The organisers took notes of the discussion, sent key points to the media the same evening, and produced the report of the entire Assembly within 24 hours. They sent it to all key policy makers so that the voices of citizens could reach the corridors of power.

People's Assemblies reached over 15,000 citizens including about 30% of women

Strengths and successes

Three important factors contributed to making the People's Assemblies a meaningful and effective public debate and action process.

- First, citizens' voice was given primacy. Often public debate in Pakistan is about 'experts' talking to people for 95% of the time and perhaps 5% devoted to taking questions from them. This ratio was turned upside down in the People's Assemblies. In this process ordinary citizens became the experts. They set the tone and tenor of the debate. 'Nobody has asked our opinion before now,' said a daily wage earner in Kotri, a small town in Sindh. This complete reversal of roles also had a downside: it did not allow space for informed debate. For example, public opinion emerging from this process was overwhelmingly in favour of non-party-based elections. Aware that this opinion negated basic democratic principles, the organisers had little choice but to project this opinion as it represented the voice of citizens.

- Second, women's participation was made a non-negotiable element of the design. Even in the most conservative areas this design element was not compromised. However, cultural sensitivities required use of creative strategies to ensure the participation of women. In a conservative village in Dir, women were able to attend from behind a curtain. This emphasis paid off when one of the participants went on to contest and won the local government election. She is now a local councillor.

- Third, the public debate was not considered as an end in itself but a means to influencing public policy. Senior cabinet members were invited to the Assemblies, turning them into platforms of dialogue between citizens and policy makers. Written reports were also sent to key policy makers within 24 hours of holding each Assembly, and press articles helped give public opinion wide coverage. These efforts met with some

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A participant sharing recommendations in a People's Assembly in Bannu, NWFP

successes but also encountered a few failures. Public opinion advocating at least 33% representation of women, creating political space for workers and peasants, and subordination of the powerful bureaucracy, contributed to including these elements into the final policy announced in August 2000. But strong public opinion favouring land reforms to level the playing field for the elite and non-elite and the abolition of the separate electorate system that effectively disenfranchises religious minorities, was not able to influence the final policy. However, in January 2002 the Musharraf government's introduced its electoral reform package that included elimination of the separate electorate system.

Shortcomings

The People's Assemblies process also had many shortcomings.

- First, the rushed pace needed to keep in sync with the government's schedule of policy formulation so that the Assemblies could influence it, led to greater centralisation. There was not much time to develop consensus on each decision, and so the initiative of the People's Assemblies shifted from partners at the local level to organisers at the centre. This also led to conflicts between organising partners.

- Second, the close interaction with policy makers enabled access to key decision makers and the ability to influence the impending policy. But it also shaped a perception that the process was too close to the government. Detractors of the government also used this aspect to allege that the process was legitimising the military regime.

- Finally, financial assistance from donors enabled the process to reach a nationwide scale and achieve a pace that maintained its relevance to the policy-making process. However, some misconstrued this support as donor dependence.

Conclusions

The People's Assemblies on Devolution of Power were successful in revitalising a culture of public debate and analysis. They enabled public opinion to influence public policy. They also helped politicise civil society organisations and develop nationwide relationships amongst them. This served as the foundation for a follow up: a political education and citizen mobilisation initiative called the Democratic Rights and Citizens' Education Programme, which was initiated in August 2000. But perhaps most importantly, the People's Assemblies provided political space for popular political participation.

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Participation for whom?

Patricia Ardon

Background

Guatemala, one of the Central American countries bordering the south of Mexico, is ethnically diverse[1]. It has approximately 11 million inhabitants who speak 21 Mayan languages. Spanish is the official language. Historically the Mayan population has been marginalised from political and economic power, and the country registers one of the highest inequalities in income distribution in Latin America. A series of military dictatorships have governed the country since 1954, and the systematic destruction of any political democratic opposition led to the start of armed conflict in 1960. The conflict formally ended in December 1996 with the signature of the Peace Accords between the government and the URNG (the coalition of guerrilla forces).

The Peace Accords settled a framework for a series of economic and political transformations to advance democracy in Guatemala, particularly in the field of human rights and civilian power. The process has been difficult and in many areas the Accords have not been complied with. This has provoked discontent with and distrust of the democratic process among the population.

A 'Popular Consultation'

In May 1999, a 'Popular Consultation' was held in Guatemala, in which the public was asked to consider constitutional reforms that would provide a legal framework for compliance with some of the country's recent Peace Accords. This particularly related to indigenous identity and rights.

During the months leading up to the event, various social organisations made intensive efforts to promote the main provisions of the Accords, and to raise public awareness about the importance of the constitutional reforms that would enable compliance.

However, in a voter referendum, voters rejected the reforms. This caused shock waves, especially among sectors involved in human rights, some of whom up to that point had accepted in good faith that the external

[1] The population of Guatemala is comprised of approximately 55% Mestizo (mixed Amerindian–Spanish or assimilated Amerindian – in local Spanish called *Ladino*), 43% Amerindian or predominantly Amerindian, and 2% whites and others.

agenda was on a parallel track with the community agenda. In some cases, they had come to perceive the event as an authentic 'empowerment' exercise by so-called civil society.

Civil society groups wondered why, in a country so poor and in which structural discrimination takes such violent forms, the population had not supported reforms that would nurture democratisation. For the conservative groups who had opposed the reforms with vehemence and abundant resources, the 'No' vote was proof that the Peace Accords did not have public support.

Reasons for rejection of the reforms

A number of reasons can be put forward to explain the rejection of the reforms.

1. Some of the critical progressive sectors suggested that there had been insufficient citizen participation in negotiating the Accords signed in 1996. The rounds of negotiation leading up to the signing of the Peace Accords scarcely included formal representation of those directly involved in the conflict, and a minimal involvement, without vote, of civil society groups. The lack of a genuine process of participation by civil sectors at this stage was a lost opportunity to prioritise, in local and national agendas, those underlying problems that must be addressed in peace building. The political process was sorely lacking in comparison with the effort that went into proposals and public messages related to constitutional reform.

2. Participation in public consultations is not a common experience in Guatemala. For many observers the low turn out which was experienced was a result of the authoritarian past. People were unaccustomed to being listened to, and their caution and lack of confidence limited their ability to contribute to the peace process. Low turn out was also due to a number of factors, including illiteracy, lack of institutional credibility, inaccessibility of polling stations, family and community restrictions on women's voting, and limitations imposed by some fundamental religious sects.

3. The 'No' victory was swayed heavily by the social, geographic, and political divisions of the armed

Marcelo Espinoza (KCat)

**Participation should
not be like inviting
someone to fit
together the pieces
of a pre-determined
puzzle, but rather
to play a role in
determining the
shape and tones of
the puzzle itself**

conflict, both locally and nationally. It was also influenced by the lack of a government policy to communicate the content of the Accords to the public. By the same token, representative civil sectors lacked political unity and focus, especially amongst those who signed the Accord.

4. In addition, the extreme conservative groups invested vast resources and held more fora to spread the idea that the constitutional reforms would amount to a shift in favour of indigenous people and against *ladinas* (people of Spanish descent), and through intensive campaigning they instilled uncertainty among certain groups of voters.

A flawed participatory policy process

In a country with a long history of conflict, with sharp economic, social, cultural and linguistic differences, and low levels of literacy, it is perhaps not surprising that 'participation' was flawed.

While citizen participation remains a trend in the national political agenda, to date, the concept has been badly abused, used to gain credibility and resources, and to legitimise political discourses. For example, while the World Bank proclaims the need to extend the margins of citizen participation, it promotes and imposes policies that further impoverish the poor and hence further excludes them from taking part in the decisions that affect their lives.

Today there are practically no programmes or projects that do not emphasise the necessity of participation and

community-based support. Nonetheless, it has to be recognised that to participate it is essential to be informed. In this sense, as much effort must be given to the process itself as to the substantive content. This is a fundamental issue to ensure that efforts to involve people are enduring and sustainable over time.

But the process depends upon the availability of information that is really and truly 'accessible' and that takes into account not only the idioms and language familiar to the people, but also the cultural context and world view, and the problems and priorities of the people to whom it is directed. This means that there must be a conscious effort to create an agenda, and not simply an interpretation of an agenda created from the 'outside'.

From the most localised efforts of political involvement to processes of participation in negotiations during and after the war, it is therefore vital to have a long-term vision of collaboration in creating a different society, and a shorter-term vision of concrete changes that the people want to achieve. These efforts must be based in a conscious effort to share and access information that will allow people to feel that the process belongs to them, rather than simply something that is seen as 'politically correct'.

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Jumping on the train: the pastoralist experience in Kenya's PRSP

10

Daoud Tari Abkula

Introduction

The World Bank and IMF now require countries to prepare a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) to identify country priorities through wide consultation, and to serve as an instrument to get funding from these international institutions. The first PRSP document in Kenya was prepared very rapidly, in June 2000, and was approved by the World Bank and IMF, allowing Kenya to receive some money on the basis of that interim document. Unfortunately the document contained all the country's priorities except those of pastoralists.

Pastoralists in Kenya make up about 25% of the population and occupy 75% of the land. They hold almost all livestock: 100% of the camels, 60% of the cows, and 80% of the goats and sheep. About 90% of all tourism occurs in pastoralist areas, in the game reserves. Pastoralists occupy Kenya's border areas, which makes them a critical entity in terms of security issues. Therefore it is vital to Kenya as a nation – politically, economically and socially – to include pastoralists in the PRSP.

Bringing pastoralists' issues into the PRSP

Pastoralist groups came together for a workshop in northern Kenya in late 2000. The workshop was a *shirka*, a gathering of people with a pastoralist background from all of East Africa, as well as development workers and agencies working in pastoralist areas. At the workshop it was pointed out that PRSPs are very important instruments for getting development agendas on the table, and pastoralist people became conscious that Kenya's rushed document included nothing for them.

At the s*hirka*, some Kenyan pastoralists and development workers formed a small group aimed at including pastoralists in the final PRSP in Kenya, which was then unfolding. The group comprised pastoralist people themselves, civil society groups doing advocacy on behalf of pastoralists, pastoralist people working with international agencies in pastoralist areas (such as ActionAid, Oxfam, and UNICEF), and people from government departments working in pastoralist areas. It had support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and from the participation team at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Sussex. Later government ministries joined, and eventually the group grew larger and included many researchers and people interested in pastoralist issues, including businesspeople and religious leaders. This gave birth to the Pastoral Thematic Group (PTG).

The group had to submit a document to the PRSP secretariat in Nairobi to justify why it is extremely important to Kenya as a nation to take care of its pastoralist population. This document was readily accepted. The group then went to IDS in the UK to get some exposure on PRSPs both at the international level and in other countries' contexts, which gave them some first-hand insights. This experience proved very valuable and also gave the PTG credibility. It was the first of many thematic groups in Kenya to go outside the country to get experience of what was happening at the global level.

The PTG then met with the PRSP secretariat who agreed that it could form a thematic group – an official team which is allowed to submit a document on a cross-cutting issue for consideration in the PRSP. There were 18 thematic groups, on issues such as HIV-AIDS and gender. The pastoralist group was enlarged to include the Permanent Secretary in charge of Ministry of Livestock and Agricultural Development, and the Economic Secretary, under whose docket came the whole organisation and the nitty-gritty of handling the PRSP. Thus the group was accepted into the official system that runs the PRSP process for the whole country.

From that point the PTG had to develop a strategy to get pastoralists to participate directly in the process, to allow them to identify their priorities and talk over issues. To do this, it got involved in the government's sector working groups. Ministries were grouped into about eight sectors. The group approached people in all those sectors that were considered important, and then engaged with the secretariat on a constant basis. The programme was rushed against time, with everybody competing for the secretary's priorities. It was like a train moving; you had to jump on it!

Pastoralists live across vast areas of the country, and there were enormous logistical problems in meeting with them. At workshops and meetings, pastoralists identified their

priorities in the northern, north-central and north-western regions of the country. After meeting with pastoralist people, the group went through a consultation process at the national level. This led to a pastoralist poverty reduction strategy document, with the help of specialist groups who assembled what came from the pastoralist people into a strategy for inclusion in the PRSP.

The challenges

The process of compiling raw information from pastoralists into a policy document was challenging. The PRSP had to be structured in a way that was acceptable both to pastoralist people and to the World Bank. The PTG had been asked to structure documents in a certain fashion, so that what came out of their consultations would fit the structure of the PRSP. There were experts to help, some of them from amongst ourselves, and some were outsiders who were well-versed in writing documents. The whole consultation had to be organised into eight themes, such as security, conflict, livestock marketing, social services, and so on. This made the document more readable and understandable by people in development agencies and in the government.

The document then had to be presented to the PRSP secretariat, and be accepted by the sector working group. The PRSP works in such a manner that the consultation process and the sector working group are not working together, as they are independent bodies. But at some point they are expected to converge and produce the same document. The sector working group included input from technocrats in government, with ministry priorities, and the group was contributing with priorities from the people. Those two had to conform into one. It was hard work, and entailed a great deal of engagement with permanent secretaries and their ministries on a one-to-one basis.

The PTG then faced the challenge of how to present the pastoralist issue in the PRSP document. Is it cross-cutting, presented in a chapter of its own, or does it have to fit in with each ministry's priorities? This turned out to be a quite difficult task which required many meetings that went on till late at night. In the end, the group lost on some things. It was agreed that the pastoralist issue was cross-cutting, and it was included in almost all the ministries. But much of the group's contribution came under the ministry of livestock and agricultural development, as the government assumed that they had the greater expertise.

The PRSP itself was to be written by a small group of people, and of course some people from Washington had to look at it closely. The PTG considered itself very lucky up to that point, as its needs were being included. The final product that came out was a great improvement compared to the first PRSP, which had no reference to pastoralist people. Issues such as infrastructure

development, livestock marketing, conflict, health services, and education got a lot of prominence, and there was recognition of pastoralists as an important sector in the country needing attention. They even allocated resources, identified roads to be developed, and slaughterhouses to be built for the marketing of livestock. All these things were included in the PRSP.

Although the World Bank looked at and approved the Kenyan PRSP, this did not elicit or trigger any flow of funds into the nation. This was due to larger problems that Kenya had (and still has) with its donors in terms of corruption and politics, which were beyond the group's making. No funds have yet flowed as a result of the PRSP, and nothing tangible has changed on the ground for pastoralists. But the PTG has not despaired. It continues with a monitoring plan to push the implementation phase.

As a result of the PTG's efforts, the government has included some pastoralist priorities in its budget. But much had been left out, and in any case the government has no money to do any development programmes. It will be up to the group to follow up implementation, because government's priorities might change. Although the government has only gone as far as budgeting, it is remarkable that it has considered and incorporated pastoralists' voices and views in its planning strategy. This is the first time that this has happened since Independence.

Lessons learned

Despite the setbacks, the PTG has achieved a lot. Pastoralists have succeeded in changing the thinking of people in the government at very senior policy-making levels. The group has been able to work closely with members of the Dream Team (high-level civil service reform team in the Government of Kenya). Kenya's political process swallowed it up and that's the thing. It learned valuable lessons from those engagements with the PRSP and the government at large. It found out that opportunities really do exist when marginalised people realise they have some rights, organise themselves, and dedicate themselves to addressing their own issues. They can accomplish a lot. People accepted the group and provided space for it, and it fitted into those spaces. It was then up to the group to come up with issues.

The challenge, therefore, was thrown back to the PTG. To complain you are marginalised is one thing, but to come up with proposals of how you want to help yourself is something else. The PTG did not achieve a perfect score, but succeeded in building linkages with many people who were ignorant of issues of importance to pastoralists – ministers and powerful people who are now working with pastoralist people as allies. It also raised awareness of pastoralist issues at senior levels in the government.

Citation: (2002) Abkula, D., T., *Jumping on the train: the pastoralist experience in Kenya's PRS.* PPLA Notes, 43: 31-33

At the same time, there were many officials with a pastoralist background who did not respond. President Moi is a pastoralist, as are many ministers. When people reach a certain level of power, they no longer belong to the people and the place they come from, they belong to the power class. Whilst these people share the same identity with pastoralists, it is difficult to make them empathise with their own people.

This process also demystified what had been seen as mysterious and powerful – institutions like the IMF and World Bank, and top-level government decision making, and how they work together. The group realised that this was a process like any other, and so walked in and out of those processes and meetings with greater confidence. It realised that small people at the ground level who are very marginalised can be a part of things. Lots of space opened up for the group, and their issues got prominence at the political level out of the PRSP process.

There were also some negative things about the PRSP process itself. Everybody is talking about PRSPs, and they are being done throughout the world. The PTG was responding to a process, which had been designed and tailored elsewhere. The group had no options to change anything. Time schedules were set, and each week and day was programmed. If the group had had no capacity to fit into that programme then it would have been doomed. It was a very rushed, very top-down, straightjacket programme.

In spite of this, the group did fairly well in getting pastoralists to participate. It had the advantage that it already had networks among pastoralist people, and all the people from PTG are from pastoralist areas. Links in pastoralist areas allowed the group to mobilise the people and get them participating very quickly, with very short notice. If that was not the case, then time would have worked against it. Participation requires more time than any other thing. The PTG would have liked more time to participate and really digest and develop all the issues.

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Assessing entry points: questions of engagement

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**Lisa VeneKlasen with
Valerie Miller**

Although a key advocacy goal is to create opportunities for citizen's groups to be directly engaged in policy processes, engagement does not always impact on policy decisions in the end. It is easy to believe that access to policy makers will translate to influence, but in practice, this is rarely true. Policy makers sometimes construct these policy spaces to educate citizens about the choices they have made, or to appear consultative and thus, diffuse public criticism. But they may have no intention of changing their agendas. For this reason, many activists worry about being 'coopted' by policy engagement. Some NGOs who work closely with governments are criticised for losing their independence and connection with people when working with government consumes all of their energy and time. So a plan to engage should include the option to disengage if the political costs outweigh the benefits.

Deciding when and how to engage with policy processes is not straightforward or simple. Many different factors usually have to be considered and weighed against each other. Once the decision is made to engage, it must be reassessed continuously as the process unfolds.

Among the many questions to explore, here are two:

- Is the policy space 'created' or 'invited'?[1] If you come to the decision-making table as a result of political pressure generated by your efforts – a created space – you may be in a stronger position to influence policy choices. In contrast, when policy makers invite citizens' groups into the policy process, often transforming the space into a meaningful opportunity for change will involve demonstrating your power once you get there. However, often citizens' groups are not fully aware of the power dynamics, so behave like guests invited to a dinner party, not wanting to offend the 'host' with more demands.

- What are the opportunity costs of engagement? How much time and resources will the meetings, research, and other activities consume? What alternative activities could those resources be dedicated to? If

more can be gained from other advocacy activities, then perhaps the policy opportunity has lost its value and another strategy is more appropriate.

Impact is another important issue to assess when deciding if and how to engage. Again, this is not so straightforward and there are several issues to compare, such as:

- Are you making an impact on policy priorities and choices? As groups involved in UN conventions and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers have seen, influencing a policy document does not necessarily have a real impact on policy. It may be the first step in a long process of change or it may be a waste of time.

- Can the policy opportunity be used to educate people about their rights and the political process, and to build your constituency for the long term? Although you may not have a real impact on policy, the opportunity to engage may stimulate dialogue and give your organising efforts increased focus, public visibility, and credibility. However, people may expect something concrete from the process beyond learning and organisation, and then can become disillusioned if a project or more resources do not materialise.

- Will the policy opportunity translate into real change on the ground? If the opportunity to engage leads to new programmes, new opportunities and new resources, then the risks of engaging may be counterbalanced by these gains.

While these questions provide some ways of looking at engagement, there is no formula and no substitute for strategic, critical thinking. As groups engage with power, they should be vigilant and may need to remind themselves of who they are ultimately accountable to, in order to make sure the process is worthwhile. If it is not, remember that advocacy is about creating more promising spaces for engagement where citizens are able to advance their agenda with policy makers.

[1] See K. Brock, A. Cornwall and J. Gaventa, *Power, Knowledge and Political Spaces in the Framing of Poverty Policy*, IDS, draft, September 2001, and the workshop report from *Making Change Happen: Advocacy and Citizen Participation*, December 2000, produced by IDS.

Source: Adapted from VeneKlasen, L. with Miller, V. (2002) *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation*, World Neighbors, Oklahoma City, OK: Ch.11.

Grassroots women's advocacy programme

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Nani Zulminarni

Background

During the last 15 years, NGOs and women activists in Indonesia have brought much attention to the issue of gender inequality. As a result, there has been some improvement at the macro level, through changes in laws and public policy, and the ratification of international conventions against discrimination against women. However, a more egalitarian society – where women and men have equal rights, status, and roles – is still far from becoming reality. We see that policy on paper does not necessarily reflect or transform practical reality. Policy implementation is always influenced by people's cultural and religious beliefs and values. Independent of laws and policy, these social constructions strongly influence gender inequality in society, from the household to the state.

One of the main obstacles to increasing gender equality in Indonesia is the low level of participation by grassroots people as agents of change. Public dialogue and advocacy on gender issues is mostly carried out by elite groups such as NGOs, women activists, mass organisations, political parties, or government institutions. Grassroots people are not actively engaged in these processes. They are more often seen and treated as an object to be benefited by the advocacy process but not to play an active role in it. Many NGOs work directly at the grassroots, doing community organising, but this has not been translated into large-scale advocacy efforts. The division between advocacy and community-organising activities has slowed the process of social transformation on gender inequality.

A grassroots women's network is urgently needed as a major force for social transformation. Grassroots women can play an important role as leading agents of change in their respective areas to develop a more democratic and egalitarian society. Especially now, as the Indonesian government decentralises, the empowerment of grassroots women to enable them to do their own advocacy must become a priority.

PPSW approach and strategy

Pusat Pengembangan Sumberdaya Wanita (PPSW) is a women's NGO based in Jakarta that has worked since 1986 for the empowerment of women and a more democratic society. PPSW works with women to enhance their standard of living, knowledge, and skills to develop local women's institutions and leadership, and to promote understanding of gender equality at all levels. PPSW understands women's empowerment processes as a community-organising (CO) strategy for women at the grassroots level that involves training, technical assistance, research, seminars, and workshops, as well as documentation and publications.

Currently, PPSW works with close to 160 community-based groups with a total membership of approximately 5600 people throughout five provinces: DKI-Jakarta, West Java, Banten, Riau, and West Kalimantan. Almost all of the groups consist of women. More than 50% of the members engage in economic activities through micro businesses. The others are housewives who dedicate most of their time to managing their households and taking care of children. The majority are married. Most of the members have some elementary school education, and many have advanced beyond elementary school. Only 7% have never have had any formal education.

PPSW uses different issues as entry points to work with the community, depending on local conditions and the needs identified by the women themselves. These are:

- Economic activities. We organise women to increase their capacity to generate income, because power in the family usually comes from money. Men often claim that they have authority because they are income earners. If women have income, they may have more control over decision making.

- Literacy programmes to teach women how to read, because many women are deceived by their husbands. Husbands have been known to have them sign something they cannot read, and it turns out they have agreed to let the husband take another wife without realising what they are doing. If women can read, they are more able to bargain with their husbands.

- Health issues, especially reproductive health.

With the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, there were suddenly huge opportunities to talk about anything we wanted to. So, we started talking about bigger power – the role of the government and other players that control regulations directly affecting women. We started what we called political education – training women on how to

analyse political party platforms, how the voting process works, what happens after elections, the importance of Parliament, and other issues.

The grassroots advocacy programme

In 1997, PPSW launched an intensive grassroots advocacy programme to link the empowerment of grassroots women with advocacy. The overall objective of the programme is to contribute to the process of building a new Indonesia where women and men can enjoy a more democratic and egalitarian society. The specific objectives are to:

• develop critical awareness among grassroots women about their status and position in Indonesia's socio-political system
• promote an understanding of grassroots advocacy
• equip grassroots women with tools to organise their own community
• develop grassroots women's understanding of politics in Indonesia from the local to the national level
• develop grassroots women leaders
• facilitate regular dialogue between grassroots women and decision makers (members of parliament and related government bodies) to advocate on women's issues

The activities are conducted at two levels: community and institutional (within PPSW). Work at the institutional level is important to enable staff to facilitate and support grassroots activities.

Community level

Developing the community's vision and mission

Through intensive discussion during formal and informal meetings with the community, field workers facilitate a critical analysis of their social, political, and cultural condition, and help them to see their position and status in the system. This process has helped communities understand the power that influences their lives directly and indirectly. Based on this analysis, the facilitators help them to develop their own vision and mission to develop a better society.

Training, education, and technical assistance for grassroots capacity-building

PPSW conducts trainings and workshops for grassroots women to improve their knowledge, skills, and capacity. Training is conducted using different methods such as courses, field work and exposure to address social, political, economic, health, and education topics. In addition, PPSW provides technical assistance to the women according to their particular problems and needs. In turn, the women share their new knowledge with other community members.

Developing local organisations

The women develop their own organisations such as cooperatives, informal groups, religious groups, and traditional groups. PPSW helps to equip them with the skills and tools to manage their organisations. Through this experience, women learn to work together, to become leaders, and to mobilise resources for their activities. As leaders of organisations, women are more recognised and appreciated by other community members including formal and informal leaders who are mostly men. Women use several strategies such as savings and credit, group businesses, and charity to mobilise local resources. The organisations become the centre of women's activities. Here they can have regular meetings, peer learning and teaching, and they can support and help each other.

For example, women's groups in Jakarta, that have been established longer than groups in outlying areas have been asked to provide management training for their newer counterparts. In one case, three women leaders from Jakarta went to Karawang (a two-hour drive from the capital) to offer training in management and organisational development. In this sense, the local women's organisations no longer depend on PPSW, but look to each other for support and technical assistance. They raise money for these activities through the income from their savings and loan activities. They remain in contact with PPSW, occasionally seeking out new ideas and assistance.

Leadership and local cadres development

PPSW identifies potential women leaders in the community and regularly conducts an intensive leadership and facilitation skills training course. The participants are initially assisted by PPSW field workers. After women have gained confidence and trust from their own community, they become local cadres who voluntarily organise the

Organising process

Expressing ideas with drawing

community on a daily basis. As described above, some women also work with other neighbouring communities. This strategy has helped PPSW make programmes sustainable.

Through this programme, PPSW has also motivated and organised several strong potential women leaders to move up to become formal leaders in their respective areas, such as the Head of the Village, and the Village Board.

Women are excluded from many social and political spaces. PPSW builds their leadership skills for what we call 'moving up' – up out of the house, to the village level, then to the district level, the provincial level, on to the national level, and even to the regional level. We encounter a lot of resistance to this work. People accuse us of trying to break up homes, but we believe it is important for women to know that they can break out of the routine of their house. This is a process that takes a lot of time. It's very, very difficult to encourage women and facilitate a process where they can question their own beliefs and their own fears in order to take advantage of opportunities. Women have a hard time overcoming their belief, for example, that they cannot become leaders. The work we do is really about reconstructing the way people, and especially women, think so that they do not feel guilty about being active outside their home and they are able to face the stigma that comes from fighting against these kinds of values. The government has policies that explicitly work against women and reinforce these social values. In National Development Guidelines, for example, the government lists five roles for women – partners, educators for children, additional income earners, part of social activities, and household managers – whilst men are regarded as leaders and income earners.

Networking and cooperation
PPSW organises women to develop their own networks to strengthen their movement. The first stage is to develop networks among grassroots organisations starting at the district level, and then move up to the national and regional level. Networks meet regularly to discuss their internal development strategy and link with other organisations, including NGOs and people's organisations, in their respective areas. Networks also cooperate with other organisations, such as mass media, to gain coverage of their issues.

Regular hearings and policy dialogue with decision makers, both formal and informal
PPSW works with women's groups and networks to identify and document their local issues and bring them to decision makers and leaders in the relevant areas. PPSW facilitates regular meetings and dialogues for the groups not only with formal leaders in government and Parliament, but also with informal leaders such as religious leaders, who have decision-making power. This activity is launched with a national meeting of grassroots women's groups with members of Parliament and several related

Network building among the groups

ministries. During the dialogue, women's groups present their problems. Because they start this activity at the national level, it is easier for them to do it regularly at the village, district, or provincial level. This process has helped both sides to learn. Women become more confident and understand the power dynamics that affect their lives, while decision makers slowly understand women's concerns and are increasingly aware that the power of grassroots women cannot be ignored or denied.

Policy dialogue with parliament members

For example, one group of women in Pandeglang, West Java invited their local parliament to a dialogue. During the dialogue session, they discovered that the local government did not have a clear programme for women's empowerment, so the women asked many critical questions and demanded change. At the end of the dialogue the parliament members commented to PPSW that they were surprised by the critical comments of the women. They had never expected such progressive views from women in a village famous for being conservative.

Regular reflection and action planning
PPSW facilitates regular processes of reflection where women draw out their experiences and lessons learned from their activities to improve their future action.

Institutional level (PPSW)
Reflection on PPSW vision, mission, strategy, and approach to working with the grassroots
This reflection is done through intensive discussion with resource people, regular internal discussion among all PPSW staff, and workshops. Through this process, PPSW is able to sharpen its vision and mission, and develop its new strategy, approach and method for working with the grassroots, always within a women's empowerment

framework and using participatory approaches.

Capacity-building of PPSW field workers and staff

PPSW conducts a series of training of trainers for its staff to improve their community organising and advocacy skills. In addition, PPSW holds discussion groups by inviting resource people to speak on different topics related to women's issues. Exposure to other organisations and community-based groups both in Indonesia and elsewhere is also part of the training process for staff.

Developing a support system for the field workers

Media and information units produce different kinds of creative and popular media and communication tools to be used for grassroots organising, such as photos, video, success stories, and others. Different kinds of modules are also developed as guidance for staff to share knowledge, skills, and information about women's issues.

Networking and cooperation

Networking with various organisations including other NGOs, community-based organisations, mass media, donors and government is done at all levels (local to national) in order to get different kinds of support and resources.

Successes

This process is clearly one of long-term social change so it is important for us to find ways to measure our successes along the way. At the community level, there is increased awareness of women's rights and citizen's responsibilities to develop a more egalitarian and democratic society. We also see that the women who participate are more self-confident as leaders, community facilitators, and agents of change. They also have more knowledge, skills, and experience in facilitating and organising the community. They have improved their capacities to conduct a policy dialogue with decision makers and leaders. We estimate that through this project, we have developed 160 grassroots women's organisations and 350 women leaders. Some specific cases help to illustrate what this project has meant for some women.

Siti from Pejaten and Bu Sabar from Penjaringan, Jakarta were the first women elected from their communities as *ketua RW* (an elective office of local leadership at a sub-village level in an urban area). Since their election, they have received extensive support from their communities. Community members have found them to be effective leaders and are pleased that these women have brought many positive changes: mobilising people to clean the streets, establishing programmes to combat drugs, and developing a social support system for community members by collecting funds.

Genduk from Riau Sumatra has been elected several times as government programme leader in her area. In this position, she manages aid money allocated for poor farmers in her community. Community members strongly support her and have encouraged her to run for the village leader position. Genduk has refused saying she believes she can do more for her community informally – and that is what she does.

Lessons

We have also learned many valuable lessons from this experience.

• The capacities of facilitators and local leaders are key in grassroots advocacy. That is why we invest in the development of PPSW staff and in women who are strong candidates for sharing what they learn with others.

• Popular communication methods and creative media in the organising process are effective tools to encourage the participation of grassroots women.

• Social analysis and power analysis have helped women to see and understand their status, position and condition, and critically examine the various dynamics of power that control their life.

• Grassroots women's organisations and networks are an important place for women to build friendships and solidarity so that they can develop collective power for change.

• A social transformation process facilitated by women on a daily basis is as important as a policy dialogue for advocacy.

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Note

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Power and empowerment

13

Lisa VeneKlasen with
Valerie Miller

Forms of power

Power is an integral dynamic of politics, yet it turns out to be one of the more uncomfortable and difficult topics to address. People often see power as sinister and unchanging. Such a one-dimensional perspective can paralyse effective analysis and action. In reality, power is both dynamic and multidimensional, changing according to context, circumstance, and interest. Its expressions and forms can range from domination and resistance to collaboration and transformation. This is good news for advocates whose strategies depend upon new opportunities and openings in the practice and structures of power.

To get a handle on the diverse sources and expressions of power – both positive and negative – the following distinctions about power can be useful.

- **Power over**: The most commonly recognised form of power, power over, has many negative associations for people, such as repression, wealth, force, coercion, discrimination, corruption, and abuse. Power is seen as a win-lose kind of relationship. Having power involves taking it from someone else, and then, using it to dominate and prevent others from gaining it. In the absence of alternative models and relationships, people repeat the power over pattern in their personal relationships, communities, and institutions. New forms of leadership and decision making must be explicitly defined, taught, and rewarded in order to promote more democratic forms of power.

Practitioners and academics have searched for more collaborative ways of exercising and using power. Three alternatives – power with, power to, and power within – offer positive ways of expressing power that create the possibility of forming more equitable relationships.

- **Power with** has to do with finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength. Based on mutual support, solidarity, and collaboration, power with can help build bridges across different interests to transform or reduce social conflict and promote equitable relations.

- **Power to** refers to the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world. When based on mutual support, it opens up the possibilities of joint action, or power with.

- **Power within** has to do with a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge. It includes an ability to recognise individual differences while respecting others. Power within is the capacity to imagine and have hope; it affirms the common human search for dignity and fulfillment.

Advocacy most commonly uses these alternative sources of power to navigate and change the dynamics of power over. However, what makes power over difficult to analyse and confront is the fact that it does not always operate in visible ways (Box 1). In Table 1, we describe three interactive dimensions of power over that shape the parameters of political participation and advocacy. These range from the more obvious and visible, to those that operate largely unnoticed behind the scenes. We also discuss some of the strategies used to influence and engage these different expressions of power.

Box 1 Visible and invisible agendas in action

The advocacy experience of Zimbabwean women's groups demonstrates the complexities of visible and invisible power dynamics. The groups were concerned about women's inheritence and property rights, as growing numbers of women and children were left destitute when their husbands died due to a social phenomenon commonly called 'property grabbing'. Immediately after a death, the wife's in-laws would quickly take over and remove the property of the couple, leaving the widow with nothing. In the early 1990s, the groups launched an advocacy campaign to reform property laws to give widows basic legal protection against such injustices. They believed that broad public support coupled with the facts about the problem would compel legislators to reform the laws. Unfortunately, the advocates did not fully account for the power of tradition, custom, or society's unwritten laws. They underestimated both the opposition by vested interests and the political sensitivity around the cultural dimensions of the issue.

The traditional authorities were firmly against the reform. They felt that, by challenging customary law, the new law would erode their control over their communities. These authorities were the President's main source of political support in rural areas, and had considerable influence. Many other politicians opposed the reforms as a western feminist import that would destroy the African family. The reform never had a chance.

The advocates took their battle to the Supreme Court. They hoped they could win the case on the grounds that customary practice contradicted the constitution. But they lost there too. While the activists navigated the formal procedures of public politics with skill, the invisible power of culture and vested interests defeated them.

Table 1 Power, political participation, and social change

Mechanisms and strategies	Invisible power: shaping meaning	Hidden power: setting the political agenda	Visible power: observable decision making
	Problems and issues are not only kept from the decision-making table, but also from the minds and consciousness of the different players involved.	Influence by controlling who gets to the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda.	The visible and definable aspects of political power – the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions, and procedures of decision making.
Mechanisms: different expressions and forms of power Participation in public decision making seems relatively straight forward on the surface. It appears to be determined by the political context, clout, resources, and expertise of different political actors. Yet invisible and hidden mechanisms of power shape the effectiveness of citizen participation. These mechanisms can lead to powerlessness, conflict, marginalisation, and resistance. Different strategies are required to counter these mechanisms so that political participation can be more inclusive and so people can exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens. (See below.)	*Socialisation and control of information:* Processes, practices, cultural norms, and customs shape people's understanding of their needs, roles, possibilities, and actions in ways that deter effective action for change. Among marginal groups, socialisation internalises feelings of subordination, apathy, self-blame, powerlessness, unworthiness, hostility, anger, etc. Crucial information is concealed or inaccessible.	*Exclusion and delegitimisation:* Certain groups (and their issues) are excluded from decision making by society's and politic's unwritten rules, practices, and institutions. The media does not often consider these groups' issues to be mainstream or newsworthy. They and their grievances are made invisible by intimidation. misinformation, and cooption. Leaders are labelled trouble-makers or unrepresentative; issues such as domestic violence are relegated to the private realm of the family and therefore not subject to public action.	*Formal institutions, officials and instruments:* Visible mechanisms of power shape the formal ground rules of society. Formal institutions and officials: President, Prime Minister, legislature, courts, ministries, police, military, etc. United Nations, IMF, World Bank; Private sector: industry, multinational corporations, chamber of commerce. Instruments: Policies, laws, constitutions, budgets, regulations, conventions, implementing mechanisms, etc. Forms of discrimination: biased laws/policies (for example health care policies that do not address women's reproductive needs); closed and unrepresentative decision making structures (parliaments, courts, etc.)
Strategies: principal advocacy strategies to counter powerlessness and exclusion Social justice advocacy requires comprehensive action strategies that address the different forms of visible, hidden, and invisible power by tapping alternative sources of power (power with, within and to). (The arrows reflect the interactive relationships between the different forms of power and the different types of strategies.)	• Education for confidence, citizenship, collaboration, political awareness, political analysis, and using alternative media • Sharing stories, speaking out and connecting with others, affirming resistance, linking concrete daily problems with rights • Investigation, action research and dissemination of concealed information	• Building active constituencies around common concerns • Strengthening organisations, coalitions, movements, and accountable leaders • Mobilising around shared agendas; demonstrating clout through direct action • Participatory research and dissemination of information that legitimise the issues of the excluded groups	• Lobbying and monitoring • Negotiation and litigation • Public education and media • Policy research, proposals • Shadow reports • Marches and demonstrations • Voting and running for office • Modelling innovations • Collaboration • Etc.

Empowerment

Gender theory adds another perspective for understanding different levels and expressions of power which are applicable to women as well as men. Practitioners and scholars familiar with the challenges of women's empowerment explain that political power takes shape in three interacting levels of a woman's life. Change will not occur, they argue, unless political strategies look at and address power in the public, private, and intimate realms.

The public realm of power refers to the visible face of power as it affects women and men in their jobs, public life, legal rights, etc. The private realm of power refers to relationships and roles in families, among friends, sexual partnerships, marriage, etc. The intimate realm of power has to do with one's sense of self, personal confidence, psychology, and relationship to body and health.

As the previous article on the experience in Indonesia shows, empowerment is a very complex and multi-layered

process. Social justice advocates want their strategies to empower people so they can stand up for their rights, and help create just, healthy societies. In this way, empowerment is both a strategy and a goal of citizen-centered advocacy.

Empowerment is a process that involves individual discovery and change. Most discussions of empowerment speak about it as a gradual forward-moving process. However, it is far from linear, predictable, or easy.

The Chaz! (Aha!) framework

The Chaz framework illustrates the spiraling, contradictory process of empowerment. This Framework for Women's Empowerment and Political Consciousness was created by women leaders in a Central American workshop on advocacy.[1] While developed from the experience of women's organising, it offers important insights for advocacy with any marginalised group. The chart was generated in response to the question: *What is political consciousness and how do you promote it?*

The framework begins in the upper left with the **Unending Process** of change and empowerment. The

two circles represent the **self** (I) and **the collective** (we). As the two circles connect, both gain power. This is represented by the outward moving edges of the circle. The **male symbols** around the edges of the circles represent the boundaries of patriarchy that women's empowerment comes up against.

Moving clockwise, the next area of the framework describes the process of 'conscientisation'. It begins with **information** that stimulates **questions** and anger as a woman recognises injustice and powerlessness. As she interacts with others, she discovers common predicaments, and begins to doubt that she is to blame for her situation. Her questioning is deepened by exploring ideas like **discrimination**, **equality**, **equity,** and **rights**. These ideas help her label her constraints and legitimise her desire for change.

Source: Adapted from VeneKlasen, L. with Miller, V. (2002) *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation*, World Neighbors, Oklahoma City, OK: Ch.3.

Figure 1 The Chaz framework
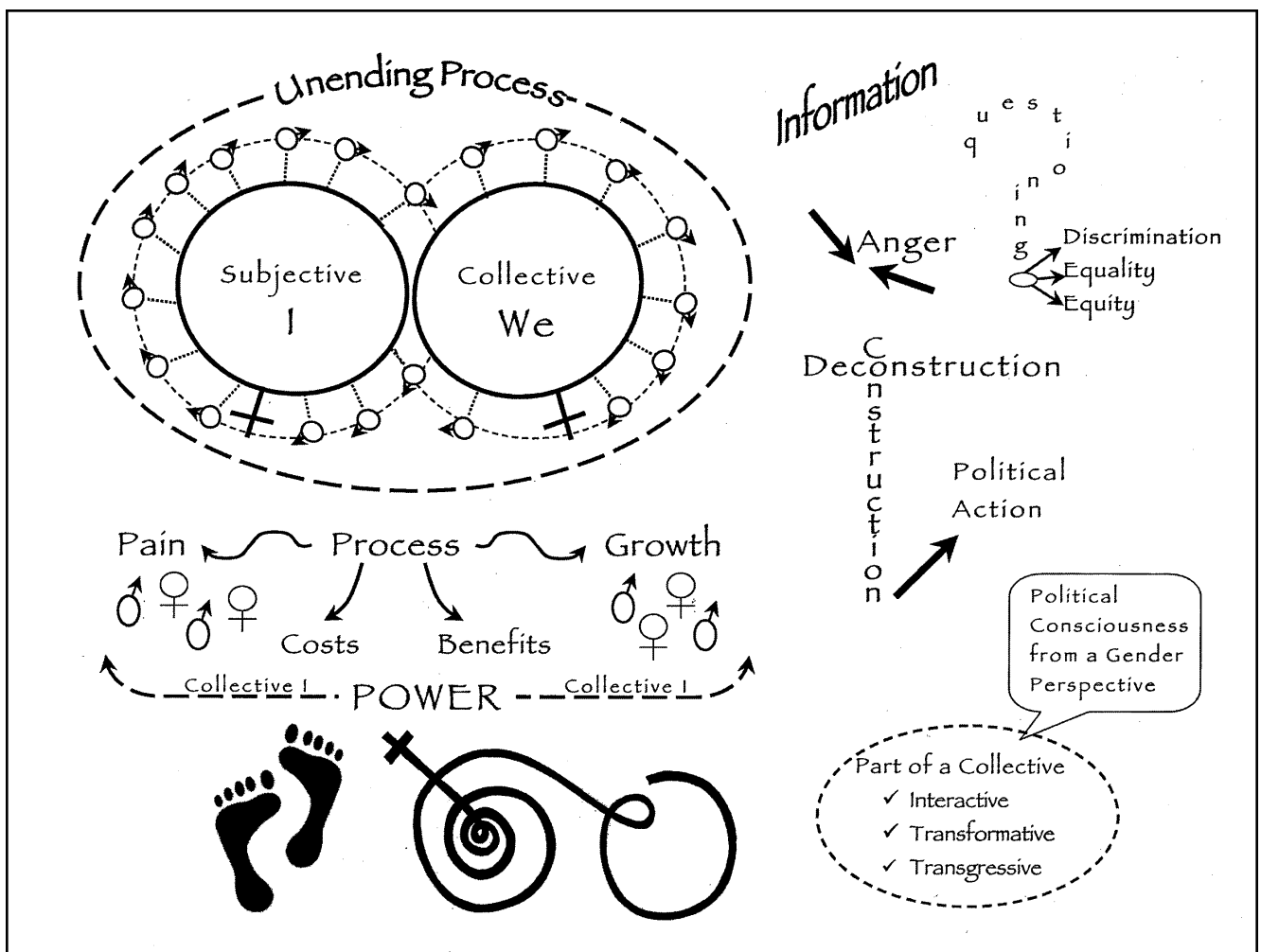
[1] GWIP/Cenzontle Advocay TOT workshop held in Nicaragua in June 1998.

The struggle at Yellow Creek

14

Valerie Miller

Introduction

Stories of community advocacy from the United States are relatively unknown yet reveal certain common challenges faced by marginalised groups everywhere as they struggle to exercise their rights. The intersection of power, discrimination, and poverty not only shapes the context of rural communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America but in the US as well. One experience from Yellow Creek, Kentucky provides special insights into the dynamics of change, citizen organising, and activism in the American south.

Background

Living in the mountains of Appalachia, one of the poorest and most exploited regions of the country, residents of the small community of Yellow Creek were forced to become strong advocates on their own behalf. Problems of corporate pollution and government inaction threatened their health and livelihoods. Mothers, fathers, farmers, mineworkers, railroad employees, teachers, and labourers came together to form the Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens to fight the poisoning of their water and lands.

In the United States, companies that use or generate toxics often locate in poorer communities, frequently in the south, where citizens have not been active in holding business or government accountable. In such settings, traditional power dynamics favour industry and discourage community participation. The voices of the poor are dismissed as irrelevant or incompetent. People from Appalachia, for example, are viewed as dumb ignorant country folk incapable of being informed or active citizens. Entrenched political and economic elites reinforce such stereotypes and shape public policy to conform to their own interests.

In this context, people from Yellow Creek waged a 15-year battle to make their water and their community healthy again. Along the way they won many victories big and small – in court, in city hall, in the minds of the public, and in their own attitudes towards themselves as citizens and leaders. By establishing a community-run health monitoring fund, Yellow Creek's court victory set a precedent for others. Their multiple strategies provide lessons on how local groups can hold government and corporations accountable to basic standards of environmental health and justice.

Local organising and networking

For decades the Middlesboro Tanning Company, run and owned by a Chicago business group, dumped dangerous chemicals into Yellow Creek. Part of an international leather and tanning operation, the Kentucky plant polluted the water supply and overloaded the county's sewage treatment plant with the full complicity of local government officials. Individual complaints by residents produced no results. But a 1980 drought forced the community's small farmers to use creek water for their livestock and pushed people to organise. When their animals suddenly died after drinking the water, residents wanted to know why. Who was responsible? If the creek was toxic was their well water safe for human use? If the community was being poisoned what could they do about it? Since the citizens of Yellow Creek first asked those questions, they have learned more than they ever wanted to about cancer, chemicals, corruption and sewage treatment plants. Most importantly, they have used that knowledge and collective strength to build a powerful local movement for change and accountability.

Along the way, they sought out assistance from the Highlander Research and Education Centre, an NGO that has supported social movements and community groups throughout the south. Inspired by Danish Folkschools, Highlander began as a union organising centre in the 1930s, moving to the struggle for racial justice in the 50s and 60s and later to issues of environmental and economic justice and community organising. Mistrustful of outsiders and mindful of the importance of autonomy, the Yellow Creek group interviewed Highlander staff to be sure they shared basic values of respect and community power. In an ongoing relationship, Highlander provided the group with strategic support. This included:

- video training for members
- exchanges with other community organisations and activists
- introduction to concerned scientists and donors
- helpful guidelines for using the Freedom of Information Act which ultimately proved vital for uncovering the truth about corporate and government actions

Marcelo Espinoza (KCat)

Change, citizen organising, and activism at Yellow Creek
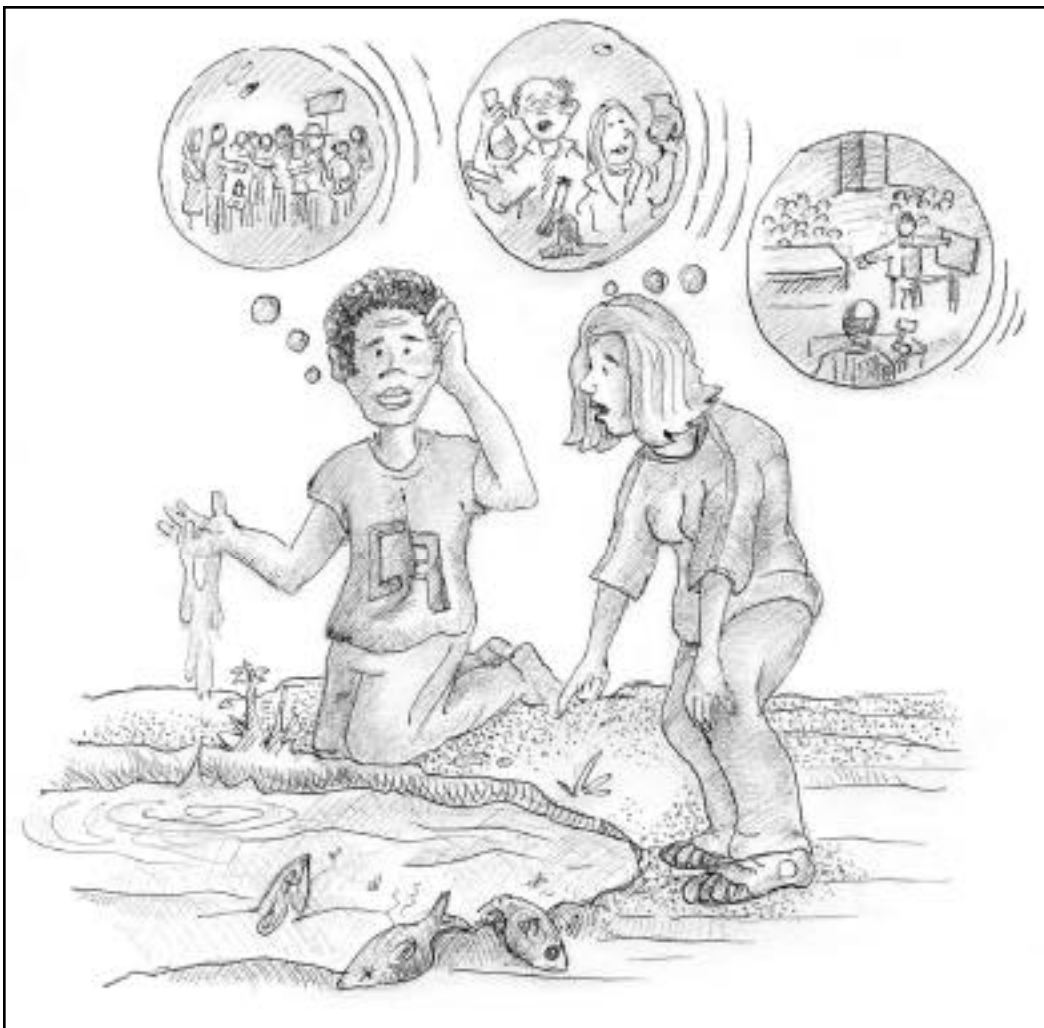
Yellow Creek eventually returned the favour by loaning Highlander two of their principal leaders, Larry and Sheila Wilson, to coordinate Highlander's region-wide Environmental Health and Justice programme. The experience of Yellow Creek helped give birth to Highlander's STP schools (Stop the Poisoning/Save the Planet workshops) which brought together hundreds of community activists working on environmental justice to plan strategy and learn from one another.

Legal action

As in so many community environmental struggles, the Yellow Creek group had to become both detective and expert in toxic chemicals and the law. Using the Freedom of Information Act, they uncovered proof of company and city lies and illegalities. Poisonous sludge from the tannery continually overran the municipal sewage treatment plant making it impossible to produce safe drinking water, yet officials and owners consistently denied there was any negligence or danger. To counter such assertions, the group conducted health surveys, videotaped waste dumping, and worked with university researchers and scientists to determine the extent of poisoning. What they found confirmed their worst fears. Studies revealed that leukaemia rates along the creek were five times the

national average; rates of miscarriage and birth defects were equally alarming.

As the Yellow Creek group peeled back the layers of lies, their anger escalated, as did their commitment to stop the abuse. They occupied city hall, used the media to educate the public, got the Red Cross to truck in safe water, organised creek clean-up days, testified before Congress, the US legislature pressured government officials to enforce clean water standards, and in between, held dances and raffles to fund their battles. They eventually elected a reform city government and, in 1985, got a safe water line to the community. Each step of the way, however, contained new problems and dangers.

Community leaders were shot at, their brake lines cut, their children harassed, and their pets killed. The tanner sued the group for $3 million for 'loss of business' and the city sued them for 'defamation of character'. Reluctantly the group concluded that it would have to go to court to force officials to obey the law and make amends for the harm they had inflicted on the community. In 1983 residents of Yellow Creek filed a class action suit against the city and the tanning company. The group later dropped charges against the

city after officials met a series of demands. The city built a new multi-million dollar sewage treatment facility, imposed stringent regulations on the tannery, paid $390,000 to Yellow Creek residents for damages, and admitted its own guilt and complicity. Through a series of legal manoeuvres, however, corporate officials delayed their own trial date for 12 years and insisted the case be tried outside the county. To keep their lawyers accountable during this long process, the group selected a small core team of members who were responsible for finalising and overseeing the community's legal agenda with the legal staff. Finally, on 30 January 1995, the community faced the tannery owners before a jury. The courtroom confrontation raged on for 11 days.

Dramatic scientific testimony on miscarriages and birth deformities hit the jury hard. One university researcher presented test results on the short-term impact of Yellow Creek water on fish embryos. In locations near the plant, survival rates ranged from zero to 16%. Jurors strained to see the large colour photographs he displayed showing birth defects in the fish tested. After viewing their twisted curved spines and deformed bodies the jury drew back, shaking their heads in disgust. Wrenching testimony of community people about their own families and children's miscarriages, cancers, and deformities produced tears in jurors' eyes and left the room silent.

The combination of the community and expert testimony proved fatal to the tannery owners. The jury found the company and four of its owners guilty of gross negligence and, together with the city of Middlesboro, ordered them to provide $11 million to the community for a health fund to monitor and identify the effects of the poisoning. In addition, the individual owners must give another $4.l million to the citizens of Yellow Creek in punishment for their crimes. The bailiff (the court security person) probably best described the trial's outcome when he turned to Larry Wilson and said 'You sure whupped their asses.'

Reasons for success

The reasons for Yellow Creek's successes were many. They included:

- creating high levels of trust among members
- sharing leadership responsibilities broadly
- being scrupulously open and transparent in all financial dealings
- using democratic procedures and affirming the contributions of all members
- ensuring accuracy of information based on both community and 'scientific' knowledge
- designing activities that use humour and common sense in the face of power
- keeping lawyers and other experts accountable to the group's decisions

- obtaining the strategic support of a collaborative NGO
- going bowling on Thursdays and line-dancing on Saturdays to keep everybody sane and fast on their feet

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Notes

From city streets to congressional corridors: insights from the US anti-war movement

15

David Cohen

Introduction

The story of US opposition to the Vietnam War provides insights into how protest movements can build on awareness and public opposition, and move to strategies that engage the formal political system. It demonstrates that multiple strategies are needed to create lasting change. Protest and electoral politics alone are never enough – ongoing public education, organising, and a variety of actions in the US legislature, Congress, were also key in building the force to end the war.

Roots of Vietnam conflict: Cold War and colonialism

Following World War II, differences of ideology dominated international relations and a so-called Cold War developed between capitalist and communist countries. As colonial regimes began to fall, each power bloc tried to influence the newly emerging states. In Indochina, the French fought to maintain their colonial power against the Vietminh, a popular independence movement in Vietnam. Spurned in their overtures to the US, Vietminh leaders turned to the communist Soviet Union for support, whilst the US government backed the French against the communist-funded Vietminh. With France's defeat in 1954, an international peace conference divided Vietnam temporarily in two – North and South – and set 1956 as the date for national elections to reunify the country.

US officials believed that once one country became communist, its neighbours would also follow, falling under Soviet Union control. Fearing a Vienminh victory, this belief led the US to oppose the elections and support anti-communist groups in the South. President Eisenhower, a popular World War II hero, however, went against the recommendations of his top military commanders and refused to commit US troops.

President Kennedy, elected by the narrowest of margins in 1960, did not want to risk political capital by 'losing' Indochina, especially South Vietnam. He enlarged the US mission by sending 16,000 American military advisers, but internal politics in South Vietnam threatened to undermine the effort. Ngo Dinh Diem, the US-backed South Vietnamese leader, was losing support. A group of his own generals approached the US about launching a possible coup. Washington did nothing to prevent the action and Diem was assassinated in November 1963, three weeks before President Kennedy was also assassinated. The South Vietnam government grew weaker as it faced pressures from an intensified North Vietnamese presence. With the government near collapse President Johnson, Kennedy's successor, began bombing North Vietnam in February 1965 and sent 6,000 combat troops in June 1965. By 1968 the US had 568,000 troops in South Vietnam.

Polarisation, disillusionment and protest

As the war continued, political polarisation in the US increased. The so-called 'hawks' opposed gradual escalation of the war and wanted to destroy North Vietnam by using massive military operations. Usually older and often veterans of World War II, hawks rejected any form of what they considered appeasement. They drew analogies to the 1938 Munich conference where the French and British gave concessions to Hitler in an unsuccessful effort to stave off another world war.

'Doves' argued that the war was not in the national interest and questioned its morality. Usually younger, doves were concerned about the draft and the unequal burdens it placed on the poor and uneducated. Despite sharing similar concerns, a huge gap remained between dove political elites and many young dove non-elites in terms of strategy. Disillusioned with government, younger doves rejected efforts to engage the state. Instead, they organised teach-ins on university campuses, conducted mass demonstrations, engaged in civil disobedience, and used street theatre and songs to express their outrage and expand their numbers.

Broad public disillusionment grew through the mid-1960s. Student actions increased in intensity culminating in campus protests that frequently led to violence. Yet, despite hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the conduct of the war, nothing was achieved in the Congress to alter its direction.

With Nixon's presidential win in 1968 and his subsequent expansion of the war, doves grew increasingly disillusioned. Enormous public demonstrations filled city streets coast to coast. When US troops invaded Cambodia

in 1970, massive protests erupted on campuses across the country from elite private universities such as Harvard to small public colleges such as Kent State, where national guardsmen killed four students during a demonstration. Anger and cynicism escalated.

Since the start of the war, Congress had been relatively passive, especially in the lower house, the House of Representatives, whose rules, committees, and seniority system discouraged debates and votes on controversial issues. Many anti-war activists concluded that American political institutions were simply incapable of exercising the checks and balances necessary to stop the war. Other war critics believed that the very nature of American democracy was at stake and that to ensure the system's survival, national governing institutions must be made to respond to public concerns.

Politics of engagement: strategies for education, organisation, and action

The ongoing anti-war education and protest efforts helped undermine some dominant political ideas about the war and expanded public opposition, thus opening up the possibility for direct political engagement. With no real end to the war in sight, a growing number of legislators had increasing doubts about its viability and costs. Yet they were not ready to embrace the full anti-war movement with its more radical challenges to venerable US institutions and symbols, such as the armed services and the American flag.

However, certain anti-war activists who knew their way around Congress, particularly the House of Representatives, began to serve as a bridge for legislative action. Concerned about the future of democratic institutions and respected by congressional doves, they were not viewed as flag burners or extremists. They also had links to elements in the peace movement which were not opposed to using the political system to create policy. Despite its previous impotence, these activists felt that the House made an ideal arena for anti-war work. Several reasons influenced their thinking:

- Voters had greater access to House members than to members of the Senate (the upper house), since representatives faced the voters every two years whilst Senators faced it only every four years.
- The House had not dealt with this issue in any substantial way since the war began.
- Given the growing intensity of street actions, the gravity of the Cambodia invasion, and the war's continuing escalation, House members new to the anti-war effort believed that they had to confront the issue directly.

In this context, the challenge was to create a congressional vehicle with political bite, one capable of mobilising public pressure and testing House members.

Most importantly, making Representatives vote on the war would increase opportunities for citizen education and organising, and eventually allow the public to hold members accountable between elections. Anti-war rhetoric had to be translated into specific votes that cut off money for the war. The votes provided the means to hold officials responsible in future elections. Yet the barriers to such a strategy were significant. Any realistic analysis of the congressional system showed that bringing a serious matter to the House floor through legislation could never successfully run the gauntlet of the House Committee system (a number of committees responsible for reviewing and introducing legislation). Moreover, the anti-war movement in the Congress had passionate champions, but few new converts to the cause.

To counter these barriers, activists with the support of legislators newly disenchanted with the war created a sign-on vehicle – a letter presenting three principles for House members' signatures that resonated with the concerns of a major sector of the anti-war movement. These were:

1. End the war on a specific date – 31 December, 1971.
2. Stop all funding to support the war after that date.
3. Return all Prisoners of War.

The inclusion of a specific date to end the war was crucial to peace activists since it provided a specific timeline for termination. The curtailment of funding gave the Statement of Principles political teeth. This was a statement that asked Congressional Members to put their signature on the line and set a date for cutting off funds.

The position on Prisoners of War (POW) was a politically tricky issue. President Nixon had used POWs as an emotional tool to justify the air attacks and the continued escalation of the conflict. Nixon conditioned any end of the war to their return. No elected official was against the return of the POWs, however, the anti-war movement was opposed to using the POWs as a condition for ending US involvement. The Statement fudged the issue by not answering the question of conditionality.

A common sign-on letter for both political parties (Republic and Democrat) proved too difficult to negotiate, so organisers created separate letters for each party, each affirming the same principles. This strategy allowed Republicans to show their opposition to the Republic Nixon and encouraged a new cast of Democrats to emerge and take the lead against the war. Geographically spread across the country, these Democrats were seen as serious legislators and not considered movement zealots. Organisers sought out such credible respected House members from both parties to lend their signatures to the separate sign-on letters. After attaining their sponsorship, the two letters were ready to be sent out to the rest of the House for members' consideration.

The letters, which did not contain the complexities of

legislation such as details about withdrawal or conditionalities, provided a way for voters to get their Representatives to state their beliefs about Vietnam publicly. A strategy had been found to focus anti-war energies on the House for the first time.

To promote the sign-on effort, a grassroots campaign was spearheaded by Common Cause, a new advocacy organisation less than a year old whose members had chosen ending the war as their first legislative priority. The organisation was committed to making the system and its institutions responsive to citizen concerns. Using a new inexpensive phone technology, Common Cause called people at home to get them to ask their Representative to sign on to the Statement of Principles. Together, Common Cause and the cooperating legislators succeeded in creating a sustained effort by the House to address the issue. Yet, those anti-War activists not focused on the Congress continued to ignore it and actions between the different groups were not coordinated.

The initial Statement of Principles effort led to additional congressional actions. Organisers got the Democratic caucus in the House to call a vote of its members on the issue but the resolution was rejected by a close margin. Even though the vote was supposed to be secret, anti-war legislators helped make the results public. Those who opposed the resolution were then bombarded with phone calls and letters from their constituents and asked again to sign the Statement of Principles.

As the sign-on campaign continued, organisers found a specific legislative vehicle to use in their advocacy – the military procurement law. Non-controversial, this routine law had to be approved annually. Without it, the military could not be funded. Well in advance of the annual vote, statement organisers and Common Cause asked two members of the House Armed Services Committee[1] to introduce an anti-war amendment that barred funds for military procurement. Since the amendment was related to the bill's content, the initiative could not be blocked by House rules. This initiative generated another public campaign to pressure legislators to support the amendment. While the vote failed, it provided crucial momentum for ongoing organising and advocacy. More Democratic legislators voted for the amendment than cast votes in the House Democratic caucus. More legislators voted for the amendment than signed the Democratic and Republican Statement of Principles.

On 1 January, 1972, President Nixon further escalated the war. Opposition was immediate and substantial. Activists felt that they now had legislative outlets that could address their concerns. The House Democratic Caucus instructed the House Foreign Affairs Committee to send legislation to the floor calling for ending the war. The legislation lost, but this was another important step in

reasserting the accountability of legislative committees. The war continued for three more years before it came to an end. Finally troops were withdrawn in 1975 as the South Vietnamese army collapsed.

Lessons learned

In reflecting on those dramatic days, here is what stands out:

- It is possible to challenge prevailing conventional wisdom and so called expert opinion, and turn such actions into sustained political and policy opposition. This work, however, is long and slow and requires patience, creativity, and perseverance.

- Advocacy and political action strategies need to be multi-dimensional. Protest and electoral politics are never enough. Combining them with public education, organising, and congressional actions is crucial for challenging conventional wisdom and promoting lasting change.

- Policies advocated have to be true to, and resonate with, the movements that created the political demands for change.

- Knowing the formal and informal aspects of how elected institutions work is critical for success.

- To build and strengthen public support, advocates must be prepared to argue with power holders.

- Framing issues in ways that draw public support is essential especially when the decision makers oppose what is being called for.

- Recognise and value public officials who will work closely with movements.

- Understand the culture and operations of formal political institutions and develop strategies to manoeuvre and use the system. Do so even if you do not agree with them. Elected bodies have customs and habits that are different from NGOs, public interest groups, or social movements.

- In developing creative congressional vehicles, be specific on policies that legislators have the power to act on.

- If legislation does not work, try other ways of making members state their beliefs.

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[1] The committee responsible for reviewing and introducing legislation related to the military.

Monitoring and evaluating advocacy

16

Jennifer Chapman

Introduction

The limitations of project work and the need for more long-term structural solutions to poverty is increasingly recognised in the development community. Concurrently advocacy as a stated NGO activity has become increasingly important, though in some cases there is a lack of clarity about what this means in practice. Over the last few years ActionAid has refocused much of its work to support civil society, strengthen social capital, and support excluded groups in collective efforts to hold decision makers accountable.

Given these increasing resources committed to advocacy, it is important that we can understand what makes this work effective – how and when does it really makes a difference to poor and marginalised people? How can we learn to do it better? The need for more understanding in this area is widely recognised. Indeed one of the five action points that participants signed up to in the Statement from the Conference that inspired this publication is the need to develop 'broader ways of **defining and assessing success** in advocacy and citizen participation':

> *Progress is often measured according to narrow, quantitative, and externally defined indicators. Systematic efforts are needed to develop alternative tools and methods which enable people to define their own indicators of success and to learn from their experience (Making Change Happen Conference Statement, 2001).*

This is a challenge that ActionAid had already recognised. Over the next 3 years a team drawn from Brazil, Ghana, Nepal, Uganda, and the United Kingdom will be engaging in action research to explore this very issue. This work is at a very early stage – this article explains some of the thinking behind it.

Challenges and complexities of monitoring and evaluating advocacy work

Developing systems to monitor and evaluate advocacy is particularly challenging for a number of reasons:

- **Causal relationships:** The complexity of issues makes it difficult to determine cause and effect between NGO advocacy initiatives and outcomes. This is hard enough when undertaking targeted lobbying for a specific change in the law, but even harder when attempting to influence more general attitudes and values in society. In such complex systems it will always be difficult to pin down exactly what caused a certain impact, or the full effect of any action, even after the event. The influence of external factors are also unpredictable – i.e. the political situation, disasters, or opposition tactics may influence outcomes more than anything within the advocate's control.

- **Compromise versus outright victory:** Outright victory, in the sense of achieving all the sought-after objectives, is rare – often compromise is necessary, with some objectives being jettisoned or modified. This introduces an element of subjectivity in determining whether gains were significant, whether small gains were consistent with the wider objectives of the campaign, or whether the campaign was coopted. There are likely to be a variety of opinions among different partners and stakeholders in a campaign. Indeed advocacy may bring together organisations that are not all trying to achieve the same thing.

- **A moving target**: the objectives of advocacy are moving targets sensitive to external factors. They will change as the environment changes through unrelated factors, as progress is made or when resistance and setbacks are encountered. Not only do objectives shift but the main action may also shift between international, national or local levels during the course of a campaign, making it unclear where success should be sought. It is even possible that success at one level can actually work against success at another level. This means that pre-set outcomes may not be the best yardstick by which to measure. Thus indicators of success may also need to change: an indicator that was relevant at the start of the campaign may loose that relevance as the campaign widens or changes its focus.

- **Advocacy can mean many things and is increasingly collective:** Advocacy includes a whole range of tactics such as influencing, lobbying, campaigning, demonstrations, boycotts, etc. Different

organisations work in different ways and advocacy increasingly takes place through networks and coalitions. Indeed, positive results may often reflect the sum of a variety of approaches, such as insider and outsider strategies. It may be difficult to assess which approach makes the difference; even harder to isolate the impact of a particular organisation. Claiming or measuring individual attribution may be counterproductive and harm cooperation. It may be more important to improve how organisations are working together for a common purpose.

- **Long-term policy work:** Furthermore, much advocacy work is long term. Policy reform can be slow and incremental and implementation, seen in terms of changes in people's lives, often lags significantly behind it. This poses a challenge in measuring impact as opposed to outcomes. Measuring policy change may not be sensitive enough to changes in the short term. It is also important to measure implementation of the policy, not only its formulation.

- **Limited accumulation of knowledge:** Advocacy work is often unique, rarely repeated or replicated, so that the gradual accumulation of knowledge by repetition does not happen. This does not mean that learning is impossible, but that reflection in order to make tacit knowledge explicit is even more important if lessons learnt from one initiative are to be carried through to the next.

- **A conflictual process:** Advocacy can be a conflictual process. Engaging in advocacy work can have political consequences in terms of groups' relationships with others. These consequences are hard to predict at the outset, and difficult to map.

Combined with these issues specific to advocacy work are other challenges that cut across all monitoring and evaluation:

- *Who* and *what* is the monitoring and evaluation for?
- How can monitoring and evaluation be participatory, involving stakeholders at all levels?
- How can gender and other social differences be fully taken into account?
- How can monitoring and evaluation be a basis for organisational learning?

The above poses a real challenge in developing useful methods to support meaningful learning in the area of advocacy work.

Incorporating different dimensions of success

All of these issues are compounded when organisations are unclear about what they want to achieve. Intermediate objectives or indicators may need to be

flexible, but an NGO must nevertheless be clear about its long-term goals, vision, and political understanding of advocacy, as this affects both the approaches taken and what is looked for in assessing impact.

Balancing advocacy work and capacity building

A campaign's success is frequently evaluated against a single short-term goal, such as winning immediate legislative or policy victories – a definition of success that ignores the long-term means to sustain such gains. Without strong systems or NGOs/ grassroots groups able to hold government accountable, policy victories can be short-lived.

Valerie Miller, one of the organisers of the workshop that inspired this publication, suggests that it is not uncommon for the leaders of NGOs and popular organisations to pay so much attention to lobbying work that they neglect their members' other concerns and the processes and activities that keep organisations strong and true to their full mission:

One serious dilemma in policy work is that while a campaign may be successful in getting policies changed or adopted, the process may diminish strength of the very institutions that help generate 'social capital' and which are necessary for achieving policy reform in a pluralistic society over the long term. This concern … raises important questions about the need to place a higher priority on institutions and constituency building activities when designing policy influence efforts. If such activities are not incorporated and understood as a vital integral part of the process, policy work may actually undermine the institutional basis of civil society and the potential for promoting long-term social accountability and responsible government.[1]

Changing public opinion and social norms

Indeed policy changes on their own are rarely enough to ensure changes in people's lives. For example legislative and policy changes in women's status are often several stages removed from the lived realities of women in Africa. In politically authoritarian contexts, the gap between policy and practice is most marked: high profile initiatives on behalf of women often bear little or no relation to the harsh realities of women and do little to change them. This is not to say that international or national policies or conventions have no use – indeed they can provide an important lever or tool for activists, but on their own they are rarely sufficient to make positive changes in poor or marginalised people's lives.

In some cases the discrepancy between what policies state and what is done may be because advocacy efforts have focused on influencing national-level policies with no corresponding effort directed at traditional practices and

[1] Valerie Miller, 1994.

customary laws that have a direct bearing on individual lives at the community level. For example, the constitutions of nearly all countries explicitly accord equal status and rights to men and women. That has not prevented customary laws from effectively barring women's access to land and inheritance in many societies[2].

For many issues, achieving change in public opinion or social norms may also need attention. These are important in themselves, but can also act as a route to put pressure on policy processes, and make policies more likely to be implemented:

> *Hard won gains can be dissipated unless there is constant vigilance over the law's application and interpretation. Legal reform strategies work best, after all, when the social value base is in concordance with the desired new norms. As long as the old regime of values is in effect, the tasks of making the new norms operative, or activating the educative function of law to change values, will be difficult and require action on many fronts.*[3]

Recognising trade-offs

It is important to clarify the approach and ideology of the NGO, as the other dimensions of advocacy success are *not* an automatic result of all policy work. If NGOs act as intermediaries for a grassroots base who are merely clients, policy work can lead to the evolution of a civil society with a strong professional advocacy sector and a weak and disorganised grassroots base; this may do nothing to reduce the power of those being lobbied. Indeed, there may be tensions inherent in a campaign that attempts to influence both policy and civil society dimensions:

> *It often appears that trade-offs must be made, at least in the short term, between policy gains and strengthening grassroots associations. Lobbying actions sometimes can't wait for slower-paced grassroots education and participation efforts. Sometimes the strategies preferred by the grassroots frame the issues so that they are hard to win.*[4]

Recognising there may be trade-offs is a start. But there is the additional issue of who makes decisions when trade-offs need to be made. If NGO advocacy is planned in isolation these trade-offs may not be recognised or given priority: de facto it is likely to be the tactics of the larger, better resourced, and better linked organisations that win out. There is a need to recognise political dynamics within and between civil society groups, and work to ensure systems to enable transparency and participatory decision making.

[2] UNFPA, no date.
[3] Schuler, 1992.
[4] Jane Covey, 1994.

Incorporating other dimensions of success, and being clear about what they are and possible trade-offs, allows a more complete analysis and understanding of a campaign's effectiveness and potential for long-term impact. Table 1 draws together four possible dimensions of success in advocacy work. It is not suggested that these have equal weighting in every situation or for every type of issue. However for most advocacy issues a number of these will be important.

Each of these dimensions of success is complex in itself and may require different methods for monitoring and evaluating change. However it is important that these dimensions are not seen in isolation of each other as success in one dimension can influence progress in another.

1. Policy change

Policy advocacy is the process in which a group or groups apply a set of skills and techniques for the purpose of *influencing* public decision making. It refers not only to laws, but also to the creation of programmes, allocation of resources, allocation of staff, and implementation. Policy advocacy may be carried out by a range of groups depending on the issue. For particularly technical issues, for example around TRIPS, there may be a key role here for more formal and professional advocacy.

The policy results for advocacy are the degree to which policy objectives are achieved. Such objectives involve specific changes in the *policies*, *programmes*, or *practices* of major national institutions that affect the public, such as government, parliament, the media, the private sector, programmes of local donors, or UN bodies.

2. Strengthening civil society

The results in this dimension refer to the increased advocacy capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to hold those in power accountable, also the increased capacity of CSOs to work together in advocacy networks at the local, national, and international level, and the increased advocacy capacity of these networks. Issues of transparency, participation, and power within advocacy networks are very relevant here.

A good example of success in this dimension is the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) which has linked and supported advocacy groups in many countries around the breastfeeding issue.

Another important aspect of strengthening civil society involves increasing 'social capital' – the relations of trust and reciprocity that underpin the cooperation and collaboration necessary for advocacy and for working collectively.

3. Supporting people centred policy making

People centred policy making is a process by which the community becomes aware of its rights and develops the confidence, skills, and organisation to speak out to

Table 1 Framework for understanding possible outcomes and impact of advocacy and campaigning work[5]

Dimension of work	Intermediate objectives	Longer-term objectives
1.Policy change	• Increased dialogue on an issue • Raised profile of issue • Changed opinion (whose?) • Changed rhetoric (in public/private) • Change in written publications	• Changed policy • Change in legislation • Change in resource allocation • Policy/legislation change implemented *(and in the very long term)* • Positive change in people's lives as a result of the policy/legislation change
2.Strengthening civil society by working with individual organisations and networks	• Change in individual members' skills, capacity, knowledge and effectiveness? • Change in individual civil groups' capacity, organisational skills, effectiveness? • Greater synergy of aims/activities in networks/movements • Change in collaboration, trust or unity of civil society groups	• Increased effectiveness of civil society work • Civil groups active in influencing decision makers in ways that will benefit poor people • Civil groups monitoring implementation of policies/programmes. • Partnerships and networks effective and sustainable
3.Supporting people-centred policy making	• Greater awareness of individual rights and the power systems that withhold rights • Change in local people's skills, capacity, and knowledge to mobilise and advocate on their own behalves • Increased reporting of right violations • Existence of systems to monitor rights • Claims made by CBOs for enforcing rights	• Improved access to basic rights such as health, housing, water, food, non-discrimination
4.Enlarging democratic space or the space in which civil society groups can effectively operate in society	• Greater freedom of expression • Greater acceptance/recognition of civil groups • Existence of fora for civil groups to input into a wider range of decisions • Increased legitimacy of civil society groups	• Increased participation of civil society groups in influencing decisions • Change in accountability and transparency of public institutions

demand or negotiate them. This work emphasises results related to the role of individuals as political actors and claim-holders, especially results related to political awareness, situation analysis and a sense of personal self-worth. Such changes occur when the passive and paralysing attitudes of self-blame and ignorance, so common to many powerless and disenfranchised groups, are transformed into proactive attitudes and concrete capabilities that allow people to become active protagonists in the defence and advancement of their own rights.

This dimension overlaps with the previous one when looking at increasing the capacity of membership based organisations.

An example of this sort of work would be support given to groups of *dalits* (untouchables) in Nepal who are challenging local level discrimination by a variety of mass activities including entering temples where they are barred from access.

4. Enlarging the space in which civil society groups can effectively operate in society
This dimension looks at whether the effort has increased the access and influence of disenfranchised groups such

as women in debates and decision making, or strengthened the accountability of state institutions to civil society groups. In many cases when governments or multilaterals wish to engage in discussions with civil society, they turn to large international organisations such as ActionAid which are perceived to have relevant expertise. In the process there is a danger that local, smaller or poorer organisations are squeezed out of opportunities for debate. In a number of countries ActionAid has been invited to participate in developing PRSPs. Instead of taking this as an opportunity to represent civil society in the process, ActionAid has used this as an opportunity to get a whole range of civil society organisations together to develop a common position and together feed into the process, thereby giving smaller grassroots organisations an opportunity to get involved.

Concluding remarks
This paper has focused on only two aspects of monitoring and evaluating advocacy work – why it is challenging and the need to focus on different dimensions of success. There are many other aspects that need attention. In particular the Scoping Study on which this paper is based

[5] Developed by Ros David from IDR, 1999.

found that more work is needed on: networks and movements; how to ensure that advocacy work at different levels is complementary; how to understand the value of individual contributions without weakening cooperation; how to best support civil society advocacy in the longer term; social capital; the political consequences of advocacy; how to recognise and monitor space for involvement at different levels and in different cultures; and how to fully incorporate gender issues. These are issues that ActionAid intends to look at in more detail over the next three years through the action research mentioned earlier.

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Notes

This paper is based on a longer paper: *Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy: A Scoping Study*, 2001, by Jennifer Chapman and Amboka Wameyo. The Scoping Study is available from ActionAid.

Jennifer Chapman works on advocacy impact assessment as part of the Impact Assessment Unit in ActionAid. She is coordinating the research project mentioned in this paper.

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Determining priorities in rural communities in Jamaica

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Jane Dodman

The Mel Nathan Institute (MNI), the human and community development agency of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, has been contracted by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) to conduct organisational strengthening training programmes in several communities in rural Jamaica. Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is the prime approach used in these programmes.

This is a report of the outcome of a PLA activity in one of the groups. The group comprised 15 people from three adjoining remote rural communities, who were working towards implementing an economic project, which would provide employment opportunities in the area. The participants were all members of community organisations in their communities. These groups included churches, youth groups, citizens' associations, the Jamaica Agricultural Society, and local farmers' associations. Most of the group members were farmers who grew Blue Mountain coffee, bananas, coconuts, and otaheite apples. The different community groups from the three communities had recently come together to form a Community Development Council (CDC). Each community group had representation on the CDC, and the CDC had responsibility for planning and implementing community projects. Although some of the impetus for the formation of the CDC came from an economic initiative, the group also sought to address other community needs.

A community centre had recently been refurbished with the intention of establishing a banana chips factory[1]. This factory would use the bananas grown by the farmers in the three communities and would also provide employment for additional persons in the production, packaging, and distribution of the banana chips. Some of the participants had a particular interest in the establishment of the factory. Others had a general interest in a variety of community development programmes. The leadership of the CDC was male, with an average age of about 30. Two members of the group who attended the training sessions were teenagers; most of them were aged 20 to 35 and about four were over 35, but under 50. There was an equal balance of male and female members in the group. Although the training was primarily offered

1 Banana chips are the most common savoury snack eaten in Jamaica and are made from green (unripe) bananas.

to the leadership of the CDC, other interested community residents were invited and did attend.

There were some marked differences between the three communities, particularly in terms of their accessibility to main roads and some basic amenities. The first community was some distance from the main road, but was just accessible by car. The second community was about a mile from the first community, up a steep, winding hill. This community, which was at over 4000 feet above sea level, was only accessible in a four-wheel drive vehicle. The local All-Age school was based here and served the three communities. This was the location for the training. The third community was some two miles away from the second and again was only accessible in a four-wheel drive vehicle. There was no piped water in any of the three communities. Most of the homes in the first two communities had electricity, but there was no street lighting. There was no electricity in the third community.

In one of the training modules, *Planning and Management*, the participants were asked to prepare a list of the main community needs and then to place them in order of priority. This was done using four different ways of determining priorities, and then participants discussed the four ways and their effectiveness as planning tools.

The participants engaged in a period of brainstorming and drew up a list of the following nine community needs:
• Health centre
• Roads
• Water
• Transportation
• Electricity
• Employment opportunities/income generation
• Recreational facilities
• Educational opportunities
• Sanitary conveniences

The participants used four different ways to determine the priorities:

1. Priority ranking
Each community need was written on a separate piece of card. Participants placed them in order of priority, starting with the most important. People explained their reasons for the ranking, and the list was drawn up through

PLA techniques in action with a group from St. Thomas

Orientation meeting with the group and staff members from Mel Nathan Institute

discussion and consensus. As none of the participants had piped water in their communities, this was a vital need for everyone. Participants from the two larger communities had electricity in their homes but no street lighting. Their need for electricity was for street lighting. As the three participants from the smallest and most remote community had no electricity at all, they were adamant that this had to be the first priority, and would not agree to any other community need taking precedence over it. It was agreed that this would be the top priority for that community, and then all the other needs were put in order by overall consensus, as follows:

- Electricity for the smallest community
- Water
- Educational opportunities
- Roads
- Health centre
- Employment opportunities
- Transportation
- Recreational facilities
- Sanitary conveniences

2. Voting

Voting for community needs was done by 'body voting'. The nine community needs were written on cards and placed at intervals around the room. Participants were asked to determine the first three priority needs. They moved to stand at their first priority need and this need was given four points. When they moved to their second priority need, this need was accorded two points, and finally the third need was given one point. Six of the community needs were identified by the voting method.

- Water: 47 points
- Road: 22 points
- Electricity: 12 points
- Educational opportunities: 10 points
- Employment opportunities: 10 points
- Health centre: 4 points

The 12 points for electricity came from the three residents of the community without electricity. All three participants from that community placed it first, but it was not in the first three for any of the other participants.

3. Scoring

This activity was done in two groups. This allowed for small group discussion and also for a comparison to be made between the decisions made by each group regarding the priorities for community needs.

Each group drew up the matrix, as below, on a large sheet of paper. The community needs were listed on the horizontal axis and the criteria for determining the needs were listed on the vertical axis. Each group was given 20 counters to distribute along each row. For example, in row one, the 20 counters had to be distributed according to the number of persons affected by the problem. Both groups considered that more people were affected by the lack of water than by any other community need, so they allocated the most counters to water in both groups. Group One allocated five counters to water and Group Two allocated eight counters. Both groups judged that water was the most severe community problem, and also the most difficult to solve, and the one for which it would be most difficult to access funding and resources. Both groups considered that in second place, most people were affected by the poor roads in the communities. They also reckoned that it was the second most severe problem. Overall, electricity was placed as the third most critical community need. There was less consensus between the two groups on the issues of how to solve the problem of roads and electricity and how to access funding and resources for these two community needs. Group One accorded the difficulty of accessing funding and resources for electricity six counters, compared with the three that Group Two accorded the same need.

A word of caution was given about the total at the end of each column, as each of the criteria was independent of

Table 1 Scoring matrix

Group One

Need/ Criteria	Electricity	Road	Water	Education	Transportation	Health centre	Employment	Recreation	Sanitary conveniences
No. of persons affected	2	4	5	3	0	2	2	2	0
Severity of problem	4	4	6	1	1	3	0	1	0
Difficulty of solving	4	5	8	0	0	3	0	0	0
Difficulty of accessing funding/resources	6	4	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**16**	**17**	**29**	**4**	**1**	**8**	**2**	**3**	**0**

Group Two

Issue/Criteria	Electricity	Road	Water	Education	Transportation	Health centre	Employment	Recreation	Sanitary conveniences
No. of persons affected	2	4	8	2	1	1	2	0	0
Severity of problem	2	4	6	2	2	2	2	0	0
Difficulty of solving	3	2	9	2	1	2	1	0	0
Difficulty of accessing funding/resources	3	3	5	2	1	4	2	0	0
Total	**10**	**13**	**28**	**8**	**5**	**9**	**7**	**0**	**0**

each other criteria. The first two criteria primarily addressed need, and the final two addressed the difficulty of solving the problem, including accessing the funding and resources. However, the participants found the totals useful in looking at the total picture, and recognised that there was some correlation between the number of persons affected and the severity of the problem on the one hand, and the difficulty of solving and accessing funding and resources on the other hand. They noted that if the problems had been easier and cheaper to resolve, they would probably have been addressed already.

The full matrices, prepared by each group, are given above.

4. Pairwise ranking
The final method used for determining community needs was pairwise ranking. The grid was drawn on a large sheet of paper and participants went through each pair and decided together which was the priority in each pair. The total scores were then added up and the most

Water									
Electricity	W								
Transportation	W	El							
Road	W	El	R						
Health centre	W	El	H	H					
Education	W	El	Ed	R	H				
Recreation	W	El	T	R	H	Ed			
Employment	W	El	Ed	R	H	Ed	Em		
Sanitary conveniences	W	El	T	R	H	Ed	SC	Em	

Key and number of listings:

W: Water: 8
El: Electricity: 7
H: Health centre: 6
R: Road: 5
Ed: Education: 5

T: Transportation: 2
Em: Employment: 2
SC: Sanitary conveniences: 1
Rec: Recreational facilities: 0
Total number of listings: 36

important priority emerged. Water, electricity, and a health centre were the first three priorities.

After the discussion about the results from each of the four ways of determining priorities, there was another one about the overall results, comparing the four different methodologies. The participants noted that in each case water and electricity were the top two priorities. For the priority ranking, it had not been possible to come to a full consensus, as the persons who lived in the most remote community insisted that electricity be put at the top of the ranking. Water was the top priority for the other participants using the priority ranking method. There was a discussion about the need for people and communities to work together even if some of the participants would not be direct beneficiaries of the project. In this instance, participants recognised that the three communities might need to work together in order for the smallest and most remote community to have electricity installed in the community. Water came out as the top priority using the other three methodologies. Electricity came as the second priority, using the pairwise ranking, and as the third priority using the voting and scoring methods.

Participants noted that the health centre had a higher ranking (third), using the pairwise ranking. They remarked that when it was a direct choice between a health centre and another community need, they became more aware of the health issues, if not for themselves, at least for other people. As they were all quite healthy themselves, the need for the health centre was not a major priority using the first three methods.

The participants also noted that if they had better roads in their communities some of the other needs would automatically be addressed. For instance private taxis would drive on the roads and their transportation needs

would be addressed. Better roads would also make the health centre a few miles away more accessible. Although there is only one All-Age school that serves the three communities, there are other schools and educational facilities within a few miles, at least of the largest community. These would become more accessible with improved roads and transportation.

It was felt that each of the four ways of determining priorities contributed to the overall decision-making process. Each method allowed for a different form of decisionmaking.

- The priority ranking called for consensus from all 14 participants. In the end, this was not possible, as the smallest community insisted that its dissenting voice be heard. However, this was a learning experience for the group and encouraged them to appreciate the need to listen to the minority voice.

- The voting method allowed for individual choice as each person expressed his/her own opinion with his/her body vote. Everyone could see how the others were voting, and one member of the group was a lone voice for her choice each time. The other participants remarked on this, but she was willing to stand alone for the issues that were the priority needs for her.

- The scoring method was new to the participants. It was the most complicated of the four methodologies, and the most challenging both in terms of the methodology and in terms of interpreting the scores. This allowed for small group discussion, and the interaction towards joint decision making was seen as being as valuable as the actual decisions taken. This method engaged the participants in lively dialogue and the use of the counters meant that they could make an initial decision, review it, and then make a change if they so desired.

- The pairwise ranking encouraged the participants to weigh up each community need against all of the others in turn.

The participants recognised that they could use these same methodologies for making other decisions about their communities.

The *Planning and Management* module was evaluated by the participants, using individual questionnaires to evaluate the training. They were asked to rate to what extent the training had equipped them to plan for and implement their own community programmes. In the evaluation process the participants indicated that they had found the training stimulating, informative, and enabling. In addition a capacity based assessment tool, the MONFIS (standing for management, organisation, networking and mobilisation, financial management and fundraising, impact and sustainability) was administered before and after the whole training programme of which *Planning and Management* was one of four modules. The MONFIS evaluated the CDC's capacity before and after the training. One limitation of the MONFIS was that it was administered immediately after the training was completed and before there was time for much of the training to be used in community programmes and for its impact to be felt in the wider community.

The Jamaica Social Investment Fund responded to a request from the CDC to work with them on the banana chips project. The training programme was a prerequisite for JSIF and depending on the outcome of the training they would decide whether to fund the factory. The Mel Nathan Institute only had the responsibility to deliver the training. The response to the information provided by the results of these and other activities was primarily the responsibility of the CDC, along with the Social Development Commission (SDC), a government organisation which works through its staff in communities across Jamaica. The CDC and the SDC had the responsibility of informing and working with the wider community in implementing any of the recommendations that came out of the training. On the completion of the training, the Mel Nathan Institute prepared a report for JSIF, which was then passed on to the CDC and the SDC. At the time of writing we await further evidence that the priorities indicated in our training are being implemented by the SDC and other stakeholders in their community planning.

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From dependence to self-reliance through restoring human values: an experience with farmers' organisations

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Introduction

The human values of village communities, especially poor ones, are continuously eroded by government policies, projects, and the external environment, which look upon them as beneficiaries and handicap them in thinking about their own welfare. As a result, they become totally dependent on outside help for their well-being. Very often development workers have to face such situations and it becomes extremely difficult for them to work with communities, unless they are able to facilitate them to regain their human values. In this article we share our experiences with farmers' organisations in such a situation where a process which reinforces human values has helped farmers to keep themselves on the path of self-reliance, and has also enabled them to judge and pursue what is in the interest of themselves, their organisations, and society.

Background

India has around 0.73% of the world's sodic lands, and the state of Uttar Pradesh in India has around 1.2 million ha of the affected land. This covers 10% of the total cultivated area of the state.

The Uttar Pradesh Bhumi Sudhar Nigam (UPBSN) started the UP Sodic Land Reclamation Project in 1993. The project was supported by the World Bank and involved 10 districts of Uttar Pradesh. Eighty-five per cent of the beneficiaries were small and marginal farmers. UPBSN initiated the project through the formation of farmer organisations at village level and the project was implemented in collaboration with local NGOs.

The process included:

- installation of minor irrigation infrastructures;
- building of drainage networks;
- use of chemical amendments;
- crop and horticulture production; and,
- development of local leadership.

Under the project, 64,414 ha of affected lands have been reclaimed, covering 150,000 families. Farming families and local organisations have been involved since the beginning in the planning and implementation phases, and later in the evaluation process. In each village, group leaders of

farmers' organisations, Mitra Kisan (MK), Mahila Mitra Kisan (MMK), and animators were appointed through a series of capacity-building interventions involving local training institutions, NGOs, and UPBSN. These trained farmers (called master trainers) then worked as resource persons at village level, training other farmers, and conducting demonstrations at their fields. A unique experiment of farmer-led extension was tried out in Pratapgarh district (see Box 1).

Box 1 Pratapghar experience

In 1998, a senior project officer attended a training workshop on farmer-led extension, and as a follow-up to this training, master trainers of about 20 villages in Pratapgagh district organised themselves into a farmer field school and were given training. The school set the following goals:

- work for raising farm production
- work for a reduction in input costs
- promotion of indigenous know-how
- popularisation of organic composting in order to enhance soil fertility and preserve the environment

To achieve the above goals, a work plan for conducting seasonal trainings in the above 20 villages was prepared by the school. Master trainers started to train farmers on a voluntary basis. After seeing the effectiveness of these master trainers, the project authorities thought of using them as resource persons to give training to farmers' group leaders. Accordingly, the responsibility of organising awareness training for group leaders of some villages where the reclamation activity had not yet started, was entrusted to this school. After completion of the training, a comparison of the outcomes of the villagers trained at the school and those reached by villagers who attended the local training institute was made. Results were totally in favour of farmers and the field school. Slowly, more and more training of group leaders was given at this school. Training fees, which used to be paid to the training institute through project funds, started flowing to the school. Farmers, NGOs, and the village headman also made donations in kind and cash. The village headman allotted a piece of communal land to the school, and a three room building was constructed, which was used for meetings and training for farmers.

During the project implementation period, project field and NGO staff performed extension activities. After the project withdrawal, there was going to be total vacuum as village-level extension staff of the Agriculture Department had already been withdrawn due to the implementation of the *Panchayat Raj* Act (self-governance act). Also, the

village-level farmers' organisations were no longer functional, as the purpose they were formed for – reclamation – had already been achieved. Since the project was nearing its completion, an exit policy for sustaining project outputs was urgently needed.

The model of the Pratapgarh farmer field school immediately struck project personnel as a mechanism to ensure sustainability. Accordingly, a series of sensitisation workshops and exposure visits to the Pratapgarh farmer field school for master trainers, animators, and progressive farmers, was organised in the project area. This resulted in the formation of six farmer field schools and 41 farmer clubs, covering 740 villages. Efforts were also made to establish linkages between these newly created institutions and line departments, so that necessary inputs such as credit, seed, and fertiliser, could be supplied.

The problem

During field visits and interactions with the resource persons of the schools and clubs and field staff, it was quickly realised that there were a number of problems which threatened the sustainability of the new organisations.

- Schools or clubs had no vision. Project staff had tried to implant sustainability requirements but without success.
- Farmers were expecting subsidies or grants through the newly created institutions.
- The focus was on getting outside help instead of capitalising on their strengths.
- Influential farmers were trying to become resource persons of the institutions in the hope of receiving cash from outside.
- Some influential farmers were acting as the project's brokers.
- There was no feeling of ownership among the community.
- Cohesiveness among members was missing.
- Self-help feeling was totally absent.
- The project staff were taking the leading role.
- Project and NGO field staff were reinforcing dependency syndrome.
- In most cases there was no workplan. Even where there was, no action was being initiated.

The methodology

It looked to be a difficult task to bring about changes in the attitudes, perceptions, and vision of farmers and staff in such a short time, as the project was about to be completed. Sensitising field staff to the above problems did not help much as, after working for seven years in the project, they were finding it difficult to look at the project through different eyes. An 180 degree turn in the attitudes of members of the schools and clubs was needed, from dependency to self-reliance, external

motivation to internal motivation, being led to leading, from taker to give, and from project objective to purpose of life.

We decided to capitalise on our experience of changing personal attitudes, human values, enhancing self-worth, and synchronising personal goals with organisational objectives, and this led to the organisation of workshops with farmers of these schools and clubs. Project personnel were also invited. A passive role was assigned to them so that their attitudes or perceptions did not dominate. The whole methodology was participatory and involved individual and group exercises, followed by a plenary session for reflection. Stories based on human values, quotations, proverbs, and self-discovery tools were essential elements of the approach.

After formal introductions and ice-breaking sessions, we presented the objective of the workshop: to strengthen the farmers' schools and clubs. Our approach was to build on individual human values and then to build up a vision for the schools or clubs. We started by asking farmers to ask themselves the following questions:

1. How do I wish to be remembered after death?
2. What is the dream/vision of my life?
3. Where am I? (or what have I received from my parents or family e.g. assets, liabilities, education, health, recognition, productivity, production, etc.?)
4. If the present situation continues, where will it lead to me? (or what will I leave to my children?)
5. Compare 3 and 4. Am I leaving more/less than I received?
6. What are my/my family's achievements and strengths?
7. What are our school/club's achievements and strengths?
8. What is the dream/vision of our school/club?
9. What will be of personal benefit to me if the dream/vision of the school/club is fulfilled?
10. What will be of benefit to the community if the dream/vision of the school/ club is fulfilled?

Some responses to the questions are shown in Boxes 2, 3, and 4.

Box 2 How do I wish to be remembered after death?

- self-made person
- simple and honest person who felt love and concern for others too
- a person who showed the way to others by becoming a model
- gave more than I received from society
- innovative farmer
- hard working and committed person
- benevolent person
- a person who worked with available resources for the well-being of society without expecting outside help
- a torchbearer for community development

Citation: Saxena, R.S., Pradhan, S.K., (2002) *From dependence to self-reliance through restoring human values: an experience with farmers' organisations.* PLA Notes, 43: 57-60

Box 3 What will be of personal benefit to me if the vision/dream for the school/club is achieved?

- I will be recognised in the society
- people will honour me
- I will get satisfaction, happiness and peace
- my knowledge will get enhanced
- productivity of my field will increase
- total production will increase leading to increased income
- the living standard of my family will increase
- my children will be able to get good quality education
- my capacity will increase
- my children or family will feel proud of me
- I will be remembered even after my death
- I will be able to return a part of what I got from society
- I will be able to fulfil my social responsibilities

Box 4 Achievements and strengths of the school/club

Achievements:
- introduction of Soyabean crop during Rabi season for the first time
- installed a clock, which is getting energy from cow dung instead of battery
- successfully pursued the case of a poor farmer whose house was burnt by fire, and got a grant of Rs. 6000 from the sub-divisional magistrate
- successfully argued and convinced the deputy director to allot a room in the office of the sub-divisional agriculture extension officer for conducting the school's meeting and training
- organised vaccination camp for livestock and vaccinated 252 animals
- all master trainers have adopted Nadep composting method
- school has organised field day for wheat crop
- there was no attack on paddy crop from insects and diseases due to the adoption of IPM practices
- resource person of the school has learnt rapid testing of fertilisers and, as a result, adulteration in fertiliser was avoided
- continuous cropping in reclaimed area

Strengths:
- school has its own byelaws
- functioning is democratic and transparent
- farmers of 16 villages have confidence that the school can get their day-to-day problems solved
- all master trainers/resource persons of the school are demo (model) farmers
- most of master trainers/resource persons have been selected as Mitra Kisan (contact farmers) of agriculture department
- women are equal partners
- resource people have a very good profile in the farming community
- resource people have innovative ideas
- school meeting place is in the office of the sub-divisional agricultural extension officer
- school is disseminating indigenous technical knowledge (ITKs)

Once all farmers agreed a vision for the school/club, they developed SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timebound) goals/objectives. Activities to attain objectives and capitalise on their achievements and strengths were then discussed, and indicators of success for each activity developed. Some farmers talked about problems that they were facing and also expressed their concerns about problems they might encounter in meeting their objectives. They reframed the problem statement as an opportunity statement and then drew an action plan to grab the opportunity.

The exercise resulted in an action plan for the school/club showing what would be done, when, where, and by whom, and giving measurable indicators. One most notable feature of this plan was that all sustainability requirements, which project staff had unsuccessfully tried to encourage farmers to adopt, were already covered in the work plan. After finalisation of the work plan, it was decided to start implementing the most important activity listed – selecting a resource person for the school using paired ranking. The selection criteria developed by the farmers are shown in Box 6.

Box 6 Selection criteria for school/club resource person

- sympathy for the school/club vision and objectives
- best practitioner in the respective fields
- good personal image within the community
- acceptable to the majority of members of the community
- able to give sufficient time for others
- good influencing ability to convince others
- strong desire to do something better
- high-level urge to learn and share with others
- functionally literate

Reflections

The reflections of farmers were full of feelings and emotions. They were difficult to put into words but an attempt is made below.

- The question 'How do we wish to be remembered after death?' has opened the eyes of farmers and this will be helpful in keeping ourselves on the right track.
- Farmers realise they are not insignificant.
- They realise they are strong and have self-worth.
- Becoming independent or self-reliant gives real happiness and peace.
- Most of our personal dreams can be achieved if we pursue the school/clubs dream.
- Dependence on outside help will cripple us totally.
- Achievement of school/club's dream will be our mission as it also fulfils the purpose of our lives.
- Workshop had helped to remind and engrave in our minds the values we had forgotten or were ignoring.
- An outsider can only facilitate; we ourselves have to think, plan and act.

Citation: Saxena, R.S., Pradhan, S.K., (2002) *From dependence to self-reliance through restoring human values: an experience with farmers' organisations.* PLA Notes, 43: 57-60

• Workshop has helped us understand how we can plan, set indicators of success and continuously pursue the school/club dream.

Towards self-reliance

Following the workshops, all the schools and clubs have been moving towards self-reliance:

• These farmers' institutions have internalised the self-help philosophy and accordingly they have acted upon various ventures for their betterment based upon resources available within their reach.

• All these farmers' institutions have developed small funds through voluntary contributions from member farmers and other willing farmers to meet day-to-day organisational expenses.

• These institutions were proactive in approaching knowledge resources like KVKs (Farm Science Center)/State Agriculture Universities in order to conduct varietal trials at their fields and knowledge exchange through interactions with scientists. Seeds of successful varieties after these trials are being multiplied and distributed to farmers at affordable cost.

• As a result of the large-scale adoption of IPM (Integrated Pest Management) for paddy, negligible incidences of Brown Plant Hopper were observed.

• Large-scale adoption of sprinkler irrigation and polythene pipes for surface transportation of irrigation water has resulted in an increased net irrigated area.

• Change in taste, flavours, as well as quality of grain, pulses, and vegetables due to practice of organic farming through NADEP composting. This has also reduced cost of cultivation as a result of low use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

• Cultivation of other crops like sugar cane, pigeon pea, and other vegetable crops in place of routine wheat paddy rotation, has increased the income level and also met family consumption needs.

The Uttar Pradesh Diversified Agriculture Support Project (UPDASP), another World Bank-funded project, also saw the onward journey of these farmers' institutions for self-reliance, and consequently adopted this concept in their operational area (32 districts) for sustainable agriculture. The state's Agriculture Department has also accepted this approach in principle throughout the state for sustainable agriculture extension.

The above methodology, which aims at building human values and ultimately enabling farmers to judge situations, opportunities, and consequences based upon their values, has been tried by us in different settings – in two years

old, one year old, and nascent farmers' organization. We strive to encourage farmers towards the path of self-reliance and have found this methodology to be highly effective.

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Participatory communal conflict resolution (PCCR) – a tale of two Nigerian local communities

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Chimaraoke O. Izugbara

Introduction

Participatory techniques have been used for sustainable conflict resolution in many societies (Rodriguez, 1998; Schotle, *et al.*, 1999). However, reflections on the dynamics of participatory conflict resolution have largely focused on cases of local resistance to governmental programmes. Rodriguez (1998) formulated his experience of using participation in the resolution of conflicts in National Parks in Venezuela, and Paul Schotle and colleagues (1999) focused on another National Parks conflict situation in Cameroon. Although these works have highlighted the potential of participation in conflict situations, there is not yet a published assessment of the dynamics of participation in the sustainable resolution of conflicts between and or within local communities themselves. Yet in many parts of the globe, conflict situations arise daily between local groups and communities, with adverse implications for the current search for sustainability in development efforts. The present paper describes an experience of using participatory procedures to resolve a clash between two local communities in Abia State, Nigeria.

From study site to war front

In March 1999, a regional health NGO, People Against AIDS (PAAIDS), commissioned a study of local knowledge of AIDS amongst rural communities in Abia State, Nigeria. One of the sites for the survey was Ntighauzor Amairi (NA), a rural community of ten patrilineal villages. While the research team was at the study site, a conflict broke out between NA and a neighbouring community, Abala. Abala and NA are Igbo-speaking communities with two different, but mutually comprehensible dialects. The two communities exist under the Obingwa Local Government Area and have lived together for millennia (Oriji, 1972).

Local resources cause war

Abala and NA are both farming communities. They produce cassava, yam, cocoyam, maize, and other food crops. Communally owned and exploited oil palms also abound and are a source of wealth for people in the two communities. However, though Abala has a population of 10,000 persons, it has a landmass approximately half that of NA which has a population of about 12,000. High population pressure has led to serious degradation of

Abala forests and a reduction in the number of oil palms. Currently, Abala has a palm density of 80 to 130 per hectare while NA has a palm density of about 200 to 550 trees per hectare. High level poverty has thus resulted and has pushed some Abala persons into preying on oil palms and other food crops belonging to NA people.

On several occasions, men from the two communities met to find a way of stopping this trend with very little success. On 7 April, a vigilante group from NA killed an Abala youth. They had caught him harvesting oil palms in NA land. This resulted in a bloody clash between the two villages.

Searching for peace

After waiting for four days for peace to return, two members of our team went to meet the ruler of NA and discuss the situation with him. The overall head of NA arranged a meeting between us and the heads of the component villages in his domain. We discussed the crisis, its cause, and ways to initiate peace. We also obtained permission to meet and discuss the situation with members of the community. Individual and group interviews involving guided dialogue techniques were used to probe the cause(s) of the clash, and local people's views on how peace could be achieved. Interviews were conducted with elderly men and women, women leaders, village heads, warriors, young men, and medicine men.

Three delegates also went to Abala. As in the case in NA, they met with the overall head of Abala, who summoned the heads of the villages under him. The meeting lasted long enough for a number of issues to be addressed. The team was also able to obtain permission to chat freely with the villagers. Individual and group discussions were thus held with various categories of persons in Abala too.

Participation reveals useful indigenous values

Our interviews in the two communities yielded a rich body of data about people's perception of the crisis and possible avenues of dispute settlement and resolution. The people were particularly worried that the clash would spoil years of friendship and understanding between the two communities. They made it clear that the war had

persisted simply because no side would want to be called weak. In such a situation, the people observed that a neutral (third) party was needed to make peace initiatives. This probably explains the ease with which our team (as a third party) gained entry into the issue.

Through discussions with the communities, we learnt about the use of the kolanut (C*ola accuminata*) and the fresh palm frond (called locally *omu*) as key instruments of peace negotiation and conflict resolution in Igbo society. Once one community gives these to another, the receiving community is under an obligation to accept them and also to return a similar gift. In a war situation, the kolanuts are shared among the elders while the palm frond will be conspicuously displayed at the boundary of the warring communities.

We were able to persuade the elderly men of NA to present the traditional gift of kolanuts and one fresh palm frond to Abala, and Abala promptly sent their own gift to NA. On the same day, the two palm fronds (one from NA to Abala, and the other from Abala to NA) were put on display. Immediately this happened, all arms were laid down. The cessation of hostilities created the chance for the two communities to meet face to face and talk to each other.

Recognising that the social organisation of the two communities was built around male gerontocracy, we requested the overall head of each community to pick six elderly men to form a negotiating team for their respective communities. As is the tradition, the two negotiating teams met in the house of the oldest man in a neighbouring, neutral community with a third party (us) present. The men met on two occasions but failed to agree on a number of points.

We then decided to exploit another traditional facility for conflict resolution – women's role in war. We had learnt that women could bring a war to an end by staging their famed *ogu-bie* march. Women stage the *ogu-bie* march naked and may well continue until their men lay down arms. However, before the naked march is staged, the women carry out a pre-*ogu-bie* march to warn their husbands to stop fighting. The warning march comes seven days before the real *ogu-bie* parade begins.

We invited women leaders from the two communities to meet, again on neutral ground, in the house of a woman leader in a neighbouring community. The women discussed the situation together and very soon realised how urgent it had become for peace to return. They decided to return home and convince other women of the need to stage the traditional pre-*ogu-bie* protest march. Two days after this meeting, Abala woman staged their pre-*ogubie* march and a day after, NA women followed suit.

Knowing what naturally follows such protest marches, men from the two communities were forced to meet. And after two of such meetings, they finally resolved the crisis agreeing that each community should:

1. bear the full cost of burying her dead person
2. give a monthly stipend of 2000 (about US$20) to the direct families of each of the dead persons

It was also resolved that any oil palm thief caught should be fined ten live goats, seven baskets of kolanuts, five bottles of dry gin, and 30 big tubers of yam, or face ostracism in his/her community.

Conclusions

Participation was the golden key that unlocked the door to peace. The process of encouraging the two communities to reflect collectively on their situation opened the mind of facilitators and communities alike to the rich world of indigenous values upon which the search for peace could be anchored. Group and individual discussions with the youth, women, men, medicine men, and leaders in the communities offered various angles on the crisis, providing a pool of information on how to approach peace (Figure 1). Our experience endorses the need for peace efforts to start from where the people are, and what they know and do, if sustainability is to be guaranteed.

It is important to note that the key decisions which led to the truce were collectively arrived at. Although it took time to arrive at them, they proved ultimately binding to all persons in the community. Consultations with different persons helped to build confidence and led to a feeling of responsibility and commitment in the communities. The key learning here is that participation can foster interest harmonisation, promote collective responsibility, and reinforce commitment to agreed goals.

Cases of reported use of participation in facilitating peace in conflict situations have always been carefully planned by facilitators (Rodriguez, 1998; Schotle *et al.*, 1999). We, on the other hand, got involved as peace facilitators under circumstances that did not allow for such initial preparations. Consequently, we had little or no insights of what to expect.

The unexpected nature of the situation did not allow us to gain a systematic and focused understanding of the cultural organisation of the two communities. This sometimes caused problems. A case in point was when one member of our team began to address a meeting while sitting down. This did not go down well with some elderly persons from Abala, among whom it is a sign of disrespect for young persons to speak to the elderly sitting down. So the Abala contingent stood up and wanted to go. We had to explain to them that it was not a deliberate act of disrespect. They fined us the traditional one keg of palm wine, which we provided immediately and deliberations then resumed.

Figure 1 Information needed in a communal conflict situation
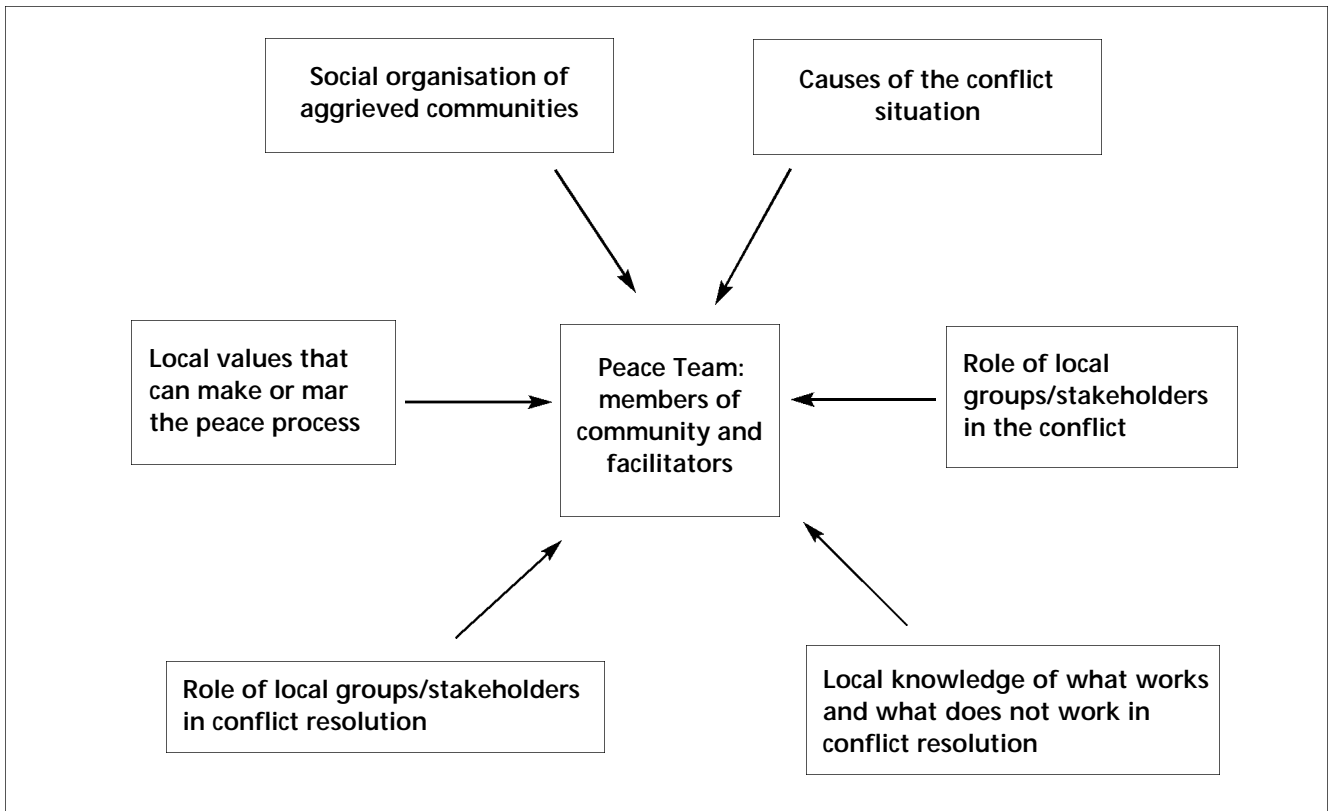
We believe we were able to gain the trust of the community because all members of the project team were Igbo and shared insights into the dynamics of Igbo indigenous culture. A complete outsider facilitator thrust into such a situation, with little or no knowledge of local culture and/or no time to investigate local cultural values, may have achieved very little.

Finally, the behaviour of the neutral party is very important. The peace facilitators in a conflict situation must strive as far as possible to be transparently neutral. They must avoid activities and practices that may make the communities suspect their intentions. For example, we were initially working in NA and had developed rapport with the people in this community. When we got involved in the conflict situation, word filtered to the Abala that we had the patronage of NA and were most likely to support them.

It required patient listening, empathy, openness, and constructive reconciliation of diverse ideas and viewpoints to earn the confidence and respect of both the communities. We felt we had succeeded in this when one elderly leader from Abala said:

> *Thank you very much for helping us resolve our problem with our brothers. It is only a brother that can help two brothers resolve a problem. Strangers cannot and do not. You people have behaved like real brothers to us.*

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Response to 'Introducing PRA techniques in the learning of environmental education in Southern Peru'

Sonia Gomez Garcia and Jose Pizarro Neyra. *PLA Notes 40*, pp13–17

Levis Kavagi

Article summary

The article presented some of the participatory approaches used in an Environmental Education (EE) course in a school in Tacna, Southern Peru. The course is part of the official curriculum of the school and involves two hours of interactive teaching-learning per week to develop knowledge of the intricate relationship between mankind and nature.

The project's objectives are:

- to show the benefits of a sustainable lifestyle to the students through education
- to improve their knowledge about the environment (information objective)
- to develop their capacity and skills regarding finding solutions to environmental problems (action and participation objectives)

The subjects covered are taught by drawing on students' own opinions and information, encouraging them to reflect on and change their behaviour, rather than by the teacher feeding them information. Students find this an 'entertaining, more interesting, and democratic' way of learning, but the objectives of the project go beyond this. The authors argue that through the students developing their knowledge, their families also improve their knowledge and in this way communities are in a better position to solve their environmental problems.

However, they also identify some limitations to using participatory techniques in a teaching environment:

- firstly, there is not much space to incorporate them into formal school curricula
- secondly, teachers need training in participatory techniques, as well as having the right approach and attitude in using them

Comments on the article

I wish to react to the above article drawing on my experience as Environmental Education and Training Officer with the UNEP Environmental Policy Implementation Programme. In developing environmental education programmes, we have faced many of the issues raised in the article by Garcia and Neyra.

1. Reasons for poor environmental education

Conceptualisation of environmental education

One of the conclusions drawn by the authors – that the disadvantage of using participatory methods in a teaching environment is that there is not much space to incorporate them into formal school curricula – is not limited to Peru. This is a global problem and its root does not lie in participatory techniques, but rather in the conceptualisation of environmental education.

When environmental education is considered as an additional subject to the curriculum, its value is greatly diminished. For this reason the UNEP-UNESCO International Environmental Education Programme recommends that environmental education should be incorporated within existing subjects. This is discussed further below.

Inappropriately trained teachers

The other reason why EE is not effectively taught is inappropriately trained teachers, and lack of user-friendly environmental information/ teaching and learning resources. Teachers and trainers who try to initiate environmental awareness and action suffer from two major setbacks: firstly, lack of appropriate content, and secondly, inadequate teaching methods.

Teacher education programmes in most countries are subject-specific and thus their graduates are not able to function in related fields. At the primary level it is better since trainees are required to teach across the curriculum, but as you go up (secondary and tertiary) teacher education becomes narrower, so much so that it becomes difficult for teachers to integrate and infuse environmental themes into their subjects. A rather defeatist alternative

has been for environmental education to be introduced through co-curricula activities such as clubs and societies, thereby alienating environmental issues from everyday life and forming exclusive clubs/lobby groups.

2. Moving from learning to action
Teachers as co-learners
On the whole most EE efforts tend to emphasise the teacher as the source of knowledge, and not as a co-learner who facilitates learning. As Garcia and Nerya state, 'Students have valuable knowledge about their environment, which has been developed through daily life…' but often this is ignored. I wish to go a little further and say that students only have a fraction of the knowledge held by a community, especially indigenous knowledge.

The authors state that 'families of students improve their knowledge about subjects related to the environment through interactions with the children.' This is a very important benefit considering that schools are institutions set up to meet societal needs. However, it is not easy if in the first place the parents are not involved in the learning process/ in the school activities.

Environmental action learning
It is important to extend the role of sustainable development education (environmental education) beyond mere acquisition of knowledge to formation of self-sustaining positive lifestyles in teachers, students, parents, and the communities in which the school is situated. Environmental Action Learning (EAL) is an approach to environmental education that recognises that schools are set up to meet societal needs and that the communities from which students come, and in which schools are located, possess immense knowledge that can be harnessed to solve real problems through practical activities.

The weakness of classroom-bound participatory methods, especially within a system that sees environmental education as an additional subject in the curriculum, is that we tend to dwell on knowledge. In this way we lose the game. Participatory teaching methods have great potential for developing life-long self-sustaining production and consumption life-styles. But to be able to exploit this potential, environmental education must be based on practical participatory activities to solve the real problems of the school and the surrounding communities. This requires proper conceptualisation that brings together all stakeholders from the very beginning of curriculum design, development and implementation.

The starting point must be an appreciation that no single subject in the curriculum can claim to handle exhaustively all environmental issues. It follows that there should be a school-wide coordinated effort, bearing in mind that schools are part of the greater community.

The school administrator appoints a dedicated person/group of people to coordinate environmental action learning (EAL). This person should be trained in participatory techniques. The coordinator should then build consensus among stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, and members of the community in which the school is situated) to come up with a school-community policy on environmental action learning (EAL), and nominate/elect a board of members. A key element in environmental action learning is therefore establishing a strong link between the school and its immediate communities. In this way parents of the school and members of these communities feel part of the learning process and hence are more likely to follow up on activities.

After establishing this, the school should formulate curriculum-wide environmental education activities so that it is agreed on the best approach to handle environmental education as an inter-disciplinary body of knowledge using carrier subjects (nature study, biology, etc.) and communication subjects (e.g. languages). All subjects in any education system have opportunities to integrate/infuse environmental aspects in the curriculum.

Example of EAL
The strongest case for environmental action learning (EAL) comes when the school in partnership with the community develop practical activities together. The Arya Vedic Girls School in Nairobi, Kenya is an excellent example here. The school is located within Nairobi city adjacent to restaurants, butcheries, supermarkets, and hawkers' stalls. After establishing the school-community partnership, with the required members of the board chosen from among students, teachers, and the business community, the first task was to identify an immediate pressing environmental problem on which to collaborate. Using brainstorming techniques and other participatory methods, an illegal dumping site was identified as the most pressing problem. The business community contributed the money required to hire trucks to haul away the garbage and buy materials for buying fencing wire, posts, dustbins, and flowering plants. After one month the site was so clean and green with attractively landscaped grounds that people stopped dumping their garbage on the site.

However the removal of the garbage created a new problem because street children who used to scavenge on it now found themselves without food and a source of income (formerly generated from collecting and selling paper to recycling plants). This was tackled by the business community providing foodstuff and clothing to the school where street children were then invited for a meal; after a shower and a change of clothes! On its part the school encourages its teachers to volunteer to teach these children various subjects. Students on the other hand organise events to raise funds so that the programme is self-sustaining.

Environmental education policy

The major challenge to environmental education in formal and non-formal education is that unless there is a clear policy by the government, EE is treated superficially, in most cases being left to a few teachers who have the personal zeal to advance the cause of environmental conservation. For this reason, UNEP is focusing on influencing policy formulation.

Resources on environmental action learning

Report of a Training of Trainers workshop on Environmental Education, 4–8 September 2000, Kaimosi Teachers Training College, Kenya.
Nairobi: UNEP.
This publication is a rich resource material on Environmental Action Learning. Two cases from already practising eco-schools are presented as illustrations. Educators and trainers of teachers will find this resource useful for planning and implementing Environmental Action Learning activities in their curricula and co-curricular activities. Available free of charge, subject to availability.

Report of a seminar on coordination of environmental action learning activities in the Eastern Africa sub-region, April 2001.
Nairobi: UNEP.
Available free of charge, subject to availability.

Report of a development-enabling workshop for Eastern and Southern Africa sub-regions, 30 July–3 August 2001.
Available free of charge.

Readers are asked to check our website at http://www.unep.org/Training to see other resources available.
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