

Editorial

• Theme issue

Welcome to this issue of *PLA Notes*, where the theme is community management of water systems. This issue presents the outcome and progress so far of a research project for the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC), based in The Netherlands. Working in collaboration with 6 partner organisations (see Box 1), the project looks at the role of communities in the management of improved rural water supply systems in the South. It focuses on the many possibilities for improving community management of local water resources, working with communities based in Kenya, Cameroon, Guatemala, Colombia, Nepal and Pakistan.

The guest editors for the theme section are Marc P. Lammerink and Dick de Jong. Marc, an economist and social scientist, is the director of FMD (Forestry Manpower Development) Consultants. Currently, he is also working with the IRC to co-ordinate the community water project. With more than twenty years of experience, his main areas of interest are the scaling-up of participative training and research approaches in the field and on institutional support to organisations to implement sustainable development projects.

Dick de Jong is a journalist from the School of Journalism, Utrecht, The Netherlands and is a practising communications specialist. Primarily responsible for IRC's public information, advocacy and marketing programme, he also provides support to its activities concerning information management, public relations, and training. Dick has been involved in water supply, sanitation and hygiene education in the South since 1981. He is editor of *Source Bulletin*, member of the Editorial Advisory Board of *Waterlines* and is joint author of 'Communication in Water Supply and Sanitation: Resource Booklet' and 'Communication Case Studies for the Water Supply and Sanitation section'.

BOX 1

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

• Europe

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• In this issue

This issue opens as usual with a suite of more general articles. In the first article, Hilde Van Vlaenderen discusses the use of video in community development in South Africa. The video was used to help identify the development priorities of 14 villages and was a key tool in aiding both the understanding of the reality facing the villagers in their daily lives and also as a catalyst for community mobilisation.

In the second article, Paul Scholte et al look at how PRA can be used in a conflict situation in Waza National Park, Cameroon, to deal with sensitive information on illegal park exploitation. The authors discuss how carefully the resulting information had to be used, for fear of disrupting the dialogue that had been initiated with the stakeholders.

In the third article, Neela Mukherjee et al discuss the use of a method for participatory evaluation, the project benefit-impact matrix, and show its use within the context of a project evaluation in the Maldives. Participants are requested to review project activities and score them with reference to their impact at the individual, group and community levels. The method enables participants to evaluate project activities as a group and encourages wide participation in the process of evaluation.

In the final article of the general section, Michele Nori et al discuss the use of complementary methods to understand land-use changes, with an example from the Ethiopian Rift Valley. The study examines agro-pastoralism and recent landuse change through analysing social and environmental processes. The researchers combined information derived from soil sampling, aerial photography and mapping, and satellite imagery with socio-economic and cultural data derived from local communities using PRA.

Regular features

In the *Feedback* section, Anneli Connold and John Rowley discuss the learnings from the use of PRA in community assessments in Berkshire. Through the use of PRA to assess various communities living on housing estates within the county, the authors raise methodological problems and challenges to using PRA methods in a northern context. In a challenging and critical response, Alison West, the Chief Executive of the Community Development Foundation, UK stresses the multitude of methods currently used in the UK for community needs assessment and questions whether the introduction of PRA adds anything new to the range of methodologies currently available.

For trainers in participatory learning, we have reached the last in the serialisation of the *Trainer's Guide to Participatory Learning and Action*. This section describes how training needs analysis, combined with in-depth institutional analysis, can help design a training programme. This includes suggestions for planning the logistical arrangements, course structure and content, and evaluations and revisions for the future.

The *Tips for Trainers* section has been prepared by Jane Bañez-Ockelford and discusses a technique to aid problem analysis. This exercise enables participants to work through issues and identify the root causes of problems, at the same time learning how inter-related are socio-economic, political and environmental problems.

The *In Touch* pages (at the back of the issue) share experiences and publicise new and relevant materials and training events. *The RCPLA Pages* in the *In Touch* section profile one of the RCPLA Network members, the Learning Resources Center of the Center for Development Services (CDS) based in Egypt. The RCPLA Pages also provide some news and latest information of some of the other RCPLA Network partners' activities during the recent months.

Happy Reading!