Welcome to issue 49 of PLA Notes

News
Firstly, allow me to introduce myself, as Acting Editor of PLA Notes, as Angela Milligan is now on maternity leave. As we go to press, I am delighted to announce that Angela had a baby boy, Lindley, on 21st March. I am sure you will all join me in congratulating Angela and her family and wishing them well.

My name is Nicole Kenton and I have been working in the Drylands Programme at IIED for the past 13 years, and as some might say, time for a change! I am delighted to be able to take up this new challenge and I would like to thank Angela for ensuring that the handover was smooth and thorough, and to thank her for all her work on this issue, since she did the bulk of the coordination and editing prior to going on leave. I am also indebted to Holly Ashley, the Editorial Assistant, without whom I would not have been able to produce this issue. Holly, as previous Editor of PLA Notes, has provided invaluable experience and help and has worked long hours to get this issue to print. I am also grateful to Andy Smith for his usual high standard of design and assisting the authors and guest editors for their professional and scales used in community-based planning projects. They highlight the need to look beyond the narrower focuses that have been prevalent in the past, which have resulted in...
barriers to participation for the most vulnerable, or have been less than inclusive in their scope and implementation, or have failed to deliver real democratic power to the communities concerned.

The underlying principle of CBP, that the guest editors and authors have sought to demonstrate in this special issue, is how communities can plan for their future, as part of an integrated planning process for an area, thereby improving local governance.

**General section**

For this issue we bring you two general articles. The first is by Dipankar Datta and Neli Sen Gupta, and explores the effects of the work undertaken by Concern Worldwide in *haor* areas of Bangladesh to promote the socio-economic empowerment of poor women, principally by examining the level of domestic violence experienced by housewives.

Our second general article is a little different to the usual, and we hope that you enjoy it! It comes in the form of a series of cartoon extracts by Kate Charlesworth taken from *Teach Yourself Citizens’ Juries: A handbook by the DIY Jury Steering Group*, published by the Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences (PEALS) Programme at the University of Newcastle. These extracts look at what a citizens’ jury is, why you might want to have one, what the main ingredients of one are, and how to get started.

**Regular features**

Continuing with the special theme, this issue’s *Tips for Trainers* section brings you two extracts from Khanya-Managing Rural Change’s *Action Research for Community-Based Planning* project manual.

The manual offers a practical ‘how to’ approach to community-based planning, giving a background to the subject, and providing useful information about facilitating and organising CBP activities. These short extracts discuss two of the initial phases of the CBP process: how to ensure the effective representation of people within the planning community, and how to prepare and run a pre-planning community meeting.

Our *In Touch* section contains the usual selection of book reviews, forthcoming events and courses, and our e-participation website reviews. We always welcome contributions from our readers for this section, so please get in touch at the usual address.

The RCPLA Network (Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action) has undergone a review of its vision and mission statements with the aim of taking on a far more proactive role within the development sector. You will see from the update, that in order to orient member organisation towards this new focus, it is organising a number of activities this year, including a series of workshops to document field experiences. We look forward to hearing more about the outcomes of these activities in future issues.

**PLA Notes celebrates its 50th issue!**

The next issue will be our 50th and to celebrate this anniversary, we will be inviting past guest editors of *PLA Notes* to give an up-to-date picture of developments in their particular areas, and also to look ahead and think about – what next? And even, what will be in the 100th issue! We are very pleased and privileged to have Robert Chambers guest-edit this special issue and welcome any contributions for our *In Touch* section. In the meantime, enjoy this 49th issue of *PLA Notes*. We welcome your feedback and comments. As Angela would say, happy reading!

Nicole Kenton, Acting Editor

**Corrections**

*PLA Notes* 48: In our *In Touch* section on page 82, we gave a wrong website address for PEANUT. The correct address is: www.northumbria.ac.uk/peanut

Our apologies to PEANUT for this.