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participatory learning and action

Tools for influencing
power and policy



December 2005

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International
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participatory learning and action

Participatory Learning and Action, (formerly *PLA Notes* and *RRA Notes*), is published three times a year in April, August, and December. Established in 1988 by the SARL, now the Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods (SABL) Programme of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), *Participatory Learning and Action* enables practitioners of participatory methodologies from around the world to share their field experiences, conceptual reflections, and methodological innovations. The series is informal and seeks to publish frank accounts, address issues of practical and immediate value, encourage innovation, and act as a 'voice from the field'.

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Participatory development

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

The methods used range from visualisation, to interviewing and group work. The common theme is the promotion of interactive learning, shared knowledge, and flexible, yet structured analysis. These methods have proven valuable for understanding local perceptions of the functional value of resources, processes of agricultural intervention, and social and institutional relations.

In recent years, there has been a number of shifts in the scope and focus of participation:

- emphasis on sub-national, national and international decision-making, not just local decision-making;
- move from projects to policy processes and institutionalisation;
- greater recognition of issues of difference and power; and,
- emphasis on assessing the quality and understanding the impact of participation, rather than simply promoting participation.

Recent issues of *Participatory Learning and Action* have reflected, and will continue to reflect, these developments and shifts. We particularly recognise the importance of analysing and overcoming power differentials which work to exclude the already poor and marginalised.

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Photo: Estevao do Prado Braga



Esme Joaquim,
Kyeretwie Opoku
and Vanessa Mcleod
deep in thought at
the Power Tools
writing workshop,
November 2004

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editorial

Welcome to issue 53 of *Participatory Learning and Action*.

Tools for influencing power and policy

This special issue is guest edited by **Sonja Vermeulen** from IIED who coordinated the Power Tools initiative – Sharpening Policy Tools for Marginalised Managers of Natural Resources – which involved 35 partners from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Sonja is a senior researcher in the Forestry and Land Use Programme of the Natural Resources Group at IIED, London. She was previously a research fellow at the University of Zimbabwe. Her particular interests lie in tools and tactics for natural resource governance, assessment of ecosystems and biodiversity and company-community partnerships. Sonja's current work includes the Forest Governance Learning Group in Africa and Asia, and financial and institutional mechanisms for watershed management in Indonesia.

The articles in the theme section of this issue are written by eight of the partners from the Power Tools project. Each article reflects on the authors' experience. The authors analyse and suggest ways forward on the adaptation and application of tools in participatory action and learning situations, where participants must deal with more powerful institutions and individuals. Instead of waiting to be consulted by government or other policy processes, many people – who are usually excluded from policy processes – want actively to take their own values, priorities, analyses and demands to the powerful. The tools aim to help less powerful people and their allies achieve positive change in natural resource policy – through

understanding, organisation, engagement, resistance and persistence.

Before each article, we have included a summary of the corresponding Power Tool. This takes the place of the usual Tips for Trainers section.

In her overview, Sonja looks at the explicit connection between power and tools – and how tools can change power relations. The articles give real examples of working with power tools in India, Brazil, Ethiopia, Mali, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

General section

We have two general articles in this issue. First, **Phil Howard, Tim Galarneau, Jan Perez, and Dave Shaw** recount their experiences of integrating two approaches to participatory meeting facilitation: open space technology and dynamic facilitation. Open space allows participants to guide meetings creatively and spontaneously. But documenting such meetings is not always easy, with implications for implementing decisions made by participants afterwards. By combining a simple, dynamic facilitation approach with open space, such meetings can retain their flexibility but also document proceedings at the same time.

Our second general article is by **Paul van Mele and Ann Braun**. The authors explore the importance of methodological diversity in agricultural research and development. They argue that a wide range of methods and of actors implementing them allows for greater responsiveness and flexibility when working with different groups in different settings. Does flexibility in the choice of methods used promote

creative thinking in development? And how can methods evolve and contribute to organisational learning?

Regular features

Tips for Trainers in this issue takes the form of the tools summary card before each theme article. Our In Touch section includes book reviews and events and training, followed by e-participation which is dedicated to some of the website links from the Power Tools website.

We have exciting news from the RCPLA Network, which has a new coordinator, **Ali Mokhtar** from CDS in Cairo. Our thanks go to **Tom Thomas** for his excellent work as coordinator over the last three years. We bring you an update on this and on the Communications for Change initiative in the RCPLA Network pages.

New international editorial advisory board

In this issue we would like to introduce you to our new international editorial advisory board. We have long had ambitions to expand our editorial board to include a wider membership of practitioners, academics and others, drawn from all those parts of the world where participatory approaches flourish, and also those where they are still at the fledgling stage. We believe that this expansion is vital for ensuring that *Participatory Learning and Action* remains in touch with those practising and using participatory approaches in their everyday work around the world.

The **day-to-day management** of *Participatory Learning and Action* will still be carried out by our editorial team, **Nicole Kenton and Angela Milligan** (Co-Editors), and **Holly Ashley** (Assistant Editor). There will also still

be a **core strategic editorial board** consisting of staff from IIED and the Participation, Power and Social Change Group of the Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex, who will advise on the strategic development of the series.

Members of our new, 45-strong international board have strong links to participation networks in their own countries and regions, and can act as our eyes and ears on the ground, helping to tap into innovative work taking place, particularly in the South, and to expand the reach of the series.

They will be providing input in the following main areas:

- encouraging practitioners and

others, particularly those in the South, to write about their work for possible publication in *Participatory Learning and Action* and suggesting ways in which the editorial team can support people to write;

- promoting the series through their own networks and at conferences and workshops to ensure the series reaches the widest possible audience;
- reviewing articles relating to their particular interests; and
- commenting/advising on plans for future themed issues and possible guest editors and authors.

These areas may well develop or change to some extent as the board becomes more established.

Because of the size of the board, and its international nature, board meetings will be held electronically, although we will explore the possibility of bringing the board together on a biannual basis.

Editorial board members, each with a short biography, are listed at the end of this editorial. We would like to say a big welcome and thank you to them all, and look forward to a fruitful and mutually rewarding relationship with them.

We would especially like to thank those who reviewed articles for this issue and hope that you all enjoy reading it. We look forward to your feedback.

Participatory Learning and Action's Editorial Boards

Strategic Editorial Board

Ivan Bond

Ivan Bond is a researcher in the Forestry and Land Use Programme at IIED, London. He specialises in incentives for land and natural resource management. His current work includes coordinating an action-learning project to investigate payments for watershed services and livelihoods in five countries. Ivan has previously worked as a resource economist for WWF's Southern Africa Programme Office. Ivan has also written for the *PLA* series.

Andrea Cornwall

Andrea Cornwall is a social anthropologist, and works as a research fellow at IDS, UK in the Participation, Power and Social Change Group. She has worked as a practitioner using participatory approaches in the health field, and especially in sexual and reproductive health. Her current research is on the history of participation in development, and on citizen engagement with health policy processes. Andrea has also written for the *PLA* series, and guest edited previous special issues on performance and participation; critical reflections from practice; and co-guest edited an issue on sexual and reproductive health.

Nazneen Kanji

Nazneen Kanji is a researcher in the Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Programme at IIED, London. She has carried out research on the effects of structural adjustment policies at the household level and on changing urban and rural livelihoods, using qualitative and participatory methods. She is currently involved in research on gender, markets and livelihoods and on land reform and livelihoods. Nazneen has also written for the *PLA* series.

Jethro Pettit

Jethro Pettit is a member of the Participation, Power and Social Change Group at IDS, UK, where he works on approaches to the design and facilitation of learning in both organisational and educational contexts. He is interested in strategies for personal and social change, shifting power relations, and realising rights. He is currently doing action research on methods of reflective practice and transformative learning for change agents. Jethro has also written for the *PLA* series.

Michel Pimbert

Michel Pimbert is an agricultural ecologist by training and is currently director of the Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Programme at IIED, London. His work centres on the political ecology of natural resource and biodiversity management, sustainable food and farming systems, as well as participatory action research and deliberative democratic processes. Over the last 25 years he has published extensively on issues of development and conservation, linking theory with practice, and increasingly exploring issues of deliberative decision-making, participatory democracy and food sovereignty. Michel co-guest edited a special issue of *PLA* on deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment.

Cecilia Tacoli

Cecilia Tacoli is a researcher in the Human Settlements Programme at IIED, London. She is a specialist in rural and urban linkages, migration and urbanisation patterns in the context of globalisation. Cecilia currently works in Africa, South and Southeast Asia, focusing on the links between rural and urban development, with special attention to the role of small urban centres in the development of their surrounding region; migration and mobility; livelihood diversification and rural non-farm employment; and transformations in peri-urban areas.

Samuel Musyoki

Samuel Musyoki has a background in anthropology and development studies. He has extensive experience in facilitation and training in participation and participatory approaches to development, research and advocacy. He is the networking and capacity building coordinator with the Participation, Power and Social Change Group at IDS, UK. He is involved in a participatory action research and learning initiative exploring ways of making rights work more participatory. Sammy has also written for the *PLA* series.

International Editorial Advisory Board

Oga Steve Abah

Oga Steve Abah teaches theatre and participatory methods at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He is the Nigeria Country Convener of the Citizenship Research Project based at IDS, UK and executive director of the Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance, and has previously written for *PLA*.

Jo Abbot

Jo Abbot joined IIED in London after completing her PhD in Biological Anthropology. Her focus was on policy and practice around participation, biodiversity, and rural livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa; she also coordinated *PLA* (then called *PLA Notes*) for three and a half years. She then joined CARE International, first in Uganda and currently in South Africa and Lesotho, where she coordinates CARE's programme on rural livelihoods, HIV/AIDS, and good governance. She co-guest edited *PLA* 49 on community-based planning.

Jordi Surkin Beneria

Jordi Surkin Beneria currently works for Conservation International's Center for Biodiversity Conservation-Andes (Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela). His work includes protected area planning, participatory natural resource management, governance and co-management of protected areas and implementation of international conventions. For years he has worked in Bolivia with indigenous organisations. Jordi has written for the *PLA* series and is the Latin American regional coordinator of the RCPLA.

L. David Brown

L. David Brown is associate director for International Programmes at the Hauser Centre for Non-profit Organisations and Lecturer in Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government in the USA. His work focuses on strengthening civil society organisations and networks concerned with social change and sustainable development, particularly at the transnational level. David has contributed to the *PLA* series.

Andy Catley

Andy Catley is a veterinarian and epidemiologist with the Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University, USA. Based in the Horn of Africa, he supports community-based approaches to

animal healthcare and participatory research. He has a particular interest in participatory epidemiology and policy processes around livestock services and disease control. Andy has written for *PLA* and guest edited a special issue on community-based animal healthcare.

Robert Chambers

Robert Chambers is a research associate working in the Participation, Power and Social Change Group at IDS, UK. His main development experience has been in Eastern and Southern Africa and South Asia, working on issues such as settlement schemes, refugees, irrigation management, poverty, tropical seasonality, agricultural research and extension, and approaches to rural administration and development. His current interests include participatory methodologies, professional behaviour and perceptions of poverty. Robert has been a regular contributor to and guest editor for the *PLA* series since it began in 1988.

Louise Chawla

Louise Chawla is a professor at the Whitney Young School of Honors and Liberal Studies at Kentucky State University and an associate faculty member in the Doctoral Programme in Environmental Studies at Antioch New England Graduate School. She serves as International Coordinator of the Growing Up in Cities project of UNESCO, and has published widely on children's environmental experience and young people's participation in community development. Louise has written for and co-guest edited a special issue of *PLA* on evaluating the effectiveness of children's participation.

Bhola Dahal

Bhola Dahal is chair of the Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) in Kathmandu. NEPAN is a member-based organisation which envisages a situation where the poor and underprivileged become the main focus for sustained, equitable and humanistic development. It promotes and facilitates participatory development approaches for the empowerment of people through research, advocacy, lobbying and capacity-building activities.

John Devavaram

John Devavaram is a development activist who has worked as an advisor to various international NGOs and multilateral organisations. John is currently involved in field research activities using participatory approaches in the areas of poverty focus,

social discrimination and environment protection. John initiated a participatory network in Southern India and in Tanzania (PARENT) and organises yearly reflection workshops for practitioners to document innovative new learnings and methods. He has co-authored several articles for the *PLA* series.

Charlotte Flower

Charlotte Flower started her career at the Workers' Educational Association in the UK and her work in community-based forestry in Nepal, Cameroon and Namibia introduced her to participatory approaches more formally. Charlotte now works as Participatory Methods Adviser with the Oxfam UK Poverty Programme. Charlotte has written for the *PLA* series, and has co-guest edited a special issue on participatory processes in the North.

Forum for Community Empowerment (FORCE) Nepal

FORCE is a participatory networking forum for social development workers and organisations, committed to promoting participatory processes. It is a membership-based, non-political and non-profit making forum and works with development workers and agencies to sensitise and bring about their involvement in the empowerment of disadvantaged communities.

Ian Goldman

Ian Goldman is CEO of Khanya-African Institute for Community-Driven Development (Khanya-aicdd), based in South Africa and Lesotho, which is promoting community-driven development and sustainable livelihoods in Africa. Ian is a governance and livelihoods specialist, working particularly on decentralisation, local economic development, and community-based approaches to development. Ian has written for the *PLA* series and co-guest edited a special issue on community-based planning.

Bara Gueye

Bara Gueye works with IED Afrique (Innovations, Environnement et Développement) in Senegal, formerly IIED Sahel. Bara's work has focused on the training of trainers in Méthode Active de Recherche et de Planification Participative (MARPP) techniques throughout the Sahel, strengthening local institutions' capacities in participatory training and research, networking, developing and managing an information/communication system on participatory methods, and training

agricultural and pastoral communities in participatory planning in natural resource management. Bara has also written for the *PLA* series.

Irene Guijt

Irene Guijt is an independent advisor and researcher based in the Netherlands, focusing on learning processes and systems in rural development and natural resource management, particularly where this involves collective action. She has been a regular contributor to the *PLA* series, including co-guest editing a special issue on learning from analysis and on participatory monitoring and evaluation.

Marcia Hills

Marcia Hills is a professor at the Centre for Community Health Promotion Research at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. She is engaged in projects related to participatory research and evaluation, health sector reform, health promotion effectiveness, the effectiveness of community action strategies, and the education of health professionals in primary health care, health promotion and participatory educational and research methodologies.

Enamul Huda

Enamul Huda is a freelance participatory development consultant from Bangladesh. He is working in different development fields including agriculture, environment, health, micro-credit, community-based organisations, and information-communication.

Vicky Johnson

Vicky Johnson worked as environmental policy analyst for ActionAid in the UK on programmes in Africa, Asia and Latin America to bring messages from marginalised men and women into the policy arena. She also carried out research into children's participation. With Robert Nurick, she set up a non-profit organisation, Development Focus Trust, in Brighton, UK, and developed an approach called Community Assessment and Action, working with teams of residents and workers in the UK to formulate and monitor local action plans. She has been a regular contributor to the *PLA* series, and guest edited a special issue on children's participation.

Caren Levy

Caren Levy is a development planner and director of the Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College London, involved in

postgraduate teaching, research, training and advisory work. She specialises in urban policy and planning, as well as the institutionalisation of social justice in development, with particular expertise in gender issues.

Sarah Levy

Sarah Levy is a macroeconomist and set up Calibre Consultants, which focuses on design and management of research programmes in developing countries. She later worked on monitoring and evaluation for a large-scale food security programme in Malawi, contributing to the development of a new approach that generates national statistics using participatory methods. She is currently interested in exploring the potential for locally owned information systems. Sarah has also written for the *PLA* series.

Ilya M. Moeliono

Ilya M. Moeliono is a board and staff member of Studio Driya Mendia, a small NGO in Indonesia. Its main role is to provide assistance to other development agencies in Indonesia on participatory approaches and methodology through consultancies, training, and media development. Ilya has collaborated with many agencies and networks in introducing, adapting, and developing participatory methods in village/community development planning, natural resource/ecosystem management, and environmental conflict resolution.

Humera Malik

Humera Malik is the manager of the External Affairs and Community Development Programme at BHP Billiton in Pakistan. Her current role includes the identification of local and national partners and their capacity building, and developing a vision for sustainable development in Pakistan. Humera is also responsible for developing a communication and stakeholders' management strategy.

Marjorie Jane Mbilinyi

Marjorie is a founder member of Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) and is currently head of its Activism, Lobbying and Advocacy Department. TGNP promotes gender equity, women's advancement and social transformation at all levels. Marjorie taught gender studies and research methodology at the University of Dar es Salaam for thirty-five years.

Ali Mokhtar

Ali Mokhtar is the regional programme

manager for the Near East Foundation, Middle East Region, at the Center for Development Services. Ali has over fifteen years' experience working with non-governmental organisations in the field of community development and project management. He specialises in establishing institutional partnerships for development among stakeholders from diverse fields, with particular emphasis on engaging the private sector. Ali currently serves as an advisor to a number of international development agencies operating in the North Africa and the Middle East region. He is also the new coordinator of the RCPLA Network.

Seyed Babak Moosavi

Seyed Babak Moosavi is a member of the Rural Research Centre (RRC) in Iran. He is involved in the application and spread of participatory approaches and community empowerment. This includes rural development, social well-being, environment, and refugees.

Neela Mukherjee

Neela Mukherjee is a development practitioner and the director of Development Tracks, a field research and consultancy organisation based in Delhi. Her research areas are participatory, social and sustainable development, fair trade and trade related to WTO issues. She is involved in pro-poor policy courses for UNDP professionals. As an independent consultant to international development agencies, she has experience in people-centred development in many developing countries. Neela has also been a regular contributor to the *PLA* series.

Trilok Neupane

Trilok Neupane is one of the founder members of ERPAN (Eastern Region Participatory Action Network) in Nepal. ERPAN seeks to share learning about participatory development between government organisations, NGOs and international NGOs. Trilok was chairperson of ERPAN for six years and at present is working as an advisor. He is also the founder member of the NGO PRAYAS-Nepal and is affiliated to other social and development organisations. He was previously senior manager in the Agriculture Development Bank of Nepal (ADB/N) and has also been involved with the Small Farmer Development Programme based on participatory processes for empowering grassroots people, particularly women.

Esse Nilsson

Esse Nilsson is a social anthropologist who

worked in Bangladesh with rural NGOs and then at the University of Reading's International and Rural Development Department (IRDD), the Social Development Department, and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). More recently, Esse returned to IRDD to work on a research project about attitudinal change/poverty training within commercial banks in India. Her current post is as a social adviser at Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency).

Peter Park

Peter Park has been involved with participatory action research (PAR) since 1979 and founded, with the help of Paulo Freire, a community organisation devoted to PAR, and directed it for a number of years. He is currently involved with systems-level PAR projects at institutions of higher education and a county-wide PAR project aimed at immigration integration in Boulder, Colorado. Peter initiated a study of community-based PAR in Cuba and he is currently editing a book about Paulo Freire and a treatise on the knowledge base of PAR. He is an advisory board member of *Action Research*.

Bardolf Paul

Bardolf Paul worked as a PRA practitioner in India in 1989 and subsequently in Vietnam. He is currently running a small NGO within a mineral exploration venture in Borneo that aims to foster development based on true human values. He has a mixed background of design-communications, forestry and working between communities and government.

Bimal Kumar Phnuayal

Bimal Kumar Phnuayal is a social analyst and learning facilitator, based in Nepal. He has been working in the field of community education and development since 1985, being affiliated with different NGOs and civil society networks. His areas of interests and involvement are in participatory learning, PM&E, popular education, civil society and social justice movements. Bimal is currently the chair of Forum for Popular Education, Nepal, and a regular columnist in Nepali newspapers and magazines. Bimal has also written for the *PLA* series and co-guest edited a special issue on participation, literacy and empowerment.

Peter Reason

Peter Reason is professor of Action Research/Practice and director of the Centre

for Action Research in Professional Practice, School of Management, at the University of Bath. His focus is on the development of a participatory worldview and associated approaches to enquiry. His recent publications include *The Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (which he co-edited) and the journal *Action Research*. Current interests include the further development of this method and its application to personal and organisational learning; radical shifts in epistemology grounded in an ecological perspective; professional and managerial practice as inquiry; education as liberation; and high quality post-conventional personal behaviour.

Joel Rocamora

Joel Rocamora is executive director of the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) in the Philippines. IPD is in the forefront of research and experimentation on participatory approaches in local governance. Apart from its work on the Philippines, IPD also has a capacity building programme for civil society engagement of local governance in four Southeast Asian countries. IPD is the SEA 'regional node' for LOGOLink (Local Governance Learning Network). Joel has a PhD in politics and he has written extensively on the Philippines and Indonesia.

Jayatissa Samaranayake

Jayatissa Samaranayake has been the executive director of the Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPIID) since 1997. IPIID is committed to promoting participatory methodologies in Sri Lanka, and is a steering group member representing Asia in the RCPLA Network. Formerly of the Sri Lanka administrative service, Jayatissa was also chief executive of a number of private sector companies. He has taken part in many exchanges on participatory methodologies, both nationally and internationally.

Madhu Sarin

Madhu Sarin has worked on the democratic decentralisation of natural resource management for over 25 years, both at the grassroots and policy advocacy levels. She currently works independently, but is associated with several NGOs and policy advocacy networks in India and abroad, as well as being a member of IIED's Board of Trustees. At present Madhu is involved with the finalisation of a Bill to be tabled in the Indian Parliament, for recognition of the customary forest rights of tribal communities in India, which could potentially trigger

significant changes in Indian forest governance.

Daniel Selener

Daniel Selener currently works for CARE, Ecuador, where he leads the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. He specialises in participatory design and monitoring of a range of development projects in municipal governance, public health, tuberculosis, basic education, water and sanitation, sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation and development. Daniel has published books on participatory action research, systematisation of development projects, participatory rural appraisal and planning, and farmer-to-farmer extension.

Anil C Shah

Anil Shah has been chairperson of the Development Support Centre, Ahmedabad, since its inception in 1994. The Centre works to provide knowledge-based support to people-centred development of natural resources. Anil's main role is to provide leadership in developing empowering policies, programmes and practices. He was earlier a member of the Indian administrative services where he was head of different government organisations. Throughout his career, Anil has written extensively on development issues, mainly focusing on the empowerment of the disadvantaged. He has also written for the *PLA* series.

Marja Liisa Swantz

Marja Liisa Swantz has over four decades of experience of participatory action research in Tanzania and elsewhere. Marja was the first director of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Helsinki, served as an acting professor in Social and Cultural Anthropology, and received the title of professor and an honorary doctorate at the Faculty of Political Science for her work in developing and applying PAR. At present she is involved in a local government co-operation between her present municipality of Hartola and Iramba district of Tanzania.

Peter Taylor

Peter Taylor is a research fellow in the Participation, Power and Social Change Group and Head of Graduate Programmes at IDS, UK. He is the convenor of its MA in Participation, Development and Social Change. Peter's background is in agriculture and education, and he is currently working on learning and teaching for transformation in higher education; contextualising curricula

in basic education; and participatory curriculum development. Peter has written for the *PLA* series and has also co-guest edited a special issue on learning and teaching participation.

Tom Wakeford

Tom Wakeford is a research biologist by training and now works as a participation practitioner. Based in the UK, he has been involved in projects in India, Brazil and Zimbabwe. He is director of the Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences (PEALS) Research Centre at the University of Newcastle and a visiting fellow at IIED in London, and he is involved in a range of grassroots initiatives using participatory action research in the UK and elsewhere. Tom previously co-guest edited a special issue of *PLA* on deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment.

Eliud Wakwabubi

Eliud Wakwabubi is the network coordinator of the Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK). A social scientist, he specialises in participatory and capacity building approaches to development in the areas of project and organisational learning and change, partnerships and network building, process facilitation, action-based research, rights based approaches, rural finance services, governance, and civil society participation in policy processes. He also is the Southern and Eastern Africa region representative for the RCPLA Network.

Alice Welbourn

Alice Welbourn is a trainer, writer and activist on international gender, participation and health issues. She has worked in East, Southern and West Africa. Diagnosed HIV-positive in 1992, she wrote an HIV and relationship skills training package, *Stepping Stones*, used by communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Alice has just finished serving as chair of the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW) and has advised the United Nations, governments and NGOs on HIV-positive women's issues. Alice has also written for the *PLA* series, has guest edited a special issue on participatory approaches to HIV/AIDS and more recently co-guest edited a special issue on sexual and reproductive health.

We are also pleased to welcome the following to our international editorial advisory board:

Meera Kaul Shah; Qasim Deiri; Zakariya Odeh and Zhang Linyang. A short biography will be included in the next issue of *PLA*.

theme section

Power tools for participatory learning and action

by SONJA VERMEULEN

Power tools for policy change

This special issue is about tools – techniques, tactics or tips – for achieving positive policy change. Its emphasis on methods, on ways of doing, places it in a strong lineage of past issues of *Participatory Learning and Action*. But do we really need more tools? Surely there are more than enough methods, resources, manuals and toolkits to equip every last participatory tool user in the world?

In the recent anniversary issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* (PLA 50), Robert Chambers gave a thoughtful evaluation of our collective progress in approaches to participation, in its broadest meaning. One observation was that tools do indeed deserve ongoing attention and development, as part of a broader process of social learning. But there are several areas to which we don't yet pay enough attention. Power is chief among these.

The articles in this special issue focus on the intersection between power and tools – specifically on how tools can have a deliberate goal of raising the power of people who have been excluded from decision-making that concerns them. Of course, all legitimate methods for participatory learning and action work to change power relations – but many do not describe their aims in this way. Previous issues of *PLA* have used other terms to express the same funda-

“...tools do indeed deserve ongoing attention and development, as part of a broader process of social learning. But there are several areas to which we don't yet pay enough attention. Power is chief among these”

mental aims and processes. Examples are **social transformation** (Pimbert, 2004) and **people-centred advocacy** (Samuel, 2002). Similarly, using concepts of **rights, participation and power** to inform institutional practice entails more or less the same tools (Pettit and Musyoki, 2004). In all cases, the central principle is that excluded people do not wait to be invited to participate in external processes. Rather, they use their power to create their own policy space, demanding and generating participation on their own terms.

Source and structure of this special issue

The articles in this theme section are all written by partners in the IIED-coordinated Power Tools initiative (under a project entitled 'Sharpening policy tools for marginalised managers

of natural resources' funded by DGIS and BMZ, with additional funds from DFID). The Power Tools initiative involved about 35 partners across Africa, Asia and Latin America over five years. Each partner was working on real and pressing policy problems in their own context. What united the work internationally was a common goal to develop and share policy tools relevant to people who are normally excluded from playing a part in local and national policy around natural resources. We have used a broad view of policy as 'what organisations choose to do', be they government, businesses or local institutions.

The most important output has been progress on problems of equity and marginalisation in land, agriculture, biodiversity and forestry policy wherever this has been possible through application of the methods and tactics. To spread these gains more widely, a set of 26 tool write-ups appear on the Power Tools website (www.policy-powertools.org) in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. These write-ups try to avoid being too prescriptive and formulaic, but rather try to share experience of both what did work and what did not. In this special issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*, eight partners have taken their learning from the Power Tools initiative one step further, reflecting on the wider contexts and implications of their policy tool as a means of securing meaningful and sustainable participation. Before each article we have included summary versions of the policy tool write-ups by these partners.

Interested readers can follow up full versions of these tools by visiting the Power Tools website. On the website are a further 18 tools that are not represented in this issue: tools for organising, understanding, engaging with and ensuring policy influence (see Box 1 for the full set). The website also contains other useful resources, including partners' longer written work and a directory of websites that offer methods, tactics and guidance for participatory policy (see e-participation in the In Touch section of this issue).

Thinking about tools and power

The term 'power tool' conjures up a vision of whirring drills and chainsaws. This analogy is of course deliberate, reminding us that tools are functional and versatile, but they are also potentially very dangerous in ill-meaning or novice hands. A focus on policy tools, rather than on policy problems or policy stories, is useful because it attracts practical people, encouraging us to think not just about what we want to change, but how to do it. On the other hand, too much of an emphasis on tools can promote rigid, repetitive behaviour – ticking off the boxes rather than coming up with imaginative solu-

"Hierarchy", drawn in a workshop during use of the Power Tool Community trade-offs assessment



Credit: Anonymous artist, North Rupununi District Development Board, Guyana

tions. The trick is to share ideas and to spark people's enthusiasm and optimism, but to avoid the impression that there are sure-fire methods that work anywhere anytime. We suspect too that there are no 'new' policy tools, only shinier versions of old favourites.

The Power Tools initiative worked predominantly with allies and supporters to develop tools jointly with people who are sidelined, less powerful or less experienced in natural resources policy. The roles of those supporters and allies are a major factor in whether a particular tactic or technique really does help people empower themselves, or just reinforces unequal power relations. While policy tools can be used to transform – or at least nudge! – power relations, they also have power themselves. Much of the learning from the Power Tools initiative concerned how to get third-party roles to work well, deftly responding to local viewpoints and priorities with relevant (and locally legitimate) innovation from the

Box 1: Power Tools for policy influence at www.policy-powertools.org**Getting started**

Overview of what is involved in improving policies and institutions for the benefit of poor people, based on international experience.

Accessing 'public' information

Set of approaches and tactics to obtain and use information from public agencies, based on experience in India.

Appeal to ethics

Use of ethics-based international agreements and standards to develop dialogue, based on experience in Ethiopia and Vietnam.

Associations for business partnerships

Activities to help smallholders engage with, compete in, and benefit from market economies, based on experience with migrant smallholders in Brazil.

Avante consulta! Effective consultation

Steps to empower communities in negotiation processes, based on experience in Mozambique.

Better business: market chain workshops

Workshops for direct and indirect participants in market chains to share knowledge and inform policy, based on experience in Vietnam.

Community organisations

Organisational options for community groups (cooperatives, trusts etc), based on international experience.

Community trade-offs assessment

Activities for communities to assess different development options in terms of local worldviews and aspirations, based on experience in Guyana.

Connecting communities to markets

Tactics to market independently certified community forest products, based on experience in Brazil.

Family portraits

Description, analysis and communication of how a given family organises labour and other assets, based on experience in Mali.

Good, average, bad: law in action

Framework for scrutinising and improving the practical outcomes of particular legislation, based on experience in Mozambique.

Improving forest justice

Approaches to improve the administration of justice in the timber supply chain, based on experience in Uganda.

Independent forest monitoring

Assessment of the opportunities for IFM to raise accountability, based on experience in Cameroon.

Interactive radio drama

Use of radio to gain public participation in natural resources policy, based on experience in biodiversity conservation in India.

Legal literacy camps

Interactive sessions to familiarise people with legal concepts and current legislation, based on experience with tribal people in India.

Local government accountability

Ways to help rural citizens bring local authorities to account, based on experience in forestry in Malawi.

Media and lobby tactics

Tactics to get national policy to work for small-scale farmers, based on experience in Grenada.

Organising pitsawyers to engage

Framework for developing organisations and business partnerships for small-scale producers, based on experience in Uganda.

People's law

Advice on understanding and utilising law in land and natural resources campaigns, based on experience in Ghana.

Speaking for ourselves

Steps for communities to express their priorities and constraints in professional development language, based on experience with pastoralists in Ethiopia.

Stakeholder influence mapping

Method to examine and visually display the changing policy influence of various social groups, based on experience in Costa Rica, UK and Kenya.

Stakeholder power analysis

Techniques for understanding stakeholder relationships and capacity for change, based on international experience.

Targeting livelihoods evidence

Steps to link natural resources policy with poverty reduction strategies and to develop appropriate monitoring, based on experience with forestry in Uganda.

The four Rs

Framework to clarify and negotiate respective stakeholder roles, based on experience in Zambia and Cameroon.

The pyramid

Framework to stimulate participatory assessment and target-setting in forest governance at national level, based on experience in Brazil.

Writing style: political implications

Approach and checklist to analyse how pieces of writing challenge or support inequalities, based on experience in Zimbabwe.

outside. Positive relationships acknowledge and even benefit from power differences, making use of allies' different abilities and spheres of influence.

Changing power requires understanding power. The partners in the Power Tools initiative did not use or endorse any single analytic framework for thinking about power, as that did not make sense given their varied practical goals and contexts. Indeed, one reason that 'power' is a useful term is because it has a commonsense meaning rather than a difficult academic definition. There are many different ways of looking more closely at power – some useful categories are given in Box 2 (see Vermeulen, 2005 for further references).

Importantly, everyone has power. People who are subordinate possess sources of power absent among elites – such as knowledge, social capital and means of production. People can use this 'counter power' in a variety of ways to oppose, evade or resist oppression.

Along the continuum of approaches, counter power can work in cooperation rather than opposition. Many of the policy tools in this special issue aim at engaging with rather than resisting powerful bodies such as companies and government agencies, albeit engaging tactically rather than playing along with the naïve idea that if stakeholders just sit down and talk, it will all be all right. Using cooperative

“Changing power requires understanding power. People who are subordinate possess sources of power absent among élites – such as knowledge, social capital and means of production. People can use this ‘counter power’ in a variety of ways to oppose, evade or resist oppression”

power, as opposed to ‘power over’, different people can work together to achieve shared goals. The notion of cooperative power is very attractive, but we shouldn’t lose sight of the fact that it is hard to achieve this kind of ‘win-win’ between very disparate groups. For most people who are excluded from mainstream decision-making processes, any gains in power must be hard fought for, and require more powerful agencies to relinquish some of their control.

Learning from power tools in action

The articles in this theme section discuss real-life experience with power tools, taking the opportunity to reflect on what has worked to promote meaningful participation and policy influence, and what hasn’t worked. Each tool evolved with time and learning to address a specific ‘policy’ need, be it in the realm of local organisation and decision making, regional and national policy formulation, legislation and its applications, or implementation of both policy and law. The resulting spread of policy challenges and associated tools covered here reflects the huge range of barriers faced by less powerful people who want to influence policy – and the many alternative routes and methods for achieving progress. To navigate this diversity, the eight articles included here have, in hindsight, been divided into three sets, described in turn below.

Build power to act

Power can be gained by amassing, constructing and coordinating sources of power (see Box 2). A crucial source of power, especially in the modern context of rapid communications across great distances, is information. Two articles here look at how less powerful people have gained access to information to claim their legal rights to greater policy influence and self-determination. In Article 3, Bose and co-authors chart the experience of Indian civil society movements, including groups of poor people working without

Box 2: Unpacking power

Power is generally understood as an ability to achieve a wanted end in a social context, with or without the consent of others.

Positions of power. The simplest typologies of power are in terms of dualities in relationships, e.g. empowered/disempowered, central/marginal, oppressor/oppressed, dominant/subordinate. These are useful shorthand but they provide only a crude basis for analysing power, because they do not capture the complexity or fluidity of actual power relations, and they deny the power of ‘less powerful’ people. Understanding positions of power in terms of roles, e.g. various characters in a play, can be more helpful.

Mechanisms of power. Understanding how power operates in a particular situation is very useful, allowing us to find strategies to maximise or counter that power. Most simply, power can work through rewards, penalties or conditioning. Conditioned power is especially important as it is institutionalised and often hard to recognise. But it can be either positive (cooperative power to achieve shared goals) or negative (hegemony, in which oppressed people collude in their own oppression).

Sources of power. Key sources of power are capital (financial, natural, physical, social, human), means of production (labour power), consumption, culture, location and geography, information, technology, physicality (e.g. age, sex, health or physical ability) and personality (e.g. charisma or skill). The various sources of power are often also the rewards of power.

Arenas of power. People may have different power relations in different, but overlapping, fields of activity: social, political and economic. Within the social arena, people may behave differently in public (outside the home), private (at home and among friends) and intimate (within the self) realms of power. Economists distinguish ability to set prices (market power) and ability to withdraw from a transaction (bargaining power).

external support, to access what is meant to be ‘public’ information. Getting hold of relevant reports and statistics has recently been enabled by new freedom of information legislation in India, in tune with an international trend (e.g. in the UK) to pass law that improves citizens’ access to information about the activities of government and public agencies. Indian civil society groups have been especially imaginative and tenacious in their pursuit of facts and figures that government departments prefer to keep to themselves. In turn there have been many successes in holding agencies to account and securing better service delivery and good governance for poor people.

Article 5 turns to one state in India, Rajasthan, where indigenous tribal people have in the last decade benefited from new rights to self-rule under national law. Many villages have not yet taken full advantage of this law, partly because

"Wow, John, what a difference! How did our community change so much?"

"It's a long story, Joseph. Come on, I'll show you how it all happened..."

From *Mercados para comunidades certificadas* (part of the Power Tool *Connecting communities to markets*)



Cartoon: Rubens de Toledo Frizzo, Imaflores, Brazil

of ignorance or misunderstanding and partly because of feet-dragging at state level. Upadhyay explains how he and fellow Delhi lawyers crossed the divide with tribal communities to enable people to understand the law in their own contexts and to make practical use of it, for example to draw up utilisation certificates that are legally watertight. The experience of *panchayat shivir*, or interactive legal literacy camps, is very much one of learning and adapting on both sides as the process unfurled.

One of the greatest tools that subordinate people have against the prevailing economic, institutional and political bedrock is collective action. Getting organised is a critical feature of successful people's movements around the world. In Article 7, Macqueen and co-authors look at how association has helped small-scale forest enterprises (which are often one person working alone) to make the best of different forms of organisation in Brazil. They offer practical advice for those in forestry and beyond who want to increase their economic power or reach other mutual aims by clubbing together.

Claim the tools of the powerful

Many useful tools, including those designed to facilitate participation, remain in the hands of powerful agencies. Two articles describe the experience of development professionals in their successful endeavours to transfer control of policy tools to the people who are intended to benefit from them. The tools thus become mechanisms of power: communication techniques that express the self-analysis and priorities of marginal people in their own terms but in a language that outsiders comprehend. In Article 9, Belay and co-authors report how communities in Ethiopia have adapted and used the 'sustainable livelihoods' framework to present government agencies with coherent and evidence-based demands for support to their self-development. Article 11 by Cochrane describes how a similarly effective communication tool, known as family portraits, works to counter simplistic caricatures (e.g. of ethnic groups and genders) that prevail among policy makers at all levels. Through learning and training the tool was usefully updated to fit the needs of families in Mali, Kenya and Tanzania.

Take hold of participatory processes

Participation often carries the paradox of being introduced from outside. Even with good intentions, implementing agencies, not intended beneficiaries, retain ultimate power over not just the tools but the entire process. One process that tried to tackle this from the start was development of the Indian National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. In Article 13, Apte reviews the strategies and tactics that worked – and those that failed – in achieving active ownership of the process by actual biodiversity users and managers. Indeed, this external process created an unintentional space for all kinds of local activism around biodiversity (Apte, 2005). Kazoora and co-authors take a close look in Article 15 at how forest law enforcement, not traditionally an arena for participation, has come to use rewards

as well as punishments to establish more just outcomes. Notably, participation has not been given easily – people have had to lobby for it.

Final words

Individual tools may seem too specific and too polite given the scale of power inequities and the radical actions we perhaps need in response. But for many people who live outside of the privileges of police protection, opportunities for legal redress and other services, to find safety and reduce risks to life, livelihoods and reputation can be primary concerns. Hopefully readers will find in this special issue some fresh ideas and refreshed inspiration to keep on making the most of the channels that do exist for change – and creating those that don't.

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2

POWER TOOLS



Accessing 'public' information

Purpose:

The purpose of this tool is to access information held by public agencies – to improve people's lives.

In India, NGOs and activists have used the approach to help poor people by:

- Collecting information on public works spending; government contracts; casual workers' wages; and food staples supplied to the poor.
- Using the information to improve governance through:
 - Participatory decision-making – people are involved in making decisions that affect them.
 - Transparency – people know what officials are doing.
 - Accountability – people can hold officials responsible for their actions.

The tool can be used in any situation where lack of information is a major constraint in achieving good governance. NGOs, activists, resident associations and community leaders working with poor and marginalised people will find it useful.

Activities:

- Identify the issue to address.
- Understand the law on people's right to information. Find out about others' experience in this area.
- Broaden awareness and interest among the target group. Use communication strategies such as street corner meetings, posters and songs.
- Build the capacity of the target group to understand and effectively use their rights to improve their lives. Use strategies such as training programmes and exposure trips.
- Identify the exact information needed.
- Identify the potential source(s) of the information and the procedure for obtaining it.
- Make a formal application.
- If you are denied the information, appeal to the designated official. Use the media and mass protests to put pressure on officials.
- If you still cannot get the information, file a court case wherever possible.
- Once you have the information, verify it by crosschecking with local people or on-site inspections.
- Analyse the information and discuss the findings with the people involved.
- Use the information to bring about the desired change. Use strategies such as public hearings to make officials accountable.

Keep in Mind

- ★ It is not necessary to have specific 'right to information' law to access information from public agencies. In the absence of a specific law, look for other ways of accessing information. You can use, for example, constitutional provisions, environment protection laws, labour laws and so on.
- ★ Before formally applying for information, first check if the information is already public – e.g. on a website.
- ★ Be specific about the information required. Vague information requests are not effective.
- ★ For maximum impact, adapt communication materials (posters, songs, etc.) to the local context.
- ★ Form networks with others to share experience and support each other.

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at:
www.policy-powertools.org
or contact:
Sushil Saigal,
sushil@winrockindia.org
Other relevant information can be found at:
www.winrockindia.org

3

Information as power: making best use of India's Right to Information law

by SHARMISTHA BOSE, PANKAJ LAL and SUSHIL SAIGAL

Access to 'public' information

Access to information is a fundamental prerequisite for exercising any right. Many democratic nation states today agree on the need for 'good governance'. The right to information is thought of as a touchstone of a vibrant democracy, and recent years have seen new legislation around the world to guarantee greater freedom of information from public bodies. For its part, India passed the Right to Information (RTI) law in 2002 and recently strengthened it further. The Right to Information legislation is one of the ways available to secure information. There are several other avenues that exist within other laws and policies as well. These may include environment laws, decentralisation policies, affirmative action policies, and constitutional provisions, etc. However, the presence of an enabling legal framework does help in the process.

Better information on the activities of public bodies can be used to improve efficacy of public service delivery systems, with direct benefits to the community at large. In the longer term, this can catalyse the development of efficient monitoring and management systems within government agencies. In India, a number of individuals and groups in civil society have been using the Right to Information law along with other strategies to make progress in a number

"The access to information process typically involves a three-stage approach of building awareness and interest among target communities, identifying and getting the necessary information, and using the information to bring about desired changes"

of important areas¹ :

- **Food security** – to ensure efficient working of government food programmes and proper implementation of food security schemes.
- **Agricultural security** – to improve agricultural security in a scenario where seed and fertilizer production has been completely de-linked from the farmer community. Information on the quality of seeds, insecticides and pesticides, genetically modified crops etc. can be obtained from relevant authorities.
- **Fair wages** – to make certain that full wages are paid to

¹ The list is only illustrative and not exhaustive.

A public meeting where residents and Parivartan officials are demanding accountability from the food inspectors.

Photo: courtesy www.parivartan.org



labourers who work on government projects such as forestry plantations, watershed development works etc. In fact, the campaign for RTI in India started from the issue of payment of full and fair wages to such workers.

- **Public works** – to allow people affected by large infrastructural and industrial projects such as dams, mines or roads, to ask for relevant and timely information on the status of work. It may also be used for getting justice to victims of industrial accidents and disasters, and to raise accountability in public works.

Process and tools for accessing information

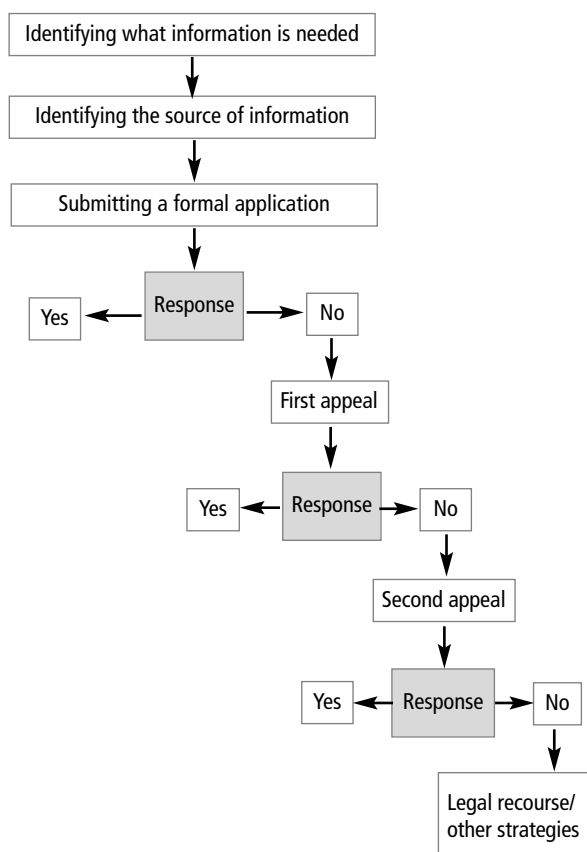
From the Indian experience, we have collated a generalised process and a set of strategies and tactics that have been – and can be – used by NGOs, activists, civil society groups, or poor communities on their own to access and use information to improve public service delivery and hence justice for poor people. We expect that many of these can be used in other countries where deficit of information is a major reason for poor governance and marginalisation of certain communities.

The access to information process typically involves a three-stage approach of building awareness and interest among target communities, identifying and getting the necessary information, and using the information to bring about desired changes.

Building awareness

In countries like India, where the Right to Information law is very recent and inadequately publicised, awareness generation emerges as a necessary first step. A myriad of strategies have been used by civil society organisations in India to generate legal awareness among people. A variety of aids can be used to generate awareness such as information centres,

Figure 1: Flow chart for RTIL



pamphlets, posters, street corner meetings, charts, street plays, songs and puppet shows. While pamphlets and posters are effective in areas with literate populations, in areas where a large number of people are illiterate, *dhols* (drums), songs, street plays and puppet shows are more effective.

Identifying and obtaining necessary information

This multi-step process is illustrated in Figure 1. Engaging in the information access process involves identifying **what** exact information is needed, as well the potential **sources** of that information. It is important to know which information will exactly bring about the desired results and to follow the procedures for application and appeal diligently, wherever these are prescribed.

Where there is no prescribed procedure, written applications may be submitted to the identified authority. If the supply of information is delayed, civil society can use tactics

Citizens demanding information from the food inspectors during a social audit



Photo Courtesy: SNS Foundation, New Delhi

such as exerting pressure on higher officials, highlighting the issue in local media, or getting a public representative to ask a question in the legislature.

Another tactic that has been successfully used is that of mass applications. In order to source information, people need to first identify the problem and the concerned department. The next step is to identify the exact nature of information required so that the application can be correctly drafted. Typically, the questions to be asked relate to the norms, procedures and laws governing the discharge of responsibilities by the public authority in question. The next question to be asked should be with regard to each specific problem faced by the subject, in such a manner that it strengthens their position with regard to the state.

For example, if the concern is regarding bad condition of roads in the locality, they should ask questions relating to:

- when the road was repaired last;
- to whom the contract was given; and
- the status of the current contract.

Then it would allow the citizens to challenge the concerned public authority and ask for quick repair of roads.

The next step in this would be to identify within the system **where** and **in what form** are the categories of information stored. This is especially important because most often citizens have little knowledge about the nature of documents generated in the course of functioning of a public authority. It is here that NGOs or committed citizens have a big role to play.

If public bodies are reluctant to supply information, persistent strategies are needed. Non-violent *Gheraos* (blockades) of government officials and elected representatives, *Dharnas* (continuous sit-ins by protesters until their demands are fulfilled) and *Morchas* (protest rallies) are relevant tactics. Innovative and forceful slogans like '*jawab do, hisab do*' ('give us answers, give us an account'), or '*poora kaam, poora daam*' ('full pay for full work') when used during the rallies and blockades are also useful. These strategies are mostly non violent in nature and the role of the police is mostly restricted to maintaining law and order in such situations.

To realise the full impact of these efforts, media coverage is essential. Finally, if no response is forthcoming from the

concerned authorities, recourse to court may be required. However, since this alternative is resource and time intensive, it should be used only as a last resort.

Using information to bring about desired change

The first step is verifying the information supplied through means such as:

- Social audits: this a process whereby public officials are made accountable to the citizens and have to supply information about the action taken in case of charges against them. Citizens at large audit the public officials. Their responsibilities are fixed, performance graded and variations noted;
- Parallel attendance registers: this a mechanism whereby citizens can maintain muster rolls to compare the attendance record given by public bodies such as the municipal corporations;
- Public hearings;
- Testimonies;
- On-site inspections.

Once adequate information has been collected, the next step is analysing information to see how it can be used to bring about change. Sometimes publicity of bad practice is enough to make public bodies improve service delivery. In other cases, civil society must persevere with strategic lobbying and the use of the media to secure the changes they seek. If no action is forthcoming, even after various tools are used, then legal action through the courts is an option. In India, several organisations have successfully used Public Interest Litigation to bring about accountability and initiate action against defaulting officials.

In addition to following the channels above to demand and use information, other factors also help. Networking is good for sharing developments, experiences and lessons learnt on a regular basis. *Hum jaanenge* is an Indian e-group comprising many activists, users and NGOs working on Right to Information issues. The media can also play a major role – for example a major daily newspaper carries a regular column on the use of Right to Information law in India.

The tools in action

In this section we describe some recent experiences with various tactics and tools to access information on public bodies to improve service delivery to poor people.

Getting the rural poor their dues: The MKSS experience

The movement for Right to Information in India emerged from a grassroots struggle to secure livelihood and justice for

“Once adequate information has been collected, the next step is analysing information to see how it can be used to bring about change”

the rural poor in southern Rajasthan. The movement there was led by the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), a group of three social activists who had come together to work for the poor. In its Right to Information movement, the MKSS conducted a series of public hearings from December 1994 to April 1995, where they were able to collect evidence of corruption in works and delay in payments.

In Parliament in April 1995, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan declared that any citizen has the right to information. On payment, anyone could demand and receive details of expenditure on work done over the last five years in their village, and all the documents could be photocopied, as evidence should they want to use it in the future. However, no government orders were issued to give effect to this declaration. In April 1996, the MKSS declared that it would go on an indefinite *Dharna*, or sit-in, at Beawar until the orders for giving effect to the Chief Minister's assurance were issued. The *Dharna* by MKSS received phenomenal support not only from the local populace but also from political parties, journalists and social activists from across the country. Finally, the Government had to succumb to the demands and issue orders to assure rights to information.

Protecting homes of the poor: challenging eviction of villages in forest areas of Koraput, Orissa

In Koraput district in Orissa, the Right to Information law has been used to challenge the attempts of the State Forest Department to evict 11 villages from forest areas in 2004 on account of their being 'encroachers'. These attempts to evict villagers were met with widespread protests from the people who claimed that they had been living in the area for centuries, and had traditional rights to the land. Further, the residents of these villages had been issued Below Poverty Line cards² and Voters Identity cards³ that established them as resi-

² The Government issues Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards to urban and rural poor, which entitle them to get food grains at a highly subsidised price.

³ According to the Election Commission of India, each voter must be provided with a Voter Identity card, which includes a photograph and other details. This identity card is very important in preventing malpractices like impersonation and rigging. These cards can be used for many other purposes as multi-purpose identity cards.

Photos: Courtesy of The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), New Delhi.



A workshop organised by CHRI to promote awareness about RTI issues in India



dents of the areas. Bank loans, sanctioned on the basis of landholdings (even though *pattas* or land deeds were unavailable) were also used as evidence.

At the time of our fieldwork, the information demanded by the people was yet to be received but on the basis of the anticipated 'evidence' that the information would provide, the activists planned to file a petition in the Court to ensure that evictions were not conducted and that people's rights were protected.

Ensuring food security for the poor: plugging leakages in the public distribution system (PDS)⁴

Poor people often depend on government ration shops (called Fair Price Shops) for purchasing food at subsidised prices. However, due to rampant corruption, food meant for the poor is often sold at higher rates in the open market by making false entries in the record books. Parivartan – a citizens' rights group in Delhi – has fought to ensure better food supply through the public distribution system to poor people. Parivartan obtained the sales registers and stock registers of some ration dealers in the Welcome area in east Delhi for the month of June 2003, using the Right to Information law. Subsequently, the food supply in the area improved significantly.

Improving governance: curbing political interference in transfers of police officials

Mr. Shailesh Gandhi has used an extended letter-writing campaign to expose the extent of political interference in the transfer of police officials in the city of Mumbai. On 12 September 2003, he filed an application asking for informa-

Box 1: Rule 413 of the Police Manual

Government servants are forbidden to approach officials of other departments or non-official gentlemen for support in pressing individual claims or obtaining redress of grievances, or to approach members of the Legislature with a view of having their individual grievances made the subjects of the interpellations of the Legislature. They will be liable for disciplinary action if members of the Legislature or non-official persons approach the government on their behalf unless they can prove that such approach was made without their knowledge.

tion on the number of transfers of police personnel carried out at the request of politicians. He did not immediately get a response but he got a letter stating that while there had been recommendations from politicians, these had not been considered.

He subsequently requested information on the date of each recommendation, the name of the officer recommended for transfer, the name of the politician requesting the transfer, and the actual date of transfer of the officer. When his application was rejected, he appealed against it and further cited a rule from the Police Manual (Box 1). He demanded information on action taken against officials for whom recommendations have been received. After several rejections and appeals, he was finally able to force the Police Commissioner's office to start disciplinary action against erring officials. Two circulars were also issued stating that violation of rule 413 will be strictly dealt with.

Combating corruption through social audits

In some areas, such as Sundernagari colony in Delhi, local residents have formed *Mohalla Samitis* (Local Area Committees) to monitor the quality of government works through social audits. They do not allow any work to take place until

⁴ The PDS is a scheme initiated by the Indian Government to obtain food security for the poor. In this scheme necessary food items are provided to the poor (urban as well as rural) at subsidised prices from government designated fair price shops.

"If people start using the provisions of the law, it has the potential to emerge as a potent tool for improving the governance and empowerment of poor people"

the contents of the contract is made public and then they closely monitor these works to ensure that all contract conditions are being fulfilled.

Ensuring accountability: the *Jan Sunwai* way

In August 2002, the civil rights group Parivartan obtained information regarding civil works carried out in Sundernagari and New Seemapuri areas in the previous two financial years, using the Right to Information law. Parivartan then audited these works through discussions with the local people. Calculation for misappropriation was done for 64 works worth Rs. 13 million. It turned out that from the Rs. 13 million, corrupt contractors and officials had embezzled Rs. 7 million.

On 14th December 2002, a *Jan Sunwai* (public hearing) was organised by Parivartan along with the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) and MKSS of Rajasthan to discuss publicly the works audited. The public hearing was attended by almost 1,000 people including local residents of the area, journalists and eminent personalities. Officials of the Municipal Corporation and the state government were also present. The *Jan Sunwai* made people aware of the extent of corruption and also about their rights. There has been a drastic change in the attitude of officials towards the local people after this *Jan Sunwai*.

Conclusion

While the use of the Right to Information law can lead to several positive changes, some precautions also need to be exercised while using it. Often the information sought is used to expose vested and powerful interests.

This can lead to violent reactions, making it necessary to have a strong safeguard system for the affected people. To protect against any backlash, influential public-spirited citizens have come together and formed devoted networks such as MITRA in Mumbai and initiatives by the NGO Parivartan in Delhi. Bringing the victimisation cases into the public domain, molding public opinion, maintaining close contacts with the state, and collective action by the citizens can mitigate the vulnerability of backlash and act as a deterrent. Representatives from judiciary, bureaucracy, and the media are sensitised on a regular basis on RTI and the plight of the affected people is brought before them.

Further, many of the tools such as the social audit, *Jan Sunwai* and signature campaigns, are time and resource intensive and this has to be kept in mind during planning.

In 2005, India amended and strengthened its national Right to Information legislation. Using its provisions, people can seek information from public agencies on many aspects directly affecting their lives. The available experience indicates that the Right to Information law can help greatly in improving transparency and accountability in the functioning of government agencies. The key challenge is spreading awareness about the rights of the people and mobilising community organisations for collective action. If people start using the provisions of the law, it has the potential to emerge as a potent tool for improving the governance and empowerment of poor people.

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4

Legal literacy camps

**POWER
TOOLS**



Purpose:

'Panchayat Shivir' is used here as a Hindi term for Interactive Legal Literacy Camp. Law trainers may use it to aid tribal self-rule in India or other forms of decentralisation. Trainers may also use this tool in other countries that are progressing towards decentralised governance.

Activities:

- Know your target group. For example are they village headmen, members of CBOs, local officials? Pitch your training accordingly.
- Make sure your trainer can deliver. What are their abilities, skills – as a trainer, legal practitioner, linguist?
- The trainer must know the law in depth and how it works at the field level.
- Start with people's existing knowledge of legal concepts. Create interest in words commonly used in law. The meaning of words such as judgement, order, rules, regulations, acts, policy, petition, suit and decree are often a good starting point.
- Build on existing knowledge. Relate law to everyday situations in a village setting. Choose a live legal conflict and break it into phases: what, when, how and the current context of the conflict.
- Create an atmosphere where there can be a free flow of information. Be adaptive and respond to feedback especially during breaks.
- You need to measure how well you are doing and who you are reaching. Collect information on numbers taking part, how involved they become, where they are from, how much it costs them to attend. This will help you prioritise need.
- Trainers usually get information on legal conflicts in an anecdotal form often with a political and social bias. To be objective, the bedrock of an effective legal strategy, the trainer must separate legal issues from social, political and moral opinions.
- Encourage others to speak, repeat an idea, explain to their neighbours, and explain other similar examples. This clarifies things for both trainer and trained.
- Always end with action-based next steps. Fix responsibilities, timelines, and forums for further clarifications and exchange.
- Conduct sessions over several months. Reinforce learning because law and legal concepts are not easy to understand

Keep in Mind

- ★ Hold camps in the villages where tribal (indigenous) people find themselves in familiar surroundings and so are more comfortable about taking part.
- ★ Use local examples to illustrate complex legal situations. Use simple language and simple expressions of legal concepts.
- ★ Use humour and local vernacular to help get across complex points.
- ★ Use easily identified objects and situations to help create a better atmosphere for free exchange of knowledge.
- ★ The trainer should behave like a student rather than master of the subject. This strategy, where people feel less pressurised, encourages open expression of ideas.
- ★ The time of the year and length of the camp are important. Avoid the harvesting season.
- ★ Include such techniques as role-playing, focus group discussions, pictorial representation of legal issues, triangulating incidents with legal implications, and informal sessions.
- ★ Strategies, language and content must differ with the type of audience. So a strategy for senior officials should be different from that for mid-level administrators or village people.

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at: www.policy-powertools.org or contact: Sanjay Upadhyay eldf@vsnl.net; admin@eldfindia.com You can obtain the simple and useful Hand Guide on Tribal Self Rule Law in India from:
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Law for the people: interactive approaches to legal literacy in India

by SANJAY UPADHYAY

Introduction

The term 'law' evokes a variety of reactions and responses (Box 1). The development sector, at least in India, is on the one hand extremely vigorous in court action, but on the other, minimally informed about the legal system. The myth surrounding law and legal terminology is perhaps the biggest reason for pending litigation and lack of enforcement measures, especially in rural areas. Demystifying law, legal systems and legal literature is crucial.

This paper describes one such effort in rural Rajasthan, India, a state mostly populated by tribal people (legally recognised indigenous people). A new radical law on tribal self-rule empowers village assemblies (*Gram Sabha*) to manage community resources and act as institutions of self-government on almost all the socially relevant issues surrounding tribal villages in India. But while the law exists on paper there is very little to show on the ground. One of the central reasons for this void is tribal people's lack of knowledge of the new legislation. Therefore, through an empirical assessment of this situation and the presence of an active people's organisation, the Enviro Legal Defence Firm (ELDF) lawyers decided to take the law on tribal self-rule to tribal people through interactive legal literacy sessions (locally named *Panchayat Shivir*).

"Law is a powerful tool – but only if it is understood well"

- The legal literacy sessions were conducted at three levels:
- With senior staff in state-level partner NGOs who work with tribal people. The technical aspects of the legislation were dealt with in detail, so that they become more equipped in the formal language of the State, in order to facilitate their own advocacy processes.
 - At district level with members of people's organisations. This is done using less technical language, with more emphasis on the spirit of the law, which then can be used by village organisations, community-based organisations (CBOs) and village assemblies.
 - At village level (selected villages in consultation with partner NGOs/CBOs). This is done with mixed groups of interested women and men, in vernacular language wherever required, and with a simplified version of the law on tribal self-rule.

The rest of this article describes the experience with *Panchayat Shivir* at village level.

Box 1: Different views of 'the law'

Understanding Panchayats with special reference to tribal areas – Orissa Development Action Forum, Gram Vikas, Behrampur, Orissa, India, 13-14th October 2004.

Development professionals' response to: What do you understand by the term 'law'?

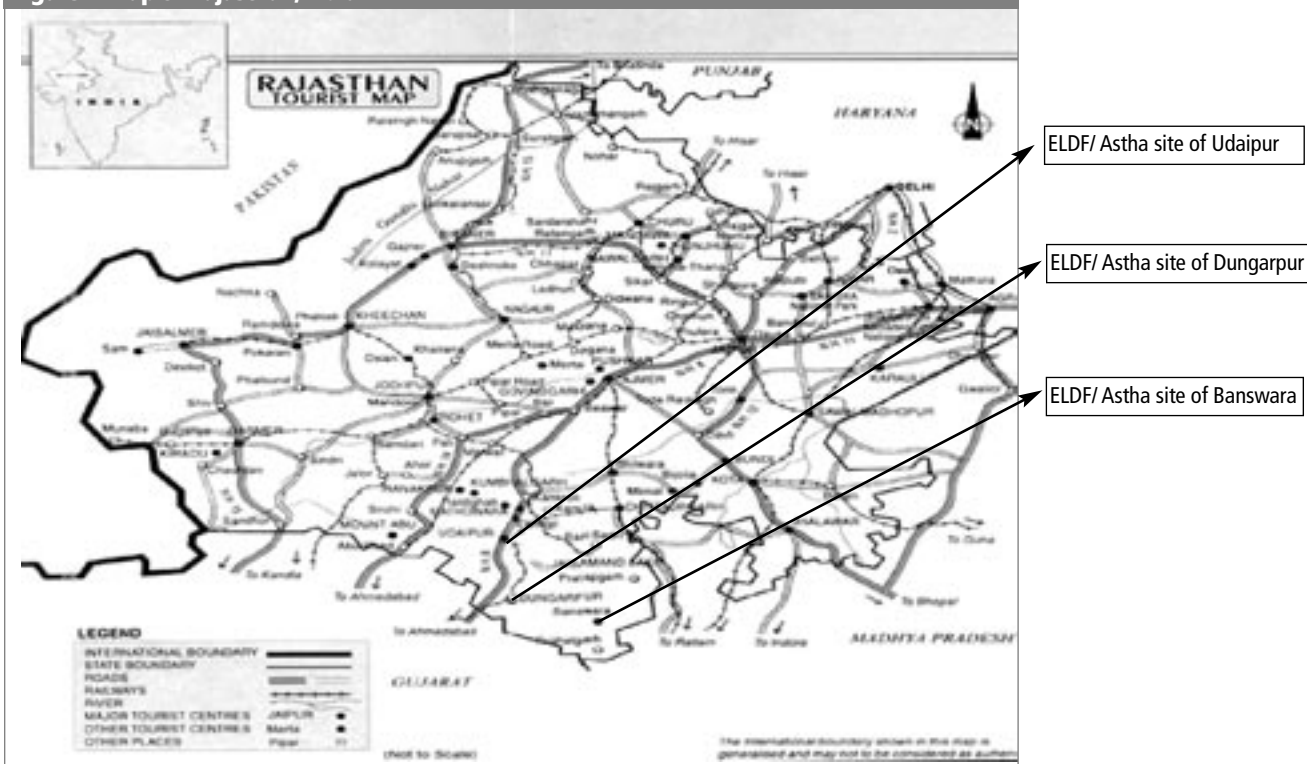
Common sense, dos and don'ts, context, community, written form, discipline, normative frame, protector, hard to carry out, set of impositions/instructions, to restrict freedom, instruments of power holder to dominate/rule, control mechanism, principles of governance, conditions, specialised knowledge, justifications, complication, litigation, principles of social justice, pain, liars, marriage between discipline and administration, middleman, controlling system, black and white, political interest, problem solving, anarchy, dominant, rationalising, principles governing a system, court, trial, judge, magistrate.

Rajasthan and the Tribal Self-Rule Law

Rajasthan is one of the most beautiful states in the western part of India, which attracts tourists from all over the globe due to its rich traditions and colours. Dense forests dominate the south of Rajasthan. Due to the predominance of tribal popu-

lations, parts of the region have been demarcated as Scheduled Areas, areas for special administration under the Constitution of India. The enactment of the Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, popularly known as the Tribal Self-Rule Law, ushered in a new era of empowerment of the lowest unit of governance (Gram Sabha, or village assembly).

This national legislation gave one year to each state to conform to the central mandate by amending their respective Panchayat legislation. However, Rajasthan failed to do so within the stipulated time. This inability of the state triggered a movement for self-rule, led by numerous tribal organisations and spearheaded by Astha, a well-respected rural development and rights NGO, in southern Rajasthan. Two years of protests followed, which finally forced the state to enact the conforming legislation in 1999. In a national study in 2000, what came as a real surprise in Rajasthan was the great enthusiasm for the law but very little effort to understand its details, impacts, or links with other legislation. At this point Astha and ELDF mutually realised that tribal empowerment was only possible if people actually understood the law to the point that they could use it. Law is a powerful tool – but only if it is understood well.

Figure 1: Map of Rajasthan, India

The need to demystify legislation

The Tribal Self-Rule Law touches on tribal ethos very closely. The legislation covers every aspect of tribal life including:

- management of community resources;
- protection of customs;
- preserving traditional modes of dispute resolution;
- controlling social evils such as exploitation in money lending;
- land alienation; and
- controlling social and developmental plans at the village level.

The only problem seems to be the manner in which the law is written and understood – and as a result it has failed to reach the masses. The challenges of legal language are immense and unless a conscious attempt is made to **demystify** the legal jargon, the potential of such legislation to support people's self-determination cannot be realised.

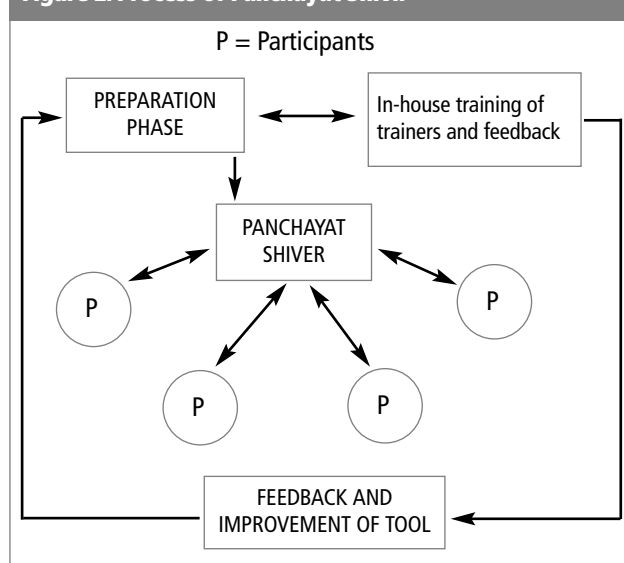
The process of Panchayat Shivar

Legal literacy sessions are part of an ongoing process. A typical day-long event starts with a facilitator from Astha informally introducing the lawyers from ELDF. Introductions to Supreme Court Advocates raise the expectations of the audience and create an interest in – and legitimacy of – the training session. All participants then introduce themselves, and leading questions test their level of familiarity with legal language.

One example is the question: 'What comes to mind when you hear the term "law"?' The words that come from the group are linked to the subject matter: provisions of the law on tribal self-rule. Terms such as 'control', 'recommendatory', 'power', 'customary law', 'customary practice', 'shall', 'may', 'minor forest produce', 'minor minerals', '*panchayats*', and '*gram sabha*', are explained and related to the provisions. While explaining the details through day-to-day examples, women and those who normally speak less are especially encouraged to speak. Intermittent breaks and starting the new session with a folk song makes the atmosphere lively and amenable to sharing and learning.

The first session is normally on conceptual issues, the second session discusses issues experienced in the region, and the third session relates actual examples to relevant legal provisions. In all cases the language used is non-technical. Complicated legal terms are simplified by using day-to-day language. A typical one-day event ends with a review 'What did I gain or lose today through this session?' then a song or a prayer. Feedback from participants and leaders of sessions is used to improve how sessions are run and to train others to facilitate *Panchayat Shivar* (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Process of Panchayat Shivar



The challenge of communicating law with illiterate people

One of the foremost challenges that soon dawned during the literacy sessions was that the groups we were communicating with were not only unfamiliar with law, but also illiterate, with no formal education. Legal training by professional lawyers who are urban trained in prestigious law schools to an audience that barely understand even the national language was a big constraint in the beginning. It was soon clear that vernaculars are the most comfortable medium of communication in such situations. There are thousands of dialects in India, which indicates the enormity of this challenge. We realised that the usual law sessions and training curricula would not work and innovative approaches had to be adopted to make any headway.

Innovative approaches

Six rules of thumb helped us to communicate the aims and workings of the Tribal Self-Rule Law.

Know your audience

It is essential to not only understand the nature and profile of the participants (e.g. their means of earning a living) but also to map their strengths and weaknesses. Their level of literacy, existing knowledge and experience with law, and comfort with different languages all make a difference and should be known before starting out. It is here that the partnership with Astha was useful as they were well aware of

“The challenges of legal language are immense and unless a conscious attempt is made to demystify the legal jargon the potential of such legislation to support people’s self-determination cannot be realised”

their members. Thus the discretion to choose participants was given to Astha and at the same time the literacy sessions started with leading questions to ascertain the participants’ profiles. Often informal questions on the understanding of law and legal terminology, linking it up with their day-to-day language, helped the process.

Learn and teach by real examples

Often a well known or a real example breaks the ice with a group who are not familiar with the law or how it operates. It is always better to start with a real-life scenario and link it up with law rather than starting directly with information about the provisions of law. For example, if a community utilises a forest product and there are issues of control, ownership or transit, it is best to explain why and where the law operates in each of these instances. Talking about the day-to-day situation leads to a discussion of legal provisions and a demonstration of why, say, the enforcement agency behaves in a particular way. Or when and where people need to exercise caution to avoid breaking the law. Or about issues where they worried that they had committed legal violations, but actually had not.

Emphasise the importance of legal terminology

Terms mean different things in day-to-day language compared to the law. For example, if people have been taking headloads of wood under the impression that it is their ‘right’, it may so happen that the statutes record this as a ‘privilege’. The difference between a right and a privilege may entail totally different legal consequences in a conflict situation when brought before a court of law. More subtly, ‘minor forest produce’ and ‘major forest produce’ are subject to different legal provisions, but state government agencies and village assemblies might have rather different ideas of what is included. We did an exercise to determine what counts as ‘minor forest produce’ (MFP) during one of the literacy sessions, to bring out this point more clearly (Box 2).

Box 2: Comparative table of State list of MFP, and list of MFP as per the Village Assembly

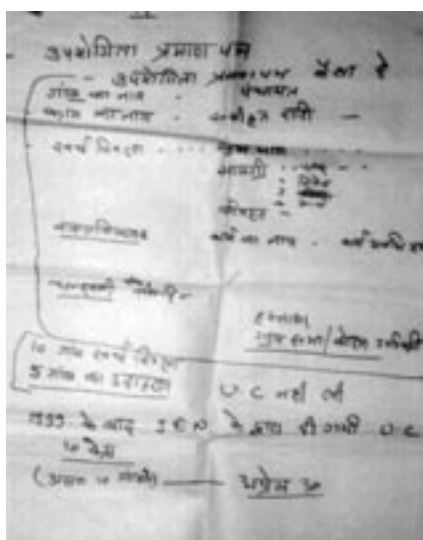
	List of MFP made by Village Assembly	State List of MFP
1.	Tendu Patta (Tendu Leaves)	Tendu Fruit but NOT Tendu Leaves
2.	Aritta	Aritta
3.	Behra	Behra
4.	Amla	Amla
5.	Lanwara	Not included
6.	Seetafal (Custard Apple)	Not included
7.	Bans (Bamboo)	Not included
8.	Gondh (Gum)	Not included
9.	Shahad (Honey)	Shahad (Honey)
10.	Ratanjot	Not included
11.	Imli (Tamarind)	Not included
12.	Karanji	Not included
13.	Mahua	Mahua flowers
14.	Dolma	Not included
15.	Jamun	Jamun
16.	Safed Musli	Not included
17.	Bila	Not included
18.		Mom (wax)
19.		Chaal (bark)
20.		Oil Seeds
21.		Junglee Jhadiyan (Wild shrubs and branches)
22.		Khirmi
23.		Molsari
24.		Aam (Mango)
25.		Ber
26.		Lissora
27.		Ghas (Grass)
28.		Chara (Fodder)
29.		Palas Leaves

Discuss ‘live’ problems

An ongoing problem or difficulty attracts maximum attention – much more than examples from the past. It is an art to bring out the legal aspects of these situations vividly. The Tribal Self-Rule Law, for example, mandates that all ‘minor minerals’ are to be under the control and management of the *Panchayat* (local government) at an appropriate level, with a detailed procedure to determine where this responsibility should lie. But one *Gram Sabha* (village assembly) had another interpretation of this provision, charging a tax on

Figure 3: Utilisation certificate: a legally robust model developed by village people

First draft



Utilisation Certificate

Name of the village and Village Council

Name of the Works

Approved Budget

Description of Expenses

- Cost of labour
- Material used
 - o Stones
 - o Cement
 - o Others
- Transport
- Actual state of work
 - o Name of work
 - o Date of completion

Signature of Village Assembly

Final draft

Utilisation Certificate

Sr. No. Letter -----

Certified that out of Rs. -----

1. No. amount & dated ----- of grant-in-aid sanctioned during the year ----- in favour of ----- under the Rural Development Department letter number given in the margin and Rs. ----- on account of ----- unspent balance of the previous year/s sum of Rs. ----- has been utilised for the purpose of ----- for which it was sanctioned and that the balance of Rs. ----- remaining un-utilised on the ----- end of the year shall be utilised during the next financial year with the consent of the Village Assembly of the local self government.

2. We the members of the Village Assembly certify that we are satisfied that the conditions on which the grant-in-aid was sanctioned have been duly fulfilled/are being fulfilled and that we have exercised the following checks to see that the money was actually utilised for the purpose for which it was sanctioned.

Kinds of Check Exercised¹:

1. -----
2. -----
3. -----

Signature of the Village Assembly representative

Members of Village Assembly -----

1. -----
2. -----

Dated -----

¹ For instance, in case the money had been sanctioned for construction of a road, the kinds of check would be seeing whether adequate quantity and quality of material had been used, whether the workers had been paid adequate daily wages, whether the work had been done within the time frame and whether the end product was workable.

One of the interactive sessions with policy makers. From right to left: Shri BS Chandana – Director ASTHA; Shri Dilip Singh Bhuria – Chairman, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission, India and Chairman of Bhuria Committee (based on which Tribal Self Rule Law (TSR) was enacted); Shri BD Sharma – one of the key architects of the law on TSR; Sanjay Upadhyay – Managing Partner, ELDF.



Photo: ELDF

sand and gravel under the impression that such a levy was within their powers. When confronted with this legal problem, representatives of the *Gram Sabha* acceded to its illegality.

Similarly, what distinguishes ‘major’ from ‘minor’ minerals was unknown to the members of the *Gram Sabha*. This experience prompted us to the next rule of thumb of the legal literacy session – that it is not enough just to identify an illegality but equally important to find solutions. The new emphasis on problem solving made the literacy sessions much more meaningful and rewarding.

Find solutions

If an apparent illegality is brought to light, the next step is to look for solutions. With a supportive law such as the Tribal Self-Rule Law, in most cases illegality is not intentional but due to lack of information about the law. In the above example about minor minerals, the levy on sand and gravel are in the Tribal Self-Rule Law’s spirit of control and management of community resources by the community. In fact the Tribal Self-Rule Law empowers the *Gram Sabha* to act on its own without state enforcement on many issues. So we

created space in the legal literacy sessions for people to discuss creative ways to use the various provisions that directly involve community action.

For example, for activities sanctioned to *Gram Sabha* level, a certificate of utilisation of funds has to be given by the *Gram Sabha*, but there are no set formats for these certificates. During the sessions we worked together to work out an understandable but legally robust format that can be used within and between villages (Figure 3). This certificate automatically has legal power, now in the hands of the *Gram Sabhas*.

It became clear through the literacy sessions that finding solutions to existing problems was a great way of communicating the importance of how the law affects communities at large.

Link with the law makers

Another innovative approach that was discovered was to bring the participants attending such literacy sessions to meet the policy makers behind the law (Figure 5). We invited the architects of the Tribal Self-Rule Law to discuss the intentions, objectives and history of the legislation. Bringing the law

makers and a sample of those who are affected by the law together on one platform is an excellent way to help both groups to benefit from each other's experience. The law makers get feedback on how the law is working on the ground, while the tribal representatives are exposed to the whole process of making and implementing legislation.

Potential for replication elsewhere?

Most legal literacy sessions in India are carried out on a more formal basis: e.g. lecture series on predetermined topics at established training centres, which are conducted by legal experts who are primarily academic and not practitioners.

The *Panchayat Shivar* experience has been encouragingly successful. There is lots of space for experimenting in other areas of natural resource management. Of course, the situations described here are specific in statute, geographical location and community profile. However this need not be a barrier to replication. All that is required is to follow the rules of thumb and adapt to a particular situation. ELDF has continued legal literacy sessions on a demand-driven basis. Currently we are working in Orissa. In our experience, *Panchayat Shivar*, or interactive legal literacy sessions, are one of the best and most effective means of taking laws to the people who are most affected by them.

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6

Associations for business partnerships



Purpose:

Associations for business partnerships is a tool for migrant or other marginalised forest-dependent communities. It helps smallholders to engage with, compete in, and benefit from market economies.

Activities:

Migrant communities can solidify their control over forests, manage them sustainably and maximise benefits from them through joint action of many private smallholders.

This tool tackles five key problems in migrant communities:

- Lack of information (little knowledge about local natural resources and the legitimate and efficient use of them).
- Lack of political influence (little credibility with local authorities and support services such as finance agencies and legal services).
- Lack of market power (small scale of resources with which to negotiate and poor knowledge of markets for produce).
- Lack of administrative experience (no history with the bureaucracy of their new environment).
- Lack of collective confidence (few joint experiences on which to establish mutual trust and from which to take calculated risks).

The six activities below culminate in a formal contractual agreement about sustainable forest management between a smallholder association and an established business (e.g. a logging company). But the process provides much more than that – it develops community capacity, builds a support network and fosters self-sufficiency.

- **Community sensitisation** – link to an external catalytic NGO to demystify what forest management involves and find out what legal steps to take to formally allow commercial forest activity.
- **Association formation** – investigate which forms of association best suit community action and strengthen a subset of community members who agree to form such an association to undertake joint actions together.
- **Management formalisation** – agree exactly what pre-harvest, infrastructure development and harvest activities are required in the joint land area and over what timeframe.
- **Partnership negotiation** – negotiate potential sub-contracted management agreements with an established service provider, paying particular attention to monitoring and get-out clauses.
- **Contractual obligation** – develop a formal contract following a model outlined in the expanded tool guidance – building in an initial trial phase.
- **Revised affiliation** – use the success of the initial trial phase to draft in further community members and renegotiate with the established company.

Keep in Mind

Preconditions for this process include:

- ★ Individual smallholders with tenure over separate lots.
- ★ Available forest or other natural resources.
- ★ Willing NGO and business partners (e.g. forest management NGO, logging companies or other processing industries).
- ★ Economic viability where profits from the joint activities exceed costs.
- ★ Collective action requires trust. In migrant communities building trust can take time – so allow plenty of it during the community sensitisation phase.
- ★ There is a risk that some community members will want to be free riders (benefiting from management infrastructure without contributing to the joint action) – so make sure to create special benefits for association members.

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at:

www.policy-powertools.org or contact:

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Stronger by association: small and medium-scale forest enterprise in the Brazilian Amazon

by DUNCAN MACQUEEN, LUCIENE FIGUEIREDO, FRANK MERRY and NOEMI PORRO

Introduction

Community-based small and medium forest enterprises (SMFEs) have sprung up across the extensive and remote Amazon frontier. They account for a significant proportion of forest revenue and jobs – even if many of these are informal. High transaction costs in dealing with them often leave them marginalised from policies and markets. At the frontier, marginalisation affects both traditional groups such as rubber-tappers, brazil-nut collectors, indigenous peoples, and more recently, colonists. They rarely share a common history and background.

Associations are one tool that can help. Participation in associations is often an attempt to overcome isolation, poverty and political marginalisation. It is a way of creating a sense of community and enables people to pool their resources to increase bargaining power with outsiders (Merry and Macqueen, 2004). This paper asks what forms of participation at the forest frontier enable associations to deliver?

To answer this question, this article first looks at the contexts in which participation in association has emerged in the Amazon. Next an assessment is made of the institutional forms shaping that participation. The article then examines in more depth some Amazonian examples of association – shedding light on four key elements of association:

“Participation in associations is often an attempt to overcome isolation, poverty and political marginalisation”

- cohesion (what glues them together);
- resilience (what decision-making structures keep them vibrant);
- equity (what distribution of costs and benefits keeps members happy); and
- support (what outside inputs are necessary).

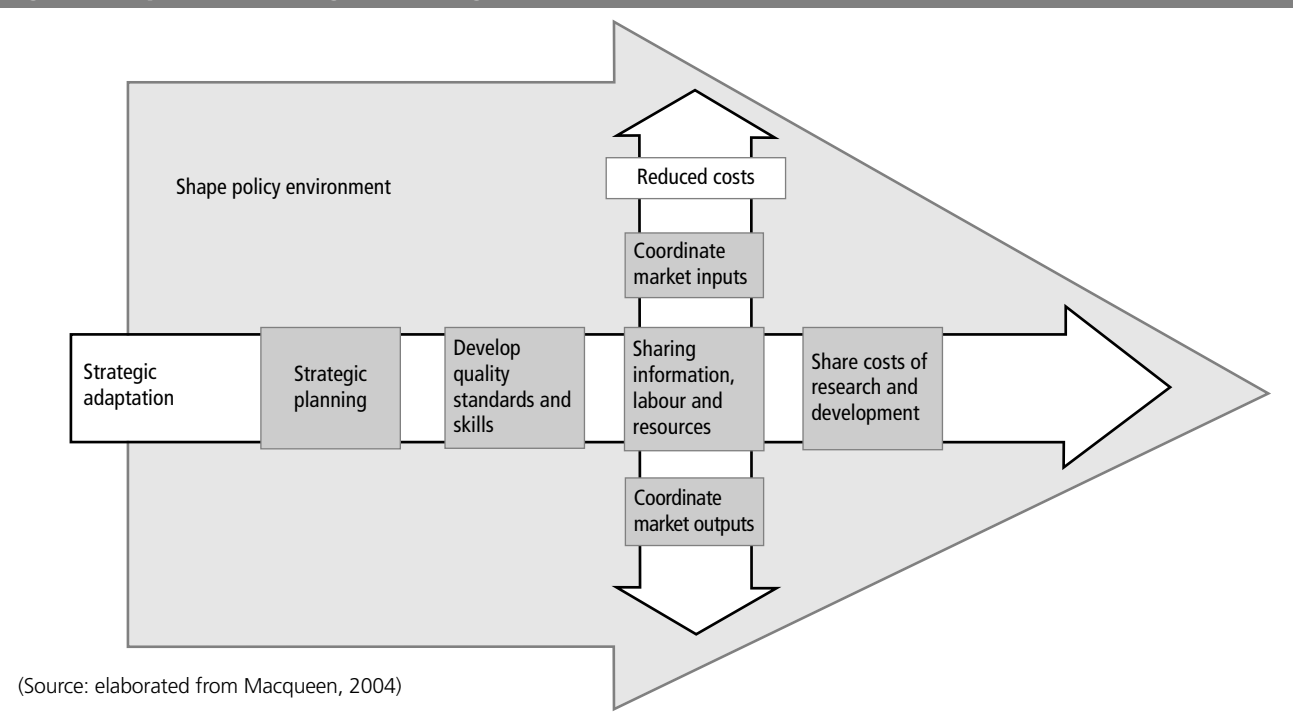
A final action-orientated section points to some ways forward – supporting associations as a tool to help marginalised groups.

Contexts: where does participation in associations emerge?

Association is about ‘banding together around a common purpose’ – usually strongly felt by those who initially participate in that association. In what contexts has participation in associations emerged at the Amazonian forest frontier? There are three basic scenarios:

- Opportunistic – sometimes access to resources, credit or

Figure 1: The possible advantages of forming an association



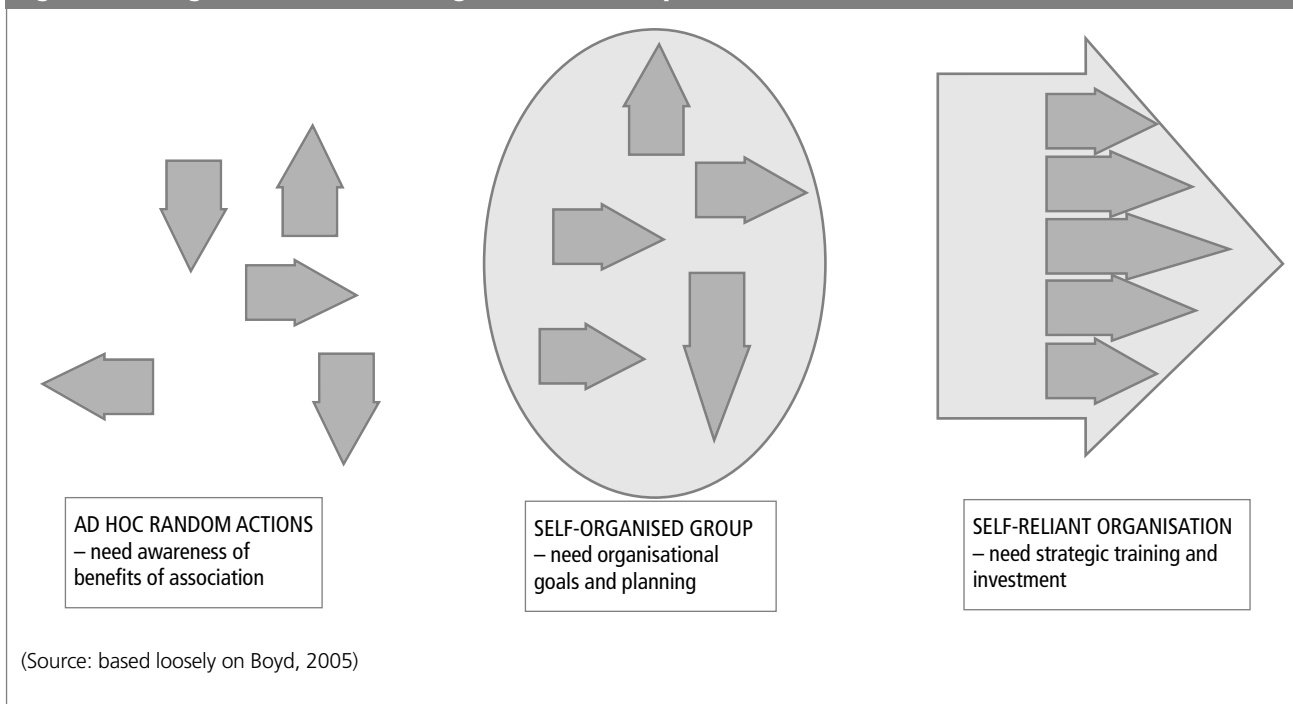
markets is only legally available to groups. For example, in the 1990s many Amazonian associations formed primarily to take advantage of credit offered through a programme known as FNO-Especial.

- Survival – sometimes, community SMFEs have been unable to compete without uniting to increase their scale and market power. For example, the *Cooperativa dos Agricultores de Medicilândia* (COOPERSAME) formed to increase the scale of production and cut out intermediary agents who were making production unprofitable.
- Strategic – sometimes new opportunities have existed to reduce costs or combine specialisms to adapt to new opportunities. For example, members of the *Associação dos Moradores e Produtores do Projeto Agroextrativista Chico Mendes* (AMPPAE-CM) worked together to launch a new eco-tourism project.

In some cases, participation towards association emerges spontaneously across a whole group. For example, the rubber-tappers living in the Seringal Porto Dias, in the municipality of Acrelândia jointly realised that their *Seringal* (natural forest containing rubber trees) might be made into a conventional Settlement Project by INCRA – threatening the integrity of the forest. They then jointly formed an association.

In other cases, a dynamic leader has been more prominent in uniting members. For example, Chico Mendes led rubber-tappers of Seringal Cachoeira, in the municipality of Xapuri, to form an association. The aim was to fight against cattle ranchers who were grabbing their lands and devastating their forests. The Association of Residents of the Extractive Settlement Project Chico Mendes (AMPPAE-CM) was later created to formally access public resources destined to Extractive Settlement Projects. Through their leader Chico Mendes, the rubber-tappers' movement was able to elevate this locally based proposal into national policies for forest peoples.

In some cases, leadership comes from outside. For example, the government agency EMBRAPA helped to start the *Associação dos Produtores Rurais em Manejo Florestal e Agricultura* (APLUMA). Changes in leadership sometimes occur as associations evolve. For example in the state of Acre, the Cooperative of Agro-Extractivists of Xapuri (CAEX) formed to commercialise Brazil nut collection. The initial leadership from among the rubber-tapper members struggled as the scale of the trade exceeded the capacity of individual families. When colonists with greater business experience arrived from Southern Brazil they soon found themselves leading the cooperative.

Figure 2: The stages of association and organisational development

Associations can be particularly important in remote areas where other support structures are weak – for example along the Amazonian frontier highway BR 163 that connects Santarém with Cuiabá. In these areas, SMFEs have had few other people but themselves to turn to.

Drivers: what do associations help members to do?

What have been the main drivers for participation in associations? Joining forces through association has helped Amazonian SMFEs in three main ways:

- First, associations have pushed for changes in the policies and institutions to favour their interests (the shaded enabling environment in Figure 1). For example, the *Sindicato de Trabalhadores Rurais* (STR) formed to combat powerful ranchers forcing rubber-tappers off their land.
- Second, associations have participated together to reduce transaction costs (the vertical axis of Figure 1). For example, members of COOPERSAME have shared transport costs, labour costs, market information, and so on.
- Finally, associations have shared the costs of adapting to new opportunities (the horizontal axis in Figure 1.) For example, members of the *Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária e Extrativista dos Municípios de Epitaciolândia e Brasília* (CAPEB) enjoy access to processing, packaging and marketing facilities.

dia e Brasília (CAPEB) enjoy access to processing, packaging and marketing facilities.

Different stages of participation can be seen in Amazonian associations (see Figure 2) with an evolution from random ad hoc activities towards highly structured self-reliant development institutions – such as *Reflorestamento Econômico Consorciado e Adensado* (RECA).

As participation has become more formalised, choices have been made about what institutional forms optimise benefits.

Institutional forms: what structures how participation occurs?

Associations in Brazil have taken many different forms. Most correspond with those described by Boyd (2005): informal groups, formal associations, trusts, partnerships, cooperatives and companies. Informal groups of SMFEs are often found when money transactions are small, trust is high and there are shared social or environmental aims. For example, interviewees across the states of Para, Acre and Mato Grosso said their main goal was education. Many informal groups are focused on that issue – made up of parents and grandparents, friends and neighbours, all pooling resources

Harvesting brazil nuts
from extractive reserves



Photo: Duncan Macqueen

together to educate their children. Other examples of informal groups are those observed in the interactions between rubber-tappers and new colonists – the latter being trained how to collect, process and transport brazil nuts. Few written constitutions exist in such groups.

If money looms larger – but social or environmental aims are still strong – one option is to form a charitable trust. There are some examples of charitable trusts set up, for example, by the Catholic Church. The starting point is a more complex written deed of trust. Being non-democratic has probably reduced the use of this form of association.

More democratic is the formal 'association'. This is the most common institutional form for participation in the Amazon – for example the Chico Mendes association close to the Chico Mendes extractive reserve. A simple constitution defines objectives and responsibilities. Management is by an elected management committee, appointed on terms

agreed by the members. Associations such as Chico Mendes can own, invest and disperse significant amounts of land, money and other assets. But an association is primarily about representing members' interests, not commercial dealing. It is not a legal personality. Nor does it constitute a guarantee against which to borrow money (i.e. it is not contractible or bankable). Its members are fully liable if things go wrong. If commercial dealings are the main aim, groups often opt for tougher commercial models.

A commercial form widely used in Brazil is the member-controlled cooperative. A good example in the Brazilian Amazon is RECA. Cooperatives are all about democracy, equity and solidarity – i.e. less appropriate if individual profit and limited liability are important aims. Brazil fortunately does not suffer from a strong negative connotation with the word 'cooperative' that exists in other countries where they were forcibly, not voluntarily, established. Cooperatives require the same mix of business skills to introduce technology and find markets as any other business. Attracting these skills without the promise of substantial profits is a major challenge.

Perhaps the most commercially robust form of association is the company: a legal personality that can acquire resources, trade, and employ people just like a person. Directors, members and employees also benefit from limited liability. Yet setting one up in Brazil is not easy. Company law demands complex Memoranda, Articles of Association and annual reports. Moreover there is the risk in a 'company limited by shares' that founding directors are free to dispose of their shares (cashing in). The control over activities can then quickly slide into the hands of unscrupulous outsiders. Not surprisingly local groups rarely adopt the company form.

Practical insights: what characteristics of association have secured benefits?

Field-based analyses of twelve associations in Acre and Pará showed that many Brazilian associations formed solely to take advantage of government credit programmes (e.g. FNO-Especial credit line). Many (but not all) such associations became empty shells once they have obtained the initial credit. Twelve case studies by Campos *et al.* (2005) describe continuing active groups. In such groups, an average of 90% of respondents felt that their association had made them better off in some way. Associations helped to overcome marginalisation by tackling:

- Insecurity and powerlessness – CAPEB is a large cooperative of rural producers from Acre. The Catholic Church established it to unite rural workers and extractivists, secure access to land and resources and eliminate the middleman

Sharing mobile
sawmill technology in
settlement legal
reserves



Photo: Duncan Macqueen

buyer among other aims.

- Inequitable social relationships – members founded the association *Sindicato de Trabalhadores Rurais* (STR), which now has 7,000 members, precisely to give voice to the rubber-tappers against incoming ranchers who were forcing them off their land.
- Drudgery – the women's *Associação de Mulheres e Campo e Cidade de Porto De Moz* (EMANUELA) on the Xingu River diversifies women's activities from manioc production (a staple food) towards liana crafts (a rainforest vine).
- Diminished diversity and ecological resilience – the *Associação dos Moradores e Produtores do Projeto Agroextrativista Chico Mendes* (AMMPAE-CM) acts to promote sustainable forest management in the extractive reserve of Chico Mendes with the help of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).
- Lack of identity – members established the *Movimento de*

Mulheres do Campo e Cidade (MMCC) in part to promote women's voices in politics.

The principal motivation for participating in these associations has tended to be financial, but members also emphasised social and environmental aims for the broad community. Associations get support from a huge number of NGO, government and church-based organisations. Even the more advanced cooperatives require a range of financial, administrative, technical and logistical support. A striking feature is the degree to which different associations provide support to one another through mutual assistance. Yet external support is not alone sufficient to keep an association going. The government agency EMBRAPA established the *Associação dos Produtores Rurais em Manejo Florestal e Agricultura* (APLUMA) to promote community timber production. But poor leadership and lack of trust have riven it apart.

Longer-term resilience may depend on formal institutional

procedures. The large cooperative RECA requires attendance at all meetings for one year before accepting new members. Continued membership is only possible through adherence to organic farming standards, environmental preservation, sale of produce through RECA and continued participation in 80% of meetings. Although most associations stipulate membership fees and attendance at meetings, it is common for associations to fail after as little as five years because members do not adhere to these rules.

Associations' members think that democratic decision-making and regular attendance at meetings are important. Campos *et al.* (2005) found that 26% of members attend all meetings and a further 52% attend frequently. Where problems had arisen, lack of trust, opaque decision-making processes or inequitable financial distribution were seen as the main causes. Membership and decision-making in mixed associations tended to favour men – perhaps explaining why women's associations of small and medium enterprise were flourishing in their own right. For example, the women's association EMANUELA was set up to improve women's health, liana weaving and nut processing activities.

Ways forward: what steps can small-scale enterprises take to form resilient and effective associations?

- Meet with other similar enterprises to identify common concerns;
- Discuss both problems (e.g. those listed under 'Practical insights' above) and goals (e.g. Figure 1) to work out how an association could help;
- Agree a series of foundational meetings to decide rules on membership, leadership positions, frequency of meetings, taking decisions, keeping records and winding things up – making use of the tips from experience described above;
- Use the section on institutional forms (based on Boyd, 2005) to investigate what structure might best serve your interests;
- If you wish to formalise the association, identify and complete all the necessary legal steps;
- Regularly review how to maintain cohesion, resilience, equity and to attract the support you will need from outside.

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8

POWER TOOLS



Speaking for ourselves

Purpose:

Development dialogue is a twofold process involving (i) the development of skills of pastoralist and other communities to represent themselves through the development and application of livelihoods analysis tools, and (ii) the creation of appropriate forums through which to demonstrate and enact new representation skills.

The tool helps to:

- Explain livelihood problems faced by marginalised rural communities.
- Develop common understanding and ownership of solutions and actions.
- Empower communities to represent themselves in development dialogue and action.

Activities:

Building skills in livelihood analysis

- Get started
 - Understand the sustainable livelihoods framework
 - Develop a simple and flexible plan of field work
- Introduce the sustainable livelihood framework to communities
 - Facilitate discussion on each of the five capital assets
 - Ask communities to represent assets with drawings on separate cards
 - Produce capital asset cards – a physical tool-kit
- Identify problems that affect their capital assets
 - Identify problems related to each capital asset
 - Encourage people to visualise problems (drawing)
 - Place drawn problems alongside the

corresponding asset

- Identify solution to these problems
 - Brainstorm to identify solutions
 - Ask communities to categorise solutions according to difficulty to implement.
- Use three categories of solutions:
 - Using community resources
 - Using community resources with external assistance
 - Using external assistance with little community input
- Assess sustainability and feasibility of each solution
 - Using cards assess the workability of the proposed solution
 - Analyse solutions under the headings: resource needs, available resources, required from outside
- Develop action plan
 - Lay out cards and select solutions
 - Analyse the solution under the headings: time, place, responsibility
 - Develop action plan

Creating opportunity for presentation and representation

- Identify the target audience
 - Identify relevant institutions who will work with the community's solutions and plans
- Select the venue for presentation
 - Identify a convenient meeting place
- Hold an event for the target audience
 - Decide on the community presentation group
 - Build team presentation skills
 - Invite appropriate institutions and development partners
- Review the event
 - Review and learn from the event
 - Analyse the impact, and discuss what's next

Keep in Mind

- ★ Train field workers in appropriate facilitation skills.
- ★ Build good relationships based on mutual trust and understanding with the community – this lays the foundation for success.
- ★ Work in community time and space; be punctual; always respect time arrangements, especially those made by you.
- ★ Engage constantly with the community. The process involves a series of on-going activities, which need continuing periodic engagement.
- ★ Laminate the asset cards to ensure durability – make a physical tool.
- ★ Involve relevant government offices – their early involvement improves their later listening and acting.
- ★ Give communities control over the presentation – let them do it.
- ★ Don't pay incentives to attend meetings (for either government or community groups).

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at:
www.policy-powertools.org
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www.sahel.org.uk

9

It works! Speaking for ourselves: a development dialogue tool

by SEMALIGN BELAY, ISMAEL HARO and BEN IRWIN

Responding to our own flawed practice

The catalyst for the development of this power tool came from comments made by an elderly woman during a government evaluation of the first phase of SOS Sahel International's Borana Collaborative Forest Management Project (BCFMP 1999-2001). The evaluation team had asked a group of rural women from the Bobella community what advantages they had gained from the project.¹ The group had interacted positively with the forest management and livelihoods activities. They had appreciated the project's approach and were pleased to be closely involved. However, an older woman then commented that there had been a lot of talking about the community's needs, but that the actions taken in response were often predetermined. She held the evaluators' attention by elaborating their frustration at being frequently consulted (by both government and NGOs) but not listened to. She complained that organisations often visited their village, asked them many questions, and then simply disappeared. Why the information was needed and what was done with it they did not know. What they did know, however, was that very little changed on the ground.

Reflecting on these comments, a number of critical issues

concerning the way in which SOS Sahel and other organisations work with communities emerged, such as:

- the balance between specialised sector approaches (in our case collaborative forest management) and broad community needs;
- the need to invest the time required to interact with communities in genuine participatory planning; and
- the need to ensure that their priorities are addressed and their understanding and ownership established before moving forward to action.

As our reflection deepened, a further key point was identified. This was that community members are marginalised throughout the whole development process. Their only opportunities to express their needs and priorities are when development actors appear in their village asking questions. But these visits are based on chance. The issues raised will depend on who is spoken with and on their particular ideas and perceptions. In turn, this is determined by who happens to be in the village at the time of the unannounced visit. There is no dialogue, and no pre-arrangement of meetings and discussions. More significantly, there is no preparation, planning or prioritisation by the community of the issues they should present to development actors when these chances arise.

¹ Bobella is a village in Arero Woreda, Borana Zone, Oromiya Ethiopia

The idea of unpacking the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)

Our conclusion was that communities need to be able to represent themselves far more effectively in development discussions and to overcome this marginalisation. They need to be able to present their priorities in a coherent language that development agencies can understand, and in a form that is more than a wish list.² Our idea in meeting this challenge was to work with the community to unpack the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (DFID, 1998; 1999).

The SLF is an innovative, analytical tool. It emerged in the late 1990s and has been used by development professionals to improve their understanding of people's lives. It involves analysing five categories of capital assets within a context of vulnerability (the result of trends, shocks and culture) influenced by transforming structures and processes (such as government laws and policies).

The SLF is highly representative of what could be termed the latest 'development-speak'. It is a language shared by those formulating development policy and designing development practice – and is exclusive to development agencies. What would happen if those agencies went to a village and found a community using the SLF, and talking their development language? Would it make a difference? Would they hear better and take the community more seriously? Would they respond more effectively to that community's needs and priorities?

Our idea was to present the SLF to the community, in its three main components – capital assets, vulnerability context and transforming structures – and see what they did with it. To see if they could understand the SLF and adapt it into a tool to use to present their development issues.

A development tool that works

After a considerable amount of time working with the Bobella community, the *Speaking for Ourselves: Development Dialogue Tool* was developed. The community group quickly understood and cleverly adapted and developed the SLF.³ They selected the five capital assets as the core of their tool, visualising each asset and then assessing them in terms of what assets they have and do not have through scoring. Asset cards were created in order to produce a physical tool.

² By 'wish list', we refer to the current uncoordinated list of wishes, hopes, aspirations and desires that a community will come up with if a passing development agency asks broad, open questions about development needs and priorities.

³ The group was made up of self selected men, women and youths in order to have a cross section of the community, and to see if any particular sub group would make specific or different use of the SLF.

"The Bobella group and the government spokesperson were using the same development language. This enabled comparisons of government and community development perspectives and priorities"

The community started using the tool to identify priority development gaps as asset gaps. Once an issue was selected, they used the tool again in order to plan development action, identifying which assets they have in hand and which need to be brought in. The tool developed was proving very useful. However, the key question of whether the use of the tool in development dialogue would reduce community marginalisation in the development process remained.

It was time for the real work to begin: to see if the tool actually works as a development dialogue tool. The community built up their experience of using the tool over time, increasing their skills, confidence and competence with each opportunity. Members of the group and sub groups took turns to present the tool. A brief description of these presentations, their results and the reactions to them is given below.

Zonal Forest Management Assemblies

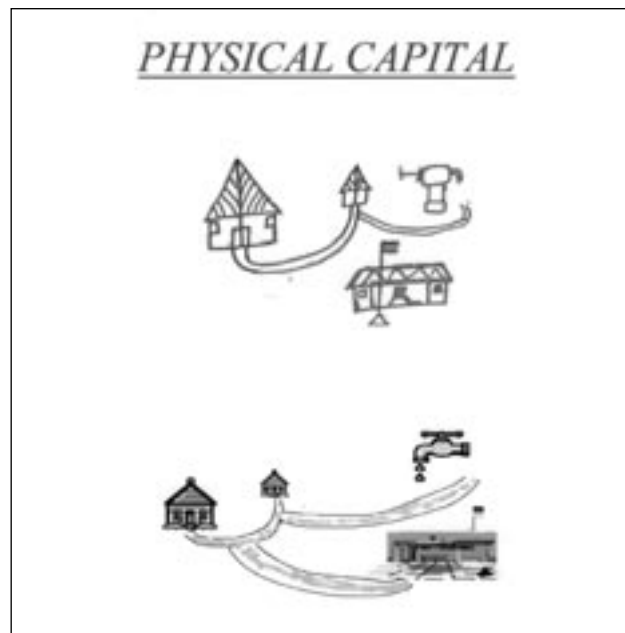
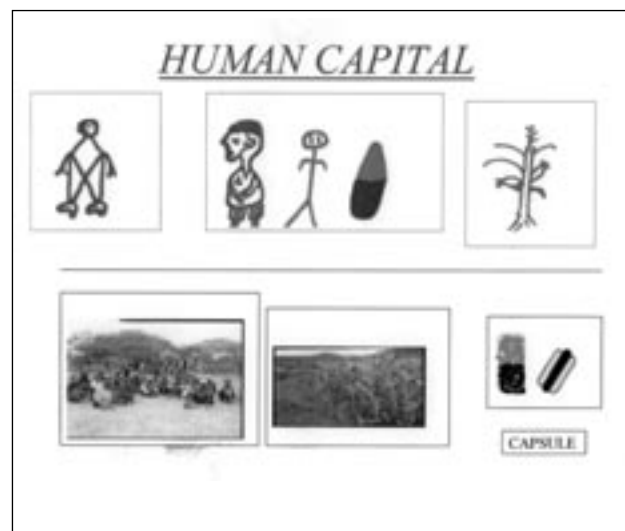
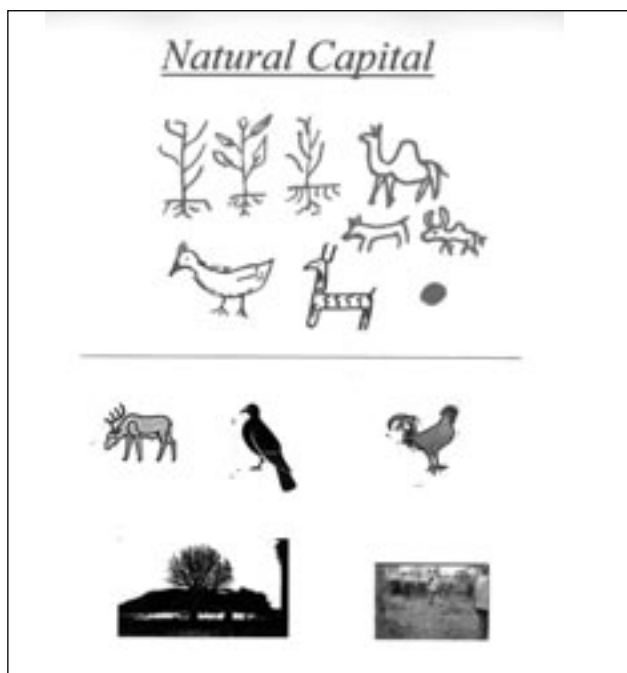
The first opportunity came in May 2004 at the annual Zonal Forest Management Assemblies, which are part of the activities of the wider BCFMP.^{4,5} The assemblies are community-arranged meetings involving traditional authorities, forest management groups and government line offices. The assemblies focus on the new forest management systems that are being established. However other development issues can be discussed. The Bobella group was given the chance to present their development dialogue tool. The reaction to the group's presentation was very positive. The description and explanation made by the group of their capital assets came across clearly. The importance of natural capital and social capital was stressed, and this fitted well with the issue of forest management through traditional institutions and systems, which was being debated at the assemblies. The assembly participants appreciated the logic and relevance of the analysis.

Later in the meeting, a government spokesperson presented the government's new pastoral development

⁴ A zone is a governmental administration unit: Region – Zone – Woreda.

⁵ Two assemblies were held, one in Guji Zone and one in Borana Zone.

Asset cards drawn and chosen by the Bobella group



programme. He also talked about capital assets and livelihoods. He stressed the government's intention to invest in human capital – in schools and clinics for pastoralists.

The Bobella group and the government spokesperson were using the same development language. This enabled comparisons of government and community development perspectives and priorities. The Bobella community had identified gaps in their human capital. However their priorities lay between strengthening their social capital (traditional author-

ities and systems) their most valued asset, and developing their physical capital (improving road access and establishing a grinding mill) in their village. The government spokesperson had stated the need to build human capital. The potential for dialogue with both sides speaking the same language and having similar understanding had arisen.

From this first experience of presenting the development dialogue tool the reaction from the assembly participants was one of clear interest in the dialogue tool. Many stated a

desire to know more and learn how to use the tool themselves. The reaction from the government officials attending the assembly was rather more subdued. But when asked later, they stated that they were both surprised and impressed to hear a community group presenting such a comprehensive livelihood analysis.

Zonal and Woreda development committees

A number of Zonal and Woreda development committee meetings were arranged. The purpose of these meetings was to bring Zonal and Woreda administrators and development committees down to the village level, to hear the community present their development dialogue tool. They felt that holding the meetings in the village mirrored the previous visits of development actors to the community. It was also felt that villagers would be more at ease presenting their tool in their own environment, and reflected the reality that the community have few opportunities to travel outside the village.

The reaction to the development dialogue tool presentations was very positive. The Borana Zone Administrator stated that this was the sort of development practice that the government wanted to promote. He congratulated the community, and urged SOS Sahel to scale up the method to other areas. He also donated 65 corrugated iron roofing sheets towards the construction of a grinding mill (the community's priority project) and recommended that the Woreda Administration support the project through their pastoral development funds.

The Woreda-level Administrator and development committee were also impressed by the presentations. They stated that the community's priorities would be funded from the government's new pastoral development funds, since they fitted with that programme well. However, this has not yet happened.

Some of the comments made by the government participants were as follows:

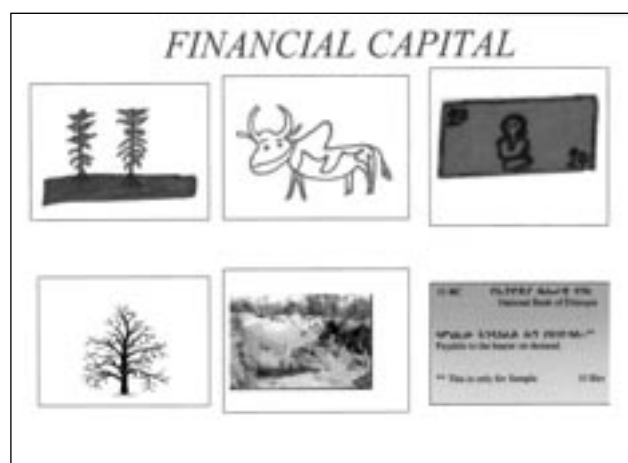
'I feel very happy to see the community group present its development issues in such an attractive way.'

'I have learnt a lot from the community members today that I didn't know before (referring to the capital assets).'

'I hope to share this experience with colleagues. It would be good to spread the tool to other communities.'

'By using their tool I encourage the community to struggle hard to pull themselves out of poverty.'

Asset card drawn and chosen by the Bobella group



'I am happy that you all talked the same language and expressed your issues as one voice. This shows you are really concerned and ready to participate in development activities.'

Development agency meeting

This took place in December 2004 in Addis Ababa in order that the Bobella group could present their tool to donors, federal government officials and NGOs. Unfortunately, donor attendance was poor. The NGOs present included the Pastoral Forum for Ethiopia, FARM Africa, CARE International, Oxfam Canada, GTZ, and the Gudina Tumsa Foundation. Government representation included the Federal Office for Pastoral Affairs.

The reaction to the tool presentation was again one of supportive surprise. Several organisations were interested to know how adaptable the tool was and whether they could introduce the tool to their own target communities. The Federal Office for Pastoral Affairs expressed interest in the tool for community-level planning. Meeting discussions centred on the development implications of using the tool.

However, the Bobella group was rather disappointed by this meeting – an issue discussed in more detail below. Briefly, the fact that the meeting was held in the capital, and involved international organisations and potential donors, led the group to expect a more immediate and concrete response (i.e. funds for their proposed development actions). This did not happen. There was a clear gap in agendas between the development agency audience and the community presenters. The development agency audience were observing a community group making a livelihoods presentation as a development tool, the community were presenting their livelihood position and expecting some action.

Comment/ impact	Motivation	Self-help	Empowerment	Skills	New ways of working
<i>'We promised to work very hard to see our projects established very soon.'</i>	●				
<i>'We believe in the importance of the project and have already started collecting money from within the community.'</i>	●	●			
<i>The tool has actually changed our attitude towards development.'</i>		●	●	●	●
<i>'The tool has helped identify our capital assets which we weren't able to identify before.'</i>				●	●
<i>'We have learnt that there is a big opportunity outside of village life, with a big audience of people working on development issues, that can be met.'</i>			●		●
<i>'We learnt that other communities cannot identify the five capital assets like we do.'</i>			●	●	
<i>'The tool is good, we can use it to solve our problems' (men's sub-group).</i>	●				
<i>'If you tell us to work we will wake up and work very hard using this tool' (women's group; refers to presentation work).</i>	●	●			
<i>'This tool has helped us to express our ideas properly.'</i>		●	●	●	

Sahel Alliance meeting

Finally, the group was invited to present its tool to the Sahel Alliance meeting in Negelle in April 2005. The Sahel Alliance is made up of the former SOS Sahel country programmes, now national autonomous organisations, linked together within the Alliance. There were representatives at the meeting from Mali, Sudan, Ethiopia, UK, South Africa and Kenya.

The reaction to the presentation was one of inspiration and frustration: inspiration at the skills of the group, at their empowerment and enablement, and at the quality of the development relationships and their potential.⁶ There was also frustration for and with the group that they had invested so much time and energy into developing and using the tool, but had had so little immediate response, in terms of secured resources. After the presentation the participants contributed ?750 in support of the group's priority planned activities.

What do we think? The Bobella Group

Community members' comments and reactions were recorded while the tool was being developed and used. Group members were asked simple questions about how the work affected them, and this is what they said.

At the beginning of the work

People were enthusiastic and curious about the idea of carrying out the action research. The strong relationship that already existed between the SOS Sahel team and the community contributed to this willingness. *'We can identify our assets, we have very little'* (comment made at the research concept introductory meeting).

After developing the tool

As skills were built and their understanding of the aims of the research increased, the group developed its SLF tool but were not sure how, when, or where to use it. *'People come and show us how to plough or how to dig. SOS Sahel is showing us how to use our heads, how to plan and how to present our ideas. This is most important to us'* (comment made at the BCFMP mid-term evaluation meeting).

What they say now

'This is our tool. We have used it to analyse our livelihoods and to explain our livelihoods to you' (comment made at the introduction of presentation at the Sahel Alliance meeting).

The following comments were recorded from the community group during the process of the action research. Their suggested impact is analysed in the table opposite.

⁶ Relationships between different levels of the community, and between the community and project.

"Will the use of this tool be embraced as proof of community capacity, or rejected as a threatening and confrontational strategy to challenge and undermine professionals and government officials by, and in front of, communities?"

What do we think? The research team

Our learning from this experience has been very interesting. In our opinion there is no doubt that the tool has worked.

Reversal of roles, community decision-making and development partnership

Even during the action research process the reversal of roles was apparent. The research process invested a lot of time in developing understanding of the SLF on both sides (the community group and the SOS Sahel research team). The research team initially used a more traditional approach of gathering information supplied by the community. Working in familiar ways helped build gradual but comprehensive understanding of the SLF as a concept and as the basis of the new tool.

Developing the ideas and skills needed to shape and then use the tool required a different dynamic. The key to success in moving from understanding the concept to a more animated and practical use of the tool was understanding and ownership, with the community rather than the research team driving the agenda and designing the tool as they see fit. In this regard the skill-building process within the research process became a microcosm of what the overall tool aims to achieve. The power relations of the formal development dialogue process are reversed, with communities making decisions and acting as genuine partners in development.

Some shortfalls

To some extent the community still expects instant success. Recent discussions have focused on the fact that now they have the tool and have presented it to development audiences, but where are the resources?

An understanding of how to use the tool strategically and opportunistically needs to be developed. The challenge is how community members can take the initiative fully upon themselves: how they can invite development actors to visit

them, to discuss with them, and to plan around their ideas? In reality the community has few opportunities to meet donors and development agents, given the costs and difficulties of travel, their isolated location, and lack of communications systems.

What next? Building on the experience

Spreading the word

It could be said that if an intervention is really good it will spread itself. Following the reactions to the community presentations, recommendations have been made to spread the method to other places. The main challenge is the time needed to develop the necessary skills. The action research gave the space to develop both the tool and the community's skills over a 12-month period. Certainly within SOS Sahel's current Borana programme, spending that amount of time with one community group is not feasible in terms of time, or replicable in terms of cost. Further fieldwork will show how the tool could be transferred and communication between and amongst communities established. One innovative proposal is to use the Bobella community group as trainers, and to establish a system of community-to-community training.

Who's listening?

In order to really scale up we need to know who is listening. Investing time and resources to scale up the method would feel much safer if government and other development actors were genuinely committed to listening to communities and treating them as development partners. Unfortunately this is not always the reality.

As mentioned before, at one point the Bobella community group became disillusioned with the presentations. When they travelled to Addis Ababa for a donor/NGO meeting, they themselves and the rest of the community expected the group to return having secured the resources to go ahead with their first project. When they did not, people in the community questioned the value of the tool, leading the group themselves to question it.

The problem is one of raised expectations. The research team took care to explain the purpose of the research and to stress that there were no guarantees of success. That part of testing the tool was to see what happened when the community made their presentations. But after all the time the community had invested, and the fact that we had set them up with a donors' meeting, it is natural that they expected more.

What the project had not done was to prepare the group for the realities of securing funds: The frustrations, the need to canvass many potential sources, the slowness of response, and the lack of preparedness among donors when meeting a community with its own action plan.

Knowledge is power

Communities obviously understand their livelihoods far better than we do. They are the best informed about their own situations, problems and potentials. And yet dialogue is still a challenge. Why don't development agencies listen and talk more carefully with the people they aim to serve? We would suggest that the key factor is the quality of the development relationship, and the level of trust and respect between development agencies and communities. In almost all presentations the development audience's reactions were of surprise, even shock that communities could analyse and articulate their livelihoods in a development language. This prejudice ensures communities are marginalised from development processes.

Interestingly the role of communities in using the SLF as a tool is little explored in the literature. The SLF is presented as a framework through which 'we' (development professional and governments) can better understand 'them' (communities), but not as a means through which communities can better articulate their needs. The SLF is the intel-

lectual property of academics and development professionals and uses a language that reinforces the gap between these professionals and communities – unless, of course, the community also learns that language.

The assumption that professionals know more than their target communities reflects unstated positions of power. One of the main blockages to progress in using participatory development approaches over the past 20 years has been the denial by development professionals of the wealth of knowledge that exists within communities, and of the specific and potential skills they have. The rhetoric of communities being equal partners in development is rarely realised.

In developing this dialogue tool – an animated assessment of capital assets using visual cards for community self assessment – the research has tried to merge a community's knowledge about their own livelihood situation with one of the latest theoretical development concepts, the SLF.

It is highly likely that this knowledge is not common currency amongst the lower levels of local government. Will the use of this tool be embraced as proof of community capacity, or rejected as a threatening and confrontational strategy to challenge and undermine professionals and government officials by, and in front of, communities?

Sensitive introduction of an empowered community demands great care.

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Family portraits

Purpose:

Family portraits are tools for understanding and communicating how real families organise their labour and other assets to make a living. The process of making and sharing the family portrait has the capacity to take individual and family perspectives to the level of policy change.

A family portrait is a document of words, diagrams and photographs that provides a great deal of detail on specific activities carried out by individual family members on a seasonal and historical basis, and highlights the major constraints they face in their struggle to provide for themselves. It is a research tool, but one which presents an immediate human dimension to many of the issues surrounding sustainable development.

Activities:

- **Develop a field guide** – to structure and give context to the portrait, and to provide direction for field activities.

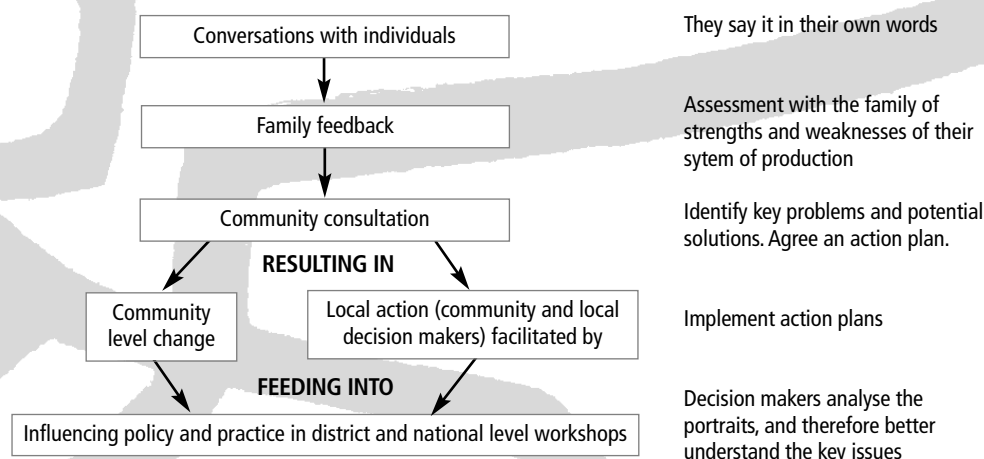
- **Select a family** – willing to devote time and effort to the development of their portrait.
- **Work with the family to create the portrait** – stay with the family over four to five days, engaging in informal conversations, observation and more visual participatory exercises. Analyse information, write up in the local language and prepare further lines of enquiry with the family. Follow up until the field research team and the family are satisfied that the portrait is relatively complete and accurate.
- **Hand back the portrait** – transcribe the portrait with photographs and present it to the family, allowing plenty of time for discussion.
- **Community consultation and policy influence** – use the portrait to facilitate reflection with the wider community and other decision makers. The portrait can be used as evidence to inform community-level action planning or to make sure that external interventions are informed by people's realities (see diagram).

Keep in Mind

- ★ Let the family dictate the breadth and depth of the enquiry – you can't force them to take you into their confidence.
- ★ Have a realistic time frame so that the portrait can feed into a broader programme of development, for example project design, community consultation about a specific issue, local action, or monitoring and evaluation.
- ★ Get the wider community involved – they will be curious.
- ★ Keep an open mind, let the process of the family portraits lead you within your broad objectives.

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at: www.policy-powertools.org or contact: Katherine Cochrane of SOS-Sahel katherinec@sahel.org.uk



The family portrait process – from individual perspective to policy change

11

Family portraits in Mali, Kenya and Tanzania

by KATHERINE COCHRANE

Introduction

The family portrait methodology provides a visual and written portrait of how a family sees itself within a broader environment (see Figure 1). This article compares how this methodology was used with pastoralists in Mali between 2000 and 2002, and in Kenya and Tanzania in 2004.¹ It describes how the methodology was adapted and refined for different objectives in different contexts, and concludes with some suggestions for facilitating and using the approach.

Family portraits to catalyse change in Bankass, Mali

SOS Sahel worked with four pastoralist families in Bankass district in Mali to prepare family portraits. Since the colonial era, the more powerful settled farming communities have made decisions about natural resource management, to the exclusion of pastoralists and women. The advent of decentralisation in Mali, and the election of local governments who would take responsibility for natural resource management, was a prime opportunity to try to transform power relations between resource users and ensure more equitable use of natural resources. The family portrait was a key tool in this approach; it took analysis to the household level and added

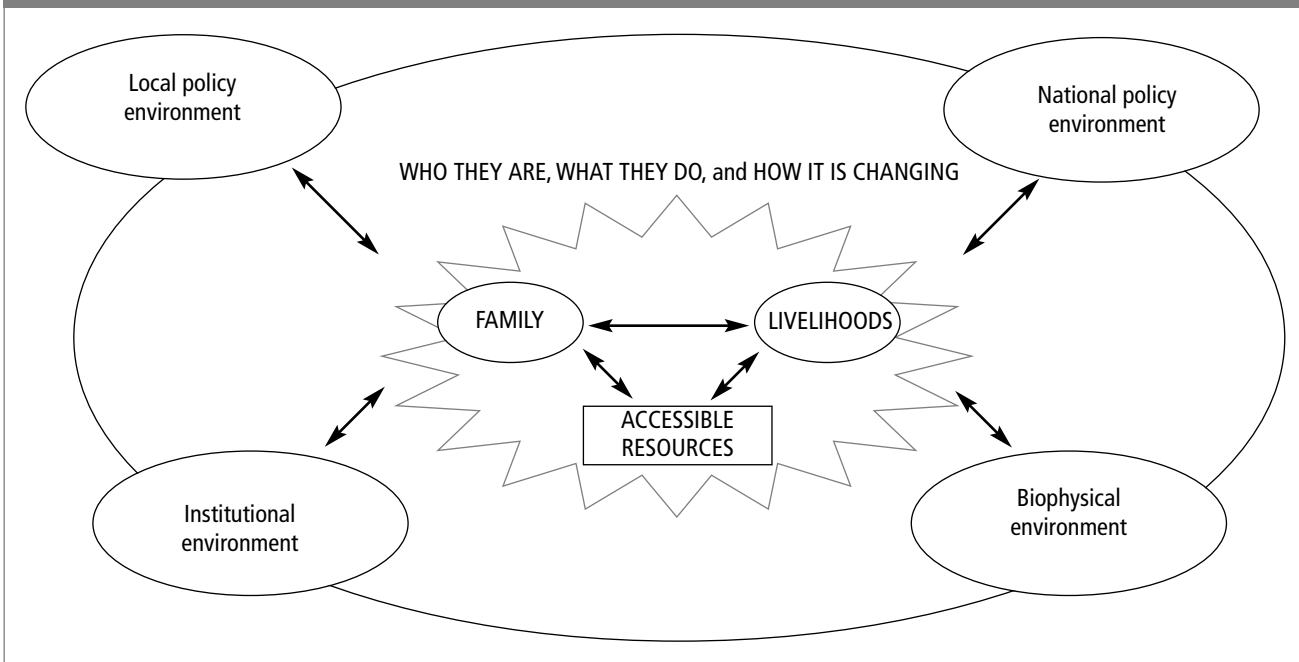
“The family portrait was a key tool in this approach; it took analysis to the household level and added depth and complexity to debates that were often oversimplified or stereotyped. It was also used to catalyse a process of reflection and decision-making within the community, and to lobby for policy change at a local level”

depth and complexity to debates that were often oversimplified or stereotyped. It was also used to catalyse a process of reflection and decision-making within the community, and to lobby for policy change at a local level.

Each community analysed the problems that the family identified to assess whether they were common to the majority of the community, and whether they were getting worse or better (Table 1). They also identified priority actions and the support needed to implement these actions (Box 1).

There was a great deal of learning within the families and the project team about the challenges families face in achieving sustainable livelihoods. Project team members became more confident and felt they had more legitimacy in policy discussions.

¹ The process in Kenya and Tanzania is still in its early stages.

Figure 1: Conceptual diagram of the family portrait

At a district-level workshop, local counsellors and government officials analysed portraits to identify the key problems faced by families. They saw for themselves the complexity and diversity of survival strategies, the importance of mobility and the interdependence in the use of resources in different agro-ecological zones. They also identified and discussed problems that could arise from certain groups being excluded from decision-making. Participants could draw their own conclusions rather than being presented with research findings. This brought analysis of real lives into district-level discussions, which are often ill informed. The result was a consensus on the necessity for inclusive fora for decision-making on natural resource management.

A consultative body was set up, including the office of the district council, three representatives from each commune, including one woman, and representatives from the technical services, NGOs and other associations. Since 2002 the body has met four times, and the decisions made have contributed to the commune and district councils' development plans. For example, the rehabilitation of the livestock corridors around Bankass and around Baye is now in both district and commune development programmes. The family portrait contributed to the start of the reversal of the power dynamic, giving pastoralists and women a voice in decision-making fora.

Family portraits to understand change in Maasailand

The family portrait methodology was used in Tanzania and Kenya during 2004 as part of an International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) project 'Better policy and management options for pastoral lands: assessing trade offs between poverty alleviation and wildlife conservation'. Maasailand has seen much more extensive and rapid change in the way land and resources are owned and controlled than Mali. In Kenya, changes include a shift in land tenure policy from communal to individual landholdings, high population growth and in-migration, expanding agriculture, mining and settlement, and increased awareness of the issues and conflicts around wildlife conservation through both national parks and community initiatives.

Much of the research carried out in the ILRI programme was quantitative, establishing broad trends of change but not picking up on the detail. To complement the survey work ILRI community facilitators did nine family portraits in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania (Amboseli and Maasai Mara in Kenya, and Longido and Simanjiro in Tanzania). These presented Maasai households' own experiences and analyses of the complexity of changes to their livelihoods, revealing who benefits and how, and who is not able to grasp opportunities and why not. For example, broad trends towards increasingly diversified livelihoods have been

Table 1: Analysis of problems with transhumant pastoralists in the Samori Forest

Problem	Classification	Details
Difficult to access the Sourou River to water animals.	Experienced by all families and is getting worse.	Each year there are more rice fields alongside the river. The passages left for the animals are so narrow that you need more herdsmen to avoid damaging crops.
Settlement of farmers in previously uncultivated forest, reducing grazing areas.	As above.	The traditional authorities, which allocate land, do not recognise the rights of pastoralists to the land, nor defend their interests.

observed but Kirisia's own story (Box 2) explains his experience of diversification.

The visual tools and photos helped to illustrate the issues the families faced more clearly. One family found the analysis of herd dynamics extremely useful and said they would continue to use it annually to inform their decisions about herd management. Others found that discussions around land use and access illustrated the contradictions in the system, which they needed to discuss with neighbours. Follow-up with the families is planned for 2006.

The portraits were also a way for the ILRI community facilitators, who are supposed to be the link between communities, researchers and policy makers, to do local and national level analysis. This work is on-going.

Adapting and refining the family portraits methodology

Critical reflection on SOS Sahel's work in Mali informed how the methodology was used in Kenya and Tanzania, as discussed below.

• Developing the field guide together

In Kenya we were careful to follow the Mali example of developing the field guide during the training workshop. This gave facilitators time to think about the key livelihood issues in each area, and how they could facilitate a discussion and analysis around those issues with the family.

• Criteria for selection

In Mali, community members selected families to do family portraits. This was to ensure ownership of the process within the community and so that each family was committed to doing the portrait. However two communities selected their

Box 1: Community action: pastoralist organisational development in Samori Forest

Participants identified a lack of consultation over land use among pastoralists, migrant farming villages and the local natural resource management association as a key problem. They decided that the fact that they were not well organised themselves contributed to this lack of consultation. Their action plan was to set up an association of transhumant pastoralists to act as the point of contact for sharing information, and to represent their interests in local decision-making on natural resource management.

Box 2: Kirisia

The family of Kirisia is pastoralist, depending mostly on livestock keeping for its living. Low rainfall and lack of access to water mean that cultivation is not possible. Many decisions about access to pastoral resources are made in consultation with the neighbourhood. Kirisia considers the pastoral way of life to be an integral part of the Maasai community, where the size of your herd symbolises your status. Kirisia's family also leases out a plot of land near Namelok, and receives periodic remittances from Kirisia's brothers, Kirayian and Leshan, who work in Nairobi. The motivation to diversify came from a sense that pastoralism is increasingly vulnerable to devastating droughts and changes in climate and land access. They also realise that as the family grows and more children go to school they will need more cash to cover school fees. By diversifying, the family feels it can better survive the dry seasons and droughts and is in a reasonably strong position to respond to changes in access to natural resources in the future.

village chief, showing how delegating decisions to community level will not always enhance the participation of the poorer members.

In Kenya and Tanzania we maintained community selection but developed more stringent criteria, including poverty indicators. In Tanzania two communities did a participatory wealth ranking exercise² initially and then selected families from wealth bands. This ensured that they understood the views and analyses of those not benefiting from change, and those normally excluded from decision-making.

• Inclusion from the start

In Kenya we insisted that three female facilitators were trained from the start. This ensured that they were a central part of the team, and were working from the same level of information as their male colleagues. In Mali, although women were included in the facilitating teams, they did not take part in the initial training. Team members commented on how having a female facilitator in the team, and thus direct and appropriate contact with women, meant discus-

² For more information about wealth ranking see http://www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/pla_notes/pla_backissues/15.html

Family member with favourite crossbred Zebu/Boran cow. Innkilto, Kenya



Photo: K. Cochrane

sions were more accurate and detailed. In two families, the female facilitators found that women had much more detailed information about the range and importance of livelihood activities than the head of the family (the Mzee), who saw livestock as the main source of livelihood. This detailed knowledge gave the women a voice and respect that they do not normally have. In addition this approach meant that many young family members heard their family history for the first time, as well as contributing their views, which were often very different to the older members.

• **Maasai facilitators for Maasai portraits**

All the facilitators who worked on the portraits were Maasai and conversations took place in the Maa language. This made it much easier to empathise with the families, negotiate cultural issues, build trust and have proper conversations.

In Mali we did not have enough Peul facilitators so conversations sometimes took place in Bambara, which not all family members (especially the elderly and women) spoke.

• **Staying with the family and getting involved**

In both East and West Africa the project team stayed with the family for four to five days. This was essential as many conversations took place late at night or over shared activities such as cooking. Accompanying the family in its daily tasks, the men to water the cattle, or the women to collect water or fuelwood, reduced the disruption of the project team on the family. Finding an appropriate space and time to talk to different family members was critical, especially for engaging with the women.

• **Establishing a contract of trust with the family**

The importance of trust was a key lesson from the Mali work.

'Handing over the stick' using visual tools. Kenya



Photo: K. Cochrane

When trust was developed, both parties benefited, and where it was not the portrait quickly became an exercise in question and answer. The key to trust is establishing ownership of the process by the family from the beginning. In Kenya and Tanzania the family was asked whether they wanted the facilitators to help them write down their family story. It was explained that both the process (discussion, analysis and sharing) and the product were important. In Maasailand, where there is an extensive culture of story telling, families were very interested in having their story recorded for them. In one community there was an explicit contract of trust developed between the community and ILRI staff. The community had not allowed the last set of researchers to work with them, but because the team was Maasai and offering something that was of interest, they agreed.

• Which language to write in?

We had long discussions within the team, and between the team and the families, about the language for the written family portrait. In Kenya and Tanzania all families spoke and used Maa, but more people were literate in Kiswahili. We decided in the end to write the portraits in Maa so that they would be a family story in the family language which, when read aloud, would be understood by everyone, not just those who understood Kiswahili.

• Photos

In Kenya and Tanzania, we took a Polaroid camera so that people could have copies of the photos straight away. We

"When trust was developed, both parties benefited, and where it was not the portrait quickly became an exercise in question and answer. The key to trust is establishing ownership of the process by the family from the beginning"

also asked the family which photos they wanted in their portrait. This increased their sense of ownership and provided a focus for discussion.

• Visual tools or not?

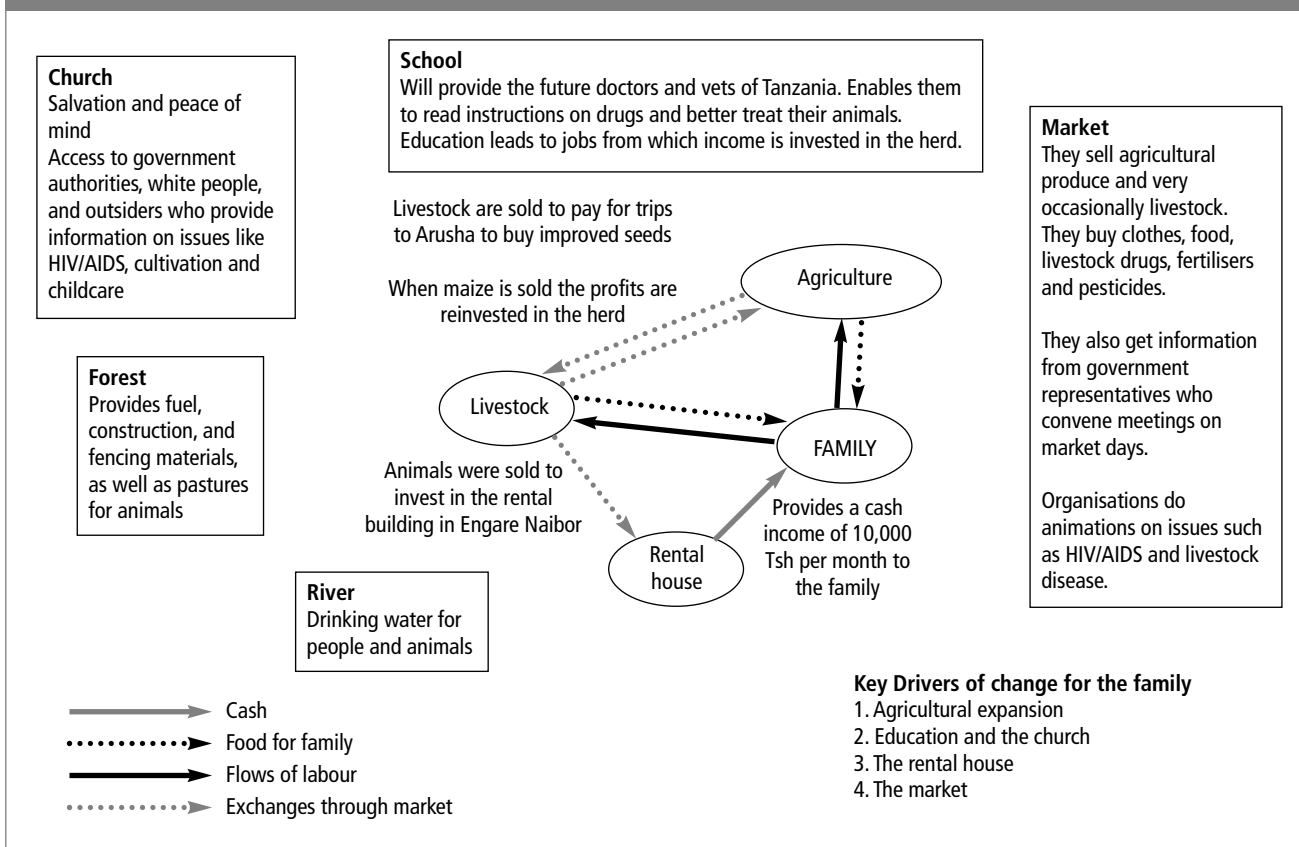
In Mali we used relatively few visual tools (mostly with women) and relied more on conversation and discussion. During the training workshop in Kenya, it was hard to persuade the team that visual tools would add a new dimension to discussion and debate. The argument was that Maasai is an oral culture, and they may think they were being patronised if they were made to 'draw' or 'play games'. In reality, experience in Kenya and Tanzania showed how 'visualising the conversation' helped to include more voices in the portraits, reduced the focus on the head of the family, and added to the level of analysis in discussions. We used resource mapping, ranking livelihood activities, Venn diagrams of institutions and services and livelihood diagrams during the family feedback.

• Family feedback: using livelihood diagrams

In both East and West Africa, the team spent a separate day discussing the entire portrait with all family members to engage them in a wider discussion and to verify the information was correct. In Mali, to make the process more interactive and to ensure non-literate family members could follow, the team prepared visual representations of the inter-relations between the different systems of production (e.g. farming, fishing, herding), the family and their links to other people, institutions and places.

Although these feedback sessions were useful, we felt that the methodology could be developed further to deepen the family's analysis of their situation. So in Kenya and Tanzania we introduced livelihood diagrams (see Photo 3 and Figure 2), which helped families analyse how livelihood activities were connected and how they were changing. In large families the diagrams were done with men and women separately. These exercises highlighted issues that families had not thought about previously.

Figure 2: Livelihood diagram



Livelihood diagram
Ngare Nabour,
Longido, Tanzania

Photo: K. Cochrane



Box 3: Extract from facilitator's process notes from the Mara, Kenya

'It was much fun meeting the family for the second time. Since we were able to call the family members by name, and we spent some good time sharing news outside the portrait. The second visit was also important in ensuring that the portrait was more accurate as the family had a chance to check all the details and added more information to what they earlier said. The families were amazed at the amount of information they were able to provide and how it was captured in writing. By enumerating their past and present they felt they better understood themselves and the young family members said they learnt new things by listening to their parents speak to us.'

Note: For a full explanation of the diagram see Figure 2. Objects with paper underneath them signified agents of change within the community. For this family they were: the church, the school, the market and agriculture.

• Process notes

All facilitators kept process notes. In these notes, facilitators recorded feedback from the families, tracked progress and explained what worked well and what hadn't.

Conclusion: facilitating and using family portraits

'Doing' a portrait with a family is not a simple painting exercise, it throws up many issues. However the family portrait, if introduced with tact and diplomacy, and if the family takes real ownership, can be a powerful tool to facilitate critical thinking and illustrate essential community issues.

There will always be different views (generational, gendered) within the family and deciding whose view is included can be difficult. However, the discussions over these differences are central to the analysis undertaken.

Painful or sensitive issues vary from country to country. In Mali the number of heads of cattle in a herd is confidential information. Thus, discussions about the size of herds and their sustainability had to be negotiated very carefully. The Maasai on the other hand were happy to discuss freely the number of cattle, although they rarely counted them, however talking about deceased family relatives only took place in private one-to-one discussions.

Facilitating a critical analysis with the family, while allowing them to 'tell their story', takes time and skill. Rushing into an analysis of issues that concern the facilitator, and asking too many questions, can reduce ownership by the family. However it is not just a listening exercise, and facilitators need to find ways to question, add depth to, and help the family

"..the family portrait, if introduced with tact and diplomacy, and if the family takes real ownership, can be a powerful tool to facilitate critical thinking and illustrate essential community issues"

to think through its story. Practical advice for this includes listening at the beginning and using simple visual tools, and then moving on to use further visual tools that support analysis, as well as in-depth targeted discussions on certain issues.

Using family portraits to contribute to transforming power relations is a long-term process, and is dependent on continuing support for weaker voices to be heard and for their views to be taken into account. In Mali, the consultative forum is still young and dependent on external support. The strength of the family portrait is that it starts with critical analysis at a family and community level. The results can be used in a variety of ways, from helping communities decide on self-help initiatives, to informing policy discussions. What is powerful is that the actions proposed, and positions that people take, are deeply rooted in the realities that communities face.

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Interactive radio drama

Purpose:

Interactive radio drama can be used to gain public participation in policy planning, for example towards biodiversity conservation. Its huge advantage is that radio breaks the barrier of literacy, and is heard even in remote areas where there is little electricity. This format was developed for a 14-episode series of weekly radio programmes to encourage public participation in preparing a biodiversity action plan for the state of Karnataka, India. The Centre for Ecological Sciences and All India Radio jointly developed the tool. The objectives were to:

- Obtain information from the general public to use in planning.
- Raise awareness of biodiversity and the importance of documenting and saving it.

Activities:

• Identify field interview locations

Focus on places that have some interesting ongoing activity, and places in remote areas. Each location should be relevant to a particular theme (e.g. crop diversity, sacred rivers, medicinal plants).

• Conduct the interviews

Radio producers visit locations to interview grassroots communities on a chosen theme relating to biodiversity in their daily lives and surroundings.

• Dramatisation

Back in the studio, two actors record a scripted drama. Grassroots interviews are woven into the fictional narrative. Use the format of two fictional characters travelling through the state. On their travels they meet different people, interact with them and ask them questions about local biodiversity. Use the pre-recorded voices of local people for the replies. Thus the dramatised narrative and real-life interviews are integrated. Focus each weekly episode on a different theme. End each episode with a recap of important points.

• 'Expert' episodes

Follow each dramatised episode with an 'expert' episode, with a panel of experts talking about the theme of the previous week.

• Letters

End each episode with a request for listeners to send in information about that theme (e.g. for a medicinal plants episode, the presenter can ask listeners to write in about the use of local curative plants). Distribute prizes for the best letters. Use relevant information in the letters to prepare the biodiversity action plan.

• Final phone-in

The final episode could be a live phone-in, with a panel of experts answering questions from callers.

Keep in Mind

★ Be flexible. Use interesting information from letters received during the series to choose some of the field locations.

★ Broadcast the series in the evening, when people are usually home, and are free.

★ Keep it simple and attractive: record local folk songs (especially relating to local biodiversity) during field interviews, and include them in dramatisations. Create humour and emotion within dramatic situations. Avoid scientific jargon.

★ Read letters as they arrive, instead of creating a concentrated workload at the end.

★ Include women on the team of field interviewers. It will be easier for them to approach and interview women in the field locations.

★ Publicise the series on radio before it goes on air.

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at:

www.policy-powertools.org or contact:

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National Biodiversity
Strategy and Action Plan:
<http://sdnp.delhi.nic.in/nbsap>

13

Creating stakeholder ownership of biodiversity planning: lessons from India

by TEJASWINI APTE

Introduction

This article is based on the findings of a year-long study of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) planning process in India. It draws on almost 200 interviews and was published as *An Activist Approach to Biodiversity Planning: a handbook of participatory tools used to prepare India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* (Apte, 2005)¹. The main objective of the handbook is to describe and analyse some of the tools that went into eliciting participation in the NBSAP process. It is written for practical use. The tools described can be adapted for participatory biodiversity planning in other contexts. The study was conducted in four Indian states: Sikkim, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

A significant lesson that emerges from the NBSAP experience is the importance of creating stakeholder ownership of a participatory planning process, and the various ways and means through which ownership can be achieved (or lost).

"A significant lesson that emerges from the NBSAP experience is the importance of creating stakeholder ownership of a participatory planning process, and the various ways and means through which ownership can be achieved (or lost)"

This article begins with a brief overview of the NBSAP to set the context, and then presents some of the lessons learnt with regard to creating ownership. It ends by discussing briefly the progress of the national biodiversity plan produced.

Background to the NBSAP

The NBSAP was a project of the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Government of India. All countries that are signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are required to prepare an NBSAP, which is meant to serve as the primary vehicle for national implementation of the CBD.² The Ministry appointed a national non-governmental organisation (NGO), Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group, to prepare the NBSAP. In a context where government environmental policies are prepared predominantly in a centralised manner, the preparation of the NBSAP was visualised as a decentralised process covering all the states of India. What

¹ See the In Touch section for a review of this book and ordering details.

² The Convention on Biological Diversity was signed by 150 government leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. It was the first global agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It aims to put the principles of sustainable development into practice. See www.biodiv.org for more information.

Procession of women carrying traditional seeds at Deccan Mobile Biodiversity Agricultural Festival



Photo: Ashish Kothari

followed was a unique process unlike anything that had happened before in national environmental planning, in terms of scale, ambition, decentralisation and people's participation. The NBSAP process lasted from 2000 to 2003.

The NBSAP approach was based on the premise that biodiversity has ecological, cultural, spiritual, as well as economic, value and impinges on every citizen. Planning for its conservation should therefore be owned and shaped by as many individuals as possible in an equitable process that allowed the most marginalised voices to be heard. The aim was biodiversity conservation as well as livelihood security. A key element of the approach was also the premise that the wider the ownership of the process, the greater the chances of the plan being accepted and implemented at a national and local level.

Most importantly, there was a consistent emphasis that the **process** of putting the plan together was as important as the final **product**. In other words, apart from what might come out of the final plan, the process itself was to yield results in terms of increased awareness of biodiversity,

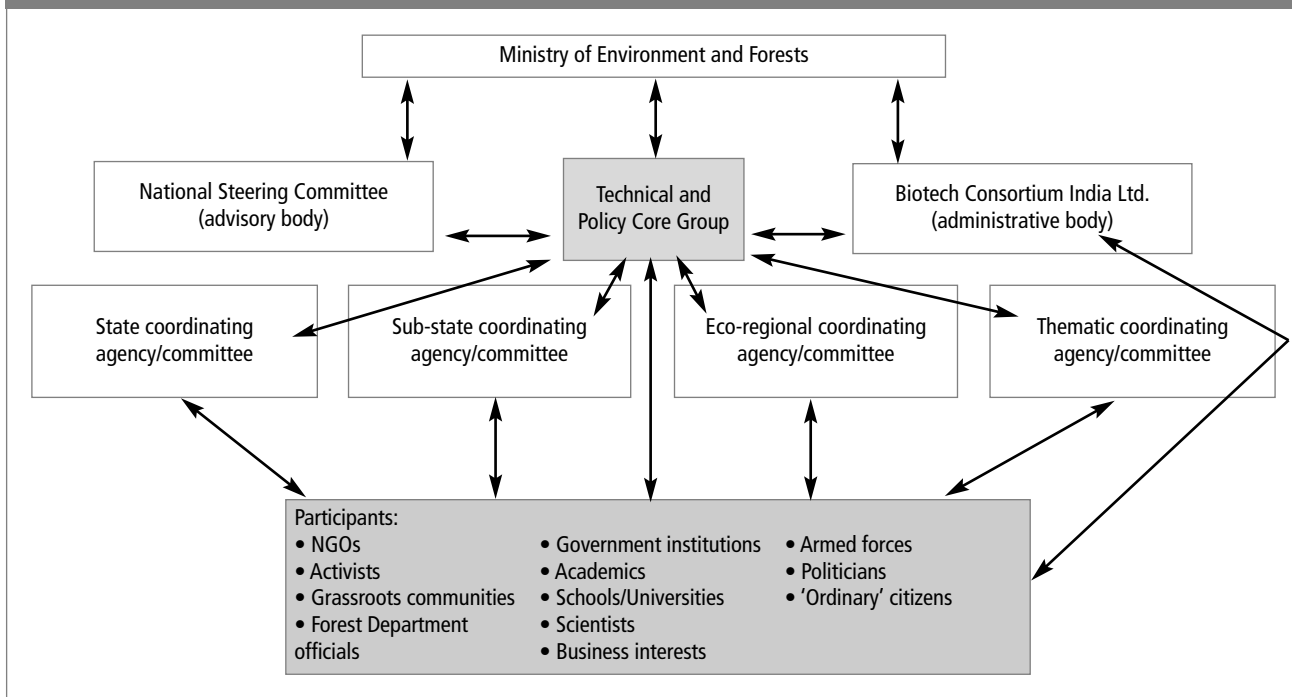
empowerment through participation, local initiatives to begin implementation of local plans, and so on. In this sense, the NBSAP process was turned into a form of activism, as much as the putting together of a formal national plan.

Separate biodiversity plans were prepared at four levels across the country:

- State (in 33 states and union territories);
- Sub-state (at 18 selected sites to create more detailed local level plans);
- Interstate eco-regions (in 10 eco-regions cutting across state boundaries); and
- Thematic (13 themes relating to biodiversity, such as 'Culture and Biodiversity').

A coordinating agency was appointed for each location or theme – usually an NGO, government department or academic institution. A local committee of relevant persons/organisations was constituted to provide support to the coordinating agency. The agency was responsible for developing a plan for the relevant state, sub-state site, eco-region or theme. Each agency was required to elicit wide

Figure 1: Communication flow between components of the NBSAP process



public participation in the planning process, and was encouraged to use a range of participatory tools for the purpose. Guidance and support was provided to coordinating agencies by a national 15-member core team of NGOs, activists and scientists: the Technical and Policy Core Group (TPCG). The TPCG was central to the conceptualisation and day-to-day running of the NBSAP process.

A total of 71 plans were prepared across the four levels. Each plan was meant to be an independent, stand-alone document that would be directly referred to for implementation of strategies and actions in the concerned area. Key elements from all plans were finally integrated into a single National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).

Creating stakeholder ownership of a participatory process

Many of the lessons learnt from the NBSAP experience are to do with creating a feeling of ownership among participants. People need to identify with, and feel ownership over, a process in order to participate meaningfully and value the output. In different contexts, different things are likely to create ownership or alienation, e.g.:

- the type of coordinating agency selected;
- the kinds of resource materials or decorations used in a

biodiversity festival;

- the opportunity for teamwork; or
- the use of dialects.

In terms of implementation of the 71 individual plans, generating ownership was crucial: there was no in-built mechanism or guarantee of implementation from the government. At this stage it was purely a planning process. The idea was that ownership over the process would create a pressure or momentum for implementation by stakeholders.

I discuss below two aspects of the NBSAP – the selection of the coordinating agency and information dissemination – which offer lessons for creating stakeholder ownership. The lessons are greatly condensed here due to restrictions of space. For a more comprehensive discussion of the process, see Apte, 2005.

Selection of coordinating agency

A key aspect that impinged heavily on the NBSAP process was the selection of coordinating agencies. This is not surprising, given that the process was a very decentralised one with independent decision-making by coordinating agencies. The criteria for selection were that the agency should be:

- relatively independent;

**Decorating the bullock carts
for Deccan Mobile Biodiversity
Agricultural Festival**



Photo: Ashish Kothari

- not seen to be on any one side of the spectrum between conservation and livelihoods; and
- acceptable to governmental and non-governmental organisations.

This was a difficult set of criteria to meet for every selection, but the TPCG tried to find a reasonable balance within it.

A bureaucratic constraint in the procedure of appointing coordinating agencies was that once a state-level agency had been appointed it could not be changed, regardless of the quality of the process. This affected the possibilities of ensuring accountability of state coordinating agencies.

The following lessons emerged regarding coordinating agency selection.

Government or NGO?

Some interviewees were of the opinion that any government agency is the wrong choice to handle a wide-ranging, participatory process like NBSAP. It was felt that government institutions usually have their own agenda, are too bureaucratic,

and find it difficult to be self-critical and to understand or mobilise participation. Depending on the context of government-civil society relations, having a government agency in charge of a process may stifle the possibility of creating feelings of stakeholder ownership over it. However, while some NBSAP experiences supported this view, there were contrasting experiences as well. For example, in Sikkim, the Forest Department conducted one of the most participatory NBSAP processes in the country. Some factors to keep in mind when selecting a coordinating agency include:

• Who is in charge?

Much depends on the capacity and interest of the individuals in charge. When the right individuals are in charge, a government agency can show high levels of achievement because of the immense human resources and institutional back up that it commands.

• Accountability

The flip side is that when a government agency has little interest in a process, not much can be done to ensure its success. This is because there is frequently a lack of account-

ability within government institutions, or simply due to the slow workings of the bureaucracy. Non-governmental organisations are usually (not always) more approachable in terms of informality and openness to 'outside' ideas. At any rate they are more concerned about maintaining an image of efficacy and responsibility. Funds are not likely to be a lever for accountability of a government organisation unless the funding is a very large sum in relation to normal institutional resources (NBSAP funding was negligible in a large institutional context).

Action such as holding back funds to ensure accountability could perhaps make a difference to smaller, non-governmental institutions, which tend to rely on smaller amounts of funding. So coordinating agencies need to be selected keeping in mind that the type of agency will affect the possibilities of accountability.

- **Lack of continuity among personnel**

Personal relationships built up with stakeholders during a process may be disrupted due to personnel transfers. This is difficult to guard against in any organisation when dealing with a process over a few years. In a government institution though, it is almost inevitable due to routine transfers of officials.

Perception of coordinating agency amongst stakeholders

The perception of the coordinating agency amongst local stakeholders affects the extent to which the agency can involve people in a process. Therefore it is important to take into account local dynamics among stakeholders when choosing a coordinating agency.

For example, some interviewees in Andhra Pradesh felt that the state-level coordinating agency was the wrong choice because it did not have a record of handling successful participatory processes or links with local communities. Consequently, some people did not take the process seriously because of the institution heading the process.

At sites where interviewees were overall more positive about the coordinating agency, this reflected on their keenness to be part of the process. For example, for the Uttar Kannada sub-state and Karnataka state processes it was widely felt that the coordinating agency selections were good because both agencies were seen as 'neutral' and well networked amongst key stakeholders.

In short it seemed important for stakeholders and potential participants to have the perception that the coordinating agency was:

- neutral;
- well networked with key players in different sectors;
- capable of conducting a participatory process.

Box 1: Negative outcomes of insufficient prior information

- **Commitment levels remain low**

People need to know the implications and the benefits of participating in a process. If there are monetary benefits, these are easiest to communicate. The challenge is in communicating non-monetary benefits, for people to know that it is worthwhile to contribute their time and expertise.

This is particularly important when targeting smaller NGOs and institutes – these usually tend to be pressed for time and resources, and therefore need to make careful decisions about how to make the most effective use of what is available. A process that does not seem to have clarity in terms of information or purpose is likely to put off people who have too many other things to do.

- **Quality of inputs is directly affected**

If a meeting is called without distributing an agenda beforehand, people are likely to come out with knee-jerk reactions rather than coming mentally prepared for the meeting.

Information dissemination: build-up and follow-up

Receiving and exchanging information is crucial if participants are to develop a feeling of ownership over a process. In contrast, feeling 'left out of the loop', or 'not in the know' is likely to create disinterest, disillusionment or even suspicion.

It seems that there is no substitute for face-to-face contact, or the personal touch, as a tool for communication. Information and updates sent on email or by letter have less value when not supplemented by telephone calls, regular meetings or briefings. In some cases, invitations through a general email or letter, without personal communication, even caused offence or irritation.

Two common complaints across the sites studied were insufficient **prior information** (e.g. circulating an agenda prior to a stakeholders' meeting) and insufficient **follow-up information** afterwards (e.g. updates on further activity or implementation). Box 1 shows the negative effects of insufficient prior information.

The need for follow-up information seems to be especially under-estimated. Dissemination of follow-up information needs to be marked out in the work plan of a coordinating agency as a separate activity, requiring the allocation of time, resources and responsibility. Box 2 shows why follow-up information is needed.

What happened next?

The TPCG submitted the national plan to the Ministry two years ago, but since then the Ministry has refused to approve and release it. The Ministry was displeased with parts of the

Box 2: Need for follow-up information

- **Maximising impacts**

Follow-up is crucial in terms of maximising the initial impact of a festival or meeting, and 'cashing in' on its value by keeping people interested and involved. For example, attracting people to a biodiversity festival is only the first step in biodiversity awareness-raising. The event would only partially retain its value if not followed up by a strategy of further awareness-raising activities.

- **Creating feelings of empowerment and ownership over output**

In Sikkim, most interviewees were not aware of the fact that there had already been some implementation of the Sikkim biodiversity plan. The long information gap and the feeling that 'nothing was happening' had created some amount of disillusionment. There was no specific mechanism in place to ensure that people were made aware of developments in implementation. Another example of insufficient follow-up was that, after widespread and successful village-level planning meetings, villagers were not given copies of their own village-level plans in their own language. This would clearly impinge on ownership of the output, and any possibilities of local initiative to implement the plans.

In contrast, the coordinating agency of the Deccan sub-state process (Andhra Pradesh) ensured thorough follow-up to its mobile biodiversity festival meetings. The following year, thousands of Telugu language plan summaries were distributed to participating villages. The plan was also read out and presented as the outcome of the previous year's festival, and feedback was solicited. This was key to building on empowerment and ownership created by the meetings.

plan, including the statement that India's current development paradigm is environmentally unsustainable. In Parliament, the Ministry stated that the plan contained inaccuracies and would embarrass India internationally. But neither did it want to negotiate any changes with the TPCG. It simply suppressed the plan, and there was a breakdown in communication. This led to the TPCG independently releasing the plan to the public in October 2005. It is believed that there has been an overall change of heart in the Ministry and a growing antipathy to participatory or empowering processes. The Ministry is likely to submit its own version of the plan to the government.

In this context, the consistent emphasis that the **process** of preparing the plan was as important as the final **product**

Call for participation brochures translated into different Indian languages


Photo: Ashish Kothari

Box 3: Some innovative participatory planning tools used in the NBSAP process

- **School Biodiversity Registers**

Forty-nine schools in 14 districts mapped the area around the schools and interviewed local residents to compile local biodiversity information as inputs for the Karnataka state plan.

- **Interactive Radio Drama**

Weekly radio dramas in the Kannada language were broadcast state-wide over 14 weeks. Episodes were interactive, to solicit public inputs for the Karnataka plan and raise biodiversity awareness. More than 800 responses were elicited; 9.4 million people heard the series.

- **Mobile Agricultural Festival**

In Andhra Pradesh, bullock cart processions travelled through 62 villages over 32 days. The carts were decorated with exhibits of 75 varieties of traditional seeds, crop diversity rituals and traditional crop recipes. People sang and danced in celebration of crop diversity. Public meetings were held to get inputs for the Deccan sub-state plan. About 20,000 farmers participated in the meetings and 50,000 people saw the exhibition.

emerges as the principle strength of the NBSAP. States possess independent plans, many of which have a stakeholder support base built up during the process. NGOs and government departments are free to implement plan recommendations. There are already examples of local-level implementation. Valuable offshoots of the process include new networks, awareness and capacity building. Thus the **planning process** itself created the potential to achieve at least some of its goals of biodiversity conservation.

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14

Improving forest justice



Purpose:

This tool kit, based on experience in Uganda, aims to help forest institutions support law enforcement agencies and others create systems to eliminate illegality and corruption and install justice for forest-linked livelihoods.

Activities:

Identify the key producers, traders and final consumers of timber and visualise the production-trade-consumption chain.

- List the laws, regulations and procedures that the players in the chain are supposed to follow in accessing and using timber.
- List the enforcement agencies and other mandated institutions the players are meant to relate to.
- Sketch out how the formal processes are supposed to work.
- Then sketch out how they actually work, or don't work.
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the process, at all stages, for the poor and marginalised to access justice.
- Define a strategic approach to improving matters, using a mix of tools which can

improve justice in the following areas:

- Institutions for justice, law and order: training kits, public awareness programmes, compendium of case law, independent litigation by civil society organisations.
- Timber production: streamlined and better used management plans, better timber marking and documentation, independent audit of forest authority operations, competitive bidding, forest user associations and collaborative management agreements.
- Timber trade: financial and fiscal instruments, improved pitsawyers and saw millers associations, professional codes, auction of confiscated timber.
- Timber consumption: certify dealers of timber and require large-scale procurers to use them.
- Record and analyse observations and impact of the tools used in empowering the poor and promoting sustainable forest management.
- Adapt and modify tools and work to install successes in policy and institutions.

Keep in Mind

- ★ Improving justice for forest-linked livelihoods usually requires a combination of better practices of law and order institutions and better practices of forest institutions – we need to work on both, and get them cooperating.
- ★ Tools for the job will vary greatly from one place and time to the next – the kit presented here will be practically useful for some, but will lack vital tools for others. In the latter case we hope it will still provide some useful ideas.
- ★ Laws and procedures for securing justice for forest-linked livelihoods should be changed when they are going wrong – we hope this kit helps practitioners move forward in the belief that they can be changed.

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at:
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Routes to justice: institutionalising participation in forest law enforcement in Uganda

by CORNELIUS KAZOORA, CHARLES TONDO and BOB KAZUNGU

Introduction

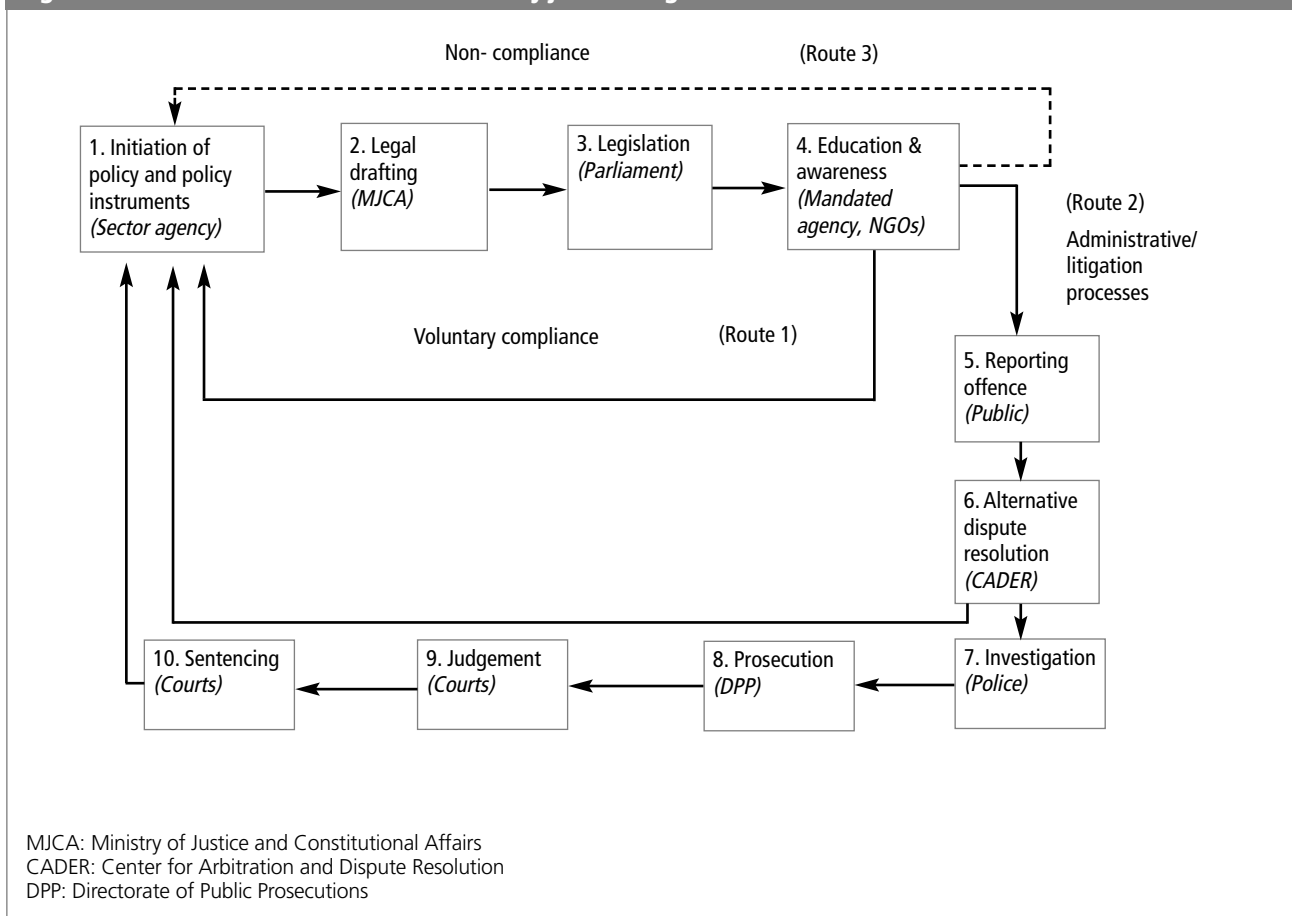
Forestry is a balancing act between production and conservation. Historically, government policy to achieve this balance has been a 'command and control' approach: high levels of regulation, and exclusion of ordinary people from using forests and forest products. Forests are associated with guards and arrests. But in recent decades a number of countries have begun to change forestry practice, and are beginning to share ownership of forests and forest management with local communities. These emerging participatory approaches in forestry are hardly cutting-edge by the standards of experienced practitioners in participatory learning and action. However, for the highly conservative forest sector, the involvement of citizens in shaping and implementing forest policy – especially in the sensitive area of law enforcement – is a radical step forward.

This article describes how Uganda has successfully instituted changes towards participatory processes for law enforcement in forestry. We authors are practitioners not in participation but in public policy. Here we share the story of the Ugandan government's turnabout in understanding forest law compliance and its first forays in engaging ordinary people to make sure that forest law leads to just outcomes.

"Participation is and can be very complex, particularly when one considers the whole array of enforcement agencies, natural resource agencies and their interface at national, local government and community levels. At these levels, access to information, capacity, mandate and instruments for participation differ"

It is one thing to formulate a law and another to enforce it effectively so that the offended, including poor and marginalised people, obtain redress. In this article, we argue that good forest law enforcement starts early, with processes for legal enactment, and takes advantage of innovative approaches from society's behaviour during implementation. Ultimately, the lessons in enforcement should inform future revision of not only the overall forest law, but also policies, plans and regulations – leading to a legal climate that delivers fair outcomes. We also look at the government's response to its own failures in administering justice, and how over time

Figure 1: Routes to the administration of forestry justice in Uganda



it is addressing them to create an inclusive environment for open and transparent participation.

A framework for understanding how forest justice is secured

In 2004, we carried out a study to trace six years of participation in and outside the sector to explore how to ensure justice for all in forestry, through curbing illegality and corruption in timber-related transactions (Kazoora and Carvalho, 2004). We analysed the institutional framework for administration of justice to identify barriers to participation in securing justice and how they could be addressed (Figure 1). The figure provides the framework for the routes to justice and the assessment of innovations, processes, lessons and impacts of participation – particularly for poor forest dependent communities.

From a practical point of view, a good pro-active starting

point in law enforcement is the initiation of policy formulation by sector agencies. A policy that is based on a thorough situational analysis and a participatory process is likely to bring out the issues better than one where such a process is driven from the top. The policy, once approved by Cabinet, can serve as a basis for the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs to draft the supportive law (Step 2 in Figure 1). Thereafter, parliament debates the law and will pass it if there are no objections from the public (Step 3 in Figure 1). Usually, objections arise when consultations have not been participatory. When the law comes into effect, the public is educated and sensitised about it by the National Forest Authority (NFA) and non-governmental organisations (Step 4 in Figure 1). Access to information is central to sustaining participation. Government has enacted the Access to Information Act 2005, which should strengthen citizen participation.

Once the law is implemented, individuals may react in any

Village furniture makers in Uganda



Photo: James Mayers

of three ways, given as routes in Figure 1. Under Route 1, a person voluntarily complies with the law because of information and knowledge acquired, plus incentives and disincentives. Under Route 2, the illegality or offence is handled reactively through the administrative process by the mandated institution (NFA) or litigation process by the justice, law and order institutions. Route 3 is a situation of persistent illegality and committing of offences, whether the offender is knowledgeable about the forestry law or not.

We chose this framework because other countries follow more or less similar formal systems, and lessons from Uganda can therefore be transferable. Secondly, it was imperative to analyse participation in the context of existing structures and procedures for securing and administering justice. Participation is and can be very complex, particularly when one considers the whole array of enforcement agencies, natural resource agencies and their interface at national, local

government and community levels. At these levels, access to information, capacity, mandate and instruments for participation differ.

Experiences with participation in securing and administering forestry justice

Our study gave us an opportunity to ask a range of forest-using communities in Uganda their opinions and perceptions about alternative measures to curb illegality in forestry and to ensure justice. These communities included small-scale timber growers and managers, owners of natural forest, forest associations, big construction companies and furniture workers. We wanted to use the study to establish broader scope for public participation in forest justice, so it was more of an exchange of ideas than a data-collecting exercise. In this section we share the emerging lessons and potential tools for better, more just law enforcement (published as a

Pitsawyers
in Uganda

Photo: James Mayers

toolkit in Kazoora and Carvalho, 2005).

Reporting

The responsibility for reporting forestry offences to the police lies with the entire public (Step 5 in Figure 1). We asked members of the various communities for their perceptions of the efficacy of the police in handling reported cases. The majority had little regard for the police in its role of recording offences from the public. Two national integrity surveys conducted in 1998 and 2000 had revealed the police as the most corrupt institution in Uganda. People said that the process of making reports to the police was long and tedious. Having to disclose one's name was a disincentive to report to the police. People feared being confronted by those they had mentioned to the authorities, who in many cases were in very powerful positions. People also argued that the police were not very conversant with forestry law.

In fact, most people preferred the alternative of reporting

to the National Forestry Authority (NFA) staff, whom they considered more knowledgeable. However, people strongly advocated for the strengthening of the Forest Produce Monitoring Unit in the NFA. The Minister of Water, Lands and Environment strengthened the unit in December 2004, giving it powers to cooperate with other statutory agencies in forestry enforcement, such as the police.

Telephone hotline

Among other alternatives, we asked people for their opinion on whether a telephone hotline specifically to register forestry-related crimes and offences would be appealing to them. We were motivated to explore it because the police told us that people sometimes use the emergency line, 999, to report vehicles that transport illegally obtained timber.

The rapid growth and expansion of the mobile phone industry in Uganda favoured the use of a hotline as an instrument of participation in reporting crime. Hotlines already existed to report tax evaders to the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) and those making illegal power connections to the Uganda Electricity Distribution Company Ltd.

People were in favour of a hotline because of its expediency, cost-effectiveness and protection to the reporter. But they observed that it would only be very effective if a well-facilitated rapid response were put in place by the NFA. Luckily, the NFA was keen to play its part and a hotline is now used to receive public complaints. The NFA maintains the anonymity of reporters of illegality and alerts the police immediately when reports come in.

Incentives for reporting

The other approach we looked into was whether the NFA could give incentives to people reporting forestry offences, particularly trade in illegal timber. People were in favour of this incentive. In fact, some of them referred to a similar incentive scheme run by the URA, which gives a commission on the value of goods confiscated from tax evaders.

However, they also cautioned against a potential risk. Those involved in the illegal forestry trade might pay those likely to report them more than what the NFA would be willing to offer. People observed that such a practice existed among tax evaders. The NFA now provides some token of appreciation to those reporting offences, but it is not yet standardised. Through this approach, those participating in giving information are offsetting their costs and developing the motivation to look out for more cases. Previously, the public did not have any incentives for reporting illegality. Yet they would have to incur some cost to do so. One can argue

Box 1: Pooling resources to obtain justice

In 1996, parliament gazetted 1,006 hectares of Namanve Forest Reserve, which contained among others, eucalyptus trees. These had been planted by several farmers through a forest permit issued under the Forest Act of 1964. Whereas the farmers wanted to be compensated for trees that would have a life-cycle of sixteen years, the government wanted to compensate them for only five years, the initial period of their permits. Negotiations between the farmers and the Uganda Investment Authority, which sought the gazetted land for investors, broke down. The farmers formed the Uganda Woodfarmers Association (UWFA) and elected leaders who represented them in court in a case – Kabbs Twizukye and others versus UIA, No.761 of 1998. Justice Richard O. Okumu Wengi eventually ruled in favour of the farmers giving them compensation for trees that would have four rotations (sixteen years). This case shows that in order to obtain justice, the farmers had to form an association to enhance their collective voice, and to pool resources together to hire a lawyer. They were able to do that because, first, they had a private interest in the trees they had planted, and second, they were well-to-do farmers.

Source: Kazoora, 2003

that expectation of a win-win situation is critical to sustaining participation.

Dispute resolution

Once a case has been reported, both the plaintiff and defendant may choose to settle their differences through an alternative dispute resolution mechanism under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act 2000 at the Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution (CADER; Step 6 in Figure 1). Though CADER works well, it does not have branches to reach out to the rural areas where the poor live, plus it is relatively new and still being popularised to the public. If there is no agreement at CADER, people go through the whole chain of litigation, including being investigated by police, prosecuted by the Department for Public Prosecution (DPP) and sentenced by judges and magistrates in courts (Steps 7-10 in Figure 1).

Timber tracking and auction

The NFA has guidelines for various approaches to reduce illegal logging, such as marking timber and confiscating undocumented forest produce. Our study showed that as the public became aware of particular approaches, offenders devised new strategies to defeat them. People cited cases where offenders covered timber with other commodities like sand to conceal it during transportation. They also cited cases of collusion between the offenders and the police, with the latter escorting lorries carrying illegal timber.

Based on this revelation, we strongly recommend that confiscated timber be auctioned. The NFA has institutionalised this approach. It retains all the revenue from the entire auction, which it reinvests in fighting illegality. Before the establishment of the NFA in 2004, the then Forest Department could not reinvest the revenue from auction sales because structurally, it had to bank it in a consolidated government bank account. Overcoming institutional structural barriers can thus improve the climate for investing in the participation and administration of justice.

Competitive bidding

The NFA has also replaced standard administratively set prices for timber with competitive bidding for pitsawyers and sawmillers who obtain timber from NFA land. Now the timber licences are sold for well above the reserve prices. There are two positive impacts: more revenue for the NFA and the elimination of inefficient operators.

Associations and networks

Another weakness we discovered during the study was that forestry users and enterprises had weak networks among themselves. This undermined their potential for a collective voice. Accordingly, we recommended the formation and strengthening of forest-user associations. In fact, the NFA is working with some of them, such as in Tororo on collaborative forest management. Further, it has held several consultative fora for pitsawyers, sawmillers and timber dealers, particularly in Kampala, to discuss changes taking place in forestry management in Uganda. Out of that initiative, the pitsawyers, sawmillers and timber traders have formed an interim committee of a potential future umbrella association. We recommended forming an all-embracing association based on a legal case study whereby the pooling of resources through an association was instrumental in ensuring justice for tree farmers (Box 1). In other words, it may be more viable to participate with government as a group rather than on one's own.

Partnerships with third parties

In a similar manner, to secure justice, it may be of strategic importance to develop partnerships with third parties, such as civil society organisations knowledgeable in forestry law and litigation processes. This is particularly relevant where poor farmers do not understand legal terms, procedures and institutions on their own. It is also relevant where the institutions that have the mandate to protect citizen's rights are seen to be acting contrary to those mandates and therefore undermining

Box 2: Defending the marginalised

The Constitution of Uganda requires that 'the state shall protect important natural resources, including land, water, wetlands, minerals, oil, fauna and flora on behalf of the people of Uganda'. But in practice, conflict arises between public and private interests. The de-gazettement of Butamira Forest Reserve in 2001 was a good case in point. In that reserve, 148 community groups and 30 individuals held plots of land that they planted with trees as permitted by the allocation permits from the Forest Department (now NFA). In 2001, the government opted to de-gazette the reserve so as to lease it to Kakira Sugar Works to clear the forest estate and replace it with sugar cane plantations. The communities around Butamira Forest Reserve complained against the decimation of the forest reserve. To seek justice, several advocacy NGOs came forward to defend their case, one of them being Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE). The government went ahead and de-gazetted the reserve, with some compensation to community members. This was regarded as an unsatisfactory result by the community, but it is unlikely that they would have received compensation without the intermediary NGOs arguing on their behalf.

Source: Tumushabe *et al.*, 2001

justice (Box 2). This particular case illustrates that the assessment of potential benefits from participation must be done in the wider context of institutional capacity to secure justice. That capacity may not necessarily be held by the aggrieved party, and has to be sought from third parties. Making reference to already-decided case law has the value of transferability across courts and countries because in legal practice, lawyers and judges use precedents to guide judgement.

Local councils

The government has also come to recognise that the institutions for the administration of justice were not within reach of the poor. Often, they are located in urban areas. Yet almost all forestry related offences occur in rural areas. To address that anomaly, it enacted the Local Council Courts Act 2003. The government had introduced the Local Council system as far back as 1986 as a first step towards the decentralisation of power to the grassroots. The Act defines the

offences that Local Council Courts may handle and how they relate to other courts. Some of these courts have handled cases related to illegal forest transactions.

To strengthen their capacity, the Ministry of Local Government has produced 'Guides for Local Council Courts'. This example underscores the importance of the subsidiarity principle – which affirms that environmental decision-making should be taken at the lowest possible level of public authority – in participation for sustainable forest management.

Capacity building

Capacity building in justice, law and order institutions through training and the compilation of case law is another tool we recommended. People observed that despite the country enacting several laws on environment and natural resources, the staff in enforcement agencies were not well informed about them. Awareness creation and training across enforcement and natural reserve agencies is fundamental to changing mindsets and improving access to information. It is only then that public participation can be sustained.

Conclusion

Although many institutions formally embrace the principle of participation, putting ideas into practice is far more difficult. First, participation must be analysed in the context of the problem to be addressed, taking into account individual and institutional capacities, and the general policy and legal environment. It has become apparent in Uganda that to secure participation for forestry justice, it is not only the disadvantaged or offended that have to be supported. It is also those that have to listen to them, such as the police and the magistrates in courts.

Equally, the government has to create an enabling policy and legal framework, including the establishment of relevant structures (e.g. Local Council Courts) under which formal processes for securing forestry justice take place. However, it may not do that unless there are champions among indi-

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general section

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Integrating open space technology and dynamic facilitation

by PHIL HOWARD, TIM GALARNEAU, JAN PEREZ AND DAVE SHAW

Open space technology is a very successful participatory process, but it has two potential shortcomings: it is difficult to produce documentation of discussions in meetings lasting less than two days, and the process does not always encourage empathic listening among participants. Integrating open space with another participatory process, dynamic facilitation, could address these weaknesses when modest additional resources are available.

Introduction

Two hundred people from across the state of Illinois met in November of 2001, with no pre-planned agenda and no invited speakers. They had only a theme – food security, or ensuring access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food to all people at all times. In less than an hour they generated 50 workshops, self-managed them over a period of two days, and left with a written summary of all of these discussions, more than 100 pages long. The proceedings of this event are still referred to as the ‘food security bible in Illinois’ (Herman, 2004). Perhaps most remarkable was how typical the results were compared to other events using the same format. The organisers employed open space technology, a method first developed by Harrison Owen in the 1980s. It can be used in groups of nearly any size. One event

“Like open space technology, dynamic facilitation is an ‘emergent’ process. It first appears very chaotic, but eventually results in order. The shape that this order takes is impossible to predict. So both approaches are only appropriate for situations where meeting organisers have not made decisions, or limited the potential options, in advance”

with street kids in Bogotá, Columbia involved more than 2,000 participants! Meetings begin when a facilitator gathers the group in a circle and describes the process, and from that point on the participants bear the burden of ensuring that their issues are discussed.

Open space encourages people to take responsibility for issues that they are passionate about. Meetings can be very effective for encouraging action. However, it is most effective when held for two and half days, which can be exces-

Participants in an open space technology meeting begin by gathering in a circle to listen to a brief explanation of the process. The agenda for this meeting on the future of biofuels later took shape as participants moved to the centre of the circle and announced the topics of the breakout sessions they wanted to convene.



Photo: Tim White

sive when an issue requires broad public involvement. In practice, shorter meeting lengths usually result in productive discussions, but not in written proceedings (Owen, 1997). This is unfortunate, because as the example above suggests, a written document can serve as a useful roadmap for implementing the ideas generated at a meeting.

One criticism of open space in comparison to other forms of meeting facilitation is that the discussions can have a 'transactional' quality (Martin, 2002). Participants tend not to listen to each other empathetically, and instead just talk past each other. This limits opportunities for real change because a true consensus involves not just a formal agreement on a particular issue, but a meeting of both hearts and minds (Zubizarreta and Rough, 2002).

We hypothesised that combining open space with another participatory methodology, dynamic facilitation, could address these two weaknesses. Dynamic facilitation is a process developed by Jim Rough and aims to elicit true dialogue and creative problem solving (Zubizarreta and Rough, 2002). The process also involves taking notes on large flipcharts, which can easily be compiled into a written proceeding. Like open space technology, dynamic facilitation is an 'emergent' process. It first appears very chaotic, but eventually results in order. The shape that this order takes is impossible to predict. So both approaches are only appropriate for situations where meeting organisers have not made decisions, or limited the potential options, in advance. In comparison with other processes such as citizens' panels or future search, both open space technology and dynamic facilitation require minimal training for the organisers, and are easier and less expensive to implement.

This article is an evaluation of the potential for integrating dynamic facilitation with open space technology based on our experience organising two such meetings, both held in Santa Cruz County, California, USA in 2005. A day-long meeting in February was organised to explore a vision for the Santa Cruz County food system, and another one and a half day meeting in May addressed the future of biofuels.

Open space technology

Harrison Owen's impetus for developing open space technology was his experience of organising a conference. When it was over he asked for feedback from attendees. He learnt that most people said the best part of the conference was the coffee breaks (1997). His insight was that there might be a better way to organise meetings, to encourage the types of interactions that occurred during coffee breaks. He attempted to make this as simple as possible in his experiments, and

continued to remove elements until all that was necessary remained. So in its current form, the facilitator of an open space meeting speaks for no more than fifteen minutes.

The event begins with all participants seated in one big circle. The facilitator stands in the middle and explains the process. Within a few minutes people are announcing topics for breakout sessions. The facilitator invites those who are passionate about a topic related to the theme – and willing to take responsibility for convening a meeting to discuss this topic – to come to the centre of the circle when they are ready. These participants then write down an issue or opportunity (or several) and announce them to the group, and say their name. They then tape the paper to a wall called the 'bulletin board,' along with a specific time and place to meet, before returning to the circle. When all topics have been announced, everyone moves to the bulletin board for a 'market place', which involves signing up for the sessions they want to attend.

At the outset the facilitator briefly explains some guiding principles for an open space technology meeting. These are:

- whoever comes is the right person;
- whatever happens is the only thing that could have;
- whenever it starts is the right time;
- when it is over it is over.

(Owen, 1997)

These principles help participants understand that it is important that the people who are attending breakouts want to be there, even if this means that no one else comes to a proposed session. They also encourage people to let go of preconceptions about what will be accomplished at the

meeting, and that it is important to pay attention to the group's energy, rather than the clock. If they accomplish what they want before the time allotted is over, they are encouraged to move on. Conversely they are encouraged to continue working past the allotted time if desired (although they may have to move if their space is reserved by another convener).

There is one 'law' in open space and that is the law of mobility. People are encouraged to leave a session if they are neither learning nor participating. This law helps keep long-winded people in check: if they talk for too long, other participants may simply leave. It also creates 'bumblebees' and 'butterflies'. Bumblebees are people who flit from one session to another, cross-pollinating ideas. Butterflies may not go to any sessions, but create centres of stillness, and the opportunity to engage in a conversation. Such conversations may trigger a thought that can have an influence on a larger group.

When the meeting lasts at least two days, conveners typically type up notes of their sessions on one of a handful of computers provided there. This produces an overall summary document, distributed before the participants leave the next day. With another half day, participants can also prioritise issues arising. Meetings (and days in multi-day events) end with a closing circle, which allows participants to share their experiences with the whole group.

O'Connor and Cooper suggest that open space technology has a strong applicability to policy processes because it can facilitate rapid, yet thorough, consultations with very large numbers of stakeholders (2005). Its collaborative nature often leads to widespread buy-in for proposals that emerge. O'Connor and Cooper also state that 'the process has no hierarchy; everyone has the same opportunity to participate and contribute', therefore responsibility for implementing these solutions is placed on all who create them, not just on public officials. As a result, open space technology has been used by 'national, regional and municipal governments in North America, Europe, Africa and Australia' (O'Connor and Cooper, 2005).

Dynamic facilitation

The dynamic facilitation approach to holding meetings was developed in the 1990s by Jim Rough. It often leads to 'breakthroughs'. A designated facilitator attempts to write down everything participants say on four charts. These charts are labelled 'enquiries/problem statements', 'difficulties/concerns', 'information/perspectives', and 'options/ideas'. The dynamic facilitator does not attempt to direct the conversation. This is usually explained to the participants with a jigsaw puzzle analogy; the group may jump around while

Box 1: Breakthroughs

For example, a group of loggers used this process to solve an 'impossible' problem: management had turned down their request for new radios. Their current radios made it difficult to communicate, so that moving logs on the mountainside was unsafe. When the facilitator asked why they wanted to improve safety, one answer was that the loggers were held responsible for safety at their sites. Their breakthrough was to realise that they were not given full responsibility and that their level of responsibility required greater decision-making authority. After discussing this new perspective with management they received new radios, as well as a greater voice in other workplace issues (Zubizarreta and Rough, 2002).

working on various parts of a bigger picture.

The facilitator's most important role is to make sure everyone feels they are being heard, and to draw people out by asking them questions to clarify or further explain their comments. The facilitator may need to ensure that one person speaks at a time, and that opposing viewpoints are encouraged. All statements are listed in one of the four categories. The emphasis is not making sure that the statements are listed in exactly the right category, but that everyone's contributions are written down.

Zubizarreta and Rough suggest that as participants feel fully heard, they begin to expand their focus and listen to others for their contributions to the bigger picture (2002). Participants first express what is already on their mind, or what they already know. After 'dumping' this information and feeling that the facilitator values their input, it is easier to begin listening to other perspectives. As participants recognise the complexity of the situation when considering multiple points of view they begin to suggest creative solutions.

A fifth chart is used to record breakthroughs, or to book-mark where the group is at when the meeting ends. The facilitator does not try to push for a decision or consensus, and should make sure that no one is holding back when there seems to be an agreement. Because points of convergence can quickly move to points of divergence, the facilitator's role is to ensure that these convergences are identified, and to help the group recognise their progress.

Dynamic facilitation does encourage people to 'be themselves'. The facilitator does not ask anyone to modify their behaviour or adhere to any ground rules, but does ask participants to speak up when they feel 'out of step' with the rest of the group, because 'their unique perspective may well turn out to be the missing piece of the puzzle' (Zubizarreta and Rough, 2002). They can be passionate and emotional and still their contributions are valued.

"There is one 'law' in open space and that is the law of mobility. People are encouraged to leave a session if they are neither learning nor participating. This law helps keep long-winded people in check: if they talk for too long, other participants may simply leave"

Rough has advocated and practiced the use of dynamic facilitation to inform policy processes (2002). He suggests that governments from local to national level should charter randomly selected groups of people to develop non-binding consensus statements, using the methodology. The consensus statements are then communicated to the larger community for further discussion and potential implementation. Rough facilitated one of these 'wisdom councils' in conjunction with the city of Port Townsend, Washington in 2000, focusing on regulating retail chains.

Integrating open space technology and dynamic facilitation

To integrate the two methods, we made some modifications. First, we needed to have multiple trained dynamic facilitators available, since open space often results in a number of sessions occurring simultaneously. It was difficult to predict the exact number and depended upon the number of people attending, and how many workshops were proposed. So we recruited students enrolled at the University of California, Santa Cruz as volunteer facilitators, giving them the option of a course credit if desired. We estimated the number of volunteers needed and held trainings lasting approximately two hours to introduce them to open space technology and dynamic facilitation, and to explain how we would integrate these two methods.

Our biggest concern was how to maintain open space technology's emphasis on participants taking responsibility during the meeting. The open space facilitator usually explains this as 'you are in charge'. So we modified the terminology. We asked the volunteer dynamic facilitators to think of themselves as both note takers and 'designated listeners' rather than more traditional 'facilitators'.

Dynamic facilitation may begin with a brief introduction to the process. However, we chose not to do this, in keeping with our desire to leave the initiative with the participants. Because dynamic facilitation was optional for the session

conveners, we did not mention how this process would work. Instead, we introduced these note takers as an available resource. We explained that conveners could take their own notes for inclusion in the proceedings, or take no notes at all. In practice, most conveners were grateful to have someone else take notes.

One modification to dynamic facilitation was to include an additional flipchart to record the session title, the convener and participant's names, and the convener's introduction or background to the issue. The 'note taker' either began taking notes when the convener started talking, or if necessary, encouraged them to start with the background of the topic.

Because meetings can extend past their scheduled time in open space, and to avoid conflicts with the next scheduled group, we asked the note takers to let participants know when there was 15 to 20 minutes left to go. If they wished to continue their discussion, they would have to move elsewhere. Note takers encouraged the group to consider summarising their discussion at this point. Where there was agreement this was recorded on the bookmark chart, and where there was not it was recorded in the other four categories.

Effectiveness for proceedings

Both our experiments with combining open space technology and dynamic facilitation were successful in producing a written proceeding. The notes for sessions using dynamic facilitation were much more extensive than those that were summarised by the conveners. Integrating these two approaches could even work for meetings shorter than a full day, perhaps just a few hours long.

Although successful for documenting proceedings when this would not otherwise occur, it required more resources and raised new issues. In contrast to multi-day open space technology meetings, where participants produce the proceedings, our integrated approach required more materials (e.g. flip chart paper, markers) and personnel. Formal training in dynamic facilitation involves a three or four day seminar costing \$800 (US) or more per person. However, an inexpensive manual explaining the process is available (Zubizarreta and Rough, 2002), and the basics can be communicated in a brief training for motivated volunteers.

Relying on volunteers had several downsides though. Some had difficulty grasping the importance of the designated listener role. Those who did find it difficult at times because they were interested in the issues being discussed and wanted to provide their own input. Also, many who signed up did not attend the trainings. Some who attended

Participants in a breakout session at a meeting on the local food system engage in a conversation, as a volunteer trained in dynamic facilitation takes notes on multiple flip charts. The process helps participants feel that their input is valued, and improves the quality of the dialogue.



Photo: Laura Tanaka

the trainings were absent at the events, and those who attended found taking notes for multiple sessions tiring.

We advise organisers to either plan for this or to select volunteers more carefully. Recruit enough so that volunteers do not need to take notes in back-to-back sessions. Or have two note takers in each session, to share the workload, and to allow volunteers to step out of the designated listener role when desired.

Although written proceedings were produced, we relied on the volunteers to type up their notes. The proceedings were compiled and printed two to three weeks later, rather than before the meeting ended. This delay may inhibit implementing agreed upon actions right away. It also prevents participants from seeing notes from all the sessions they did not attend while the meeting is taking place, which would help them to grasp the bigger picture. Full distribution of the proceedings also became more difficult after everyone had dispersed. So we suggest that rather than collecting the flip charts when sessions are over as we did, place them on a wall where everyone can see them during the event instead.

Effectiveness for dialogue

Both experiments integrating dynamic facilitation with open space technology successfully generated true dialogue. We

observed that reviewing the items on the flip charts during discussions led to a greater synthesis in thought and creativity. The dynamic facilitation process seemed to help people say what was really on their minds, in some cases allowing the group to get past hidden agendas. It was also helpful for dealing with difficult people, because their criticisms were welcomed as contributions to the concerns chart. Often these concerns were reoriented in a positive direction, particularly if the note taker specifically asked for potential options.

When group members felt listened to and had their input recorded, they had more enthusiasm and commitment to group decisions. At least three breakout sessions in the food system meeting catalysed community development efforts that were ongoing prior to the meeting, and contributed to much more rapid progress toward the initiators' goals. For example, a group wishing to institutionalise food security planning at the county level had met for nearly seven months with little success. In the breakout session, participants decided to form an organisation and contact policy makers about the new group's goals. They have since accomplished both of these tasks.

In many cases the integration of dynamic facilitation led to breakthroughs on complex issues. In one session, summarising or bookmarking the session helped the group to recog-

“Dynamic facilitation does encourage people to ‘be themselves’. The facilitator does not ask anyone to modify their behaviour or adhere to any ground rules, but does ask participants to speak up when they feel ‘out of step’ with the rest of the group, because ‘their unique perspective may well turn out to be the missing piece of the puzzle’”

nise their breakthroughs and to bring up action items. However, there is not always time to achieve this, and in future we may extend the length of scheduled breakout sessions beyond an hour and a half. The use of note takers can also slow down conversations, e.g. if the note takers are not familiar with the language or concepts used by the group, taking longer to document the participants’ comments. This was not always a disadvantage, as it gave participants more time to reflect on what other group members said.

But a potential area of tension is the mobility encouraged by open space technology and the emphasis on encouraging divergent views in dynamic facilitation. Participants who dislike conflict may leave a breakout session, rather than bringing their contrasting viewpoints to a dialogue. They may potentially miss contributing significantly to a breakthrough.

In practice, the two methods appeared to complement each other by reducing status inequalities. Dynamic facilitation encouraged greater participation by drawing out those who may have been more reluctant to speak up in a traditional open space meeting. Open space technology’s law of mobility allowed people the freedom to leave a breakout session when it failed to fully engage them, rather than conforming to norms of politeness that often serve to reinforce hierarchy.

Conclusions

Integrating dynamic facilitation with open space technology was beneficial for creating written proceedings in a shorter meeting, and for fostering high quality dialogue. But is important to consider the demands for more material and personnel resources than open space technology requires alone.

An integrated approach could be particularly useful for shorter, but more frequent meetings. This would allow for follow-up of ideas and actions from the first meeting, and for recruiting and involving more people. It also holds promise for informing policy processes, as long as organisers and government officials are genuinely interested in cooperatively developing creative proposals to address complex problems. An added benefit is that citizen initiatives may be undertaken in conjunction with government responses as a result of the spirit of collaboration and consensus the process fosters. We suggest that future meetings integrating open space technology and dynamic facilitation be evaluated for their long-term potential to impact people’s livelihoods.

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Methodological diversity and creativity in agricultural innovation systems

by PAUL VAN MELE and ANN BRAUN

Introduction

The challenge of supporting the diversity and dynamism within human and natural landscapes calls for a corresponding methodological diversity in agricultural research and development (R&D). The multi-faceted dimensions of communities' and farmers' needs – and the multiple demands on their precious time – influences the choice of methods for situation analysis, technology development and resource management. Besides, it also affects ways of negotiation, communication and farmer education. A wide range of methods and of actors implementing them allows for greater responsiveness, flexibility and fine-tuning to the context and needs of specific client groups.

Diversity in R&D innovation systems can be assessed in terms of the:

- biophysical environment, including agricultural and natural resources;
- political, economic and institutional contexts;
- actors in the system, and their perspectives, historical background, ideas and opportunities; and
- research, extension and farmer education methods.

In this article, we focus on the diversity of R&D methods, the actors, and their interface, by examining the implications of diversity at the level of individual R&D actors and at the

“Individuals and organisations need to continuously assess their expertise and capacity to better position themselves as R&D actors”

level of national and global innovation systems.

Multiple versus single methods at the level of R&D actors

Individuals and organisations need to continuously assess their expertise and capacity to better position themselves as R&D actors. Some actors may specialise in participatory rural appraisals (PRA), quantitative impact assessments, or assessing local knowledge. Others focus on conducting farmer field schools (FFS), or position themselves more broadly as managers or facilitators of agricultural knowledge and information systems. Focusing on a single method, or skilfully deploying a few methods, allows actors to develop specific expertise, while at the same time further improving the method. Some pros and cons of focusing on a single method or approach are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Pros and cons of focusing on a single method from the perspective of an R&D actor

Advantages	Disadvantages
Potential to develop expertise and take a strong position as an R&D actor.	Personal interests in careers may hamper a true partnership environment. Actors may become blind to innovations coming from perceived 'competitors'.
Efficient use can be made of human and financial capital.	High pressure to promote a single method globally, whereas priority and goodwill of donors may change over time.
Scope to learn and advance the method by applying it in different contexts.	Actors may demonstrate a low flexibility to adjust method to local contexts.

The need for diversity at the level of R&D innovation systems

While focusing on one or a few methodologies may have advantages for an individual R&D actor, the propagation of a single method at the national or global level has some important drawbacks.

Quality issues are likely to emerge when a single method is scaled up massively, as shown in an early review of the FFS experience (van de Fliert, 1993). This, however, does not mean that farmer education with a strong emphasis on participatory and experiential learning has no global significance, on the contrary (Röling and Wage-makers, 1998).

But methods that are strongly promoted globally may be perceived as imposed by those who implement them. They may be viewed as a damper on local methodological and institutional innovations. Just as the lack of local ownership of technologies may result in non-adoption, the same holds for methodologies and working philosophies, especially complex ones.

People and organisations may feel pressured to implement certain methodologies, without having internalised the true nature of participation. Especially with participatory methods such as PRA and FFS that rely heavily on the qualities of the facilitator, scaling-up may go at the expense of learning together: the very core objective of the method. Even well-trained facilitators may switch to a mode of mechanically implementing a method under pressure of donors (Barzman and Desilles, 2002).

Methodological flexibility is key to creativity and sustained motivation of those working in the field. When

people's job description mentions 'you develop a programme in the way that works best in your area' that creates responsibility and passion. When their job description says 'you visit farmers every week or every fourteen days' that kills passion (IIRR, 2000). But for people to act responsively and creatively they need to be familiar with a range of approaches and their environment needs to be supportive.

The promotion of a single blueprint approach or method is also risky when it ignores the economic, political and institutional context in which actors operate. A well-known example is the training and visit (T&V) system of extension, previously promoted by the World Bank and part of the transfer-of-technology or 'pipeline' model of innovation, which considered that research results originate only from specialised research institutes, and are disseminated to farmers through the extension service (Biggs, 1989). The failure of this methodological approach led to a wave of participatory approaches and a new cycle of learning from failures and successes.

In their opening paper on methodological complementarity, Abbot and Guijt (1997) stated that a key contribution of PRA methodologies lies in bringing together a greater diversity of perspectives. Yet this often led to complex, context-specific information, that could not be extrapolated, or which failed to unveil information that may not be expressed freely in groups. The authors continue by citing various cases in which PRA has been combined with more conventional research methods in various sequential orders, depending on the scale and objective of the work.

Recent critiques of participatory approaches (Guijt and Shah, 1998; Cooke and Kothari, 2001) further emphasised that development-oriented research processes need to be tailored to particular circumstances. Research has multiple objectives and dimensions, each opening up a spectrum of possibilities. Conventional and participatory types of research are not independent or discrete activities. To ensure quality, researchers are encouraged to focus on skilfully combining elements from the different dimensions in order to tailor research to specific circumstances (McDougall and Braun, 2003).

Methodological diversity in the system allows R&D actors to tap into their own organisational strengths and explore what works best for them under which conditions. Diversity also enables them to play the card of complementarity. Partnerships built on the strengths of the individual actors pave the way for combining various methods available in the system. This moves away from the idea of a one-size-fits-all

The Africa Rice Centre (WARDA) combines innovative scaling-up approaches, such as video, with their expertise in participatory technology development.



Photo: Josephine Rodgers

technology or an ideal blueprint methodology. We will illustrate this with a few examples.

Evolving methods and the organisational learning culture

Recently, the intergovernmental organisation CABI *Bioscience*, with an expertise in sustainable agriculture, has given rise to creative farmer support services such as community plant health clinics (www.globalplantclinic.org) and Going Public (see Box 1).

CABI also collaborated with a UK-based private company, called Countrywise Communication, to build competency in developing learner-centred videos for farmer training. Together with the Rural Development Academy and

Box 1: Going Public

Going Public is a novel method that makes use of places where farmers meet spontaneously, such as markets, bus terminals and other public places, to create a two-way learning channel. Going Public allows scientists, agricultural extension workers and farmer experts to show things to people, answer questions, run short experiential learning exercises and potentially to distribute material, as in any other face-to-face method. But this is quick and it allows contact with people from many areas at once. It also allows scientists to gather feedback from farmers in a social setting where the farmers are comfortable, surrounded by their friends and neighbours, but where they are also free to come and go (Bentley *et al.*, 2003). More recently, Going Public was used to learn about the range of local names and management practices farmers use for *bakanae*, a major rice disease (Nash and Van Mele, 2005).

Box 2: Historical trends in participatory R&D at CABI

CAB *International* (CABI) was established in the early 20th century to foster the international sharing of knowledge from agricultural science and to help tackle specific agricultural constraints. While the users of this information were originally the National Agricultural Research System (NARS), in recent years greater emphasis has been placed on how this pool of knowledge can be more effectively accessed and used by communities themselves.

In the early 1990s, the formerly independent institutes of CABI *Bioscience*, the scientific division of CAB International, had little experience of participatory R&D though many years experience of working in developing countries and with tropical agriculture. A new role began to emerge for them, as a provider of technical backstopping to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) farmer field school programmes in Asia.

Since the late 1980s, CABI has supported farmer field schools across the globe, helped to expand the training curriculum from insect to disease management, and adapted the method for use in perennial crops such as cocoa, coffee and fruit. CABI's ecologists, taxonomists, biotechnologists and senior management all became familiar with the concept of farmer field schools. New staff were hired with broader field experience, new types of partnerships emerged with commercial companies, and interest grew in developing a 'new' sustainable, organic, equitable and fair agriculture.

More recently, collaboration with anthropologists and communication specialists from outside the organisation has given rise to innovations such as the community plant health clinics, Going Public, and the use of videos in farmer education. It is difficult to see how such innovations might have arisen in a research institute or university, where staff advancement depends on academic publications. CABI *Bioscience* has a more flexible approach, using the pro-active development of initiatives and project achievements to reward staff achievements. Operating as a learning organisation and driven by demands from its member countries, CABI has been able to respond to emerging international needs through multiple innovations and as part of larger learning networks.

a Bangladeshi women's NGO called Thengamara Mahila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS), they produced videos on on-farm rice seed management. The videos proved more efficient in training rural women than face-to-face extension (Van Mele *et al.*, 2005a). Likewise, the Africa Rice Centre (WARDA) is developing innovative scaling-up approaches such as video, adding to their expertise of participatory variety selection and participatory learning and action research (see photo 1).

Although the senior author currently works for WARDA, we thought it appropriate to present a historical perspective of CABI, his previous employer, and show how it developed and advanced its expertise in innovative farmer support methods over the past century (Box 2).

Box 3: PROINPA's decision criteria for applying complementary methods

Apply CIALs when....

Farmers give high priority to solving specific problems or constraints in the production system.

There is strong leadership in the community or an interest group with the organisational capacity to form a CIAL.

A community has experience with participatory approaches and collective action (CIALs are formed more easily in communities that had an FFS).

There is some financial support and commitment to follow-up from seed money provided by an R&D organisation or from local government.

Apply FFS when...

There is community interest in initiating collective action.

There is local demand for training on specific issues of recognised importance.

Appropriate technology and knowledge is available that can be incorporated in the training process.

There are sufficient financial and human resources to operate FFS.

Source: Oscar Barea, PROINPA, Bolivia

The second example we describe here illustrates how two farmer education methods, each pioneered by a different international organisation, found fertile ground in one and the same national implementation agency. The Bolivian non-profit foundation PROINPA saw complementarity in local agricultural research committees (CIALs) and farmer field schools (FFS) and consciously decided to work with them in an integrated manner. Through several cycles of fieldwork, PROINPA learnt how to coordinate the complementary use of these methods (see Box 3). Where simple knowledge is sufficient to address a specific problem, they use workshops and presentations at local markets, (the new Going Public method) which they developed with CABI *Bioscience*.

A third example reflects on historical trends within the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Over the past two to three decades, FAO has spearheaded two major development initiatives: farmer field schools and rural communication systems, including radio and video. But how can one explain that hardly any crossover has taken place between those two developments? Surely there must have been individuals working within the organisation who looked 'over the fence' and were attracted by what 'their neighbours' were doing?

Blacksmiths inject new ideas and join hands with researchers and NGO staff to improve a rice parboiler in Benin.



Photo: Marcella Vrolijk

These examples illustrate the need for R&D organisations to become more familiar with existing methods, to assess their appropriateness, to innovate when necessary, and to build synergies with their own methodological expertise if possible.

Promoting diversity in innovation systems

Clearly, the strength of an innovation system depends on the strengths of its components and the management of its linkages. Policy makers may be put under pressure to promote a single method, at the expense of overall system adaptability and robustness. While developing national research and extension policies, decision makers need to be aware of the human dimensions of R&D. The impetus for methodological monocultures is often associated with strong lobbyist groups

and personalities. Decision makers need to ensure that the promotion of a method builds on local social capital and on previous methodological experiences. This can be done by shaping an environment where creativity can flourish, and multiple methods and partnerships can be assessed objectively in response to new emerging needs.

As innovations come from multiple sources (Biggs, 1989), including the farmer community, the education system and the private sector, research policies need to be better coordinated with rural development, education and trade policies, as these directly or indirectly shape the innovation system. Policy makers and donors can facilitate the testing and fostering of partnerships between R&D and private businesses (see Photo 2), or between R&D and the education system.

Box 4: RRI promotes methodological diversity in Bangladesh

Funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), The Poverty Elimination Through Rice Research Assistance (PETRRA) project approved and supported 45 sub-projects between 1999 and 2004. These had a focus on pro-poor policy, technology development, or on uptake and extension. Sub-projects were approved at different stages through a competitive bidding mechanism. More than 50 partner organisations, including NGOs, government organisations and the private sector, worked in partnership, some in turn involving a broad range of local NGOs and community-based organisations.

Many innovations emerged from building on the organisations' own strengths and enabling cross-fertilisation between sub-projects. Innovations ranged from partnerships to develop a pro-poor market for mobile pumps, to 'picture-songs', which combine large paintings of insect pests of rice and their natural enemies for example, with song and dance, to pro-poor seed systems. Flexibility and ownership are the keys to mainstreaming methods. Both at management and sub-project levels, PETRRA linked underlying values of the learning organisation – empowerment of its members, rewards and structures fostering initiatives, and experimentation – with values required to address gender and poverty in rural development (Van Mele *et al.*, 2005b).

Identifying champions with expertise in one method may not be too difficult. But finding facilitating actors or setting up structures that can bring multiple sources of expertise together in an open learning environment is more challenging. Mapping out actors, assessing their organisational cultures, and creating early opportunities for them to interact, share experiences and build trust may be a first step in the right direction to boost methodological and institutional innovations (Van Mele *et al.*, 2005b; see also Matsuert *et al.*, 2005). A successful approach tested and managed by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) from 1999-2004 is described in Box 4.

We hope this article has illustrated the need for an innovation systems perspective at the level of individual actors, and among national and international policy makers. Innovations are more likely to emerge in an environment that builds on perspectives of multiple actors, that taps into a broad range of R&D methods, and that stimulates and sustains creativity.

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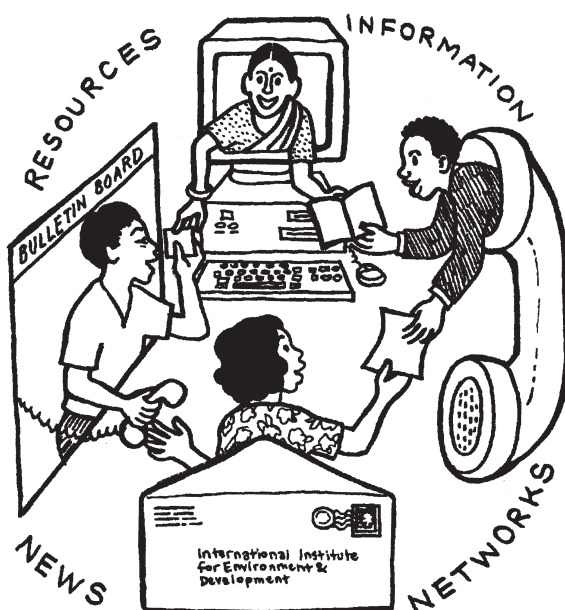
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in touch



Welcome to the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*. Through these pages we hope to create a more participatory resource for the *Participatory Learning and Action* audience, to put you, as a reader, in touch with other readers. We want this section to be a key source of up-to-date information on training, publications, and networks. Your help is vital in keeping us all in touch about:

- **Networks.** Do you have links with recognised local, national or international networks for practitioners of participatory learning? If so, what does this network provide – training? newsletters? resource material/library? a forum for sharing experiences? Please tell us about the network and provide contact details for other readers.
- **Training.** Do you know of any forthcoming training events or courses in participatory methodologies? Are you a trainer yourself? Are you aware of any key

training materials that you would like to share with other trainers?

- **Publications.** Do you know of any key publications on participatory methodologies and their use? Have you (or has your organisation) produced any books, reports, or videos that you would like other readers to know about?
- **Electronic information.** Do you know of any electronic conferences or pages on the Internet which exchange or provide information on participatory methodologies?
- **Other information.** Perhaps you have ideas about other types of information that would be useful for this section. If so, please let us know.

Please send your responses to:

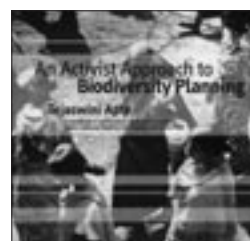
Participatory Learning and Action,
IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London
WC1H 0DD, UK.

Fax: + 44 20 7388 2826;

Email: pla.notes@iied.org

Participatory Learning and Action is published in April, August, and December. Please submit material two months before the publication date.

Book Reviews



An Activist Approach to Biodiversity Planning: A handbook of participatory tools used to prepare

India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

● Tejaswini Apte

IIED, 2005

ISBN 1 84369 548 0

India has been one of the first countries to undertake a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Planning (NBSAP) process under the requirements of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with the extra challenge of integrating opinions over a vast national scale.

Based on interviews with over 190 people involved in (or, in some cases, excluded from) the NBSAP in four Indian states – Karnataka, Maharashtra, Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh – this book reviews the key successes and challenges in achieving a truly participatory process of policy planning. Moving beyond general principles of participation, the review identifies precise approaches that work to include diverse local opinions – along with associated risks and pitfalls – emerging from on-the-ground experience.

A range of successful tools are explained step-by-step to help practitioners adapt and design appropriate approaches for their own contexts internationally. Further advice comes from an overview of common lessons across very different opportunities and constraints faced in different settings, ranging from well

resourced to poorly supported, from urban to inaccessibly rural, and from reluctant to enthusiastic.

■ Available from www.earthprint.com. Order Number 9521IIED. Price USD 28.00 or downloadable from www.policy-powertools.org/related/NBSAP.html



Our World, Our Voice, Our Media. Community Media Experiences and Skills

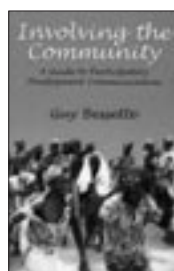
● Editors Ashish Sen, Catherine Kannam, Ekta

Mittal, Meghana Rao, Ramnath Bhat, Tom Thomas
Praxis/VOICES, 2005

This resource guide explores the power of community-based forms of communication. It articulates the role of democratising the media in a contemporary context by exploring issues such as advocacy, media law, piracy, etc. The publication includes a number of case studies from Asia, South Africa and the MENA region and also gives practical advice on how to set up a community radio station, how to produce transformative theatre, community puppetry and journalism, participatory video, etc. This is a valuable guide for development practitioners and others interested in communicating to bring about social, political or economic change.

This is the first production of the Communications for Change initiative from the Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) network.

■ Available from Near East Foundation in English, French and Arabic languages. Email pisaak@neareast.org



Involving the Community: A guide to participatory development communication

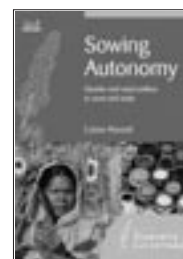
● Guy Bessette
Southbound/IDRC, 2004
ISBN: 983-9054-41-4

Participatory development communication is about encouraging community participation in development initiatives through the use of various communication strategies. This publication serves not only as a reference document, but also as a guide for training sessions. It addresses questions on how researchers and practitioners can improve communication with local communities and other stakeholders, how two-way communication can enhance community participation in research and development initiatives and improve the capacity of communities to participate in the management of their natural resources, and how researchers, community members, and development practitioners can improve their ability to effectively reach policymakers and promote change.

The guide is split into three parts: the first part deals with the role of the researcher or development practitioner as a communication actor and introduces the principal concepts associated with participatory development communication; the second part deals with methodology behind the development and application of a participatory communication strategy; and the third discusses conditions for the effective use of some communication tools with a participatory approach. Appended to the book is a section on

the major trends in development communication, which adds a theoretical background to the material in the guide.

■ Available to order from IDRC and free online at www.idrc.ca
Also available in French.



Sowing Autonomy. Gender and seed politics in South India

● Carine Pionetti
Reclaiming Diversity and Citizenship Series, IIED, 2005

ISBN 1 843 69562 6

Women, through their multiple roles in food and agriculture, have played a major role in shaping biodiversity. This book looks in particular at women's roles in agriculture and especially the important part women play in saving and reproducing seed in the drylands of the Deccan Plateau, in South India.

Detailed farmers' accounts of why seed-saving is essential emphasise the interconnectedness between self-reliance in seed, crop diversity and nutrition. By extension, the realms of food culture and religious rituals (which entail the use of traditional crops) are also linked to seed autonomy. What is most significant about the intertwining of seed-saving, crop diversity and nutrition is that these three realms are largely under women's control. However, the processes of industrialisation and institutionalisation in the seed sector are undermining the very basis of autonomous seed production.

The author argues that a radical re-orientation in public policies is needed to support autonomous seed production in the drylands of South India. Poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation both directly

depend on the strengthening of diversity-based farming systems, institutional support for decentralised seed systems, and reversals in policies for technological and legal developments.

■ Available from www.earthprint.com
Order No. 14502IIED. Price: USD 30.50 or
downloadable from
www.iied.org/pubs/pdf/full/14502IIED.pdf



Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions

● Edited by Naila Kabeer
Claiming Citizenship
Series, Rights,
Participation and
Accountability (Volume 1)

Zed Books, 2005

ISBN Hb 1 84277 548 1

ISBN Pb 1 84277 549 9

This book looks at how poor people understand and claim citizenship, and the rights they associate with it. Citizenship is a highly contested term with differing meaning ascribed by different cultures, interests and ideologies. However, the editor argues that aspirations for citizenship entail common core values, including a desire for social justice and self-determination and solidarity with others. To be meaningful, any concept of citizenship carries a conception of rights. In recent years, the 'rights-

based approach' has emerged as a 'new' approach to development, having the potential to strengthen the status of citizens from beneficiaries to rightful and legitimate claimants.

Divided into four sections: citizenship and rights, citizenship and identity, citizenship and struggle, citizenship and policy, this book goes beyond conceptual debates by examining the meanings of rights and citizenships through case studies from Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, the UK and the USA.

■ Available from Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, UK. Telephone +44 20 7837 4014. Fax: +44 20 7833 3960. Email: zed@zedbooks.demon.co.uk. Website www.zedbooks.co.uk Price Hb £55.00, Pb £17.95.



African Video Film Today

● Edited by Foluke Ogunleye
Academic Publishers, Swaziland,
2003

ISBN 0797829318

Video film is a progressive form of entertainment which is becoming more and more accessible across the continent of Africa. The video film movement has managed to develop and succeed, in spite of the socio-economic pressures

Africa faces and is gradually becoming an art form, which traverses many boundaries. This book sets out to explore the driving force behind the video film movement, the people and processes involved and how this art form can be improved. It also addresses various topics such as the historical background of the movement and how video film is received in other countries. Themes such as language, religion, genre and ethical issues are also considered. The book draws upon experiences and observations of the video film movement in Nigeria, Ghana, Lesotho and the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa, reflecting on the use of video film to promote social political awareness throughout the continent. One chapter addresses the new image of women in Nigerian video films. The book also reflects on how video film promotes local artistic expression giving a voice to the people that are increasingly becoming marginalised by the global media.

■ Available from African Books Collective Ltd, The Jam Factory, 27 Park End Street, Oxford, OX1 1HU, UK. Telephone: +44 1865 726686, Fax: +44 1865 793298. Email: abc@africanbookscollective.com Website: www.africanbookscollective.com Price £16.95.

Events and training

Advanced Learning Design Global Learning Partners, Canada Toronto: 10th – 13th January 2006

Advanced Learning Design builds on the foundation of Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach with a focus on design principles. Each participant revises a course design from her/his workplace based on peer and instructor feedback. To learn more, please visit

www.globalelearning.com/ALD.htm

■ For more information, please contact: Dwayne Hodgson, GLP Canadian and International Programmes Director. Email: dhodgson@globalelearning.com; Tel: +1 866 284 4572 (toll free); Fax: +613 598 0094

Participatory Approaches in Science and Technology (PATH) Conference, 4th – 7th June 2006 Edinburgh, UK.

The PATH conference aims to explore how best to involve stakeholders and the public in policy development and decision-making on science and technology issues. The conference will bring together policy makers, practitioners and academics to exchange knowledge and explore future directions for public participation in these areas. Using a combination of keynote speakers; papers addressing state of the art theory and practical examples; and interactive sessions exploring good practice approaches, participants will

consider experiences and innovative ideas from around the world. The conference will be small and focused with a limited attendance of around 120 delegates. The organisers would like to invite contributions of oral presentations, posters and interactive sessions in the following areas under the science and technology theme:

- Scaling up participatory processes from local to European and global scale
- Theories of representation in participatory approaches and their practical implications
- Evaluation of methods to allow multiple interests, viewpoints and values to be expressed and deliberated in participatory processes
- Gender aspects of participation in decision-making and policy development
- Case studies illustrating innovative approaches to involving the public in science and technology, especially (but not exclusively) in the areas of:
 - genetically modified crops in agriculture
 - biodiversity conservation
 - nanotechnology
 - water resource management

The conference is organised by the Macaulay Institute, Aberdeen, as part of the PATH project. Deadline for submissions: 13th January 2006.

■ Further details can be found on the website: www.macaulay.ac.uk/PATHconference/ or by contacting Jane Lund, email: j.lund@macaulay.ac.uk or Wendy Kenyon, email: w.kenyon@macaulay.ac.uk.

Foundation degree in Active Citizenship and Participation September 2006 Bradford University, UK

This course is a two-year degree (three years part time) intended for those who would like to or are currently working to encourage active citizenship and greater participation either within local communities or within local services. It is designed for people on 'both sides of the equation': both those within and those outside formal institutions and has been developed by staff at the International Centre for Participation Studies with Peace Studies, working closely with a group of local employers and stakeholders.

Foundation Degrees are two-year vocational degrees (3 years part time), which include a significant element of work-based learning. Successful Foundation degree graduates can then transfer to the final year of existing honours degrees within the University.

This course is being run in partnership with the School of Lifelong Learning, who are providing additional study skills modules and co-ordinating the admissions process.

■ To request further information and an application pack for the course please contact Lucy Brill, Programme Officer, International Centre for Participation Studies, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, Bradford, BD7 1DP, UK. Email: learning@bradford.ac.uk; Tel: +44 1274 233210. More information about the course is also available on the university website at: www.brad.ac.uk/booklets/#ssis.



e-participation

In this issue, our e-participation pages are dedicated to online resources that have a tools-oriented content.

Power tools: for policy influence in natural resource management

www.policy-powertools.org/



This website introduces a range of Power Tools – ‘how-to’ ideas that marginalised people and their allies can use to have a greater positive influence on natural resources policy. The tools include **tools for understanding; tools for organising; tools for engaging;** and tools for ensuring. The website includes

- a tools guide – 26 power tools based on experience from around the world
- discussions of power tools in theory and practice
- strengths and limits of tools in practice
- related research on policy tools in action
- a directory of the many other websites that contain policy tool resources – some links are also listed below.

ActionAid

www.actionaid.org/wps/content_document.asp?doc_id=33

Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS) is a guide for ActionAid staff and partners in their planning and reporting. See the final section on ‘Guidelines in content for ALPS submissions’ – includes a number of useful questions for planning and evaluating, e.g.: appraisals; ActionAid, regional and

country strategy; programme strategy; strategic review; and regional, divisional and organisational reports.

Action Research Resources, Southern Cross University, Australia

www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arhome.html > Pieces

Includes 24 short sets of ideas and explanations of what action research is about. Topics include participation, grounded theory, rigour, and generalisation. ‘Resources’ has a long list of topics, e.g. communication skills, group feedback analysis, and neighbourhood meetings, written in a very practical and skills-based way. Also information about a 14-week public course called action research and evaluation on-line (Areol).

Adaptive Learning Website, South and South-East Asia

www.adaptivelearning.info/

The adaptive learning guidelines, available in English, Khmer, Lao, Bengali and Vietnamese, give lots of useful methods and hints on adaptive learning strategies for natural resource management (e.g. designing a shared learning process, conducting experiments, communicating lessons), based on experience in fisheries but widely applicable.

Advance Africa

www.advanceafrica.org/who_we_are/index.html > Tools and Approaches

Advance Africa is a family planning/reproductive health (FP/RH) service delivery project, funded by USAID. *Strategic Mapping* has four sections: process, which involves PRA intervention, interactive group planning, and programme implementation and monitoring; a guide to tools (unavailable as yet); resources, including a technical brief

and country reports (Angola, Benin, Senegal and Rwanda); and links to what conceptual mapping and GIS are about. *Best Practices* follows the same format (with an online database of tools/best practice in FP/RH). *Scaling Up* is the same format, except there are no tools.

Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)

www.cifor.cgiar.org/ > Tools

The *Criteria and Indicators Toolbox Series* is 10 manuals on alternative ways of measuring sustainable forest management and human well-being. Includes: future scenarios tool; participatory mapping (a workshop report on boundary and land-use conflicts); multicriteria-analysis (useful when consensus is hard to reach); system dynamic modelling; software and computer-simulated models for collaborative management of NR (Co-Learn); Co-View, a tool to help the articulation of visioning of the future; possible consequences of land-use decisions (FLORES); and more scientific mapping of growth and distribution of trees and animals (VegClass, TROPIS and DOMAIN).

CIVICUS

www.civicus.org > Resources and Services > CIVICUS Toolkits

CIVICUS is an international alliance promoting the foundation, growth and protection of citizen action throughout the world, especially in areas where participatory democracy and citizens’ freedom of association are threatened. The *CIVICUS Toolkits* are in simple and clearly English, with some available in French and Spanish. Topics include e.g.: writing effectively and powerfully; producing your own media; action planning; monitoring and evaluation; and writing a funding

proposal. Links include e.g. Financial Lobbying, A Guide to Budget Work for NGOs, Open Source Democracy, and Cyber Law (>Resources and Services> Books and Publications).

The Communication Initiative

www.comminit.com/index.html

The Communication Initiative promotes enhancing the extent and quality of communication and change information, based in Canada. The communication strategies tools cover a range of topics, including health, training, journalism, participation, and there is a large focus on HIV/AIDS. Search for 'Toolkit' (76 entries), and for 'Manual' (322 entries). 'Materials' has an alphabetical list of links. Focus Points on the home page include children, radio and environment. The Drum Beat, a weekly publication, focuses on a different topic each week, such as polio, East and Southeast Asia, conflict, radio dramas.

Connecticut Nonprofit Information Network

www.ctnonprofits.org/default.asp > NonProfit Toolkits

NonProfit Toolkits include: an *Advocacy and Lobbying Toolkit* (the basics about lobbying, dos and don'ts, sample letters, effective public and media relations); and *Free Complete Toolkit for Boards*, which covers an overview of Board roles and responsibilities, staffing the Board, successful committees and meetings,

and evaluating the Board and Executive Director. The intended audience is from the United States, so some of the practical tips are not relevant to other countries.

Dev-Zone

www.dev-zone.org > Knowledge Centre

Dev-Zone is a specialist information and education centre in New Zealand, focusing on development and global issues. Knowledge Centre categories include e.g.: development practice; disasters and emergencies; globalisation; health and population; human rights; knowledge and information; peace and conflict; poverty; society and culture; and women's issues. Each is further divided, into 'categories' and 'links' to reports, and other websites. There is also a search function, which is useful if you want some specific information, as the site is large.

The Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF)

www.esrftz.org/ppa/Index.html > Documents > Field Guide

The *Tanzanian 2002/03 Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA): Field Guide* is divided into nine sections including e.g.: PPA themes; fieldwork process; PPA methodology; analysis; writing reports; team roles; and policy summaries. Lots of practical information about methodology in section 5, including e.g. group meetings, mapping, transect walks, preference ranking, gender and well-

being analysis, and sequencing.

Palestinian Poverty Assessment Project: www.pppap.org/; *Ugandan Participatory Poverty Assessment Process* www.uppap.or.ug/.

Education and Training Unit (ETU)

www.etu.org.za/ > Community Organisers' Toolbox

The Community Organisers' Toolbox covers: work in the community (external work); building a strong organisation (internal work); administration; local government in South Africa; information technology; financial management; HIV/AIDS; and para-legal advice. Each guide is has a number of smaller tools, beginning with 'What is in this guide?' and explains what is covered. These tools are written in clear and simple English, though some information is quite specific to South Africa.

Other websites

Participatory Development Forum (PD Forum) Virtual Resource Centre

www.pdforum.org

This newly launched version of the PD Forum website includes a discussion forum; online documents; and the new Dialogue on Participation, a thematic quarterly e-newsletter. It also hosts the PD Forum Virtual Resource Centre (VRC). The VRC is an innovative and participatory web-based resource centre, hosting a compilation of articles, papers, book reviews and resources.

RCPLA Network

In this section, we update readers on activities of the **Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network (RCPLA) Network** (www.rcpla.org) and its members. RCPLA is a diverse, international network of national-level organisations, which brings together development practitioners from around the globe. It was formally established in 1997 to promote the use of participatory approaches to development. The network is dedicated to capturing and disseminating development perspectives from the South. For more information please contact the RCPLA Network Steering Group:

RCPLA Coordination and North Africa & Middle East Region:

Ali Mokhtar, Near East Foundation – Middle East Region, Center for Development Services (CDS), 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, 10th Floor, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt.

Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +20 2 794 7278;

Email: cds.prog@neareast.org amokhtar@nefdev.org;

Website: www.neareast.org/main/cds/default.aspx

Asia Region: Tom Thomas, Director, Institute for Participatory Practices (Praxis), S-75 South Extension, Part II, New Delhi, India 110 049. Tel/Fax: +91 11 5164 2348 to 51; Email: tomt@praxisindia.org or catherinek@praxisindia.org

Jayatissa Samaranayake, Institute for Participatory

Interaction in Development (IPID), 591 Havelock Road, Colombo 06, Sri Lanka. Tel: +94 1 555521;

Tel/Fax: +94 1 587361; Email: ipidc@panlanka.net

West Africa Region: Awa Faly Ba, IIED Programme Sahel, Point E, Rue 6 X A, B.P. 5579, Dakar, Sénégal. Tel: +221 824 4417; Fax: +221 824 4413; Email: awafba@sentoo.sn

European Region: Jane Stevens, Participation, Power and Social Change Group, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK.

Tel: + 44 1273 678690; Fax: + 44 1273 21202;

Email: participation@ids.ac.uk; Website: www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip Participatory Learning and Action Editorial Team, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK.

Tel: +44 207 388 2117; Fax: +44 207 388 2826;

Email: planotes@iied.org; Website: www.planotes.org

Latin American Region: Jordi Surkin Beneria, c/o

Conservacion Internacional, La Paz, Bolivia. Tel:

+ 591 2 2797700 ext 224; Email: jsurkin@conservation.org

Southern and Eastern Africa Region: Eliud Wakwabubi, Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK), Jabavu Road, PCEA Jitegemea Flats, Flat No. D3, PO Box 2645, KNH Post Office, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel/Fax: +254 2 716609; Email: pamfork@nbnet.co.ke

News from the RCPLA Network Steering Group

Some exciting news! During the Steering Group meeting held at the offices of the Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) in Colombo, Sri Lanka in August, Ali Mokhtar was voted in as the new Network Coordinator. We would like to thank Tom Thomas at Praxis for all his hard work and support of the Network over the last three years. Special thanks also to Catherine Kannam, who ably assisted Tom.

Ali Mokhtar, who is also a member of our newly formed International Editorial Advisory Board, has over fifteen years of experience working with non-governmental organisations in community development and project management. He is currently

a development strategy advisor to a number of international development agencies operating in the North Africa and the Middle East region and is based at the Center for Development Services, part of the Near East Foundation (NEF) in Cairo.

Communications for Change (C4C) initiative

After the Steering Group meeting, the RCPLA Network, with special assistance from IPID, launched *Our World Our Voice Our Media: Community Media Experiences and Skills*, the first step of its Communication for Change (C4C) initiative. Two of the editors - Ashish Sen and Tom Thomas - presented the resource kit to an invited audience of NGOs, government ministers and local press in downtown Colombo.

The resource kit looks at how to communicate to bring about change by exploring the democratisation of the media and providing a practical guide of how to use alternative, participatory forms of communication as a means to achieve this change. See the In Touch section for more details.

News from the new RCPLA Network Coordinator

Believing in the power of communication and based on the successful impact of the C4C initiative in South Asia and Africa, the use of participatory development communication will be expanded in the MENA region through the new Network Coordinator. Promoting best practices in this area will serve as a guide to development practitioners

who strive toward realising economic, social or political change. *Our World Our Voice Our Media: Community Media Experiences and Skills* has captured the experiences and efforts of Southern community-based initiatives using community media to make critical difference to peoples' lives, and will soon include case studies from the MENA region. Editions in French, Arabic, Spanish and Kiswahili are planned.

Over the next three years, the RCPLA Network hopes to witness a significant expansion in its membership base and the resources it is offering to the wider development community. Members will be recruited from all over the world to represent different types of institutions ranging from academic, research, and development, all committed to participatory practices. Special attention will be given to attract large organisations that are the hub of various NGOs, as well as other networks that support and implement participatory approaches.

For more information on the RCPLA Network, visit www.rcpla.org. If you are interested in joining the RCPLA or in funding any of the network activities or initiatives, please contact amokhtar@nefdev.org

News from the Institute of Development Studies

To begin with, news of some changes! Firstly, the Participation Group has formally become the Participation, Power and Social Change Group. This change reflects the shift in emphasis of our work in recent years. Also, after 8 years of excellent leadership and vision, John Gaventa has handed over the team leader role to Rosalind Eyben, a fellow group member. Lastly, we are pleased to welcome two new fellows to the team: Colette Harris, who has studied and worked on issues of gender, identity and power relations, particularly in Tajikistan, and Joy Moncrieffe whose focus is on issues of accountability and good governance, politics and inequality, and ethnicity and political management.

A number of workshops and activities took place throughout the autumn. One highlight has been the **Realising Sexual Rights' Workshop**, which took place on 28-29 September. Over 50 people from 22 countries participated in this workshop. Participants worked on a wide variety of issues: female genital mutilation, HIV/AIDS, lesbian, gay and bisexual rights, abortion rights, human rights, transgender identity, sex education, family planning, sex

work, marriage, masculinities and women's empowerment. Throughout the three days, common ground was found amongst the diversity of participants by looking at sexuality in the framework of sexual rights and discussing such questions as: What are the connections between poverty, injustice and sexuality? How can development take a more positive, empowering and pleasure focused approach to sexuality? More information on the workshop, as well as links to other IDS work on sexuality, can be found on <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/research/sexrights.html>. To join the dissemination list for future IDS work on sexuality, e-mail your name, organisational affiliation and contact details to s.jolly@ids.ac.uk

Recruitment for our next MA in Participation, Power and Social Change is underway. Designed for working practitioners who wish to study and practice ways of increasing the participation, influence and voice of people in the development process, this is an action learning course running over 15 months with two intensive 10 week periods at IDS at the beginning and end and is due to commence in May 2006. For further information please look at the website at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/teach/mapart.html>



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Participatory Learning and Action is published three times a year in April, August and December. Subscriptions are free of charge to individuals and organisations from the South and to community/voluntary groups from the North with limited or no funding for resources. We ask that individuals and institutions from countries in the North – including northern organisations based in the South – pay for a subscription.† Please ask if you need clarification about your free subscription entitlement. Individual paid subscriptions are those paid from an individual's own pockets and not reimbursed by an institution.

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- **Articles:** max. 2500 words plus illustrations – see below for guidelines.
- **Feedback:** letters to the editor, or longer pieces (max. 1500 words) which respond in more detail to articles.
- **Tips for trainers:** training exercises, tips on running workshops, reflections on behaviour and attitudes in training, etc., max. 1000 words.
- **In Touch:** short pieces on forthcoming workshops and events, publications, and online resources.

We welcome accounts of recent experiences in the field (or in workshops) and current thinking around participation, and particularly encourage contributions from practitioners in the South. Articles should be co-authored by all those engaged in the research, project, or programme.

In an era in which participatory approaches have often been viewed as a panacea to development problems or where acquiring funds for projects has depended on the use of such methodologies, it is vital to pay attention to the quality of the methods and process of participation. Whilst we will continue to publish experiences of innovation in the field, we would like to emphasise the need to analyse the limitations as well as the successes of participation. *Participatory Learning and Action* is still a series whose focus is methodological, but it is important to give more importance to issues of power in the process and to the impact of participation, asking ourselves who sets the agenda for participatory practice. It is only with critical analysis that we can further develop our thinking around participatory learning and action.

We particularly favour articles which contain one or more of the following elements:

- an **innovative** angle to the concepts of participatory approaches or their application;
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- an attempt to develop **new methods**, or innovative adaptations of existing ones;
- consideration of **the processes**

involved in participatory approaches;

- an assessment of the **impacts** of a participatory process;
- potentials and limitations of **scaling up and institutionalising participatory approaches**; and,
- potentials and limitations of **participatory policy-making processes**.

Language and style

Please try to keep contributions clear and accessible. Sentences should be short and simple. Avoid jargon, theoretical terminology, and overly academic language. Explain any specialist terms that you do use and spell out acronyms in full.

Abstracts

Please include a brief abstract with your article (circa. 150-200 words).

References

If references are mentioned, please include details. *Participatory Learning and Action* is intended to be informal, rather than academic, so references should be kept to a minimum.

Photographs and drawings

These should have captions and the name(s) of the author(s)/photographer clearly written on the back. If you are sending electronic files, please make sure that the photos/drawings are scanned at a high enough resolution for print (300 dpi) and include a short caption and credit(s).

Format

We accept handwritten articles but please write legibly. Typed articles should be double-spaced. Please keep formatting as simple as possible. Avoid embedded codes (e.g. footnotes/endnotes, page justification, page numbering).

Submitting your contribution

Contributions can be sent on paper or by email to: **The Editors, *Participatory Learning and Action***, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1 0DD, UK.
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Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network

Since June 2002, the IIED Resource Centre for Participatory Learning and Action has

now relocated to the Institute of Development Studies, UK. Practical information and support on participation in development is also available from the various members of the RCPLA Network.

This initiative is a global network of resource centres for participatory learning and action, which brings together 15 organisations from Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe. The RCPLA Network is committed to information sharing and networking on participatory approaches.

Each member is itself at the centre of a regional or national network. Members share information about activities in their respective countries, such as training programmes, workshops and key events, as well as providing PLA information focused on the particular fields in which they operate.

More information, including regular updates on RCPLA activities, can be found in the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*, or by visiting www.rcpla.org, or contacting the network coordinator: Ali Mokhtar, CDS, Near East Foundation, 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, 10th Floor, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +2- 2 794 7278; Email: amokhtar@nefdev.org

Participation at IDS

Participatory approaches and methodologies are also a focus for the Participation, Power and Social Change Group at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This group of researchers and practitioners are involved in sharing knowledge, in strengthening capacity to support quality participatory approaches, and in deepening understanding of participatory methods, principles, and ethics. It focuses on South-South sharing, exchange visits, information exchange, action research projects, writing, and training. Services include a Participation Resource Centre (open weekdays) with an online database detailing materials held. The Group also produces a newsletter and operates an email distribution list.

For further information please contact: Jane Stevens, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK.
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