

# Deepening Participation for Social Change

*Case Studies from Africa and Asia*





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## Contributors

This publication reflects the contributions of the Resource Center for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) members as well as the strong support from their organizations. Without these collective efforts, this book could not have been materialized. These contributors are:

*Center for Development Services (CDS):* A development entrepreneurial venture that uses innovative approaches to mobilize technical and financial support for development endeavours in Egypt, the Middle East and North Africa. It identifies practical and creative solutions for development-related problems and builds mechanisms to allow people and organizations effectively use resources to improve standards of living, human and organizational capabilities, health, and environment that bring about a better future. To know more information about CDS, please visit [www.cds-mena.org](http://www.cds-mena.org).

*Fantsuam Foundation:* Committed to fighting poverty and supporting disadvantaged groups in Nigeria through integrated development programs. It is also the leading ICT training provider and internet services provider in Nigeria. The organization's integrated programs cover Microfinance, Health, HIV/AIDS, local volunteering and support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs). To know more information about Fantsuam Foundation, please visit [www.fantsuam.org](http://www.fantsuam.org).

*Institute for participatory Interaction in Development (IPID):* A development organization in Sri Lanka committed to the enhancement of the capacities of governmental and non-governmental organizations for supporting change in the pattern of personal behaviour and attitudes through Participatory Interaction in Development to empower local communities to manage resources and gain access to available services. To know more information about IPID, please visit [www.ipidlk.org](http://www.ipidlk.org).

*Knowledge Transfer Africa (KTA):* A Communications and knowledge sharing organization based in Harare, Zimbabwe. Its key roles include: documenting Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS); enhancing the capacity of development organizations and communities to manage and share their knowledge as well as building communities of practice, networks and learning alliances.

*Praxis - Institute for Participatory Practices:* is An Indian non-profit organization committed to mainstreaming the voices of the poor and marginalized sections of the society in the process of development. This stems from the belief that for development to be sustainable, the process must be truly participative. To know more information about Praxis, please visit [www.praxisindia.org](http://www.praxisindia.org).

For further information on RCPLA, please visit [www.rcpla.org](http://www.rcpla.org).

## Acronyms

CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCC	Children's Computer Club
CDA	Community Development Association
CDS	Center for Development Services
CFC	Children for Change
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CKC	Community Knowledge Center
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DFID	Department for International Development
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FACC	Fantsuam Advocacy Centre for Children
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GOs	Government Organizations
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDRC	International Development Research Center
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPID	Institute for participatory Interaction in Development
IREX	International Research and Exchanges Board
KTA	Knowledge Transfer Africa
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PID	Participatory Interaction in Development
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RCPLA	Resource Centre for Participatory Learning and Action

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RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SSI	Semi-Structured Interviews
SWOT	Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YWLP	Young Women's Leadership Program

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## Foreword

Since their introduction in the 1970s, participatory methods and techniques have become central tools for community development. These methods have been applied in a variety of contexts and sectors, including livestock management, village health promotion, watershed management, urban sanitation provision, impact assessments, gender awareness and the building of micro-credit organizations. Participatory approaches to development have been promoted on the basis that they support effective project implementation and enhance communities' well-being.

Gradually, participation has become a fashionable, frequently used and misused, concept which is often ambiguous, vague and abstract. It is presently applied in many projects in limited forms and manners. Aware of the lack of an actively participatory process in projects' design and implementation, the RCPLA members identified "Deepening Participation for Social Change" as the theme for 2008-2009. In this context, the network has decided to issue this publication to present information on how to design full, beneficiary participation in projects which aim at reaching and involving the poor, weak, and marginalized.

We know that these people suffer not only from low incomes but also from a sense of social exclusion, that they have no power, nor access to power, no voice and no security. We believe that participation without change of people's behaviour and redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. Therefore, this publication has placed much emphasis on participation, change of behaviour, and empowerment of poor people to encourage them to take decisions themselves, to become agents, rather than being treated as "target groups" or passive recipients of benefits.

It has also tackled the lack of feasible mechanisms to attain effective beneficiary participation as a major deficiency in projects design. This includes tight schedules; under-estimated costs; production shortfalls; bad management of staff; poor engineering; procurement difficulties; non-cohesive organization and structure; insufficient technical assistance; too many or unbalanced components; over-dimensioning; lack of sustainability; inequitable benefit distribution; slow adaptation; insufficient government commitment; and recurrent budget shortages.

This book is for all those who try to design and implement projects that aim to incorporate effective beneficiary participation in development projects to realize social change. Yet it is not about how to be a good development practitioner, project planner or implementer. Not everything is covered in this book, nor is everything in some sense new. But we hope that users will find ideas that intrigue and provoke them into trying something unique.

You will find this book easy to use. It is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is devoted to a discussion of what participation is, with a focus on behavioural change as well as power and relationships, and why it is important to development in general. The second chapter seeks to describe some of the participatory approaches and practical experiences to outline potentials for development and change.

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The third chapter analyzes participation as an active process throughout the project lifecycle. It provides readers with the needed tools to design and implement a project that is based on real needs. It identifies the different steps undertaken in a project to empower community members and realize targeted social change. The last section of this chapter focuses on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to determine whether project objectives have been achieved and to draw lessons learnt that can be applied to similar projects in the future.

The fourth chapter identifies the challenges facing the deepened use of participatory approaches. It underlines the obstacles faced and suggests ways to overcome them. It also offers tips to identify how to monitor and evaluate the process of implementing the participatory approach, which in return facilitates the process of empowering communities to achieve targeted social change.

To demonstrate what was mentioned in the first four chapters, the final chapter illustrates a series of five case studies from Egypt, India, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe. These cases are considered successful models for deepening the use of participatory approaches for social change. They highlight the different steps undertaken to incorporate participatory approaches within the different components of the project cycle. They also identify the challenges faced and the ways to overcome them through the implementation process.

The RCPLA would like to learn about organizations' experiences in using participatory approaches, including the methods and tools they adopt to implement the projects activities. The RCPLA is interested in documenting these experiences, and publishing them in the second version of this publication. Also, the network is committed to working with organizations to strengthen and deepen the use of the participatory approaches to realize targeted social change.

Finally, the RCPLA hopes that organizations find this document a useful and powerful tool for improving their work and the lives of the individuals and communities they serve.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Understanding Participation



## Overview

The cornerstone of any project or program in the development community is the active involvement of members of a defined community in at least some aspects of project design and implementation. This chapter is devoted to a discussion of what participation means and why it is important to development in general. It presents the definitions of participation and identifies the linkage between participation, empowerment and social change. It also highlights the levels of participation, its principles and the benefits of adopting it.

The second section of this chapter discusses the most common participatory approaches. Five approaches are presented: (1) Rapid Rural Appraisal; (2) Participatory Rural Appraisal; (3) Participatory Poverty Assessment; (4) Participatory Learning and Action; and (5) Poverty Reduction Strategy. Each approach provides an introduction to the approach, its theoretical underpinnings and guiding principles, relevant implementation techniques and potential limitations.

### 1. Definition of Participation

The concept of people's participation is not a new phenomenon; it has been talked and written about since the 1950s or even before. In recent years however, there has been a convergence of opinion as to the importance of participation. International, governmental and non-governmental agencies have realized more and more that the main reason behind many unsuccessful development projects was and still is the lack of active, effective and lasting participation of the intended beneficiaries. Consequently, several agencies have started to promote the participation of people, in particular disadvantaged women and men, in development through various

programs, mostly on a pilot basis<sup>(1)</sup>. Therefore, some observers have argued that, in terms of thinking and practice about development, we are currently in the 'age of participation' and it is the 'paradigm of people'<sup>(2)</sup>.

Participation proved to be a rich concept that means different things to different people in different settings. Literature review shows that there is a wide range of definitions and interpretations of participation. For example, it means (1) sensitizing people to make them more responsive to development programs and to encourage local initiatives and self-help; (2) actively involving people as much as possible in the decision-making process with regards to their development; (3) organizing group action to give to hitherto excluded disadvantaged people control over resources, access to services and/or bargaining power; (4) promoting the involvement of people in the planning and implementation of development efforts as well as in the sharing of their benefits; and (5) in more general, descriptive terms; "the involvement of a significant number of persons in situations or actions which enhance their well-being, e.g. their income, security or self-esteem"<sup>(3)</sup>.

This study uses the definition of Cerenia "empowering people to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors, rather than passive subjects, manage the resources, make decisions, and control the activities that affect their lives."<sup>(4)</sup> We see participation as an empowering process in which people, in partnership with each other and those able to assist them, identify problems and needs, mobilise resources, and assume responsibility to plan, manage, control and assess the individual and collective actions that they themselves decide upon.

As a process of empowerment, participation is concerned with the development of skills

and abilities to enable people to manage better and have a say in or negotiate with existing development systems. As Eade and Rowlands argue, powerlessness is a central element of poverty, and any focus on poverty, inequality, injustice, or exclusion involves analysis of and/or challenging/changing power and power relations. Participation as empowerment can therefore help to amplify unacknowledged voices by enabling people to decide upon and take the actions which they believe are essential to their development<sup>(5)</sup>. According to studies conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), small, informal groups consisting of members from similar socio-economic backgrounds are better vehicles for participation in decision making and collective learning than heterogeneous, large scale and more formal organisations<sup>(6)</sup>.

Based on the above, participation is an end in itself and not a means. Participation as an end is an active, dynamic and genuine process

which unfolds over time and whose purpose is to develop and strengthen the capabilities of people to intervene more directly in development initiatives<sup>(7)</sup>. As an end, participation is seen as the empowerment of individuals and communities in terms of acquiring skills, knowledge and experience, leading to greater self-reliance<sup>(8)</sup>. The proponents of this view often maintain that development for the benefit of people cannot occur unless people themselves control the process, the praxis of participation. It is argued that by establishing a process of genuine participation, development will occur as a direct result<sup>(9)</sup>.

However, if participation is applied as a means only, this will imply its use to achieve some pre-determined goals. It is a way of harnessing people's physical, economic and social resources to achieve the aims and objectives of development programs and projects more efficiently, effectively or cheaply. The following table is a comparative analysis of the use of participation as a means versus an end<sup>(10)</sup>.

**Table 1: Comparative Analysis: Participation as a Means Versus an End**

Participation as a Means	Participation as an End
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It implies use of participation to achieve some predetermined goals or objectives.</li> <li>• It is an attempt to utilise the existing resources in order to achieve the objectives of programmes/projects.</li> <li>• The stress is on achieving the objective and not so much on the act of participation itself.</li> <li>• It is more common in government programmes, where the main concern is to mobilise the community and involve them in improving the delivery system.</li> <li>• Participation is generally short term.</li> <li>• Appears to be a passive form of participation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempts to empower people to participate more meaningfully.</li> <li>• The attempt is to ensure the increased role of people in development initiatives.</li> <li>• The focus is on improving the ability of the people to participate rather than just achieving the predetermined objectives of the project.</li> <li>• This view finds relatively less favour with the government agencies. NGOs in principle agree with this viewpoint.</li> <li>• Viewed as a long term process.</li> <li>• Relatively more active and long term.</li> </ul>



## 2. Levels of Participation

Development agencies distinguish different dimensions, spaces, degrees and levels of participation. The typology of participation (see table 2) positions participation on a seven step ladder and provides a guide to the nature of participation and the way the concept evolves as an iterative participatory process ranging from manipulation to self-mobilization. It illustrates a gradient of shifting control over information, decision-making, analysis and implementation awareness from a central, external agent towards those groups that have traditionally been marginalized and excluded from active participation in the development process.

The levels of participation are linked with the analyses of the participatory approach “participation as a means and an end,” as shown in Table 1. The first four levels on the ladder can be interpreted as ‘participation as means’ while the last three levels fall under ‘participation as an end.’ Conceptualizing these levels in terms of ‘weak and strong participation’ illustrates that weak participation

involves “informing and consulting,” while strong participation means “partnership and control”<sup>(11)</sup>.

The typology of participation also highlights the shift in power over the process of development away from those who have traditionally defined the nature of the problem and how it may be addressed (governments, outside donors) to the people immediately impacted by the issue. At its pinnacle, degrees of participation involve a transformation of the traditional development approach towards the enhancement of the capabilities of the local people and communities to define and address their own needs and aspirations<sup>(12)</sup>. Participation recognizes the importance of involving all stakeholders. How effective participatory processes are in bringing these voices into development processes, and whether doing so is effective in increasing the capacity of people to chart the course of their destinies in collaboration with the government, NGOs and international community, depends on the level chosen and the manner by which it is implemented.

**Table 2: Typology of Participation<sup>(13)</sup>**

Level	Characteristics of each type
1. Passive Participation	People participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. It is a unilateral announcement by leaders or project management without listening to people’s responses or even asking their opinion.
2. Participation in Information Giving	People participate by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings, as the findings of the research are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.
3. Participation by Consultation	People participate by being consulted, and external people listen to views. These external professionals define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in light of people’s responses. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people’s views.



Level	Characteristics of each type
4. Participation for Material Incentives	People participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.
5. Functional Participation	People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social organisations. Such involvement does not tend to occur at the early stages of project cycles or planning, but rather after major decisions have been made. These institutions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may become self-dependent.
6. Interactive Participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
7. Self-Mobilisation	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated mobilisation and collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power.

### 3. Benefits and Principles of Participation

Adopting participatory approaches facilitates the process of empowering and engaging different stakeholders to realize targeted development and change. These approaches render project implementation more efficient and effective. There are several direct benefits to be derived from using participatory approaches. These include:

- **Creating a knowledge base for better informed decision making** – Understanding the needs, preferences, and realities of project stakeholders and beneficiaries can fundamentally affect a project's efficiency. Furthermore, beneficiaries, often being underprivileged and marginalized

groups, can bring to light useful, relevant approaches that might otherwise be overlooked or not thought of at all.

- **Establishing a broad base of support for decisions** – Involving a community in a project's design and implementation increases its level of acceptance, improving its chances of success and sustainability.
- **Building collective ownership of problems and solutions** – The participation of those most affected by a project in its design and implementation grants its process and its outcomes more credibility and legitimacy, and gives the community a sense of ownership.
- **Building local capacities for implementation** – Local communities and stakeholders already have an understanding of

their own problems and needs. Engaging them in project design and implementation helps develop their technical skills and further empowers them to identify their problems and seek solutions.

In order to benefit from these outcomes and for participatory approaches to be truly effective, a number of key principles integral to participation must be kept in mind. These include<sup>(14)</sup>:

- **Inclusion** – of all people, or representatives of all groups who will be affected by the results of a decision or a process, such as a development project.
- **Equal Partnership** – recognizing that every person has the skill, ability and initiative and has equal right to participate in the process regardless of his/her status.
- **Transparency** – all participants must help to create a climate conducive to open communication and building dialogue.
- **Sharing Power** – authority and power must be balanced evenly between all stakeholders to avoid the domination of one party.
- **Sharing Responsibility** – similarly, all

stakeholders have equal responsibility for decisions that are made, and each should have clear responsibilities within each process.

- **Empowerment** – participants with special skills should be encouraged to take responsibility for tasks within their specialty, but should also encourage others to be involved to promote mutual learning and empowerment.
- **Cooperation** – cooperation is very important; sharing everybody's strengths reduces everybody's weaknesses.
- **Commitment** – all stakeholders must be committed to adopt the participatory approach and create the needed environment to fulfil this responsibility.
- **Attitude** – changing attitudes and behaviour of the disadvantaged is important to empower and equip them with the needed skills to integrate participation to be part of their attitudes and behaviour.

These principles for effective participation can be applied to all aspects of the development process or project.

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# CHAPTER 2

## Participatory Approaches in Development



## Overview

Participatory approaches to development quickly evolved throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s with the introduction of methods such as Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Action Research, and particularly Participatory Rural Appraisal. Development of the latter approach spawned the emergence of a myriad of new tools and principles for implementing and understanding participatory development. Throughout this period, researchers and community organizers sought to improve their understanding of “insider/local knowledge as a balance to the dominance of outsider/western scientific knowledge<sup>(15)</sup>.

By the 1990s, and continuing to the present, participation had become a mainstream, expected component of development. Engagement of local stakeholders, involvement of members of communities, responsiveness to the outcomes of consultations—these have become central tenets of development and (typically) conditions for funding. The growing adoption of a participatory approach to development reflects a continuing belief in a bottom-up approach in which participants become agents of change and decision-making. Participation is seen as providing a means and an end through which to enable the meaningful involvement of all communities’ members, especially the voiceless, in the development process thereby allowing them to exert greater influence and have more control over the decisions and institutions that affect their lives.

Over the years, a large number of participatory approaches have been developed to meet the needs of different disciplines, settings and objectives. In this section, a number of these participatory approaches are introduced. Each

one is described in some detail, highlighting their origin, theoretical underpinnings, implementation techniques, and potential barriers

### 1. Rapid Rural Appraisal

Rapid rural appraisal (RRA) appeared in the 1970s, and became popular as a cost-effective, time-efficient method for outsiders to learn about a community. Though it was initially applied to the study of agricultural systems and rural communities, this approach does not necessarily have to be rural. It is a fast-paced, qualitative survey methodology carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals.

RRA is guided by the following principles, which its practitioners must be able and willing to apply<sup>(16)</sup>:

- **Optimizing trade-offs** – researchers are expected to carefully balance the quantity, relevance, accuracy and timeliness of the information acquired, as well as optimize actual use of the data collected.
- **Triangulation** – researchers use more than one technique/source of information to cross-check answers and undertake research as part of multi-disciplinary teams so as to increase the range of information collected.
- **Learning rapidly and progressively** – although research is undertaken rapidly in comparison to classical survey methods, RRA should be conducted in a relaxed manner that emphasizes creativity, curiosity, and conscious exploration. RRA should be undertaken on an iterative basis through the flexible use of methods, and be opened to improvisation, taking advantage of opportunities as they arise and cross-checking findings.

- **Learning from and with local people** – this means learning directly, on-site, and face-to-face, gaining from indigenous physical, technical and social knowledge. For example, farmers' perceptions and understandings of resource situations and problems are important to learn and comprehend because solutions must be viable and acceptable in the local context, and because local inhabitants possess extensive knowledge about their resource setting.

The techniques employed in RRA vary depending on the context and the purpose for which they are being executed. There is a common systemic design to RRA which can be outlined as follows<sup>(17)</sup>:

1. Selecting a multi-disciplinary research team;
2. Training of research team members in the techniques to be used as part of the research—this step is essential for achieving a consistent set of approaches to data collection;
3. Developing of a checklist of issues to serve as the basis for questions;
4. Random selection of interviewees from various households/farmers and key informants;
5. Recording data in a form that will be useful to subsequent surveys over the longer term;
6. Discussing and analyzing data with team members in order to reach a consensus on what has been learnt and what remains unclear; and
7. Rapid report writing in the field, as any delay may result in loss of valuable information and insights.

The tools employed in RRA can include, but are not limited to<sup>(18)</sup>:

- Review of secondary sources ;
- Direct observation, familiarization, participation in activities;
- Interviews with key informants, group interviews, workshops;
- Mapping, diagramming, brief aerial observation;
- Biographies, local histories, case studies;
- Ranking and scoring, as a quick means of finding out an individual's or a group's list of preferences and priorities, identifying wealth distribution and ranking seasonal changes;
- Time lines;
- Short, simple questionnaires, towards the end of the process.

### Advantages

Among the advantages of RRA is that it allows researchers to collect and analyze a wide range of data quickly and cost-effectively. Interviews allow researchers to ask relevant questions, and triangulation allows them to use a number of tools to understand an issue and to gather information from people of various segments of the community.

### Disadvantages

The fact that the RRA process is essentially extractive and externally driven places limitations on it. The community is simply providing the researchers with information as opposed to truly participating in the project or its processes.



## 2. Participatory Rural Appraisal

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) appeared in the 1980s, and has spread widely and established itself in the development field. Robert Chambers defines PRA as “a family of approaches, methods and tools designed to enable local people to formulate and analyze their situation in order to plan, act, monitor and evaluate their actions<sup>(19)</sup>.”

PRA is seen as more evolved than RRA as a participatory method, because the researchers are merely “facilitators” rather than imposed leaders of the activities. At times, the line between PRA and RRA can be blurry, since they use some of the same tools. A simple test for distinguishing between the two is to determine the value added to the community. For example, if the community members draw a map for researchers because they are asked to, this is RRA. If, however, the community members draw the map and realize it is theirs, and for their own use, then this is PRA<sup>(20)</sup>.

The guiding principles of PRA are as follows<sup>(21)</sup>:

- **Capacity building** – through empowering the local community;
- **Utilization of results** – collected data is useless unless it is utilized;
- **Short-cut methods** – short-cut methods may yield reliable and relevant information under time and financial constraints;
- **Multiple methods** – inclusion of different perspectives and various methods can help ensure that the collected information is complete and reliable;

- **The expertise of the non-expert** – usually local people are more knowledgeable about their environment than the external experts. Their interest, abilities, preferences and knowledge need to be acknowledged and used accordingly during the entire life cycle of the project.

Similarly to RRA, there is no set method to PRA execution. There are several common techniques that are used to facilitate the discussion, analysis, and planning that PRA tools aim to enable people to do. Some of these techniques are listed below according to four categories: group and team dynamics methods; sampling methods; interviewing and dialogue; and visualization and diagramming methods<sup>(22)</sup>.

### 1. Group and Team Dynamics Methods

- Team contracts;
- Team reviews and discussions;
- Interview guides and checklists;
- Rapid report writing;
- Energizers;
- Work sharing (taking part in local activities);
- Villager and shared presentations;
- Process notes and personal diaries;

### 2. Sampling Methods

- Transect walks;
- Wealth ranking and well-being ranking;
- Social maps;
- Interview maps;

### 3. Interviewing and Dialogue

- Semi-structured interviewing;
- Direct observation;
- Focus groups;
- Key informants;
- Ethno-histories and biographies;
- Oral histories;
- Local stories, portraits and case studies;

## 4. Visualization and Diagramming Methods

- Mapping and modeling;
- Social maps and wealth rankings;
- Transects;
- Mobility maps;
- Seasonal calendars;
- Daily routines and activity profiles;
- Historical profiles;
- Trend analyses and time lines;
- Matrix scoring;
- Preference or pair-wise ranking;
- Venn diagrams;
- Network diagrams;
- Systems diagrams;
- Flow diagrams;
- Pie diagrams;

Again, while the methods and tools used in PRA vary according to the context and specific purpose of the exercise, the following is a rough outline of the approach<sup>(23)</sup>.

1. Selecting a site and gain approval from local administrative officials and community leaders
2. Conducting a preliminary site visit (steps 1 and 2 could include a community review and a planning meeting to share the purpose and objectives of the PRA and initiate dialogue between all parties as well as full participation)
3. Collecting both secondary and field data (spatial, time-related, social, technical), and share information with selected communities. In this stage, facilitators may:
  - Start with a mapping exercise to stimulate discussion and raise enthusiasm, providing an overview of the area/community, and helping to deal with non-controversial information;

- Undertake transect walks and seasonal and historical diagramming exercises;
- Engage in preference ranking, which can be used to focus on the intervention and as an ice-breaker for group interviews;
- Undertake wealth ranking once participants are confident with the process.

4. Synthesizing and analyzing data
5. Identifying problems and opportunities to resolve them
6. Ranking opportunities and preparing land maps and resource management plans (a basic work plan for all members of the community)
7. Adopting and implementing the plan
8. Following-up, evaluating and disseminating findings.

### Advantages

One of PRA's main advantages is that it allows researchers to have access to a large amount of information about a community relatively quickly. Also, it enables researchers to be flexible and respond to new information and changing situations while they learn about the community and craft relevant interventions. The tools that are often used in PRA, especially visual ones such as mapping, have proven quite effective at encouraging participation from quieter, shier, or more marginalized members of the community, thereby allowing the researchers to learn more comprehensively as well as being more truly participatory and inclusive.

### Disadvantages

The main drawback of PRA is that, by itself, it does not secure the participation of the

community in project design and implementation. It is often used simply to extract information for the benefit of the researchers and to justify pre-conceived interventions by external actors. Furthermore, it often generates false hopes and expectations within the community regarding changes and improvements to their lives.

### 3. Participatory Learning and Action

Gradually, PRA facilitators accepted more and more the role of learners. This shift towards interactive mutual learning was then reflected in the new terminology of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) in the early 1990s. PLA has been used to designate the family of participatory approaches emphasizing the ACTION phase of the process; that is, the phase when the community implements its solutions.

PLA is based on the assumption that community members are the best “experts” about their own health and social situations. The role of PLA facilitators is to help community members tap into their own knowledge and resources and use them effectively. According to Robert Chambers<sup>(24)</sup>, PLA has its roots in a variety of participatory methodology approaches:

- Activist participatory research
- Agro-systems analysis
- Applied anthropology

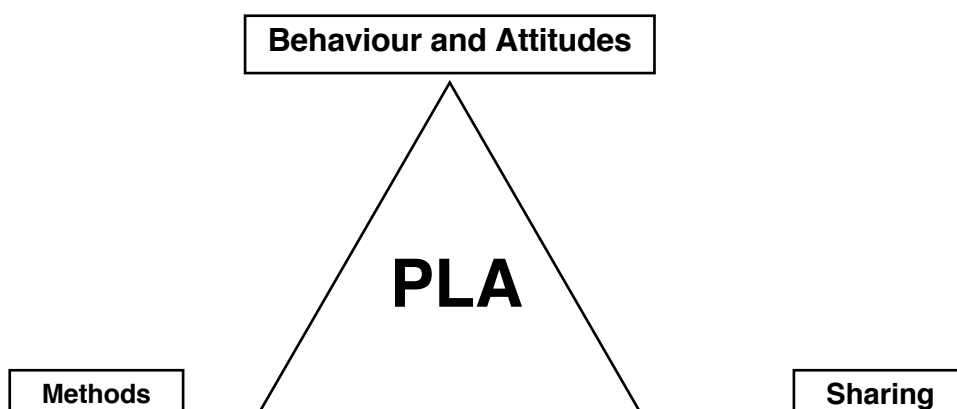
- Field research on farming systems
- Rapid rural appraisal (RRA)
- Participatory rural appraisal (PRA).

PLA can be conducted in all types of communities (e.g., rural, peri-urban and urban). Although originally conceived for use in agriculture, environment and natural resources sectors, the use of PLA has expanded into other sectors, including health, gender, education, and violence prevention. Within the health sector, PLA has been used in projects dealing with women’s reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention, nutrition, child survival, health care financing, and water and sanitation.

The methods used in PRA are the same as PLA, but the adoption of PLA suggests two things<sup>(25)</sup>:

- While in the past researchers focused on “teaching,” now, with the PLA tools, the focus is on learning. (Learning by community members as well as by development workers.)
- While in many cases the PRA tools have been used only to collect information, the PLA tools are intended to lead decision-making by the community regarding actions to be taken, based on the information collected and discussions instigated.

PLA has three foundations, which can be visualized as a triangle<sup>(26)</sup>:





**1. Behaviour and Attitudes** are at the top of the triangle, because many PLA practitioners believe that these elements are the key to successfully facilitating community participation. The kinds of behaviours and attitudes which are necessary for the successful facilitation of PLA include the following:

- Respect for local knowledge and capabilities;
- Rapid and progressive learning;
- “Handing over the stick”;
- Flexibility and informality;
- Offsetting biases;
- Seeking diversity;
- Self-critical awareness;

**2. Methods** are used to gather and analyze information during the PLA process. Following are some examples of methods:

- Mapping and diagramming;
- Time lines, schedules and seasonal calendars;
- Semi-structured interviews;
- Sorting and ranking;
- Transect walks and observation;
- Matrices;

Because many of these methods are visual, they can be used by the non-literates, which encourage the participation of all members of the community. Two key strategies for the use of PLA methods include having a multi-disciplinary team and practicing triangulation.

- A multidisciplinary team is composed of representatives of both sexes, different sectors (e.g., health, agriculture, education, etc.) and different disciplines (e.g., research, program management, field work). This kind of team ensures that all viewpoints are represented.
- Triangulation refers to using diverse sources of information and different techniques of data gathering to achieve a high level of

accuracy. (e.g., using semi-structured interviews to cross-check the information gathered during mapping exercises).

**3. Sharing** of information and experiences is a key element of PLA and takes place at several levels:

- Local people sharing information amongst themselves
- Local people and outsiders sharing information with each other
- PLA facilitators sharing information amongst themselves
- Organizations conducting PLA sharing experiences with each other

At the community level, free sharing of information ensures that communities truly own the knowledge that is generated and that the outside facilitators gain a complete picture of the communities. On a global level, NGOs and other organizations working with PLA learn from each other’s successes and challenges by sharing their experiences.

Chambers<sup>(27)</sup> describes the following key principles of PLA:

- *A reversal of learning*: Learning directly from the local community, gaining from their local physical, technical and social knowledge.
- *Learning rapidly and progressively*: Learning with conscious exploration, flexible use of methods, maximizing opportunities, improvisation, iteration, and cross-checking, not following a blueprint program but being adaptable in a learning process.
- *Offsetting biases*: Being relaxed and not rushing, listening not lecturing, probing instead of passing on to the next topic, being unimposing, and

seeking out marginalized groups within the community (the poorer people, minorities, children and women) and learning about their concerns and priorities.

- *Optimizing trade-offs*: Relating the costs of learning to the useful truth of information, with trade-offs between quantity, relevance, accuracy and time-liness. This includes the principles of optimal ignorance – not learning more than necessary, and of appropriate imprecision – not measuring what need not be measured or measuring more accurately than needed.
- *Triangulation*: Learning from several (often three) methods, disciplines, individuals or groups, locations and/or types of information, to cross-check, compare and verify. Verification also involves asking different questions during the same conversation to further probe an issue or theme.
- *Seeking diversity*: Through the expression and analysis of complex and diverse information and judgments. This includes looking for and learning from exceptions, dissenters and outliers in any distribution. It goes beyond the cross-checking of triangulation and deliberately looks for notices, investigates contradictions, anomalies and differences.
- *Handing over the stick*: The local people themselves facilitate analysis of their information and make presentations so that they generate and own the outcomes, and also learn. This requires confidence that ‘they can do it,’ that the local people are able to map, model, rank, score, diagram, analyze, prioritize, plan and act. The facilitator

may initiate the process of analysis and presentation, but then sits back and observes while the local people take over the process.

- *Self-critical awareness*: The facilitators need to continuously examine their behaviour and try to do better. This includes embracing error – welcoming it as an opportunity to learn; facing failure positively; correcting dominant behaviour; and being critically aware of what is seen and not seen, shown and not shown, and said and not said.
- *Sharing*: Ideas and information between local people, and facilitators, and experiences are shared between different communities and organizations.

### Advantages

Among the advantages of the PLA approach is its’ ability to involve learning and action by various stakeholders, not just by those who manage the project. Due to the multi-perspective the approach provides, different perceptions of various stakeholders are gathered. It also emphasizes usage of visualization techniques – use of diagrams, drawings, graphs and other symbols and local materials to represent ideas. This encourages the participation of even those who cannot read and write which supports the sustainability of project initiatives as many stakeholders feel ownership of results of the analysis.

### Disadvantages

The fact that PLA involves different stakeholders renders the approach more difficult as organizing it involves more people and a combination of exercises to validate stakeholders’ perceptions,

compared to completing a form that an individual can do on his or her own.

#### 4. Participatory Poverty Assessment

The term Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) originally referred to a field-based research exercise designed to contribute to country poverty assessments. The name was coined within the World Bank in 1992. At that point, the staff at the World Bank was developing approaches to meet the request from the Bank's Board that 'Country Poverty Assessments' be carried out in all borrower countries. The dominant approaches were derived from the guidance contained in the Bank's 'Poverty Reduction Handbook' (1992). They laid heavy emphasis on quantitative analysis of material derived from household surveys. The analytical centerpiece was a 'poverty line' that grouped households above and below a line based on their levels of consumption, as measured through interviews carried out with households selected by a random sampling method.

The basic idea behind a PPA is to include the knowledge and perspective of poor people in poverty analysis. This improves the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of policy and development interventions in their communities. Poverty-reduction strategies are more successful if they deal with issues which are prioritized by the poor and are conducted in ways and with partners which they view as legitimate and valuable. In general, PPA aims to<sup>(28)</sup>:

- **Enhance conceptualization and understanding of** the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and its causes. This requires not only a strong presence and participation of the poor, but also

an understanding of what the causes of poverty and deprivation are from the perspective of poor people.

- *Improve participation*, providing for wider ownership and for a broader cross-section of society (and particularly the poor) to influence policies and programs that would benefit them in the long-run.
- *Enhance policy effectiveness*. The effectiveness of poverty reduction policies are more likely to be enhanced with the inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders, particularly the poor and voiceless, and also if such policies address the issues that the poor value most.
- *Increase local capacity*, as the process enables previously disenfranchised people to directly engage in analysis and monitoring of poverty and policy impacts.

Like any other participatory approach, PPAs take on different shapes and forms depending on the time and funds which are available for the assessment. A general outline for PPA is as follows<sup>(29)</sup>:

- 1. Identifying technical assistance.** Project implementers need to identify the technical assistance required throughout the life of a PPA and identify the individuals able to provide this assistance.
- 2. Identifying implementation partners.** Partners may come from various levels of government, NGOs (local, national and/or international), research institutions and the private sector.
- 3. Identifying objectives and the research agenda.** Together, all partners engaged in a PPA should work to determine the

fundamental objectives of the assessment and its key elements of implementation. Involving all partners in this process helps ensure greater long-term commitment to the exercise.

**4. Identifying members for the field team.** These individuals may be drawn from key partner institutions or from consultants.

**5. Identifying sources of financial support.** Potential sources include donors, governments and participating NGOs.

**6. Selecting field research sites and participants.** Various approaches may be used to identify these locations, including selection of candidate locations that fit identified criteria and random sample selection guided by certain criteria. Whichever method is used, it is important to ensure that the criteria for selection are consistent with the objective of the PPAs.

**7. Developing a methodology for research, synthesis and analysis.** PPA designers may develop a methodology that reflects a chosen conceptual framework, such as the Capability Approach - The capability approach is a broad normative framework for the evaluation of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies and proposals about social change in society. The capability approach is used in a wide range of fields, most prominently in development thinking, welfare economics, social policy and political philosophy. It is advisable that the methodology selected incorporates tools and approaches already known within the country and that a clear plan for documenting the research findings and process at all stages be generated.

Techniques used in the implementation of PPA can include the following<sup>(30)</sup>:

- gathering existing secondary information for context, background and triangulation of findings.
- reviewing existing analysis and research carried out in poor communities using participatory approaches.
- conducting participatory field research in poor communities involving the community level members. Tools used by these research teams may include:
  - unstructured and semi-structured interviewing of individuals and groups;
  - facilitated thematic group discussions;
  - direct observation;
  - case studies and biographies;
  - structured, task-based analytical exercises carried out by research participants individually or, more commonly, in groups, and illustrating their priorities, judgments, understandings, analysis or experiences.
- policy analysis using inputs from PPAs and other sources of information and analysis to influence policy development.
- training of NGOs, research institutes, central/local level government staff in methods and approaches for engaging with people in poor communities for research, consultation, planning and action.
- creating new networks and relationships within the processes of policy formulation and poverty assessment.

## Advantages

Acknowledging the poor's knowledge and incorporating their views and problems into the assessment helps poverty reduction interventions and strategies be more relevant, legitimate, and effective.

## Disadvantages

Some of the disadvantages of PPA include the danger of raising the community's expectations of change. In addition, as with any other participatory approach, there is a risk of the participants providing unreliable information by trying to tell the researchers what they think they want to hear, or what they think would help them gain maximum advantage of the assessment. It is recommended, therefore, that transparency regarding the assessment's process and objectives be applied.

## 5. Poverty Reduction Strategy

Since the late 1990s, poverty reduction has become the principal objective of development strategies in many developing countries. This shift in emphasis has been in part spearheaded by the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) initiative, which was launched in 1999 by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to complement the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. Under the initiative, qualifying countries were required to produce and implement Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in order to obtain permanent debt relief. By 2005, the PRSP had become the primary tool in nearly 60 low-income countries for articulating poverty reduction and growth strategies<sup>(31)</sup>. The interna-

tional development community, including international financial institutions, United Nations (UN) agencies, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), had expressed strong support for this PRS process, and increasingly used country PRSPs as the basis for designing their own programs of assistance and coordinating with governments and other development partners.

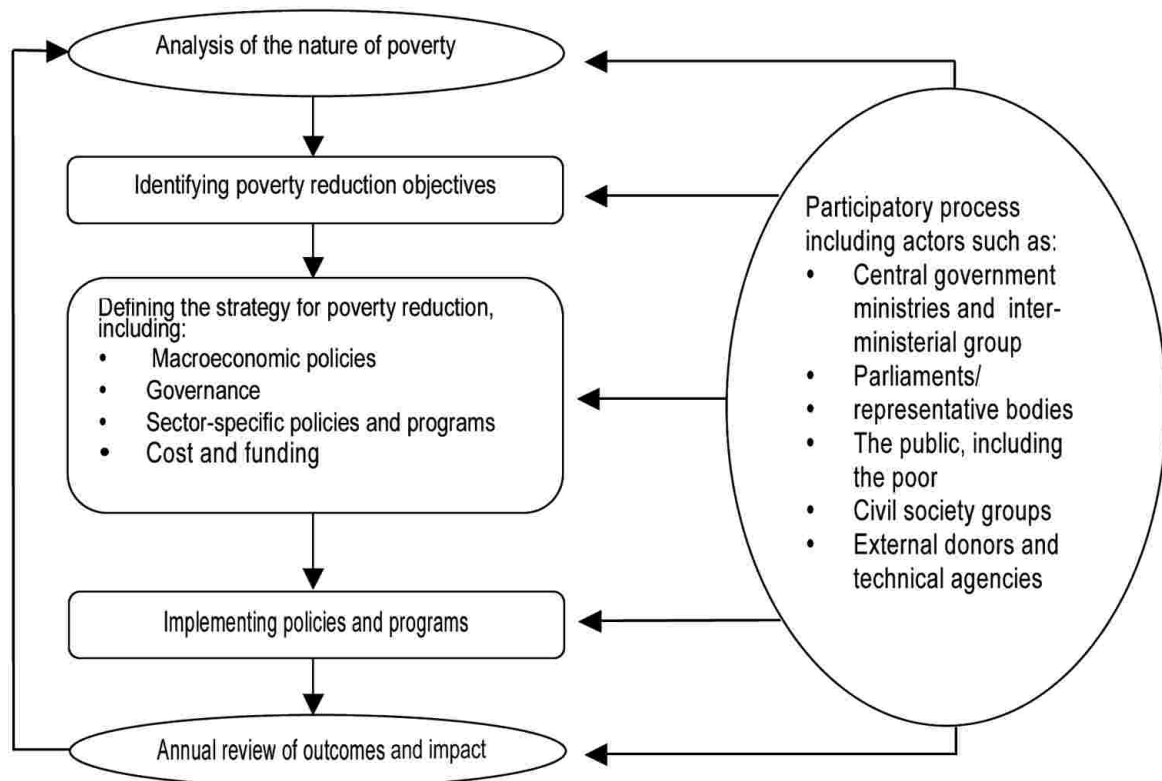
The PRSPs are intended to be nationally owned, highly participatory processes that address comprehensive development issues, including the economic, social, institutional, and environmental aspects of development<sup>(32)</sup>. According to World Bank guidelines, the strategies should:

- Be country-driven and country-owned;
- Focus on benefiting the poorest segments of society;
- Address the multiple causes and effects of poverty;
- Include collaboration with development partners, including civil society;
- Demonstrate long-term planning for reducing poverty.

PRSPs must include a description of the participatory process for preparing the paper, an analysis of who suffers most from poverty and the key factors contributing to poverty, a list of proposed policies and programs to reduce poverty, and plans for monitoring and evaluating progress (see below figure). Once the paper is finalized, a joint staff assessment by the World Bank and IMF is attached to it and sent for approval to the executive boards of these institutions. PRSPs typically cover a three- to five-year period.



## THE PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A PRS



### Advantages

The PRS has the most value in countries where leadership and management capacity are already strong. The strategy is also known for its ability to focus on improving the quality of poverty analysis, as well as the monitoring and evaluation process.

### Disadvantages

In recent years, the benefits of PRSPs have been debated. Ultimately, practitioners have discussed the similarity between the first and second generations of PRSPs, as well as the similarities of PRS for different countries. The consistency in PRSPs across countries with regards to their approaches to poverty suggests low national control over final documents<sup>(33)</sup>. In addition, heavy involvement of

international financial institutes in drafting these strategies calls into question issues of participation, as financial institutions are but one element of society. Furthermore, the drafting of these strategies is most often done centrally, excluding not only physically non-centrally located organizations, but also poor and marginalized groups whose voice is less strong than other, well-represented groups with clear interests and agendas.

### Conclusion

The use of participatory methods has proved the success of the approaches in a variety of fields. A high diversity of objectives and expected impacts were attributed to participation. Yet, as discussed in this section, it is important to identify the most effective approaches to adopt in order to achieve the

needed impacts. These impacts range along a continuum from efficiency types of impact to capacity building and empowerment.

It can be seen that there are a multitude of levels and types of participation. It is difficult, and perhaps impossible to conclude if one type of participation is better than another. Each has a necessary role and is dependent on the context within which participation is practiced. It is not a question of either-or, but the right combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods; group discussion exercises and individual and household interviews; and key informants in the community and institutions which relate to the community. It should not be either a pre-planned blueprint or an undefined ongoing process as an end in itself, but an adequate

learning/action phase to develop plans in a fully participatory manner. Ultimately, projects must take the shape of interventions which lead to substantive, sustainable, desirable change (i.e. impact).

Participation is consistent with empowerment and change of behavior and attitude as it engages and enables people to be involved in the identification, assessment and addressing of the problems that challenge their ability to achieve the economic, social, political and ecological freedoms that define “development.”

The second section of this publication analyzes the different stages of the project cycle while highlighting the implementation of the participatory approach and its relation with the empowerment process and change of people's behaviour and attitude.

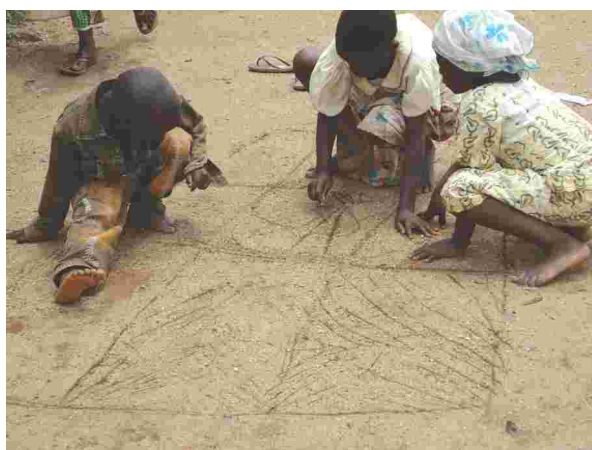




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# CHAPTER 3

## Participation in the Project Life Cycle



## Overview

The project life cycle defines the phases that connect the beginning of a project to its end.

For example, when an organization identifies an opportunity to which it would like to respond, it will often undertake a feasibility study or write a project proposal to decide whether it should carry out the project. The project life cycle definition can assist the project manager clarify whether to treat the feasibility study or proposal as the first project phase or as a separate, stand-alone project. Where the outcome of such a preliminary effort is not clearly identifiable, it is best to treat such efforts as a separate project.

### *A. Approaching the Community*

In any participatory project, the first step or activity is accessing the community through a defined entry or focal point. In many instances, the major stakeholders that influence and control a project's initiatives are the local authorities or government officials. These stakeholders need to be involved in the process and participate in formulating the outputs and outcomes of the intended initiative, so as to ensure that desired results are achieved.

As the initiative progresses, a gradual shift to other levels of participation may be pursued.

This shift has different manifestations that may be tackled, and varies from one project or intervention to the other. One way to observe this is through the application of different participatory techniques, such as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and community diagnosis in agro-ecosystem analysis, in which the interventions do not rely only on secondary data but involve representatives from the community actively participating in identifying

community problems, setting actions and developing solutions.

However, one should not fall into the trap of perceiving the community as a homogeneous entity. In looking at any communal setting, one finds that it encompasses different groups and clusters, including farmers, employees, women, children, informal organizations, interest groups, etc. These different groups may have varying interests, problems, conflicts, and even power relations. For this reason, community representation should consider most, if not all, different groups in a target community. Therefore, it is better to use the term "stakeholders" to depict specific target groups, as the term "community" often has different connotations to different people.

Involving the community or stakeholders is not only restricted to the initial phase of the activity, but should entail an iterative process of involvement in all stages of a project. This is implemented with particular emphasis on evaluation so as to provide channels for the community to provide feedback on the track of their own development.

The process of involving stakeholders starts both with what people already have and what they can give to the developmental initiative. In order to actively participate in a developmental initiative, one should build on the existing indigenous knowledge and provide a channel of knowledge sharing. Through these channels, one may integrate the technical, scientific knowledge of researchers and development practitioners with locally acquired knowledge indigenous to host communities.

Another approach to sharing knowledge is peer learning. That is, rather than sending development or extension workers to perform

all pursued activities, a core group of community members, leaders or farmers, in case of rural development projects, are trained and sent to the community. This core group or team acts as the common link between the project team and the community. This is an effective method for sharing knowledge, where people themselves start owning the knowledge and disseminating it among their peers. This process also leads to interactive participation.

One question that should be raised at this point is the shape of the relationship between the project and the community or the stakeholders. There often a countless number of stakeholders and interest groups that can be involved in one way or another in any initiative, each with its own share of roles and responsibilities. Therefore, in order to maximize the impact of the initiative, one ought to create and sustain partnerships between the different players involved, and understand the power relations and dynamics between them. This may be realized by conducting a stakeholders' analysis, where program staff understand each stakeholder's position in terms of influence or power exerted, and interest, whether low or high.

Another important step after approaching the community and selecting a focal point is selecting the project site. There are several factors influencing the selection of the project site and the targeted community. These are:

- Relevance of the site to the project's overall goal and objectives
- Familiarity of the area by project designers/ implementers;
- Establishing contacts with gatekeepers or community figures, such as farmers, extension workers and/or NGOs;

- Relevance to the organization's discipline or experience.

To understand the context where the project will take place, the project team needs to undertake several tasks. These include the:

- Review of available secondary data or resources;
- Preparation of maps of the target area;
- Identification of data gaps;
- Comprehension of the target area's culture;
- Prior establishment of contact with the local community and arrangement for personnel and human resources;
- Identification and contact with an active community-based organization (CBO) or NGO partner;
- Ensuring of the proper timing for the intervention.

Secondary data or resources include various types of data/information such as: demography, socio-economic status, social relations, culture and traditions, history of the community, surrounding physical environment or ecosystem, available services (infrastructure), past and current projects, reports, articles, scholarly journals, ministerial documentation- etc.

With regards to choosing an entry point or an NGO as a local facilitator, there may be personal, political or economic interests involved which inhibit the project or divert it from achieving its objectives. Special attention must be paid to the selection of this partner organization, as its trustworthiness and likeability from the community will facilitate project success. In order to minimize the risk of choosing an organization not supported or

backed by the community, practitioners may cross check the reliability of their partner/partners through the use of triangulation<sup>(34)</sup>.

Another alternative or approach to understanding the community at large is the application of ethnographic approaches, most commonly used in the field of anthropology. Ethnographic approaches are concerned with changing communities and organizing them, as opposed to classical social anthropology, which focuses simply on understanding communities. Ethnographic approaches emphasize field residence, unhurried participant observation, communication with the community, and building rapport.

After selecting an entry point and making the first encounter with the community, it is important to gain the cooperation of the community. A key term in this respect is mutual benefit. Communities and stakeholders should understand that projects are working for their benefit, and that their cooperation is imperative to the sustainability and success of projects. By adopting an interactive learning approach based on mutual respect, project teams and coordinators create open and frank channels of communication. The application of PLA principles may be beneficial in this respect.

Project teams must also be conscious of the possibility of raising the expectations of communities through their presence and interaction. Staff must ensure that they do not entrap the community and/or themselves into creating false expectations. On account of this, several lessons learnt could be listed here:

- Using simple, local terminology and translating project documents into the local language.
- Avoiding using terms that may raise both

people's expectations and the project's responsibilities.

- Using representatives from the community as liaisons .

### *B. Identifying the Problem*

After approaching the community and establishing contact with its members or different stakeholders, the second step for the project team is to work together with the community to identify and analyze their problems. In discussing the process of problem identification, the tree diagram method is most often used. The causes and consequences of problems are listed and categorized as main themes or issues. There are usually a number of consequences and chain effects that result from a single problem. Analyzing the problem further, one often finds several diversified causes and factors that can in one way or another lead to the problem. In some cases, the causes of the problem may also be consequences, as in real life, many factors or elements are mingled and intertwined. However, careful attention should be paid while analyzing problems to differentiate between the leading causes and resulting consequences.

After analyzing problems and their causes, the next logical step involves working on these causes to identify solutions. However, these causes should be identified and prioritized. There are three main criteria on which causes may be evaluated to determine which should be worked on:

- Looking at the most limiting factor or the factors that can have the greatest impact on the root causes of problems;
- Differentiating between what is man-made and what is beyond human control (e.g., natural or environmental factors);



- Differentiating between what can and cannot be controlled at the man-made, project level (political changes, civil unrest, global changes etc.).

The above-mentioned criteria are not the only factors that can determine the causes that are selected to be addressed. Other factors may present themselves and direct projects in certain, predetermined agendas. One such factor is the diversified interests of different stakeholders. If we separate different stakeholders, each will come up with a different prioritization of causes, which can very likely create tension and conflicts that add to original problems. Another factor is power relations, which have their stamp on nearly every step or issue tackled in a developmental project. These power relations may be manifested in political powers, gender imbalances, and project team biases towards their own disciplines or certain other vested interests.

It should be emphasized that the process of analyzing a problem requires highly effective interaction between community members and project teams. This helps increase community awareness and commitment towards its problems and needs, and motivates communities towards finding actions to solve these problems. This may eventually lead to the empowerment of the local community as it has control over certain processes and initiates actions.

### *C. Identification of Beneficiaries:*

After identifying the problem and analyzing its causes, a concrete action should be carried out to resolve it. However, before plunging directly into action, project designers should identify the specific participant groups most affected by the target problem and those who can assist in resolving it. Together with specific groups, the project team should then identify

the needs and objectives that support the intervention, as well as the best strategies and the tools to be used. These different steps are referred to as the design phase.

With regards to the identification of beneficiaries, several aspects should be highlighted. These include:

- Understanding the organization of the specific target community, as each community has different needs;
- Not imposing any external agendas on the community or informing them that they must change;
- Mobilizing and motivating the community to cooperate without raising their expectations. It is important to let the community understand that the project is for their own benefit;
- Involving the community in the decision making and implementation process of the project. This is pursued for the aim of increasing people's participation, ownership and commitment to the project's activities.

## **1. Planning for Participatory Activities**

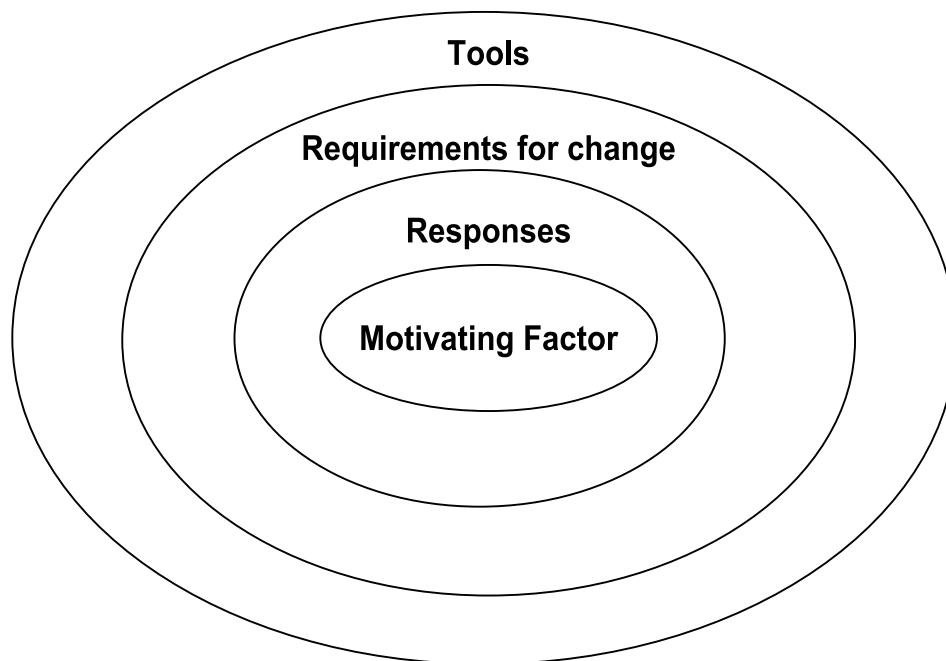
Participation requires tools that help us acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes. It also enables us to involve the community. There is a wide array of tools that can be used to support the implementation of participatory activities, and the important question to ask is "which tool should be selected and in which context should it be applied?" It is also important to question "what do people require in order to change?"

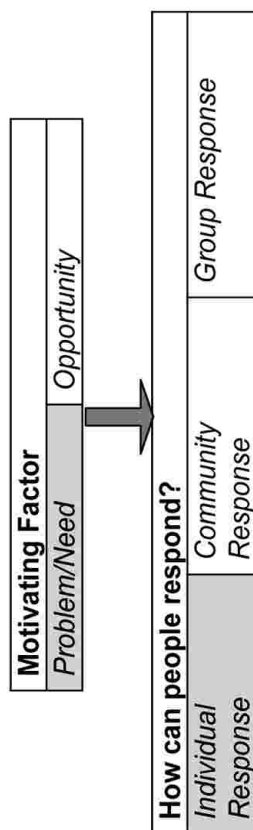
One way to answer these questions is to use the "communication circle." The communication circle is a tool that enables the identification of

the different alternative tools one may follow or apply to meet aspired objectives, based on an identified need, problem or opportunity.

This circle consists of four main circles integrated within each other. These circles start with identifying the motivating factor behind involving the community in any development initiative, moving then to how people can respond to the proposed initiative, what people require to change and effectively participate in these initiatives, and finally, which tools to be used to communicate effectively with the people. Following is an illustration of the communication circle and its main components:

Each of the four main circles is further divided into several items which one could follow or adapt, according to the specificity of the development initiative. The following chart illustrates the different paths one could take to determine the specific communication tools to be utilized.





What do people require to change and effectively participate in these responses?			
Individual Level	Community Level	Institutional Level	Policy Level
Awareness	Encouragement	Finance	Organization
Knowledge	Access	Services	Legalization
Skills	Freedom	Goods	Authorization
Attitudes and Behaviour			



Tools To be Utilized			
Demonstrations	Support Activities	Media and Materials	Interpersonal Techniques
Simulations	Community Organization	Printed Texts	Workshops
Pilot Projects	Institutional Building	Audiovisuals	Informal Groups
Exhibitions	Organizational Development	Mass Media	Role Plays
Case Studies	Networking	Information Dissemination	Campaigns
Field Visits	Advocacy	Folk Media	Home Visits
	Technical Assistance		Solidarity Groups
			Excursions/Trips

As seen in the chart, the process begins by responding to a problem/need or opportunity. These three constituents are the basic motivating factors leading to any response. Responses can be perceived at three main levels: individual, group, and community. As for the requirements for change, there are four levels of changes sought: individual, community, institutional, and policy. In each level, there are a number of factors that may be subject to change. And as we reach or identify what is required for change, we are able to determine the type of communication tool that can be utilized to achieve the foreseen change in order to reach the objective. Empowerment is implied in the three levels. It is seen as a communication process where there is an "Empowerer" and the "Empowered".

For example, in the case of identifying a problem or need to be tackled by a developmental initiative, there may be recognition of a highly perceivable individual response aimed at resolving the problem. As things progress, certain improvements required for change may be identified in the individual's level of knowledge. In this case, role plays or home visits may be utilized as tools to expand the individual's knowledge and awareness in response to resolve the initially identified problem.

It should be noted that this process is an iterative one and that community participation should be emphasized at every step. It is also important to mention that this process is highly flexible and adaptable, and selected tools may be changed at any given moment.

There is another classification of communication tools that includes four categories according to the International Development Research

Center's (IDRC) approach to participatory communication. These are:

- Group Media: flip charts, photographs, posters, etc.
- Traditional Media: theatre, proverbs, songs, traditional forms of expression, etc.
- Mass Media: radio, television, etc.
- Interpersonal: person to person, person to group, large groups discussions, visits, etc.

There are three main criteria for the selection of these tools, including:

- The tools that people already use and are accustomed to in the community;
- Cost effectiveness (it will not be efficient to introduce a new tool if there is no funding allocated for it);
- The usage of the tool, or the purpose of using the tool.

It should be noted here that there are some concerns related to the issue of establishing rapport and gaining the confidence of the local communities to allow for maximum participation and involvement in the development process. In this respect, the development practitioner needs to:

- Put the community or the people involved on the spot, that is by using a topic that is relevant and attractive to them (e.g. increasing cattle production);
- Use proverbs and sayings that relate or talk about the history, culture and tradition of the community;
- Adapt timing in accordance with the timing of the community (e.g. herders in marginal lands have specific timings



during the year when they gather and settle down. This time is ideal for carrying out visits and discussions.)

It should be noted that communication in itself is not the issue or the objective. The development practitioner has a development objective that he/she wants to reach, and activities that need to be applied, based upon which they select the communication tools to be utilized.

Communication tools need to be discovered through a participatory and cost effective process. This process is based upon mutual benefit in which communication comes from both sides. In this mutual process, if the community accepts and reacts to the tool, messages are easily transferred.

## 2. Implementation

Implementation is primarily concerned with working with different groups of beneficiaries or project stakeholders. Relationships with stakeholders should be based on cooperation and collaboration. The idea is to emphasize the issue of collaboration so that each stakeholder has his/her own input in the process, and so that development activities progress towards their objectives.

One of the challenges of collaboration is that each player or stakeholder involved holds a different level of power, and thereby has varying levels of influence on the development initiative. Usually, the major share in power is vested in government authorities and local officials. Donors also have a say in the process and their opinion is always influential.

In any development intervention, it is essential to identify the different stakeholders, fully understand the role of each, and anticipate

the role to be played in the project. Each stakeholder also uses a special channel of communication during activity implementation.

The following table shows an example of some of the main stakeholders in any project, their roles, and the communication channel used.

<b>Actual Role of Stakeholders</b>	<b>Role Within the Project and Type of Information Provided</b>	<b>Communication Channels</b>
<b>Government/Public Officials</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Drawing policies</li> <li>• Hiring technical and professional staff</li> <li>• Selecting tools for implementation</li> <li>• Solving community problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal aspects</li> <li>• Technical services</li> <li>• Research &amp; Development</li> <li>• Technical support to project and other stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person to person</li> <li>• Reports/secondary resources</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Demonstrations</li> </ul>
<b>NGOs</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guiding the community</li> <li>• Acting as a reference institution to the community</li> <li>• Identifying community problems</li> <li>• Selecting representatives from the community</li> <li>• Implementing activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide statistics and data</li> <li>• Deal with legal issues</li> <li>• Organizational aspects</li> <li>• Relations with other stakeholders</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Reports</li> <li>• Exchange visits</li> <li>• Person to person</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Pamphlets</li> </ul>
<b>Community (Beneficiaries)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritizing problems</li> <li>• Finding ways for improvement/change</li> <li>• Reaching consensus regarding priorities and opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information about the needs and situation of the community;</li> <li>• Contribute ideas and share different assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Community leaders</li> <li>• Pamphlets</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Exchange visits</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Peer to peer</li> <li>• Demonstrations</li> </ul>

To acquire an outsider's view of the concept of collaboration, one can say that in implementing this concept, the development practitioner must follow an idealistic perspective, whereby stakeholders are perceived as willing to help and provide their input to the development initiative. However, as collaboration implies working with different actors/ stakeholders, this assumption is far from reality,

as we are faced with different, if not conflicting, interests and agendas. These interests are revealed more clearly as we advance through the development initiative and progress begins to take place. For this purpose, project management should put emphasis on understanding the agendas of different stakeholders and try to find areas for compromise between them. In addition, they may work in areas

where the agendas overlap, and compensate for the gaps.

Whilst the project activities proceed, the different stakeholders acquire new knowledge. This knowledge begins with pieces of come-up-with or collected information, leading then to knowledge gained from the project's experience. The discussion of knowledge leads us to question the process of learning and how knowledge is acquired through this process. The regular classroom system focuses more on formal education, where communication is a one-way process with limited interaction between the provider and the recipient of knowledge (e.g. teacher-student classical relationship). As for adults, learning is based on the mutual sharing of knowledge and experience through informal two-way channels of communication.

In the context of participatory development projects, acquiring knowledge is based mainly on the adult learning approach in which there is mutual exchange of experience and knowledge between the development practitioner, as the holder of the technical background, and the community, as the holder of the local indigenous knowledge. It is an iterative process through which the project progresses through a cycle, all the while providing feedback to the community. This cycle allows the community to further build on its accumulated local and indigenous knowledge to support its development and growth with the ultimate aim of reaching empowerment.

An important issue that should be raised here is how to entice community members to share their knowledge with the project. Several answers or factors could be mentioned in this respect. These are:

- Emphasizing the benefit and improvement of the knowledge of the community;
- Providing financial incentives or knowledge in exchange for payment;
- Increasing community's self-esteem by proving that community members are knowledgeable;
- Debating ideas and stirring opinion;
- Highlighting the community's perception that the project is worthy of support, which in turn leads to mutual trust.

To build mutual trust, several factors may be highlighted:

- Speaking the local language;
- Showing appreciation to the community's knowledge and treatment with dignity;
- Emphasizing, in some instances, that the project is not affiliated to the government (so as not to induce power relations in the project, especially when there are tensions);
- Exhibiting patience;
- Breaking the ice by demonstrating personal attributes held by team leaders and senior project staffs.

### 3. Monitoring

It is imperative in any development intervention to monitor the activities being carried out. To put it simply, monitoring is "information and communication about the course of the project and impacts achieved" (Earl, S., et al, 2001)<sup>(35)</sup>.

In any project, there is always a logical sequence of inputs introduced, activities implemented, and outputs derived. Monitoring

happens at these three levels. Hence, three distinct types of monitoring could be identified: input monitoring, activity monitoring and impact monitoring. In addition, on the administrative and logistical level, financial monitoring occurs, whereby project budgets and expenditures are followed up to allow for decisions on whether to scale up or scale down the activities to be made, or even change them based on the remaining budget. For this reason, it is advisable for project management to consistently update their financial information so as not take decisions based on intuition.

There are various stakeholders that may be involved in the process of monitoring. However, it should be emphasized that as the aim is maximizing the community's involvement in all stages of the project, monitoring should also be carried out collaboratively - by the community and the project staff as a team. In this respect, it is fundamental that the stakeholders are versed in the project and have a high level of understanding of its components and expected outcomes.

To carry out successful monitoring, there should be at least some baseline indicators on which to monitor activities to assess if there is any sort of change, increase or decrease in numbers, etc. Baseline indicators are also used in measuring the impact of undertaken interventions. If we take the example of an audio extension project targeting farmers, the following indicators could be monitored to measure the progress and impact of the activities: number of farmers who listen to the radio program; number of farmers who actively tried the messages sent through the program; and the number of farmers who achieved positive results.

The previously stated indicators are mainly quantitative in nature. However, in order to acquire a comprehensive measurement of the impact of the project, qualitative indicators should be added as well, such as: How can the program be made more attractive? What do we need to change in the program to achieve a higher impact? What are the farmers' perceptions of the program?

Power relations are also crucial in undertaking monitoring activities. The donor, in particular, may play an influential role in emphasizing the importance of carrying out monitoring activities. In this case, a special line item for monitoring should be added into the project's budget so that it receives the attention and resources necessary for efficiency and effectiveness.

## 4. Evaluation

A final step in the implementation of any development project is evaluation. Evaluation may simply be defined as "a process that aims to analyze and verify if the specific objectives, activities and results expected of a project have been achieved." In other words, it is "judgment based on collected information" (Ibid.). Based on the latter definition, two levels of evaluation may be identified. The first level occurs while activities are ongoing, to assess the implementation process. At stages, this level overlaps with activity monitoring. The second level is concerned with the attainment of activity objectives, with emphasis on the project impacts or effects.

Evaluations serve several purposes:

- Checking what went right or wrong over the course of project activities;

- Clarifying and supporting project strengths and weaknesses;
- Meeting project objectives;
- Determining and proving the sustainability of the project;
- Enhancing project capacity;
- Assessing efficiency and cost-effectiveness;
- Ensuring accountability to different project stakeholders (community, donors, professionals, etc.);
- Developing lessons learnt for improving performance or replication.

A good evaluation should be carried out in a participatory manner. In other words, all stakeholders should take part in an evaluation exercise. It should not only focus on the donor's view point or an external evaluator's opinion, as these may stop a project or jeopardize the efforts made. As in monitoring, evaluations revolve around the power held by the donor and whether they want to integrate an evaluation in the project or not. Again, as collaboration and participation are emphasized throughout the project's life cycle, all of the stakeholders involved should make use of the results and lessons learnt.

The content of the evaluation is a critical issue that should be given much thought by those who undertake the activity. There are numerous project areas that may be evaluated including: The following are some of these areas:

- Inputs;
- Activities;
- Degree of participation;
- Degree of ownership;
- Degree of empowerment;

- Process (how coordination and collaboration are carried out/relations maintained);
- Power relations among stakeholders;
- Impact achieved.

Aspects such as the degree of people's participation or the dynamics of the project's processes fall under qualitative aspects that should be evaluated. Other aspects could be assessed from a quantitative perspective.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are usually implemented together. It should be indicated that there is no clear-cut line between the definition of monitoring and evaluation. However, according to the experiences of development practitioners who apply monitoring and evaluation in their work, monitoring, on the one hand, can be perceived as an ongoing observation and collection of data throughout all project stages. On the other hand, evaluation can be perceived as one stage in the project cycle. In other words, the monitoring spatial and temporal aspects are extended, while evaluation is fixed at a certain place in a certain time. Evaluation is more of an analysis and assessment of the data collected during monitoring, based on certain indicators, in which conclusions can be drawn regarding the degree of achievement of project objectives, as well as the degree to which these objectives have had a positive impact on the targeted community.





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# CHAPTER 4

## Challenges to Effective Participation





## Overview

Participation in some form or another has been included as an important element in development strategies. Development as a process of increasing people's capacity to determine their future means that people must participate in the process. Participation and empowerment are part of the process and definition of development. There is, therefore, a growing consensus that people everywhere have a basic human right to take part in decisions that affect their lives.

Participation is also linked to poverty and social exclusion. This is because participation supports efforts of self-help, which are meant to eradicate poverty and encourage the growth of democratic institutions. In turn, this creates political spaces for disadvantaged groups who were originally excluded from the decision-making process. Consequently, participation is regarded as a process of consciousness-raising, and empowerment and change in the balance of power vis-à-vis the system, while, capacity-building, is not only part of the definition of project success, but also a means of bridging social inequalities, promoting gender balance, creating racial and ethnic harmony, and empowering youth. As the initiative progresses, a gradual shift to other levels of participation may be pursued. This shift has different manifestations that may be tackled, and varies from one project or intervention to the other. One way to observe this is through the application of different participatory techniques, such as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and community diagnosis in agro-ecosystem analysis, in which the interventions do not rely only on secondary data but involve representatives from the community actively participating in identifying<sup>(36)</sup>.

Yet, as discussed in the previous chapters, the process of adopting and adapting participatory approaches is a complex one. Participation covers a multitude of approaches and techniques and often requires fundamental changes in the way it is implemented. This section is dedicated to highlighting some of the common challenges that may arise in the participatory process so that these obstacles can be minimized. It also offers readers with tips and guidelines to overcome various obstacles that hinder implementation of participation.

A host of factors have been identified as obstacles to effective participation in development programs and projects. Fundamentally, it is important to acknowledge the unequal power relations and potential conflicts at the center of any participatory process. Outsiders initiating a participatory exercise, for whatever purpose, inherently have more power than the community members with whom they are to work. As well, there are power inequalities in any community where an intervention takes place. According to Dale, power structures within local communities are considered barriers to specific situations, needing careful analysis in particular contexts<sup>(37)</sup>.

Oakley<sup>(38)</sup> discusses three major obstacles to people's participation, including structural, administrative and social barriers. Structural obstacles form part of the complex and centralized organizational systems that control decision making, resource allocation and information, and are not oriented towards people's participation. This situation is usually typified by a 'top-down' development approach. Administrative obstacles relate to bureaucratic procedures, operated by a set

of guidelines and adopt a blue print approach, providing little space for people to make their own decisions or control their development process. The social impediments include mentality of dependence, culture of silence, domination of the local elite, gender inequality, and low levels of education and of exposure to non-local information.

Another obstacle is “standardization of approaches,” which contradicts the original aims of participation, which are to move away from the limitations of blueprint planning and implementation towards more flexible and context-specific methodologies<sup>(39)</sup>. According to Cooke and Kothari, participation has been translated into managerial “toolboxes” of procedures and techniques. This limited approach gives rise to a number of critical paradoxes: project approaches remain largely concerned with efficiency, and focus attention only on highly visible, formal, local organizations, overlooking socially embedded arrangements and the numerous communal activities that occur through daily interactions<sup>(40)</sup>.

The following section will discuss in detail the common surrounding environment constraints to participation focusing mainly on political, socio-cultural and economic ones.

## 1. Constraints of Participation

Participatory approaches are part of the power structures at the personal, local and community levels. Whether we like it or not, ‘empowerment’ and ‘participation’ are closely linked. Participatory approaches were designed to bring the excluded into control. Yet participation may not be as straightforward as an answer to exclusion as we might wish. A number of constraints currently hinder the implementation of participation.

Participation is often undertaken without considering the political, economic and socio-cultural context within which it seeks to take place: participatory processes have been increasingly approached as technical, management solutions to basic issues. In particular, there are clear cases in development contexts where participation is not considered as true participation: where the culture, social, economic and political situation prevent apparently participative processes producing truly participative outcomes by constraining who can say what and how within any kind of group activity. This suggests that special attention should be given to make participation a viable technique in the political, economic and socio-cultural context.

### *Political Constraints*

A major barrier to the adoption of participatory approaches in many countries is perceived to emanate from a lack of democratic practices. In communities where participatory approaches are practiced, people know that they have a role in the process of decision making, choosing their own representatives, and that their opinion can influence and foster change. For example, in the Arab region, the concept of participation is relatively detached or far from the reality of the people. Rarely do we see people willing to vote for their own representatives in elections or actively participate in decision making processes. Relevant to the lack of democratic practices, a strong base of civil society and civil institutions - which are crucial to fostering participatory practices - does not seem to prevail in the region, except in rare cases. The lack of democratic practices does not only detach the people from participating in their political rights, but also assists in creating a political environment that lacks trust, credibility and accountability.

General consensus also tends to suggest that African leaders have paternalistic and neo-patrimonial tendencies, which they use to consolidate their power and prestige. In spite of democratization and good governance, most African leaders today have not been able to relinquish their predecessors' obsession with power. Consequently, there have been overt and covert attempts to either weaken civil society organizations (CSOs) or co-opt them. The growth of autonomous institutions has been stunted. This obsession with power has led to not only a concentration of power, but also to a centralization of decision-making, which has resulted in lack of participation of people in rural areas.

Again, with the prevalence of centralized and dominating political contexts, governments remain in control of the policies and regulations that frame and organize the process of development. Moreover, as far as participatory research is concerned, the right to access and disseminate valid information is limited, as governments are still in control of the flow and accessibility of this information. This situation asserts what has been previously mentioned - that having a top entry point through which research teams can access the community seems to be a prevalent first step in any participatory activity, and that the major stakeholders who exert own influence and control over project initiatives are the local authorities or government officials.

In response to the constraints to political participation, a number of community and public participation initiatives have been conducted and studied in the last decade. Theoretically, it is safe to say that such initiatives were designed to increase public participation, input, and decision making in order

to address and hopefully correct some of the structural and individual constraints that inhibit people from having a voice in the decisions and discussions that affect their lives. Research has asserted the importance of providing the individual with opportunities to participate and therefore, counteract, the tendency to remain inactive<sup>(41)</sup>. Along these lines, many community-wide initiatives specifically address issues such as health care, education, housing, and community development and are designed to counteract previously mentioned constraints by providing structures that encourage access, participatory processes, and undistorted communication. Studies of such projects offer theoretical and practical implications that inform the design and implementation of similar initiatives in the future. Many of these studies show that "it is easier said than done," and illuminate the gap that sometimes exists between the world of abstract theory and the world of real practice.

### *Socio-Cultural Constraints*

Participation in certain contexts is a concept that is not easily accepted or practiced. It has often been assumed that the deeply ingrained attitudes of fatalism among rural dwellers hinder the participatory process. It was assumed that the marginalized were happy with their surroundings, and that they had no aspirations to change their ways. Substantial evidence now exists in anthropology that such assumptions are not tenable. Admittedly, participation does not fascinate many rural people. However, this lack of interest in their own development has nothing to do with the attitudes of fatalism, the innate conservatism and other such traits which have been attributed to them for too long. Participation appears

quite irrelevant to the marginalized in their circumstances<sup>(42)</sup>. For example, in the Arab region, children and youth are raised in a way that obliges them to do what their elderly require of them, without allowing room for objection or question. As these groups age, they become more detached from the concept of participation and from taking initiatives or decisions.

The most significant factor that restricts participation by the marginalized is their low level of awareness. Governmental assistance seems irrelevant, as in many countries, the notion of the “leader” or “power figure” discourages people from taking initiative or becoming assertive in their own decision making. Elite groups tend to monopolize contact with outside agents. Often, disadvantaged groups see no point in competing with the more affluent for services and benefits which the contacts bring. Explaining why the marginalized regard participation is of no particular concern to them, Huntington and Nelson have outlined three basic reasons<sup>(43)</sup>:

- The disadvantaged lack resources - adequate information, appropriate contacts, money, and often time - for effective participation;
- In low-income strata, people are often divided by race, tribe, religion or language; even where cleavages are obvious, distinctions may be drawn on the basis of differences in sect, income, status, or place of origin that outsiders can barely perceive;
- The marginalized tend to expect requests or pressures on their part, whether individual or collective, to be ignored or refused by the authorities. These expectations are often justified. Worse, their attempts may provoke governmental repression or prompt

reprisals from the private interests threatened by the self-assertion of the poor. Those on the margin of subsistence are particularly vulnerable to threats from employers, landlords or creditors.

If participation is to be meaningful, there should be participatory local organization of the marginalized. By linking with development agencies at the local level, local organizations can provide members with a forum in which they can participate in the design and implementation of development programs. The disadvantaged simply lack the skills necessary for organizing and managing their affairs collectively. Electing capable leaders, calling meetings, making decisions, keeping records, and handling funds are some of the tasks that require a certain degree of managerial ability. Generally, the marginalized lack these skills and thus are not in a position to establish organizations of their own to promote development. This factor severely limits the emergence of participatory processes.

### *Economic Constraints*

Aware of the economic constraints to participation, promoting the participatory approach should include empowering people with information and skills so that they have greater access to resources and opportunities which will make possible their attainment of an improved way of life. It may also support the collaboration of different community members to create self-help activities to improve their economic status. Hence, participation is essential to ensuring the provision of services and resources for human development. It creates the conditions for people to move away from dependency and towards self-reliance, from being passive recipients of decisions, often emanating from a central

authority, to having an active role in decision-making. Failing to overcome economic constraints limits the implementation and impact of participatory approaches. Following are common examples highlighting the close link between the economic status of individuals and countries with levels of participation.

There are constraints on women's economic participation. Norms and expectations on women's roles restrict their ability to own household property, travel or work outside the village or home, and govern how household assets are passed from one generation to the next. Men dominate traditional community organizations, such as the various councils in India or tribal or clan councils in some African countries. This limits women's participation in decision-making over community resources. Women also suffer 'time poverty' caused by their overwhelming responsibility for household and child-rearing tasks – another major obstacle to their ability to engage in productive work, let alone take on economic leadership in local markets.

Women have been helped by social movements. Although these movements are not directly focused on women's participation, they are concerned with the economic rights of the poor, most of whom are women, and the working poor, where women make up 60 percent. Good governance movements have also created for women's participation in the economic policy arena. National governments are devolving powers to local bodies, bringing economic governance closer to the poor, especially women, who are constrained from participating at the national level by restrictions on their time and mobility. At least on paper, management of local water, forests and community infrastructure is being devolved to local levels<sup>(44)</sup>.

The economic situation in any state is another challenge affecting the perception of development projects. Developed countries value the importance of research and development. In many instances we see private institutions, even farmers, owning large farms or growers' associations participate to provide financial support to research for the development of their products. This situation does not exist in the context of many developing countries. Farmers and land owners, for example, do not have the capital to invest in the support of research and development. In addition, growing private sector institutions are more directed towards the production and marketing of consumer goods rather than investing in long term research for development. Moreover, it is usually perceived by local communities that it is the role of the state and donor agencies to support research and development activities.

#### *Other constraints*

Six other constraints are also associated with participation. First, as mentioned above, participation has been approached from a gender imbalanced or insensitive manner. Women and youth, because of their vulnerability and cultural inhibitions, have been systematically excluded from the participatory process. This group constitutes the organic source of society and yet has not been given any role to play in decision-making because of male domination. Most countries do not have youth policies and programs aimed at preparing youth for the future. Indeed, youth have been forgotten and neglected in the scheme of participation and empowerment.

Second, using existing patterns of local power and organization can reinforce inequities rather than stimulate desired system change.



Participation favours those who are better able to produce plans, local elites and those already better off. Third, participation sometimes faces political opposition in countries where most beneficiaries have not been included in the political system. Such situations can be seen as threatening to political leaders, or as otherwise upsetting the political balance and generating demands and pressures that governments cannot or do not want to respond to.

Fourth, it is difficult to implement participation in practice without taking into consideration the time factor. Timing is crucial to effective participation. “Participation takes time” is a common statement by all development practitioners, and if one wants to practice participatory approaches to development, one must allocate the proper time for it. However, this allocation of time is usually faced by restricting factors from both the community and the development practitioner, as both perceive their time to be limited.

The fifth constraint perceived to hinder effective participation is the type of research undertaken during the needs assessment phase. Although it is acknowledged that qualitative research allows for more interaction and participation from the community, it is apparent that researchers/development workers still rely mostly on quantitative surveys for collecting desired data and performing the intended needs assessment. These surveys take more of an academic or documentary format, and involve minimum community interaction. This in turn calls for a change in how the development worker perceives his/her role, as it should not be limited to the process of collecting data, but should include all what is beyond that in terms of communicating and interacting with the community through the

needs assessment and other project phases. However, willingness to carry out this role is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving this change.

The sixth obstacle is the difficulty of finding effective channels of communication through which individuals or groups at the local level can participate. The lack of homogeneity of interests within such groups and the fundamental differences between local and national interests are also major hindrances<sup>(45)</sup>.

## 2. Opportunities

The majority of obstacles listed above can gradually be overcome, as evidenced by practice in many areas. However, the list indicates that for determining the form and degree of participation, the political, economic and socio-cultural context of a project must be fully taken into account: participation is a site- and project-specific process. Moreover, starting such a process may provoke various predictable but also unanticipated reactions on the side of both the intended beneficiaries and local officials and those with higher social standing who may see it as threatening their vested interests. Also, it is important to highlight that the main and common constraint of genuine participation is the political will to be promoted in a country or project area. Recognizing this, this section is dedicated to providing suggestions to overcome these obstacles.

This basic problem can be handled by means of various strategies at international, national and local levels. The strategies should all aim at informing, sensitizing and motivating various categories of key persons in one way or another involved with rural development efforts

such as: (a) politicians and governmental policy- and decision-makers; (b) top and other staff of government, donor agencies and NGOs; (c) (field) staff of development projects; and (d) elites and better-off people <sup>(46)</sup>.

The practical outcome of the strategies must be that politicians, officials, experts and elites become motivated to accept and support, or at least tolerate, effective forms of participation from disadvantaged people. Yet it is difficult for various possible strategies to indicate precisely who should do what, when and in which way. For each strategy, this has to be planned according to its concrete scope, target groups, location, timing, technical collaborators and materials needed, costs, etc.

#### *Approaching Government Agencies*

Politicians, top decision-makers, planners, etc. need to be convinced of the necessity to incorporate participation in their development policies, plans and programs. This can be and is done in many ways by:

- Organizing ad-hoc conferences, seminars and missions;
- Inviting key government officials to field trips and workshops of participatory projects and also in inter-country workshops dealing with participation issues;
- Using mass-media and audio-visuals: distributing and showing concise promotional materials including pamphlets, slide shows, films, etc.

A number of actions indicated in the following strategies will also have direct or indirect sensitizing effects on top government officials.

#### *Promoting Policy Dialogues*

Promoting dialogue between key officials, planners and decision-makers of national and international development agencies at the country level is important. The latter may include one or more UN bodies, international and regional development banks, donors, aid consortia and voluntary organizations such as international NGOs, and companies from the private sector. These bodies may encourage, organize and/or participate in policy dialogues with selected governmental agencies in order to obtain rural poor-oriented economic and social policies and institutional arrangements that are required for participatory projects. The dialogues may indicate the need for a differential strategy as no government is monolithic: certain government agencies may be participatory development-oriented, while others may be still rather top-down, centralized, bureaucratic and/or technocratic<sup>(47)</sup>.

The most important policies required for participatory development regard appropriate legislation for rural people's organizations, including full freedom of association or group formation as well as reorientation of the delivery system - extension services in particular - towards the needs of the rural weak. Other special policies required include full integration of women in development, decentralization of decision-making, planning and resource allocation, poor-oriented input supply, extension, credit and marketing, enhancing non-agricultural income-generating activities, and fair fiscal and pricing systems<sup>(48)</sup>.

In sum, projects and programs cannot be implemented with effective (full) beneficiary participation before a minimum of certain



favorable national policies have been (or are likely to be) adopted in a country. In order to obtain strength in policy dialogues, participation and concerted action of all national and international development organizations which strive to combat rural poverty is needed. In fact, international agencies as well as NGOs can influence a country's policy and institutional framework for effective poverty-alleviation. Finally, the strategy of promoting dialogues between government agencies and NGOs appears to be particularly useful.

### *Promoting the Planning and Implementation of Participation in Larger-Scale Projects*

In a project cycle, various institutions such as one or more government agencies, international development, funding and/or donor organizations, and NGOs are involved. The lack of understanding, sympathy and/or experience regarding participatory projects of one or more of these cooperating institutions often makes it particularly difficult to render a project, or at least some of its components participatory. The institutions involved may have different views and approaches regarding rural development efforts. For example, some may have predominantly macro-economic views while others employ a strictly technocratic view. Furthermore, experience on how to attain effective beneficiary participation may be lacking, as the country's projects are either not participatory or do not properly monitor and evaluate beneficiary participation.

There is thus a wide scope of strategies to motivate officials, project planners and implementers through, among others, the following methods<sup>(49)</sup>.

- Meetings and field workshops at various levels;
- Periodic informal exchanges of views;
- Briefing sessions and documents on participatory development;
- The inclusion of participatory experts in mission teams;
- Incorporation of participatory issues in the terms of reference of identification;
- Preparation, appraisal and evaluation missions;
- Provision of background materials on on-going participatory projects and/or visits to the latter, if any, in a country.

A direct result of the above actions will be that project planners become convinced of the benefits of participation, and include it at the beginning of every stage of the project cycle. This implies, in practice, that they see urgent necessity and importance in starting with the intended beneficiaries on their needs and desires by means of pre-project identification or reconnaissance missions.

### *Systematic Sensitization*

Practice shows that the support of local leaders is crucial for a participatory project. Many villages, especially in Africa, still form very traditional communities which have a closely knit social system of clans, lineages and extended families. Indigenous chiefs are powerful and "their" people over-dependent upon them. However, the consent and support of such chiefs to a project specifically designed for the poorer people is questionable.

The required support, advice and assistance from elites are indeed often important. In many cases, local chiefs and elders are prepared to support project actions for rural

poor groups as well as for the delivery of required services and facilities to these groups. In order to obtain their support, local traditional, administrative and other influential leaders in a project's entire action area must be systematically sensitized and motivated beforehand on the participatory approach. This can be done through meetings, initiation workshops and other actions. Local leaders must become convinced that it is in their own short- and long-term interest to support the project: the latter yields viz. economic and social benefits also to the better-off inhabitants. The sensitization campaign(s) must be project area-wide. Finally, the sensitization of administrative and local leaders involved in a project is also realized through on-going participatory training<sup>(50)</sup>.

### *Increasing Support*

Efforts to obtain the support of donors, development agencies, and banks for participatory projects aim mainly at the following:

- Convincing donors and agencies that support participatory projects to continue this assistance until they yield sufficient, successful results for demonstration to governments;
- Insisting that donors, development banks and agencies only support projects if a participatory approach is incorporated into them;
- Attaining more assistance to developing countries for participatory projects on a large scale up to the point of creating a critical mass.

As a result of this wide scope, donors, international development agencies and banks should participate in, initiate, and/or organize various promotional actions such as policy

dialogues, seminars, field workshops and visits to participatory projects. It will also be crucial to show the actions and results of participatory projects by means of good monitoring and evaluation systems. Moreover, case studies revealing the benefits and cost effectiveness of participatory projects, as well as promotional materials, will be helpful. Other actions include: studies on the policies and commitments of donors and development banks and the identification of opportunities for assistance.

### *Other Constraints and Solutions*

This section provides some guidance about the pitfalls of a participatory process and the constraints that may be faced. The following table offers some possible solutions to overcome these constraints.

CONSTRAINTS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Creating <b>parallel participatory processes</b> that are not integrated within existing political structures	Link the participatory processes with government decision making
<b>Limited trust</b> between stakeholder groups	Finding allies Identifying facilitators
The <b>diverse perceptions</b> of different stakeholders concerning the participation process, poverty and the importance of poverty reduction efforts in the country	Information flow – scope and objectives agreed upon and made clear. Facilitators Emphasize the importance/benefits of participation
The <b>high expectations</b> of stakeholders that all of their desires will be met	Emphasizing benefits in the bigger picture Emphasizing that change takes time Explain the implications of their demands Information sharing and feedback mechanisms Scope and objectives agreed upon and made clear Realistic goal setting in participatory manner
Situations where <b>information is not widely disseminated</b> regarding the purpose, the process and the outcomes of participation	Improved information flow
<b>Poorly planned</b> participation processes that are open-ended and not realistically budgeted	Identifying facilitators – impartial, respected cost the process and determine funding available
<b>Lack of political will</b> among government agents to allow wide participation due to the fear of loss of power or influence	Develop commitment Emphasize benefits of participation
<b>Skeptical attitudes</b> and non-participatory behaviour Government – know what people want, not transparent Civil society organizations–want to criticize, disrupt, use process for ulterior motives	Emphasize benefit of participation in achieving outcomes – poverty reduction, economic growth Emphasize benefits and opportunities to work together Ground rules - active listening, respect of other stakeholders and their views, open-mindedness
<b>Time pressure</b>	Careful planning to maximize input and broaden input of views of a variety of stakeholders

<b>Limited capacity</b>	Identify deficiencies and train or recruit Seek technical assistance
<b>Limited financial resources</b>	Budget for participation Fund raise
<b>Consultation fatigue</b>	Utilize and build on on-going and existing processes
<b>Conflicting interests</b> /disunity between stakeholder groups such that processes are disorganized	Organize process to avoid conflict Emphasize benefits
Different <b>bargaining powers</b>	Awareness so that participation can be employed to access the views of all stakeholders in the process
<b>Confidence</b> of government is <b>abused</b> by CSOs – e.g., leak government documents as basis for publicity or lobbying	Government increases transparency Emphasize benefits Form and ground rules for participation
<b>Token</b> effort by the organizers Commitment by government	Emphasize benefits

### 3. Issues to Take Into Consideration

#### *Principles of Empowerment*

Based on the above, people require empowerment in order to take part in decision-making processes. The following are some issues that development experts should take into consideration to empower the community where they work and limit the obstacles they might face while adopting participatory approach<sup>(51)</sup>.

*Awareness raising and critical analysis of the situation:* Awareness raising among women and men is a process of critical analysis of their situation and their roles and contributions in the community and exercising their rights. The impact of their activities should be analyzed carefully with both women and men to

ensure that they promote empowerment and gender equality and that solutions are identified.

*Meaningful participation:* Participation refers to the full and equal involvement of men and women of all ages and backgrounds in all decision-making processes and activities in the public and private spheres that affect their lives and the life of their communities. As women are traditionally disadvantaged and excluded, this often requires taking positive action to support women's access to decision-making processes.

*Mobilization:* Mobilization is the process of bringing men and women together to discuss common problems and establishing community responses with the support of development workers. This can lead to the formation of women's groups, organizations and net-

works, and to public lobbying for the recognition of women's and men's rights.

*Access and control:* Access and control refer to the opportunities and rights available to women and men to enable them to have access to or have control over services, resources, and the distribution of benefits. Staff needs to monitor closely who has access to and control of services that are established. If any excluded groups are identified, such as minority groups, or unaccompanied and separated children, staff will need to work with the community to change any discriminatory patterns through empowerment and improved service delivery.

#### *From Implementer to Facilitator*

The following suggestions serve as mere guidelines for community participation. They are provided to help re-orient the thinking of development experts from being implementers to facilitators. As facilitators, development experts and researchers should foster the principle of minimum intervention and respect the indigenous knowledge of the disadvantaged groups in the community<sup>(52)</sup>.

These are several guidelines that may be followed to increase the effectiveness of a participatory development process. Researchers should:

- Demonstrate an awareness of their status as outsiders to the beneficiary community and the potential impact of their involvement;
- Respect the community's indigenous contribution as manifested in their knowledge, skills and potential;
- Become good facilitators and catalysts of development that assist and stimulate community-based initiatives and realize

their own ideals;

- Promote co-decision-making in defining needs, goal-setting and formulating policies and plans in the implementation of these decisions;
- Communicate both program/project successes and failures, as sometimes failures can be more informative;
- Believe in the spirit of solidarity, conformity, compassion, respect, human dignity and collective unity;
- Listen to community members, especially the more vulnerable, less vocal and marginalized groups;
- Guard against the domination of some interest groups. Involve a cross-section of interest groups to collaborate as partners in jointly defining development needs and goals, and designing appropriate processes to reach these goals;
- Acknowledge that process-related soft issues are as important as product-related hard issues;
- Aim at releasing the energy within a community without exploiting or exhausting it; and
- Empower communities to share equitably in the fruits of development through active processes whereby beneficiaries influence the direction of development initiatives rather than merely receive a share of benefits in a passive manner.

#### *Raising Expectations*

Experience has proven that maximizing participation over a certain level exposes the community to risks on two levels: raising expectations, and conflicting agendas or having the project's needs contradicting communities' needs. With regards to raising

expectations, as project staff approach the community and start tackling their own needs and problems collaboratively, an internal sense of hope that these problems will finally be resolved and their needs will be met grows by default.

To handle this problem, the development worker must be careful and sincere in providing the community with the opportunity to analyze its own problems and try to find solutions for them. Community members are in need of going through this process by themselves to develop a sense of shared responsibility in reaching solutions. Even if the community's raised expectations were avoided, and mutual communication was established based on shared responsibilities, still other external factors might influence the path through which the community progresses with its own development. These factors might include political interests, financial constraints etc. Thereby, the challenge of facing community frustrations would still persist. In this case, the project must proceed in communicating with the community so as not to break the steps that were achieved and the links that were established with the community. In addition, community's efforts and initiatives should be directed towards priority problems that the community itself is capable of handling to minimize the resulting frustrations<sup>(53)</sup>.

Would frustrations emanate only from external factors or factors beyond the project's control? This is not always the case. In some cases, having different agendas can result in such frustrations. In some, if not many, developmental initiatives, the development worker approaches the community with his/her own

agenda and sets plans consulting the community. In this sense, he/she is responding to his/her own needs, and not to the community's. Due to this, tension may arise and conflicts may occur. That is why, at the very beginning of any participatory initiative, we need to ask ourselves, "what is our agenda and what do we want to do?" These agendas are not only related to the researcher or the community. The greater the number of stakeholders involved, the more the agendas/needs, and the more we face the risk of dealing with conflicting interests and priorities.

Analyzing such a controversial issue, one could perceive participation as a double-edged sword. As it is intended to unite people and target groups, it can also divide them and create a revolting reaction if needs are not met or conflicting agendas compete. In dealing with such a dilemma, it is best to share the different agendas of the different stakeholders at the initial phase of any developmental initiative. The intention of this activity would be to reach a compromise at which different stakeholders meet and work together for mutual benefit. If such a compromise cannot be reached, another alternative is to find where the different agendas overlap and start building the initiative at this point of intersection. But again, we need to emphasize clarity and transparency with regards to the different agendas held.

Whichever alternative the project decides to take, the compromise or the overlap reached acts as a grey zone where manoeuvring may take place with the different players involved. However, the project management will always have the right to intervene at any point with the aim of directing the path of the initiative.



## Conclusion

People need to be empowered to be part of the decision-making processes. For disempowered communities, this is usually initiated by outside forces operating with a more egalitarian vision of society, aiming at facilitating powerless people to organize and take further action themselves. It can be seen that there are multiple obstacles to adopting and adapting participatory approaches and empowerment. It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to conclude that there is a specific technique or set of tools to overcome these constraints. Each obstacle is dependent on the context within which participation is practiced.

As discussed in this chapter, the pivotal point of success for participatory approaches is

being flexible in overcoming the obstacles faced during implementation processes. The political, economic and socio-cultural contexts are often sensitive and critical. Care and attention must be taken to ensure that these issues are considered, so as to benefit and enhance the capabilities and freedoms of the marginalized.

The series of case studies presented in the next chapter are considered good examples of the limitations and obstacles faced while implementing the participatory approach at different stages of the project life cycle. They also demonstrate effective solutions used to overcome these constraints. Furthermore, the case studies illustrate how participation is used as a step forward, compared to top-down approaches used in the past.



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## CHAPTER 5

### Case Studies



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## Introduction

Key individuals from various development agencies from Africa, Asia and the Middle East have contributed to enriching this booklet on participation by sharing their ideas and experiences in case studies of projects they are implementing in their countries. The authors of these case studies bring together and analyze their experiences of project management, the different cycles their projects went through, institutional learning and change that respond to the application of participatory projects. The case studies from these different regions and countries argue that participation is a lengthy process and involves extensive communication and deliberations with the various stakeholders and beneficiaries involved. It is a demanding job, but its outcome is always rewarding in improving the well-being of the beneficiaries, enhancing their skills, capacities and empowering them. All the case studies reflect one lesson that participation and interaction of the different actors and stakeholders really make a difference.

The first case from Egypt presents the "Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP)". It portrays a successful model for deepening the use of participatory approaches for social change of young women's lives in rural and semi-urban areas in Egypt. It highlights the different steps undertaken to incorporate participatory approaches within the different components of the project cycle. It also identifies the challenges faced and the ways to overcome them through the implementation process. Through an intensive capacity building program, the YWLP fostered the development of a new generation of young women informed and equipped with the skills, confidence, and experience to assume leadership roles in Egyptian society and make valuable contributions to their communities. Through several main components, the YWLP focused on leadership and advocacy training, including English as a foreign language and interpersonal skills development, and allowed young women to apply their acquired skills to real-life situations in private, public, and civil society sectors. The project relied heavily on community mobilization and adopted bottom-up approaches that promoted gender equality and social change from within. Moreover, the project used various techniques to ensure the participation of public, private and civil stakeholders both at the local and national levels.

The second case study from Zimbabwe demonstrates how utilizing indigenous knowledge could yield outstanding results through using participatory communication strategies. The "Activating Local Knowledge for Rural Development" project utilized "Community Knowledge Centres" (CKC) where rural people in Zimbabwe participated in identifying and documenting indicators of climate change. Moreover, they integrated conservation agricultural practices into vast quantities of knowledge that exist in rural areas, locked away in the collective memory of the people as inherited knowledge and personal experience. The case study validates how participatory communication rather than mainstream communication is more effective in achieving the intended results. It contrasts "listening" affiliated to participatory communication with "telling" affiliated to ordinary communication. The project also reveals the importance of sincere respect and belief in people's abilities and power to initiate positive change and create new knowledge. The CKCs have been sustainable and now serve as focal points for community action by helping people acquire information resources for decision making, planning, and constructive action in relation to their environments. Moreover, they attained the ability to transform data into

actionable ideas and help communities see new opportunities.

The "Participatory Land Mapping for Social Equity" case from India depicts another successful example of how participatory approaches could be utilized to capacitate marginalized and resource-poor communities (Bihar state) to assert rightful claims on their legally valid land entitlements. As explained in the case study, the cornerstone of the participatory land mapping process was the active involvement of a cadre of socially and economically disadvantaged communities in all phases of the exercise, from conceptualization and piloting of the idea to sustained advocacy of the validated outcomes for pushing local governments towards distribution of land to the landless.

The initial stage in the project was establishing links with the active community-based organizations (CBOs) in the project's areas to facilitate conducting the land mapping exercise. The land mapping process itself involved continuous consultations and monitoring of the results by the project's monitors who kept checking the quality and relevance of the emerging data from the process and capturing the entire range of relevant data to fill the gaps. This process itself was a major challenge because of the different inputs and viewpoints received, in addition to power exerted by certain groups of the local communities.

The fourth case study from Nigeria illustrates participatory work with children in the Fantsuam Children's Parliament project implemented in Kaduna state. The project emerged as a response to stern situation that children face in some parts of Nigeria and abuses of their rights. The project sought to achieve two objectives: raising awareness of children's rights and securing commitment to the protection of these rights; and advocating for the enforcement of current laws and policies protecting children's rights. In the pursuit of these objectives, the project managed to create the first ever children's parliament in Kafanchan district in Kaduna state. It was a project for and by the children, especially those accused of practicing witchcraft. As the child Parliamentarians became more deeply engaged with their communities, they worked on overcoming barriers to the full effectiveness of their activities. They developed a series of proposals that improved their ability to protect their rights, eliminate abuse on children and engage young people more fully in local governance.

The last case study from Sri Lanka highlights efforts made in disaster preparedness during the 2004 Tsunami Disaster through a participatory research study. The study focuses on the use of participatory approaches and methodology for the purpose of evaluation. The case study does not follow the same order of the previous cases, but rather focuses on the last step of the project cycle – evaluation, and the process and methodology involved in conducting a participatory stakeholder assessment. The case study takes the reader through a step-by-step process explaining how the evaluation study was conducted including identification of the approach, methods used for data collection, different participatory field techniques, the analysis of data; and the participatory capacity building activities undertaken during the process. The case study reveals that during the evaluation processes, many gaps related to needs assessment, gender involvement and sustainability of the disaster preparedness efforts were identified. Should a participatory approach had been adopted during the disaster preparedness phase, these gaps could have been covered. This highlights the fact that participation is not only applicable to development projects, but also in the case of emergency relief projects.

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## Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP) in Egypt

*By Rebecca Dibb and Manal Saleh*

The Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP) provides a good case study of a development intervention where participatory approaches were mainstreamed across all phases of the project's life cycle. The case study presents important aspects of how a project can be a model for participatory development approaches across a project's life cycles, including highlights of the advantages and disadvantages of using certain approaches.

The YWLP is a two-year program focusing on the capacity-building of young women through community-based organisations (CBOs). It was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Barclays International Bank in Egypt, and Microsoft Unlimited Potential. The project used various techniques to ensure the participation of public, private and civil stakeholders both at the local and national level. This case study follows the project through its inception to its final phases, and aims to give a practical example of how participatory approaches can be used in a development intervention.

### 1. Assessing Needs

With longstanding experience in the field of participatory targeted development interventions, the Center for Development Services (CDS) proposed the idea that enhancing the leadership skills of young women would be an appropriate development intervention for Egypt. Prior to raising the idea with potential donors, an initial needs assessment was conducted to establish whether the proposed idea would be well-received among local stakeholders and whether they thought it was appropriate to their circumstances.

With the proposed project idea dealing with an issue that possibly could change the traditional gender dynamics in communities and families, it was necessary to ensure a solid participatory needs assessment was carried out. The preliminary program assessments were done in three governorates in Egypt: Cairo, Beni Suief and Minya. The assessment took into account local, social and traditional contexts. The participatory assessment that was adopted prior to the YWLP's start comprised of using qualitative tools such as focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with women's NGOs and the potential participants from the target group of young women (aged 18 -25). A few spouses and parents were also interviewed and participated in focus group discussions. As important figureheads and responsible individuals for the young women, it was essential to include their views and suggestions on the project idea. Moreover, conducting these activities prior to the project's inception ensured not only that valid information on possible project design was gained, but also that greater recognition of the proposed project was won and that there would be greater willingness to allow young women to participate in it.



In addition to the participatory needs assessment, a stakeholder mapping exercise was carried out where meetings were convened with community-based organisations (CBOs) and local authorities, establishing whether they could be suitable implementing partners of the YWLP idea. Suitable local calibres were difficult to find, with many CBOs having weak institutional capacity, especially with regards to financial and administrative systems. Moreover, the selected CBOs had never been involved in a project such as this and were therefore introduced to new concepts, moving beyond mere training and delving into new areas such as micro-finance. The necessary training was designed by CDS to tackle such gaps.

With capacity-building being at the core of the YWLP, focus groups with community members were also convened to establish what skills needed to be included in the program. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills consistently ranked at the top of the list of skills required by the young women. Additionally, the parents of the prospective participants agreed that opportunities for young Egyptian women were limited without access to information and basic computer skills.



*Focus group discussion with community Members*

Moreover, English language skills were mentioned as very important, and that these skills would open up opportunities for jobs, education and training. Also ranked highly was the need for advocacy and leadership skills, deemed necessary for interacting with public officials, facilitating dialogue, articulating positions, speaking in public arenas and raising awareness. Based on the findings of the needs assessment, the YWLP was formed to comprise of three key skills-building components, namely ICT, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and life skills.

After deciding with the communities on key program components, further needs assessments were carried out in order to agree on the formulation of the curriculum/training manuals in terms of themes, approach and structure. Once the program had commenced and the first batch of young women had been accepted to the program, focus groups were convened with 20% of the participants to get to know their expectations of the program, their motives for joining and what kind of material they wanted to see used during the project. These focus groups were carried out across all the target communities and gave the opportunity for further in-depth discussions with the program's participants. These discussions also allowed for further inclusion of their suggestions to the project's design.

The needs assessments revealed that despite the progress achieved in education, Egyptian women were still not accessing the public workforce. The gap between young women's education, abilities and knowledge had resulted in disparities in terms of the quality of skills of the educated

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labor force and the competences required by the labor market. It became clear that a project like the YWLP would fill this gap and encourage young women to enter the public sphere by overcoming the social and traditional barriers which often make it difficult for them to do so. The participatory needs assessment proved useful to inform the design of the YWLP itself and its curriculum.

## 2. Planning the Project

Central to the YWLP was the inclusion of participatory approaches at all stages of the project planning. CDS outlined different techniques to involve the various stakeholders in the design and planning of the project. Incorporating such systems ensured CBOs, beneficiaries and other community members contributed to the planning process, which warranted local ownership of the project and raised the likelihood of sustainability. Moreover, it brought new transferable skills to the communities in terms of project planning and raised the ability of individuals from the local community to plan and build, as well as initiate, new development interventions in their communities. Another aspect in the planning process was to look for opportunities at the donor level to open up participation avenues with actors from the private sector.

Most of the planning at the beginning of the first year consisted of logistical and administrative issues. Finding the most effective ways of ensuring participation in the project planning of the YWLP became the main focus in the inception phase. Part of this was the selection of potential community partners, namely the CBOs. CDS conducted a total of 31 meetings with 17 CBOs, and through a careful selection system, six CBOs were selected to be part of the YWLP based on the following criteria:

- active board;
- history of projects in the field of women empowerment;
- women's participation in decision-making at the CBO board level;
- belief in youth leadership;
- good governance and accountability;
- sound financial systems.

Six sub-grant agreements were signed with the selected CBOs, setting the stage for further detailed planning for the implementation of the project in the target communities. CDS staff participated in the Staff Selection Committees in every partner CBO, and local technical teams were recruited. In consultation with the CBOs, and based on CDS' previous development interventions, it was agreed that the local technical staff force at each CBO would comprise of:

- a Program Manager
- a Capacity Building Specialist (facilitator)
- an ICT specialist
- two Outreach Workers (assistant facilitators)
- An EFL teacher

Upon the project's start, initial meetings were held with the CBOs to determine implementation aspects and to clarify roles and expectations. Moreover, a Participatory Planning Workshop was convened in the first quarter of the project's first year, which created an opportunity for discussing and determining detailed work plans among CDS staff and the CBOs. The workshop was organised to help clarify roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the project and identify technical support needs. To encourage local planning to take place, each CBO was asked to design implementation plans with technical support provided by CDS. Giving the CBOs ownership of the planning process contributed to building the skills of local staff members. The ability to plan, being a transferable skill, helped the YWLP local staff team members gain a skill which could be used in other development interventions in the future.

During the first year of the project, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) team at CDS looked at ways to cultivate partnerships with the private sector as part of the participation and networking aspect of the project. Microsoft Unlimited Potential and Barclays International Bank in Egypt became involved in the project to enhance its effectiveness and expand its outreach. The two key private sector donors became active participants in the planning of the YWLP. Upon establishing the ICT needs of the project, Microsoft supplied the six CBOs with the required high-tech, updated software, licenses and technical assistance. Barclays Bank was active in developing the outreach and expansion of the project and took responsibility for planning career days, work shadowing schemes and other career-building activities. The partnership with the private sector was cultivated and strengthened during the planning processes, and routes were explored to see how they could be further involved and how they could directly link up with the project's beneficiaries.

The design of the training material was another central aspect in the early planning process. The training needs assessments fed into the design and production of manuals, as well as the training of trainers (ToT) framework where staff became familiar with manuals and their contents and how to use them in the most effective and pedagogical way. Local staff and beneficiaries were regularly consulted throughout the duration of the project on training contents and were asked to give their opinions on how certain areas could be improved.

The creation of Community Committees was an integral aspect to the planning process and each of the six participating CBOs had a Community Committee attached to it. These committees were formed in order to facilitate the service delivery of the project and generate acceptance of the project in the respective communities, as well as provide recommendations for the effective implementation of the program. Comprising of key members from the local communities representing the private, government/public and civil society sector, including the media, these individuals contributed to the project's activities on a voluntary basis and helped with other administrative and logistical issues when required. As recognised individuals in the community, their involvement in the project generated an acceptance of the project in the community as well as created a good model for volunteerism.

Moreover, from the development perspective, the Community Committees were a good way to ensure further participation of local partners, as they created a forum for local ownership of the

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project and influenced how it was planned and implemented. As part of the YWLP plan, each Community Committee met on a monthly basis where they discussed the development of the project. A CDS representative attended each meeting as part of the monitoring process of the project. The meetings discussed how the committee could help in terms of project activities, such as in providing space for the role model seminars, finding venues for educational excursions, mobilising resources, and other tasks that may arise. The role and influence of the Community Committee differed in each community, where in some they had immense influence and in others almost none. With the culture of volunteerism being new to many of the committee's members, their presence was often weak and therefore did not have much impact on the development of the project. Although it was recognised that Community Committees are important driving forces behind a development project, they can also easily take a stagnant and non-influential role, as was shown in some of the communities in the YWLP.

The process of recruiting young women into the program was done in consultation with local stakeholders. Thorough discussions were conducted regarding selection criteria and how the program could recruit young women with good potential and the motivation to participate in the initiative. CDS, in consultation with its partner CBOs, designed application forms and together carried out interviews and decided on whom to accept into the program. Findings from these focus groups fed into adapting the program to their needs. For example, with a lot of the participants being in higher education, they mentioned that having the YWLP classes at flexible times would be necessary. Other arrangements were made as part of the program planning to accommodate the beneficiaries' daily lives and routines. When there were incidences of participants dropping out, the planning was reviewed to see what changes needed to be made to ensure the young women stayed in the program.

Although the majority of the planning was done in the inception phase of the YWLP, there was an ongoing review of program implementation plans to ensure the project was fulfilling the expectations of its beneficiaries, as well as ensuring plans were realistic in relation to what was actually happening on an everyday basis in the project. A central aspect to ensuring the success of the planning was the regular communication between CDS and the CBOs through telephone conversations when needed and regular field visits to the CBOs. Moreover, each CBO conducted monthly meetings where planning issues were addressed. At these meetings, CDS contributed if any technical assistance was needed. Planning was a successful aspect of the YWLP, and CBOs took the lead, an element which contributed to strengthened ownership of the project by local calibres.

### 3. Implementing the Project

Thorough planning in the initial stages of the YWLP eased the way for the effective implementation of the program's activities. As in the planning stages of the project, participation with local stakeholders was maintained during the implementation phases. The implementation of the project revealed a degree of flexibility to allow for enhanced participation of stakeholders and to allow them to shape the project to ensure implementation happened according to the contexts

and needs of each community. A rigorous monitoring framework was established to ensure that the YWLP's implementation took place efficiently and was meeting its objectives. Monitoring was done through a participatory lens where local partners were consulted on a regular basis regarding the progress of the project. Including local partners in the monitoring process increased trust from each community in the program and ensured their views and suggestions were fed into any necessary program re-design.

The key program components were decided upon the completion of the participatory needs assessment and the planning carried out in the inception phase. The program was implemented according to the three following components:

- 1) *Leadership and Advocacy Skills Acquisition*: skills acquisition through a leadership and advocacy training program that included ICT, EFL, interpersonal skills development, as well as gender mainstreaming, women's rights, development values, and democratic principles.
- 2) *Leadership and Advocacy Skills Application*: provided participants with a number of empowerment tools to support their learning and skills-building processes. Also, opportunities to apply the acquired skills to real-life situations in private, public, and civil society sectors were made available by the program, where participants selected and designed their own projects/initiatives.
- 3) *Institutional Capacity Building*: provided capacity building and technical assistance services to the six partner CDAs/NGOs and their resource centers.

A Launch Conference was held to mark the official start of the YWLP and the signing of the sub-agreements with the CBOs. The conference was attended by representatives from the public, private and civil society sectors, including the media. Public meetings were also convened in the target communities to announce the program and inform people about it. This was done to emphasise the participatory nature of the project and as a way to win the hearts and minds of the people in the community where the project was to be implemented. It allowed them to ask questions about the project and also raise their concerns and worries about it. Application forms for the potential participants were distributed at these events, allowing family members to see the application forms and thereby get a more realistic view of the project. This was also a way to encourage family members to spread the message of the project and pass on the application forms to the target group.

Local technical teams were trained as part of the training of trainers (ToT) framework, which gave them the skills to carry out the training themselves with the beneficiary young women. One of the first ToT workshops was aimed at equipping the participants with basic facilitation and communication skills required for the effective delivery of the YWLP training curriculum. Leading on from this, the next workshop focused on skills application, where participants were provided with the time, space and facilities required for conducting and facilitating training sessions. Familiarizing the trainers with the contents of the YWLP components, a ToT workshop



was organised on the issues of development concepts and practices. Complementing this, a number of field visits were conducted to development organizations to allow participants to see how theory related to practice. Staff members at the CBOs were also able to get on-the-job training, where CDS staff regularly would go on field visits to give direct training and technical assistance as part of staff capacity building activities. The YWLP training framework revealed an interactive framework whereby local participants were able to seek help and assistance when they needed, as well as be active contributors in the training sessions. Manuals were provided for each of the three skills-building areas of EFL, ICT and development and life skills. The manuals were designed by CDS and its implementing partner, the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). They were designed based on the training needs assessments conducted prior to the project's start. During the design period, local staff was regularly consulted regarding the contents and format. Ensuring local opinion fed into the design of the manuals raised the likelihood that the manuals would be appropriate to the communities' needs, as well as be well-received by the beneficiary young women.

The actual training of the young women started upon the recruitment of the first batch of participants, and they attended classes in ICT, EFL, life skills and advocacy. Each participant in the program was expected to attend training over a nine-month period in order to receive a valid certification of participation in the program. Each CBO was given the opportunity to establish a timetable suitable to its community in terms of fitting in with university holidays and other external requirements, as long as the set number of lessons was taught.



*Life skills training*

With training having been designed according to what came out in the needs assessment among the target group, this created an incentive for the young women to complete the program. Topics covered were specifically chosen to awake an interest in the young women and maintain their concentration throughout the training. There were times during the program where attendance became a problem. External commitments such as university and marriage were often put as the main reasons why participants dropped out. Addressing such issues was done through meeting with the local partners and finding ways to motivate participants to continue in the program. For example, during university exam periods, the program witnessed an increased dropout rate. It was therefore acknowledged that the timetable had to be reviewed and adapted to the external factors affecting the young women's attendance. This was discussed between the CBOs, community committees, and CDS.



Parallel to the core training modules, support activities took place in the form of excursions, social dialogues, role model seminars and career days. These activities exposed the young women to real-life situations and gave them an opportunity to see how the YWLP could benefit them in their professional future as well as contribute to the empowerment of women's lives. Role model seminars were organised during each quarter of the program and the idea behind them was to demonstrate the employment opportunities available for young women



*Role Model Session*

participants of the program and highlight their abilities to perform multiple roles within society.

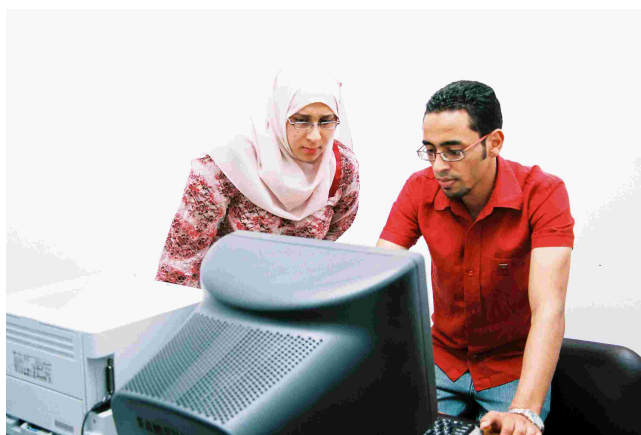
The role models were women from the target communities having faced a similar background as the YWLP participants and experienced some of the same challenges and hardships. Having managed to overcome these obstacles and reached positions of influence in their career and in their communities, these women proved to be very useful and appropriate to have as role models for the YWLP participants.

Educational trips were a central part to the development of the young women of the YWLP. These were organised to give participants an opportunity to see how organizations and other sections functioned outside of their communities. It exposed them to new places, triggering curiosity and keenness to understand how things worked and functioned beyond the life they were normally used to. Some trips took place to the other CBOs participating in the program and one excursion was made to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. For some participants, this was the first time outside of their communities. Career, or career shadowing, days were also organised for some of the participants. They were selected to attend these events based on their commitment and contribution to the program. The purpose of these days was to present the YWLP participants with new career options, expose them to what skills are required for certain jobs and increase their learning through an on-the-job experience. Many of the participants had not yet been exposed to a work environment and the job shadowing scheme contributed to not only eradicating suspicions and fears about the employment sector, but also helped participants gain knowledge about what professions are available and what jobs they may want to apply for in the future. Moreover, seeing other women active in the workforce challenged traditional gender notions which often prevail in the participants' communities. These days also encouraged the participants to think about what they want for their future in terms of job and career, and it revealed to them that they are able to embrace a wide range of jobs as young skilled and educated women.

These exposure activities were combined with the social dialogue activity. Throughout the program, participants were encouraged to use their advocacy and leadership skills to address social and development challenges in their communities. Social dialogues were therefore organised to expose the young women to different social topics and everyday problems and the concerns that affect the lives of young women in their communities.

With the program's activities and training initiating new ideas and thought processes in the young women, a mentorship scheme was set up to ensure each participant had the opportunity to seek advice and ask questions directly to one of the trainers. A manual was designed and distributed to the trainers giving them information about how to effectively mentor. The mentor-mentee relationship provided a unique opportunity for the young women to ask questions to a trainer in confidence about issues they may not have been able to discuss with anyone before, for example in terms of career prospects, advice about education and other more personal issues that may have been on their mind.

A second type of mentorship scheme was established so that the 1,120 young women participating in the YWLP could mentor 2,400 younger girls (aged 13 -17). This mentorship scheme ensured that the core ideas behind the YWLP reached not only the individuals directly involved in the program, but also other members in the community who were not participants in the program.



*Trainee and her mentor*

The mentorship scheme was implemented at schools and other sections in the community where younger girls were present. This scheme increased the avenues for participation for other members in the community, making sure the YWLP reached not only its direct beneficiaries. It opened up an opportunity for peer learning where information and knowledge was shared by individuals from within the community and not from an external contributor.

To ensure the participants received further practical experience during the project, a community-based initiative activity, part of the skills-application component of the program, was established. In groups, the young women, put together suggestions for development initiatives. Staff at CBOs had been trained on how to administer and manage micro-grants, and CDS provided technical assistance regarding each initiative. Each group implemented its own initiative after having received a micro-grant. Examples of initiatives included: enhancing students' academic achievement through active learning, conducting area clean ups in their neighbourhoods, raising health and environment awareness in different villages, and encouraging women to use ICT. Furthermore, to encourage participants to apply the skills they gained in the program, an online career tool was created for the young women to find information about local job vacancies and other important advice, such as how to write a CV and cover letter.

During the implementation phase, the partnership with the private sector continued to be explored, and further investigations on what roles they could adopt were conducted. In addition to Barclays Bank's monetary contribution to the YWLP, a number of its staff were encouraged to volunteer in the project, either through participating in the career shadowing week or by offering internships. In addition to Microsoft's financial and technical donations, they carried out ToT workshops with the local ICT trainers and provided training manuals. The continued involvement of the private sector in the YWLP revealed the interest the private actors had, not only in donating to the project but actually being able to participate in it themselves. It also gave the beneficiaries an opportunity to get a realistic insight into the job sector, as well as see other women being active members of the workforce.

#### 4. Monitoring the Project

CDS adopted several monitoring tools and techniques in order to ensure the project met its intended results. Monitoring was done through a Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan utilised to assure the program's responsiveness to the needs of young women and that implementation methodologies corresponded to the local context of each target community. Tools were also designed by CDS to monitor the program's effectiveness, as well as progress performance of the local technical teams. The following monitoring tools were adopted during the project:

Monitoring Tool	Description
<b>Young women's selection criteria</b>	In order to ensure the program's responsiveness to local needs and openness to each community's unique characteristics, members of the Community Committees identified a series of participants' selection criteria that was relevant to their local context. The selection criteria, therefore slightly vary in terms of educational requirements, age bracket and geographical coverage.
<b>Questionnaires</b>	For the program participants, a pre-intervention assessment questionnaire was designed. These questionnaires were used to monitor the young women's progress during the project. A post-assessment questionnaire will also be distributed towards the project's end.

Monitoring Tool	Description
<b>ToT workshops</b>	At the beginning of each ToT workshop and with the local technical teams, expectations of the participants were collected and compared against each of the workshop's objectives. Daily evaluations were carried out for each workshop, including workshop evaluation sheets which contained questions on assessment of logistics, trainer's performance, workshop content, training manual, interaction among the group and experience and knowledge gained.
<b>Focus group discussions with selected program candidates</b>	Focus groups were conducted with 20% of the participants and provided an opportunity to gain information from the young women about their vision and expectations of the program.
<b>Participatory self-evaluation</b>	Each CBO conducted a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis on the training they offer to the participants, the work environment, the status of their progress, their compatibility as a team, the implementation of the support activities and their financial and technical status.
<b>Refreshment workshops</b>	Workshops were conducted to refresh and monitor each of the local trainers' skills and capacity. The trainers were expected to carry out a training in front of other trainers and were evaluated on their performance.
<b>Class evaluation</b>	CDS designed a class evaluation sheet which was used to monitor and evaluate training at CBOs. CDS has been conducting unannounced field visits to attend training sessions and assess the performance of facilitators and the interaction and attention levels of participants. The class evaluation sheet helped identify the gaps and needs in the training sessions. Technical assistance was provided by CDS based on findings from the evaluations.

Monitoring Tool	Description
<b>Database</b>	The database was created as a way to monitor enrolment levels in the program and progress of each participant, and as a way to keep key information in one place regarding the program and the participants themselves.
<b>Field visit reports</b>	A minimum of two visits per NGO per month were conducted by CDS staff. The purpose of these visits was to monitor program implementation and ensure activities were conducted according to workplans.

Participatory workshops proved essential to the monitoring process and it provided an opportunity for involved stakeholders to put together necessary plans to ensure the success of the project as well as give CDS the opportunity to monitor the progress of each CBO.

Community committees and board members were also actively involved in the monitoring processes and gave recommendations and suggestions on how they would like to see the project develop. Monthly meetings were organised, whereby CDS staff met with the CBOs to discuss implementation issues. Challenges and ways of mitigating them were discussed. CBOs organised and were responsible for the logistics of these meetings, including the write up of the agendas. Moreover, in order to ensure and encourage exchange of experience among network members, exposure visits were organised, where CBOs became familiar with the work of the other CBOs involved in the project. This allowed other organizations the opportunity to share best practices and success stories.

The success of the project's implementation can be attributed to the rigorous monitoring procedures that were adopted during the project life cycle. Including CBOs, beneficiaries and other community members as active participants in the monitoring process further ensured the local ownership of the program and allowed each NGO to adopt monitoring systems according to its contexts. This allowed for the avoidance of grouping communities together as one homogenous entity.

## 5. Evaluating the Project

Evaluation during the YWLP, like monitoring, was done in a participatory manner. Local partners were actively involved in developing their own evaluation tools appropriate to their context, and CDS used a set of specific evaluation tools. The tools listed in the section Implementing and Monitoring the Project point out the overall monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework.

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In addition to the tools implemented by local stakeholders and CDS, an external mid-term evaluation was conducted. An independent evaluator was commissioned to assist CDS and IREX understand the progress of YWLP field activities, beneficiaries' views on the project and what recommended steps the YWLP should take to optimise its impact to meet local needs in the target communities. The evaluation was mainly qualitative, where the evaluator met with local stakeholders, such as program beneficiaries, parents, local technical staff, community committee members, as well as participants who had dropped out of the project. The mid-term evaluation proved a useful evaluation tool, whereby participatory frameworks were further explored. Local stakeholders were given the opportunity to talk to someone external and independent, thereby creating a neutral environment where opinions could be aired.

Specific outcome indicators were established during the project against which the evaluation was carried out. CBOs were asked from the beginning of the project to record numbers of young women participating in the training components, career counselling and the other program support activities, such as the role model seminars and career days. In addition to recording information about the direct program beneficiaries, data was also collected on indirect beneficiaries, such as the number of parents and other community members attending the program's activities. CDS carried out regular evaluations of this information.

Another significant aspect to the evaluation was to assess the functioning of the broader networks/partnerships created as a result of the program, specifically the effectiveness of the public, private and civil society partnership model and the NGO network. This allowed evaluation of the commitment and engagement of each sector based on its participation in meetings and other program activities.

## 6. Conclusion

The YWLP is a development intervention based on participation by local stakeholders. From its inception, the project has strived to achieve the highest levels of local stakeholder participation. Various tools were adopted to achieve this, and through a solid M&E framework, the project was constantly reviewed and assessed to ensure it was being implemented according to its work plans. The YWLP experienced deep donor involvement throughout the project. Increased private sector participation enabled the project to grow in terms of resources and allowed it to expand geographically and accept more participants. The YWLP serves as a solid example of how participation increases the likelihood of the sustainability of a development intervention and raises the empowerment of people from the community. Local stakeholders play an active role throughout the project's life cycles of needs assessment, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Local ownership ensures the capacity building of human capital and institutions, something which will contribute to the sustainability of the development intervention even after its official completion. Moreover, the success of the participatory methods resulted in behavioural changes being witnessed among the program's participants, where levels of confidence and ambitions were raised, combined with increased capacities needed to access the Egyptian labour market.



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## Activating local knowledge for rural development: *The Case for Community Knowledge Centres in Zimbabwe*

*By Charles Dhewa*

Rural people in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa have amazing knowledge and wisdom - often expressed through proverbs, idioms, song, pottery and poetry, among other methods. The participation of rural people in building Community Knowledge Centres in Zimbabwe has surfaced the abundant creativity, innovation and knowledge in rural communities.

In the global market-place, knowledge is one of the most important tools and factors of production. It can help rural communities fight for their own survival and sustainable development. However, in Zimbabwe and other developing countries, information collected by extension workers, NGOs and researchers is often sent to higher officials at Head Offices, not back to the community structures, perhaps because there are no structures to store and continuously evaluate such knowledge. Knowledge Transfer Africa (KTA) has facilitated the establishment of Community Knowledge Centres in three rural districts of Zimbabwe so that local information becomes the basis for raising awareness about development issues in rural communities.

Through Community Knowledge Centres, rural people are fully participating in identifying and documenting grassroots indicators of Climate Change. They are also integrating Conservation Agriculture practices into vast quantities of knowledge that exist in rural areas, locked away in the collective memory of the people as inherited knowledge and personal experience.

This initiative is demonstrating that Participatory Communication should be embraced because it emphasizes 'listening', compared to mainstream communication which focuses on 'telling'. Farmers and rural communities are being given the space and tools to design, discuss and implement their own development. This initiative is showing that Champions - people and organizations with a sincere respect for the views of rural people with whom they work and with a belief that people have the ability to solve many of their own problems and create new knowledge - are critical for the success of rural development and social change.

Local people have become the most important resource in starting and sustaining Community Knowledge Centres which now serve as focal points for community action by helping people acquire information resources for decision making, planning and constructive action. Through KTA, local rural people in the project are obtaining , skills in participatory communication, documentation and knowledge sharing, building on local skills and talents. Among the many participatory approaches harnessed in this work is Human - Centred Design whose strengths include the ability to transform data into actionable ideas and help communities see new opportunities.

*The initiative on Community Knowledge Centres started organically in August 2008 and is still underway. This Case Study focuses on one of the Community Knowledge Centres - Kamwa*

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*Community Knowledge Centre – in Gokwe North District of Zimbabwe which is a rural area in the Midlands Province of the country.*

## 1. Assessing Needs

People of Kamwa Community in Gokwe North District of Zimbabwe are renowned farmers who have engaged in cotton, maize, groundnut, sunflower and livestock production for years. Over the last few years, production has been affected by the global market which has seen cotton prices decline, resulting in widespread poverty. Last year, (August 2008) KTA engaged community members in discussions on how they could use information and local knowledge to improve their situation. The idea to engage communities was steered by a strong belief that rural communities especially farmers, have valuable knowledge which, if properly surfaced and celebrated can improve rural development efforts. On the other hand, if farmers were going to wait until they are rich in order to start a Community Knowledge Centre, they would never adequately take advantage of local and external knowledge in solving their problems.

In keeping with ensuring community participation and involvement in the needs assessment process, the following activities were undertaken:

- **Public consultations** - Knowledge Transfer Africa helped community members to conduct discussions on their development priorities and on the appropriate knowledge to match their priorities. Being an agricultural rural community some of the key priorities revolved around acquiring appropriate knowledge for diversifying agricultural activities, harnessing solar energy, building bridges and reversing land degradation. A major challenge related to the culture and tradition of the community where women do not often contribute their genuine feelings and views in the presence of men. In a number of cases, we had to organise separate meetings for women.
- **Focus group meetings** - We facilitated the meeting of specific groups such as women, youth, farmers, artisans, rural entrepreneurs, traditional healers, teachers and traders to discuss their needs. These groups discussed and codified information they believed would help them to manage their community development. They also discussed how the knowledge should be formatted/ presented so that it is easy to understand, suitable to the context, and applicable. Local youth volunteered to take a leading role in gathering local information and inventorying local knowledge. However, due to the economic melt down in the whole country, a significant number of young people who could have participated were away in urban areas such as Harare, looking for employment.
- **Participatory rapid appraisal methods** - We used dialogue (discussion rather than rigid interviews) to learn from and with the community about their life. Together, we examined limitations and threats, as well as opportunities, to prepare for decisions about development projects. Through participation, ordinary people were able to analyze their own reality. Women indicated that they would need support in starting income-generating projects such as baking bread, solar drying vegetables and poultry production throughout the year. This would

ensure household food security. Through this process, the community learned about itself, set priorities, and came up with an action plan on how to meet its problems. It became clear that various groups in the community needed skills in writing project proposals based on local information and resources

- **Listening survey.** A team of people including teachers, Rural District Council Officials and KTA staff paid attention to unstructured conversations, where people were relaxed and talked about things they were most concerned about such as soil erosion and HIV and AIDS. Not only did the survey team listen for facts, but we also listened for the feelings of people on daily issues, on emotional issues, as well as on basic physical needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self-respect and personal growth. This type of survey was open and carried out at business centres, Kamwa Primary school and at beer halls and at local soccer matches where people met to share views. The listening survey aimed to provide a full and rich insight into the life of the community. Rural District Council officials listened to people's grievances on lack of feedback on how levies are used.

Through this process community members became aware of the purpose of developing a Community Knowledge Centre before the process began. Some of the methods we have deployed for community engagement included Open Space and Outcome Mapping which entailed building the capacity of people to think in terms of outcomes of the Community Knowledge Centre.

## 2. Planning the Project

The idea to promote Community Knowledge Centres is influenced by people-centred development which require the exchange of a lot of information and knowledge at the grassroots level. KTA assisted the community to think about ways of carefully building their knowledge base so that they do not collect unhelpful or misleading information. We sat down with the community and brainstormed on community outcomes which would feed into the Community Knowledge Centre. The agreed Mission of Kamwa Community Knowledge Centre was: *To document local and indigenous knowledge for community empowerment.*

Through their zeal and active participation, we identified Boundary Partners (people or organizations through whom changes would be seen or observed). We were able to assign roles to most of the people who participated in shaping community outcomes. Most people saw the Community Knowledge Centre becoming a communication and information nerve centre for the whole district, two years down the line. They began to assume specific roles for this outcome to be realized.

Together with community members, we started planning how the Community Knowledge Centre would position local people more strategically to benefit from whatever resources are available to them, both nationally and internationally. Community members envisaged their knowledge centre speeding up the acquisition of new skills and knowledge on better farming, agro-processing

and management of the environment through conservation agriculture to improve their quality of life. We organized a strategic planning workshop in which all local key stakeholders such as traditional leaders, agricultural extension officers, local businesspeople, traditional medical practitioners, teachers, agricultural commodity associations and local health workers participated.

Results from the needs assessment survey were shared at this planning workshop where participants in the needs assessment were also present.

We also mapped local information and communication technologies such as mobile phones and radio listening clubs which communities could use to announce their products and services, from horticultural products, local artifacts and traditional healing services. Access to communication would enable the community to learn about new products they can grow for both urban and international markets.

The workshop was held at the local school Kamwa School which provided a building in which information and local items were to be stored. This became the venue for most regular meetings. Local youth were identified to collect local information and ensure the Knowledge Centre is kept in order. An Executive Committee was set up for the day to day management of the Knowledge Centre. Both men and women had equal representation with four men and 4 women. To ensure sustainability, community members agreed to get involved in raising funds and also contribute their labour toward the Knowledge Centre.

Local people have started appreciating the Community Knowledge centre as a space for local innovation and collaboration. According to local farmers, innovation demands collaboration and so does agricultural production and marketing.

Collaboration is a process through which people who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and reach for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible.



*Women and youth discuss and document information to be stored in the Community Knowledge Centre*

Building on the findings from the Needs Assessment, community members assigned each other roles toward enhancing community collaboration and strengthening the Community Knowledge Centre. The Community Knowledge Centre has provided mechanisms for knowledge and information capture, filtering and creation. To achieve their goals, community members assigned themselves the following roles:

- **Connectors** – These help people find each other in the Community Knowledge Centre. Connectors are comprised of local youth, women and local experts who identify the needs of various local people in the community and try to link them up with people who have the same interests.

- **Peripherals** – This group is made up of farmers, artisans and local entrepreneurs who may be silent but busy learning and carrying community lessons and knowledge out to the world.
- **Pollinators** – These belong to related networks such as the Zimbabwe Farmers Union who bring in and take out ideas and information.
- **Scanners and Filters** - These help make sense of information and connections from the Community Knowledge Centre and bring them back into the flow of organizational work.
- **Bridgers** – These bring ideas into the community Knowledge Centre and carry out ideas to test and evaluate on their farms or gardens. They do not seem to be fazed by the flow and volume of network information.

As Facilitator, Knowledge Transfer's role has been identifying Connectors, Peripherals, Pollinators, Scanners, Filters, Bridgers and other role players in the Community Knowledge Centre.

Among the challenges we faced was the high political polarization in the country which bred suspicion from political leaders who thought the Community Knowledge Centre had a political motive to support one political party against the other. The community also had immediate needs and expectations such as accessing food which was not in the remit of the project. As a result, some people would only commit themselves to participate once they had addressed livelihood issues like finding food for their families since there were food shortages in the country.

### 3. Implementing and Monitoring

In implementing and Monitoring the project, the community and KTA have made use of community members who have taken various roles mentioned earlier - Connectors, Peripherals, Pollinators, Scanners, Filters, Bridgers, Boundary Partners and other role players. Youth have played a key role in documenting local knowledge and so has the Steering Committee made up of local stakeholders.

The School Development Association for Kamwa Primary School has provided a building to be used as a structure for the Community Knowledge Centre. A major activity has been building the content for the Community Knowledge Centre. The community has started with information and knowledge that exists in the community. This content has come from two sources: namely, indigenous knowledge, and locally created information.

#### Indigenous Knowledge

Like many African communities, Kamwa community has a rich cultural knowledge base from which its members receive understanding and an interpretation of the world. This indigenous knowledge has formed part of the community's information and knowledge resources. In most communities, this knowledge has difficulty surviving. Difficulties arise because traditions and cultures are often



the object of massive attacks and questions by the dominant culture. The group with power casts aside and disorganizes the knowledge and traditions that rural groups and groups without power use to define themselves and their view of the world. In decreasing the value of indigenous and local knowledge resources, the channels of traditional knowledge communication have been cut off. A related challenge is that the younger generation has been de-linked from their own culture and traditions. This separation makes it difficult for the older generation to transfer this rich cultural heritage to the next generation. Young people, in turn, are estranged. They develop anti-social behaviours to attract attention and sympathy.

One of the key roles of the Community Knowledge Centre has been to gather, preserve, and make available indigenous knowledge. The community has realized that vast quantities of knowledge exist, locked away in the collective memory of people as inherited knowledge and personal experience. These stories are being evaluated carefully and recorded so that they can be put to use. The diversity of indigenous knowledge in the community has presented challenges regarding validation and the fact that some of the information is difficult to verify with some elders considering it sacred to be scrutinized and preserved in the Community Knowledge Centre. Witchcraft also reared its ugly head since it became difficult to separate authentic indigenous knowledge and witchcraft. However, trust building is helping solve this issue.



*Job Mushonga (82) Executive member of Kamwa Community Knowledge Centre. He is a fountain of Indigenous Knowledge and a great storyteller*

## Traditional objects

The Community Knowledge Centre has organized a huge collection of traditional objects and household items. This collection consists of hand-made objects, depicting the history, culture and indigenous knowledge of the community and its traditional technologies. The Community Knowledge Centre has also tapped into the expertise of old people in the community who are skilled in making traditional objects, such as woven mats, baskets, traditional carrier bags, pottery, kitchen utensils, bows and arrows, spears, farming tools, and clothing from animal skins. Such “traditional experts” are being used as resource persons in the community to train young people and to pass on these skills before they disappear completely

## Locally created Information

Locally created information comprise reports produced by agricultural extensionists, village health workers, veterinary officers, dip tank attendants, Village Development Committees and the local clinic, among other sources such as NGOs like Concern Worldwide. Previously, most communities members did not know anything about this information. But through the Community Knowledge Centre, some of this information is being collected and kept instead of being sent to Head Offices



in Harare for policy makers who sometimes do not even use it. From such reports, the community can work out how many people were affected by preventable diseases such as Malaria in the past year. Then they can plan actions to improve the situation.

Local information that has been documented include; people, culture, natural resources, vegetation, rivers, population by sex and age, life skills, schools, clinics, leadership, traditional medical practitioners, livestock, transport systems, indigenous vegetables, orphan crops threatened by extinction as well as local breeds of chickens, goats, donkeys and livestock. All this local information content is forming the basis of critical discussion to raise awareness about development issues in the community.



*Members of Kamwa Community Knowledge Centre involved In Conservation Agriculture plant sweet potatoes as a group*

The community is still to collect and adapt external knowledge sources such as publications from other countries. This is vital because some human development problems are similar worldwide. By gaining access to information and knowledge sources that bring this experience to the community, members save valuable time and resources. They are able to learn and adapt good ideas from grassroots communities in other countries.

## Major Outcomes so far

### *Information Campaigns*

The Community Knowledge Centre has been able to launch information campaigns urging cotton companies to increase the price of cotton and build roads which they damage during the cotton marketing season. This has helped in creating the needed social climate for the development and adoption of new ideas on a particular topic such as the possibility of cotton farmers obtaining small ginneries from India to process their cotton into lint, oil and animal cake. Some of the campaigns have also been organized around tree planting and adoption of conservation agriculture. Information on these issues has been assembled at the community knowledge centre, creating widespread awareness.

### Training Workshops

There have been structured training activities for the community for rapid acquisition of knowledge and skills on agro-processing, counselling, livestock breeding and rural entrepreneurship, among other knowledge sharing activities. Farmers have carried out experiments with new seed varieties which have been introduced through the Community Knowledge Centre. Other issues which have come up for discussion through workshops at the Community Knowledge Centre include: gender relations, climate change, community water management and schooling for girls.

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Knowledge Transfer Africa was responsible for identifying response persons who could share knowledge on these topics.

One of the biggest challenges has been lack of financial resources to acquire training materials and translate knowledge from Shona language to Ndebele and English languages. Some community members who are not participating in the project have been jealous of those who participate resulting in some bit of disharmony.

#### 4. Evaluating and Monitoring the Project

To ensure sustainability, the Community Knowledge Centre has embarked on strengthening the community's capacity building to evaluate and adapt knowledge from outside to suit its own social situation and values. This action has placed knowledge and learning in the hands of ordinary men and women. Taking ownership of the knowledge empowers them and builds their self-confidence.



*Kamwa Community Knowledge Centre.*

Through information collected by various role players in Kamwa Community, it has become easy to monitor activities of Kamwa Community Knowledge Centre. Knowledge Transfer Africa has imparted skills in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation so that community members can monitor and evaluate their own activities. This process has been buttressed by the engagement of an External Evaluator from another community (Hurungwe District) where a Community Knowledge Centre has been set up.

The Executive Committee monitored logistical information from setting up to planning and implementing the Community Knowledge Centre. KTA helped community members to concretise their expectations and work out indicators such as categories of knowledge collected, number of participants by gender and age and statistics on livestock, population and many other relevant factors. Participatory Impact Monitoring resulted in the active involvement of farmers and various role players such as connectors, pollinators and bridgers. A monitoring format was

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clearly laid - enhancing the community's ability to monitor its expectations and assess the negative and positive impacts they expected from the Community Knowledge Centre.

Discussions were conducted on critical indicators such as availability of relevant information regarding agriculture and agro-processing, level of soil erosion, number of farmers adopting conservation agriculture as well as associated improvement in people's lives resulting from increased knowledge levels.

Some of the key results from the evaluation exercise include the fact that knowledge is not only produced by experts, but is the product of human creation. Since time immemorial people in Kamwa community have been making discoveries in their farming activities. They have acquired skills in taming animals and growing plants for their needs.

The use of dialogue has made all the difference in building, monitoring and evaluating Kamwa Community Knowledge Centre. Dialogue requires patience, humility and a deep belief that facilitators can learn from ordinary people in the community. Some of the characteristics we have promoted include: openness to new ideas, a willingness to engage in discussion on an equal footing, and a deep belief and hope that change in rural communities is possible and indeed overdue.

## 5. Conclusion

The driving force in setting up Kamwa Community Knowledge Centre was the realization that the community had limited access to information and knowledge for correct decision making and taking action to control their future in a situation of national economic decline and the current global recession.

One of the key elements in achieving sustainability is the participation of the whole community in the full range of the Community Knowledge Centre activities. Without a Community Knowledge Centre, it would have been difficult for any organization to stimulate community development and provide information that raises awareness about urgent development issues. Since many farmers in Kamwa community have started associating improvements in their lives with the Community Knowledge Centre, we hope to see this initiative gaining strengths to become a role model in the whole country.

All the participants in the project say they have awakened to the fact that access to information and knowledge is a basic resource to drive their community self-reliance, food security and sustainable development. Relevant information and knowledge are as valuable as water, land, finances and other resources, essential for survival and human progress

The process of building Kamwa Community Knowledge Centre has had its fair share of challenges. The local political leadership had wanted to impose its will by choosing its own people to assume leadership positions in the Community Knowledge Centre so that the local member of Parliament would try to patronize the Community Knowledge Centre. However,

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KTA and local opinion leaders managed to convince the politicians that the Knowledge Centre is a social movement which is non-partisan. This was helped by the fact that politicians have begun preaching national healing in the whole country which works in favor of harmony as espoused by Community Knowledge Centres

There is still some facilitation effort required from KTA to help the community to organize itself and build the skills and self confidence to take destiny in its own hands. The community has no electricity for internet services. However, members have taken the first step towards community development, civil society building and capacity building. There is still a long way to go for knowledge to become a strong pillar of the community development process. When knowledge is a central part of the process, its presence will lead to a transfer of the skills needed for other areas of development such as the development of rural cottage industries.

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## Participatory Land Mapping for Social Equity

*By Anindo Banerjee*

The Participatory Land Mapping project undertaken by Praxis India provides a good case study of a development intervention where resource-poor and marginalized communities (share-croppers and landless labourers) of an economically backward Indian state of Bihar were capacitated to assert a rightful claim on their legally valid land entitlements. The cornerstone of the process was the active involvement of a cadre of socially and economically disadvantaged communities in all phases of the exercise, from conceptualization and piloting of the idea to sustained advocacy of the validated outcomes for pushing local governments towards distribution of land to the landless. The case study endeavours to present a viable model of a community-led, rights-based and result-oriented effort of prompting the State to act in favour of marginalized communities.

The project was undertaken by Praxis over a 15-month time-span, in partnership with Ekta Parishad – a cadre of marginalized groups active in Bihar and a few other backward states of India. The motivation for undertaking the Land Mapping exercise stemmed from shared concerns over a severely polarized status of distribution of land resources in Bihar. According to a survey undertaken by National Sample Survey Organization in the year 1999-2000, nearly 76.6% of all agricultural labourers in Bihar are completely landless. Also, according to data released by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2008, nearly 84.2% land holdings are marginal (i.e. less than a hectare in size) and the average land holding size of 0.58 hectare in Bihar is far below the national average of 1.33 hectare. The concentration of landlessness is particularly high amongst certain socially disadvantaged communities, collectively referred to as Scheduled Castes (SC, henceforth) or dalits, with about 91% of all Scheduled Caste households of the state owning less than 40% of a hectare per household! Interventions of the Government in the direction of land reforms in Bihar have been largely inadequate, although several significant initiatives have been undertaken during the decades after independence, including passing of a law that made private ownership of land exceeding a legally stipulated ceiling illegal.

### 1. Assessing Needs

The need of a research-based document establishing the levels of disparity and the complexities of issues related to land distribution in Bihar was felt and discussed on a number of occasions between the state level workers of Praxis and Ekta Parishad. It was felt that data bringing to light micro level challenges and prospects relating to land reforms would have tremendous relevance for policy as well as for interventions directed at provisioning of land in favour of the landless. In the course of these discussions, it was decided to initiate a thorough assessment of the current status and key issues related to land distribution in the state, which, even if undertaken on a small scale, would help in identification of necessary policy interventions in

favour of the landless poor, based on a comprehensive analysis of the patterns of ownership and control with regard to land resources.

Before initiating the Mapping exercise on a large scale, it was decided to undertake a pilot exercise in a few villages, to understand the challenges involved in land mapping and to achieve greater clarity with regard to the methodology. The process took off with a residential workshop, which brought together representatives of a cluster of villages from Jamui and Gaya districts. The aim of the workshop was also to build a team of facilitators, who would be able to anchor the processes of mapping land holdings in selected locations with the support of local villagers.

During the workshop, mock exercises were undertaken to attempt mapping of all holdings of a few familiar villages and to compile critical pieces of information relating to each plot of land. A few days later, the facilitators trained in the workshop initiated the pilot phase of the land mapping process in seven villages of Jamui, one of the sensitive districts of Bihar known for high degree of landlessness of SC and Adivasi communities (tribes).



*Villagers locating various plots of land using paper chits*

Most of the identified facilitators of the process were landless themselves, and were therefore able to relate with the significance of the exercise with ease and conviction.

A review workshop was subsequently organized, to discuss the initial experiences, areas of comfort, shortcomings, challenges faced by the team and ideas towards improving the process. Based on the experiences of the first phase, it was decided to initiate the main phase of the process across 36 villages drawn from five sensitive districts of Bihar. The choice of the locations was based on the relative levels of disparity in distribution of land resources; representation of different geo-physical and demographic settings, and the relative level of self-assessed collective conviction of the local cadres of marginalized communities towards taking forward the outcomes of the Land Mapping exercise for purposes of advocacy and campaigns for land reforms.

The main challenge of the inception phase was to bring about a shared conviction with regard to the feasibility of the ambitious exercise. The mock exercises helped substantially in instilling such a belief amongst the facilitators.

## 2. Planning the Project

It was subsequently left to Ekta Parishad, the cadre of marginalized communities, to identify potential leaders who could be entrusted with the responsibilities of facilitation of the Land Mapping



exercise on a large scale. A Steering Team inclusive of select representatives of Praxis and Ekta Parishad was formed at the same time to compile the key learnings and implications stemming from the pilot exercise, which led to emergence of the first design of the Mapping exercise, fine-tuned subsequently in a workshop involving all the village representatives and facilitators. The 3-day residential workshop was held at Patna, the State headquarters of Bihar, where representatives of the identified villages from the districts of Gaya, Jamui, Nawada, Patna and West Champaran came together for the first time, in addition to village level facilitators who anchored the pilot phase of the process. During the workshop, the entire process of Land Mapping was discussed in detail and the design was finalized. Finally, eight specific steps for executing the Land Mapping exercise were agreed upon, as outlined in Box 2.1.

**Box 2.1 – Eight Steps of the Participatory Land Mapping Exercise**

1. Identification of a group of villagers whose collective knowledge about distribution of land in a village would enable a comprehensive mapping of each and every land holding located within the boundaries of the village. Three or four such persons were to be identified in each village included in the exercise.
2. Orientation of the villagers identified for the process of land mapping by the trained facilitators so that they understand the far-reaching objectives of the land mapping process, the methods used therein and critical aspects of the data collection framework.
3. Drawing each and every plot of land in the village from one end on the ground using pieces of chalk, or on paper of adequate size using pencil, and assigning each plot of land a unique number.
4. Entering the following details in a recording sheet, relating to each plot of land indicated on the map:
  - A reference number for the plot
  - Name of the person who presently has control or possession over the plot.
  - Father's name
  - Caste
  - Size of the plot
  - Duration of control over the plot
  - Basis of control or possession of the plot.
  - Type of land (according to its legal status)
  - Irrigated or un-irrigated / quality of land
  - Name of the legal owner of the plot
  - Whether subjected to any dispute or not
  - Any other remarks
  - Plot number according to official land records

5. Drawing a map showing the residential place of each household of the village separately (mentioning the size of homestead land) in order to pre-empt the omission of any household from the land mapping exercise and for identifying and listing resident households deprived of even homestead land.
6. Formal presentation of the maps thus prepared in front of a large gathering of villagers for collective verification of contents and for correcting probable mistakes. Obtaining the signatures or thumb impression of the villagers at the end of the verification process as a mark of their endorsement of the data presented in the maps.
7. Comparing the map prepared by the villagers with the official map and redrawing the contours of the plots shown in both the maps carefully on another big sheet of paper.
8. Reproducing the maps on A4-size sheets, getting them scanned, entering data relating to the plots in a spreadsheet and data analysis.

After the training of the newly joined group of village level facilitators on the aforesaid steps, the process of land mapping was initiated in the identified districts in a phased manner.

The key challenge of the planning and pre-implementation phase of the project was to ensure quality in transfer of skills and perspective, from a few trained facilitators to a much larger pool of 48 facilitators. Before start of the implementation phase of the Land Mapping exercise on a large scale, intensive inputs were provided to the core facilitators to effectively convey the key objectives, process steps and expected outcomes to their fellow colleagues.

### 3. Implementing and Monitoring

Once initiated in the selected villages in a phased manner, the intense field level processes of land mapping took over six months to be completed across all the districts. Several strategies were employed for ensuring quality and authenticity of the data emerging from the exercise, which included the following:

#### 1 - *Establishing linkages with local community-based organizations*

Wherever possible, the team of facilitators of the Mapping exercise got in touch with community-based organizations of marginalized communities operating in the villages of the exercise, which turned out to be a good strategy for generating a critical mass of local support for undertaking Mapping on a subject as complex as land holdings. Such linkages also left behind a strong tool, in the form of de-segregated land-data for every local plot, indexed in terms of ownership, control, nature of disputes, type of land etc. in the hands of the local CBOs for use in their own campaigns. It also made triangulation of data easier.

## 2 - *Creating an enabling environment for the Mapping exercise*

The facilitators of the exercise, before embarking upon the challenging process, spent a few days in each village to interact with different sections of people, particularly the marginalized sections, towards ascertaining their agreement and availability for the Mapping exercise. Staying in the village also provided good insights regarding political dynamics and vested interests, which could potentially be a threat for the exercise. As a matter of fact, in a few villages the Mapping exercise had to be carried out in locations that were safe enough to protect the participating community members from any adverse backlashes at the behest of powerful sections!

## 3 - *Rotating competent facilitators*

Some of the outstanding facilitators of the Mapping process were withdrawn from their native districts after a reasonable length of progress of the exercise and re-deployed in other districts to input their experiences of managing the process and cross-fertilize excellence. This led to the emergence of a pool of highly qualified experts on Land Mapping by end of the process, with substantial knowledge of the complexities and challenges of facilitating such politically sensitive exercises in different situations and contexts.

## 4 - *Early identification of gaps*

A copy of each map emerging from the process was promptly send to a Secretariat specially set up for the purpose of data entry in the Praxis office, in order that critical gaps could be identified promptly for the district level teams to address before winding up the process in a district. The Secretariat also kept prompting the teams of facilitators to look out for additional, often area-specific dimensions of interest during the Mapping exercise.

## 5 - *Field-monitoring of progress and quality*

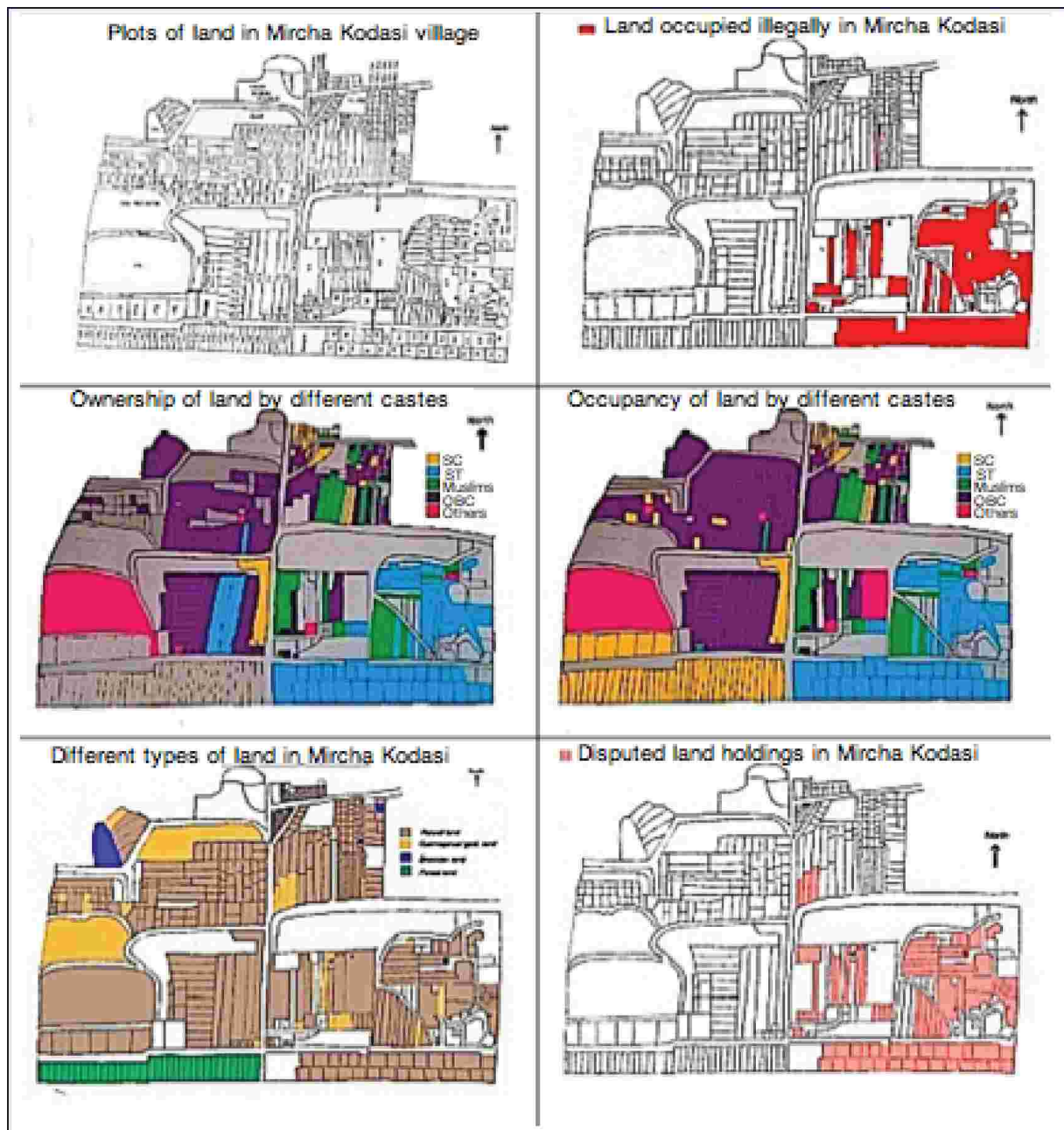
A joint team of representatives of Praxis and Ekta Parishad was constituted to extend supportive supervision to the process during its implementation. Members of the Team visited various villages in the course of the exercise and kept in touch with the facilitators to offer any necessary trouble-shooting advice or support. A few members of the Team were entrusted with the responsibility of locating relevant official maps from the revenue offices of the government on time, which however, turned out to be the most difficult aspect of the exercise. In many cases, due to non-availability of updated official maps, the facilitators had to rely upon local level democratic validation of the contents of the maps by involving the residents of the village in a community meeting.

## 6 - *Validation of contents and outcomes of data-entry*

The contents and outcomes of data-entry in the form of digitized maps (ref. Annex. 1), spreadsheets and key findings related to land-distribution were periodically shared with the Steering Team for elimination of any probable inconsistencies or errors. On a few occasions, some of important and seemingly controversial findings were shared with the entire team of

facilitators for their feedback and validation, before being retained in the report for publication of the exercise.

As a matter of fact, the most useful method for validation of accuracy of the contents of the maps came from design of the exercise itself, i.e. a formal presentation of the maps in front of a large gathering of villagers for collective verification of contents and for correcting probable mistakes. At the end of each presentation, signatures or thumb impression of the villagers were obtained as a mark of their endorsement of the data presented in the maps.



*An Example of a Map generated by marginalized communities, tracking different variables of interest*

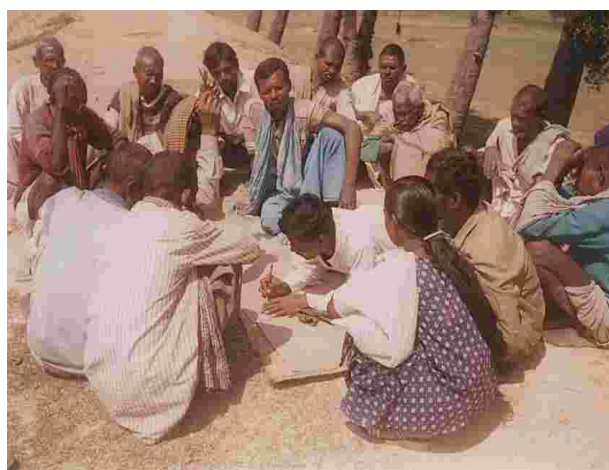
The most critical imperative of the exercise was to ensure sufficient protection of the facilitators and participating communities from any potential backlashes from local land sharks. The process was expected to expose all instances of excessive and illegal land holdings and this was a strong enough reason calling for caution. However, this was effectively dealt with through building of institutional linkages with local community-based organizations, leading to involvement of a critical mass of deprived people working together in production of evidences to pursue their land rights. Also, an unforeseen strength of the methodology came to the rescue of the facilitating teams. Even the local elites had a stake in identifying themselves with the holdings controlled by them, including illegal holdings, to retain their claim on the same and prevent any counter claims.

Keeping a check on the quality of data emerging from the process and capture of the entire range of relevant data was another important challenge of the implementation phase. The monitors visiting the study sites took special care to scrutinize the data on a daily basis to identify any significant gaps or inconsistencies. In some place, the monitors also did a sample check on the validity of data emerging.

#### 4. Evaluating and Monitoring the Project

The local cadres of land activists in the districts where Land Mapping was carried out have been extensively using the land maps to lobby for distribution of unused public lands in various villages. In several villages, e.g. Mircha Kodasi in Jamui district, the outcomes gave objectivity to campaigns against illegal occupancy of land beyond legally prescribed ceilings, while in some other places, e.g. Bagaha block of West Champaran, the exercise enabled identification of households deprived even of homestead land, who are eligible for provision of 4 cents of homestead land as per a policy of the state government.

Though the report of the Land Mapping exercise has not been made public yet, preliminary discussions with prominent political leaders and policy-level activists in Bihar have indicated huge relevance of the outcomes of the unprecedented Land Mapping exercise in the state. Given that official cadastral maps of the areas covered in the project are severely outdated by over four decades, the land maps generated through the exercise offer an important instrument for determination of the current land ownership patterns in the villages covered.



*Land Mapping Exercise with the Villagers*

Also, it was the first time that the process generated de-segregated data relating to ownership and control of land for different social groups, and for women separately. It also helped in dispelling



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several myths relating to patterns of use of land, e.g. by establishing the high level of involvement of women as active farmers, or by establishing how most illegal encroachments over land are done by socially dominant and economically powerful sections.

In several locations of the Land Mapping exercise, it would be difficult to quantify the immediate gains for participating communities from the process, other than places where either the campaign leadership was strong enough to persuade authorities to respond to compelling cases of deprivation from land, or where the local Circle office (institution dealing with issues related to land administration) was sensitive in responding to demands of land backed by the land maps without much delay.

Also, in view of the fact that State processes related to provisioning of land are highly bureaucratic and tardy, an exercise like Land Mapping would at best strengthen a case for land reforms by identifying key issues for intervention. It would require substantial political will and administrative reforms for enhancing the yield potential of an exercise like Land Mapping, particularly with regard to processes of provisioning of land, ensuring possession and grievance redressal.

#### *Prospects and Challenges relating to Sustainability*

The experience of undertaking participatory Land Mapping strengthens the argument that equipping marginalized communities with critical information regarding distribution of vital resources can play a critical role in empowering them to act towards claiming their rights. The exercise in Bihar was aimed primarily at establishing an example for the State towards updating land records in an authentic and empowering manner involving the communities, and was not intended to be a continuing effort on the part of collectives of marginalized communities. However, a number of state level events have been undertaken in Bihar by cadres involved in the Land Mapping exercise for raising issues related to disparities in land distribution in a sustained fashion.

An intense process like Land Mapping cannot be undertaken by non-government entities on a scale that would be meaningful enough to make a difference to a critical mass of the landless and would demand a serious involvement of State agencies for investment of necessary resources for such an exercise to be scaled up.

Institutionalization of a process like Land Mapping within the government system would remain a huge challenge in view of the extremely limited number of extension workers in Circle offices related to land administration. Also, the negligible proportion of functionaries hailing from the most deprived sections of society in such offices would make it extremely challenging to impart to them the necessary level of conviction and perspective with regard to the critical importance of an exercise like Land Mapping.



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## 5. Conclusion

‘Land Mapping’ is an empowering tool for mobilization of marginalized sections for asserting their rights for equity and a powerful method of social analysis. The exercise undertaken by Praxis and Ekta Parishad sought to establish the critical role land plays in the lives of the poor. For the State and development agencies, it established a critical need for engaging actively with marginalized communities to be able to appreciate the challenges towards an equitable social order and the potential impacts and risks of unmitigated inequity.

Keeping in view the large scale of landlessness in Bihar, policy interventions of a radical and far-reaching nature are required in order that the large numbers of marginalized citizens of the state get a lasting asset of livelihood, a cover for risks and a substantive foundation of identity and dignity.

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## The Fantsuam Children's Parliament

*By Bidi Bala*

Children in the southern part of Kaduna state in Nigeria are regularly subjected to abuses of their human rights and do not currently have a voice to protect them against such abuses or to advocate for changes on their behalf. The abuses are widespread and harm for the children exists at the family, community and institutional levels. The types of domestic abuse to which the children are exposed cover the spectrum of mistreatment from neglect to the infliction of physical and mental cruelty. In extreme cases, children have died as a result of the injuries sustained. Of particular concern is the recent upswing in cases of children being accused of witchcraft by adults who were still in denial of their HIV/AIDS status, and being killed as result. The Fantsuam Foundation found herself cast in the role of intervener in such a situation in January of 2008, when six children in Kafanchan were accused of being witches and were in danger of being killed by their community. Had the Foundation not removed the children from that environment, there was a high probability that they would have died.

### 1. Assessing Needs

At the institutional level there are several constraints that hinder the welfare and development of children. This had resulted in a dire situation, as there are currently few government programs in place that recognize the special developmental needs that children have, especially those children and youth who find themselves accused of crimes. In most cases, little or no differentiation is made between children and adult offenders, and children often find themselves incarcerated in facilities meant for much older detainees. In these cases, the children may be doubly victimized, as the older inmates may subject them to abuse.

In July 2008 Fantsuam Foundation was successful in its application to Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to establish the Fantsuam Advocacy Centre for Children (FACC), which was subsequently launched at a public event – the Day of Change on 6 December 2008. The FACC also led to the creation of the 1st ever children's parliament in kafanchan that was launched in the 6th of December 2008.

Its mission is to alleviate the abuse of rights suffered by children in southern Kaduna state and to encourage children and youth to participate in governance and advocacy on behalf of their peers. Raising awareness of children's rights and their abuses within the communities of southern Kaduna, with the objective of enhancing the knowledge of community members with respect to children's rights and securing their increased commitment to the protection of these rights.

FACC chose to focus its activities in the southern part of Kaduna state, where the Fantsuam Foundation currently concentrates its operations. The State is made up of 23 local government

areas with a population of about 7 million people with a near 1:1 male to female ratio. The target group of direct beneficiaries for FACC's activities are the 1.8 Million children in ten chiefdoms of the southern parts of Kaduna state: Atyap, Jaba, Zangon Kataf, Kurama, Kaninkon, Marwa, Kagoro, Bajju, Jema'a, Fantsuam and Gong. "Children" are defined as those individuals who are eighteen years old or younger. Beyond the children, indirect beneficiaries of FACC's activities include the families of these children, who will gain peace of mind from the improved health and security of their children, and the communities of which the children form a part, as children freed from abuse have a greater likelihood of becoming productive members of their home communities. Other stakeholders involved in the project are the local chiefs, state and local government lawmakers, Fantsuam Foundation staff and the media.

The establishment of the FACC has as its ultimate goal the alleviation of abuses of rights suffered by children in Kaduna state. It sought to achieve this goal through a two-pronged approach. The first strategy involves raising awareness of children's rights and their abuses within the communities of southern Kaduna, with the objective of enhancing the knowledge of community members with respect to children's rights and securing their increased commitment to the protection of these rights. Secondly, FACC intends to pursue the lobbying of all levels of government for the enforcement of current laws and policies protecting children's rights and for the drafting and implementation of legislation where gaps exist in the protection provided. The objective of such lobbying is to ensure an effective legislative and policy framework is in place and enforced to protect the rights of children to the fullest extent possible.

## 2. Planning the Project

The idea to start the Fantsuam Advocacy Centre for Children was born out of the need of the foundation to tackle child rights abuses that were taking place in her host community, it was a reaction to the situation in the community. The foundation was forced on several occasions to intervene in various cases of child abuse and as a result sought a way to find a sustainable solution to the problem. Some of the victims of such abuse were members of the Children's Compute Club (CCC), a club started by the organization to provide access to ICT training and equipment to rural children who would otherwise not have access to these facilities. The CCC met on weekends and children were brought together to learn and play under the tutelage of the IT academy's tutors.

Fantsuam Foundation anticipated that the children would be involved in the project throughout the life of the project and saw the CCC as a starting point in the drive to bring about awareness in the community about child rights abuses. Fantsuam management had consultations with local chiefs and community members, many of which are parent of the CCC members, to discuss the proposed project, the aim of the meeting was to explain what the project sought to achieve and get feedback that would be included in the project plan. An added outcome to the meeting was a go-ahead by the community leaders to carry out the project. Although Fantsuam Foundation has served the community for several years, she does not under estimate the importance of involving and getting approval from the 'gate-keepers' before starting any project.



*Villagers taking part in the Day of Change*

The development of the activities for the executing of the FACC project were done in collaboration with all the stakeholders involved, there were meetings with each partner to brainstorm and select the most effective ways to make people aware of children's rights and begin to pay attention to them. The idea to develop case studies from the immediate community about children's rights issues and abuses to be used in the advocacy efforts. The case studies, which were prepared by the coordinator of the FACC along with the

participation of the concerned children and their parents being respectful of their need for confidentiality, was one of the ideas brought forward during meeting with the community leaders and members. These were used as part of the content for the newsletter and the website. They also expected that older children, i.e. those thirteen and above, will also be permitted to volunteer to take a more prominent role in the advocacy efforts, such that they may participate in the community meetings focused on raising awareness of children's rights, for example. Families and other community members would also be encouraged to participate in these efforts as well.

The role of the boundary partners in the planning of the project was to bring up ideas that were later used to choose which activities would be feasible in the context of the particular community.

#### *Establishment of Fantsuam Advocacy Center for Children (FACC)*

The FACC was formally established with the selection of individuals to work as the executive for the project. It was anticipated that in addition to the chair for the group, there were also individuals within the executive who assumed responsibility for the following groups and activities for FACC: Children for Change drama group; government lobbying, including liaison with legal counsel and the development of the children's parliament; publicity, including the design of newsletters, pamphlets and the FACC website; community and media liaison; curriculum development for educating the children. One of the coordinators was also responsible for development of the program for the Day of Change. In addition to these individuals, there were youth representatives selected from the local community to act as liaisons with the young people in the region and to ensure that the viewpoints of the younger people were represented in FACC. Many of the individuals that took these roles within the FACC executive were GAIYA ( means Gift of Labour, it is the National Volunteering Program run by Fantsuam) volunteers already familiar with the Fantsuam Foundation and its operations. GAIYA is the national volunteering program begun by the Fantsuam Foundation in conjunction with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO).

The timing of the executive meetings were made to coincide with the Children's Computer Club

being held on Saturdays at Fantsuam Foundation. Meetings began at the conclusion of the CCC and a review of the accomplishments from the previous week helped set both the short-term and long-term goals for FACC.

Community leaders, Lawmakers, press, staff and members of the community touring Fantsuam Foundation.

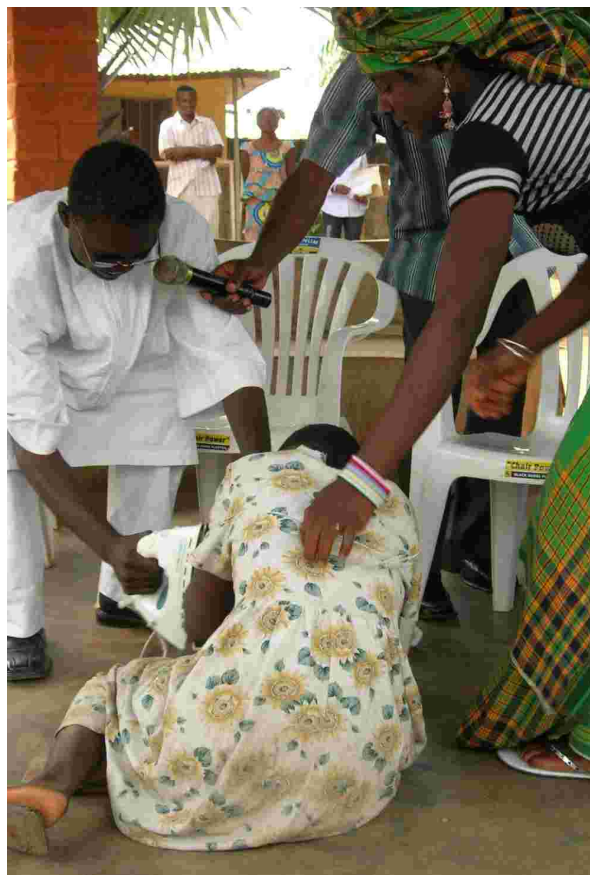
During the planning phase of the project, the management of Fantsuam Foundation had several meetings with members of the host community including parents of the CCC children and other stakeholders to present the project idea and get feedback on how they felt about the project and capture suggestions on how to meet the objectives of the project. The results of these meetings were used to determine the activities of the plan developed for the project.

#### *Development of Children for Change Drama Group*

The coordinator of the Children for Change (CFC) Drama Group assumed responsibility for the creation of the group and its operations. The coordinator developed the drama to be performed and determine the roles to be played. The drama was a relatively short one-act play of approximately twenty minutes in length derived from a real live situation existing in the host community. The theme provided a representation of a children's right issue.

Using the Children's Computer Club as a base for recruitment, the coordinator determined which of the children might be candidates for inclusion in the CFC drama group. Membership of the drama club was open to any child interested, and many of the children were interested, but required that the child was ten years old or older, to handle the demands of playing a role and understanding the issue to be portrayed, there was also a vetting session to pick the best actresses and actors. Prior to their inclusion in the group, permission from the children's parents was sought and obtained. The parents of the members of the drama group were called to a meeting and told what the aims and objectives of the FACC were and how we aimed to achieve them, those that could not attend were visited at home. Once they understood this and the important part their children would be playing, they readily granted their permission.

Themes for the drama's to be done by the drama group were determined from outputs from brainstorming and interview sessions attended by members of the host community, staff, donors



*A short play depicting abuse suffered by a girl accused of witchcraft*

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and other stakeholders during the initial consultations with in the planning of the project. These themes were centred on child rights abuses that were common in the daily lives of the community members. Rehearsals of the drama took place at a time convenient decided by all members of the group, sometimes after the Children's Computer Club on Saturdays or on a weekday after school. At the same time as the rehearsals were taking place, the coordinator made contact with the schools in the area to explore acceptable timings for the drama group to stage performances. Performances did not take place more than once or twice per month to minimize disruption of the performers' own schooling. By the time the group had perfected their play and were conducting final rehearsals for the day of change, they were obvious and noticeable changes in the drama club members. They clearly had more understanding of the issues they were depicting in drama and had a lot more confidence in talking openly even with adults about the issues.

The coordinator also worked with the FACC person who was designated as the community and media liaison to ensure that coverage of the group was maximized and other opportunities for performance outside of the schools were identified. The services of a professional drama teacher from the neighbouring college of education was engaged to coach the children in proper drama presentation to maximize stage presence.

Finally, in conjunction with the Day for Change scheduled for December, the CFC drama group performed their drama as one of the highlights of the program. The coordinator and drama group chose to develop new dramas for the occasion.

### *Lobbying for change activities*

The coordinator responsible for the lobbying activities began his role by first appointing an individual to assume the role of legal analyst for FACC. This was done by canvassing the legal contacts within the Fantsuam Foundation volunteer program. The person that took on the role of legal analyst first reviewed the legislation and policies present in the state and compared them with other jurisdictions recognized for having effective child welfare and protection mechanisms in place. The analyst then provided a report for the coordinator that detailed the areas where gaps existed. Working with the coordinator, the legal analyst developed a model legislation and with policies that addressed the problems currently found in the Nigerian legislation and policies. This was to be drafted so that any legislature could use them as a basis for the development of legislation to be implemented.

While the legal analyst was conducting his review of the legislation, developing a gap analysis and drafting the model legislation, the coordinator was working to develop a children's parliament as an event to launch the presentation of the model legislation to local legislators. This involved researching how the Nigerian parliament works and developing materials suitable for children to help explain to them the workings of the parliament.





*Members of the children's Parliament*

As with the CFC drama group, the coordinator for the children's parliament looked to the Children's Computer Club for candidates to include in the children's parliament. Selection to the parliament required that the person be at least eight years old, the new parliamentarians now had to elect officials to office. This was a purely democratic process conducted by the coordinator and instructors to ensure fairness and order. It was surprising to see that the children were learning and already applying some of the lessons about the child right issues discussed with them. For instance, they ensured there was gender equality in the choice of officials for the parliament. Once selected, the members of the children's parliament were instructed in the workings of parliament.

The Model legislation script made for the FACC was based on the existing one used in real Nigerian houses of assembly to give the children of the FACC a better understanding of the law making processes. This meant that there was not much room for modifications and as such could only be simplified for use by children. Once the model legislation had been developed, the coordinator and legal analyst worked together to adapt it for use by the children's parliament and developed a script for the performance. The script was given to the children who further adapted, so it could be more easily understood by their colleagues and other child audiences. The process of fine tuning the script and rehearsing it was a great learning opportunity for the parliamentarians to fully grasp the workings of the legislature and how laws could be created to help address the issues of child rights In the state. One of the instructors for the lobbying for change activity said 'I have never seen children change so much over such a short period of time'. The reason for the statement was the fluency and confidence with which the members

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of parliament now argued child right issues during sessions and even at home. There were already positive reports from parents and teachers of the children about the changes in their behaviour, they already stood out from other children and were aware of their new positions as models for others. The most striking thing about including the children in the creation of the parliament was how little guidance and chaperoning they needed once they understood the issues and gained the confidence to speak out. The parliamentarians were responsible for the development of their own annual work plan and contributed in the development of other funding proposals for FACC activities.

The coordinator also worked to secure the cooperation of locally elected representatives and community leaders to set up the date and location for the children's parliament. Ideally, this would have been at the site of the local legislature, but it took place in Fantsuam premises. Once confirmed, the coordinator worked with the person assigned the community and media liaison duties to ensure the community and media were informed of the event. In addition to setting up the children's parliament, the coordinator and legal analyst also worked to draft a letter to legislators that addressed the shortcomings of the current legislative scheme with recommendations for change. This letter was to be prepared for signature by members of the local community. At events such as the Day of Change, these letters would be available to members of the public, who could sign them after the letters were explained in satisfactory detail. Signed letters could then be collected and sent to local elected representatives.

#### *Development of FACC website and newsletter*

The person responsible for the development of the FACC website and newsletter began by finding an individual schooled in web design who volunteered to assist in the creation of the website. This person was found through the network of individuals who have received technical computer training at the Foundation. Working with the other individuals in the executive of the FACC, the coordinator ensured that all aspects of the FACC were represented on the website, with upcoming events highlighted along with directions on how individuals may assist the FACC. The coordinator also sought to get contributions for the website content from the Children's Computer Club members and Parliamentarians.

The newsletter contained case studies and stories of children's rights and abuses. It also contained interviews of members of the community and their views on child rights. The children contributed to their own stories and pictures, upcoming event information was also provided in newsletter to alert communities of activities planned.

At the same time as the website was being developed, the coordinator started work on creating the first quarterly newsletter for the FACC. Similar to the website, the coordinator worked with the other members of the FACC executive to provide material for the newsletter, along with contributions from the local children. Some of the children were asked to write articles for the newsletter, while others were asked to conduct mini censuses within the community. The results of these were all included in the publication. Once the newsletter had been completed, it was printed through local printers and distributed among community centres and other gathering

places for the local community. In addition, the efficacy of a mailing list was considered and copies of the newsletter were mailed to partners and contacts. The newsletters reached many people and there were various reactions, as a result, people started reporting cases of child abuse to the organization and on one occasion brought some children to the offices for protection after they had been accused of witchcraft.

The coordinator had the additional responsibility of developing the pamphlet promoting the FACC. It was a small document of no more than four pages that detailed the activities of the FACC. Once designed, the pamphlet was printed by local printers and made available to all FACC partners.

### *Day of Change Event*

The Day of Change Event was the centrepiece of FACC's activities for the year. It was a celebration of children and an opportunity to draw the attention of people to and sensitize them on child right issues. The idea for the Day of Change was suggested during one of the consultative meetings with members and elders of the community. This was meant to be a strong publicity and advocacy effort to show the importance of addressing child right abuses within the community, a one-day event in December meant to highlight the concerns faced by children in the local community. It was on a Saturday to ensure maximum availability of people invited to attend.



*The keynote speech delivered by a member of the National Assembly during the Day of change.*

The person chosen to coordinate the event began immediately to secure confirmation of the attendance of community leaders, the media, youth groups and other high profile individuals. Some of the community members and leaders were invited to participate through the delivery of speeches. Others were invited because their mere presence would lend credibility to the event in the sight of the local community and ensure that they take the issues depicted in the drama and parliament session to be very important

The coordinator worked with the person responsible for the CFC drama group to ensure that the drama to be presented on the Day of Change was ready to be performed. The coordinator also had the responsibility of developing the other events to occur on the Day of Change, the most notable of which was the Children's March. The children's march was a procession through the community by the children of the FACC along with staff of Fantsuam Foundation and some local dignitaries to raise awareness. The march turned out to be a big event as many members of the community joined and eventually attended the event.



*Children's March through the host community*

Other details of the event, such as refreshments and music, were also the responsibility of the coordinator. The coordinator ensured that there was advance notice of the Day of Change by working with the person designated as the media and community liaison and the persons responsible for the FACC newsletter and website.

The event brought the attention of the people of the community and the entire local government to the injustices suffered by children because of lack of awareness of their basic rights. The presence of some important government officials who spoke and made pledges to help advocate for the passage the child right act in the state was one of the major achievements of the day.

#### *Development of curriculum for children*

The children's curriculum was designed to contain instructions on how to raise awareness among children of their rights and how to prevent and address abuse. The person chosen to develop the curriculum regarding children's rights and their abuses began by researching the topics for presentation and how best to present them to children. This effort included securing the assistance of individuals in the local community who have had experience working with children and also canvassing of opinions of the person selected to be the legal analyst for FACC's lobbying efforts or other legal experts in the local community. Some of the individuals within the community contacted included the local chief and some elders. They were interviewed and their views on the topics were used to help in developing the curriculum.



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The curriculum was developed based on literature on child rights issues collected from partners who vast experiences working with children. Once the materials detailing the subject matter had been prepared, the coordinator ensured that parents in the community were notified of the intention to present the materials to children attending the Children's Computer Club. He did this by calling a gathering of the parents and talking them through the curriculum to get their reactions to any of the issues raised. Many of the parents were glad of the opportunity to hear and understand better about the common practices in the community that undermine the rights of children. Any parents who objected to their children receiving this instruction was asked to attend an informal session further detailing the information to be presented. If they continued to object, their children were excused from receiving this information, as was the case with a few children.

### 3. Implementing and Monitoring

The executives elected to run the FACC project were responsible for the implementation of the project. This group met regularly to ensure that the plans that had been laid out for the activities were followed accordingly. They regularly held reviews to make sure that any new learning's were incorporated in the plan to keep it on course.

The coordinator of FACC was also a member of Fantsuam Foundation's project monitoring team, he reported to the team at each monthly meeting the progress and challenges. The purpose of the project monitoring team is to ensure that each project achieves its target and to ensure that each team leader gets all the support and help to achieve this.

During the planning and design of the project, certain quantitative indicators were measured to help in determining to what extent the FACC objectives had been met in future evaluations. Among these were; a baseline population of children in the target community was determined by the team, a needs assessment of the levels of education, nutritional and financial needs of the children in the target community. Information from this baseline was used to determine the scale to which each of the FACC activities determined would be carried out and what other issues would have to be addressed on order to effectively address the problems that the project sought to. For instance, the baseline that showed the results of the nutritional and financial needs of children also allowed the project team to make more informed decisions that were critical to the success of additional interventions outside the original plan. Like including some of the FACC children in an existing programme of Fantsuam Foundation to provide added nutritional support to children from homes who could not afford it. Some of the deliverables of the project served as indicators for activities that had measurable results. For instance, the website and newsletter plans showed that case studies had to be compiled, pictures had to be collected and edited to be included in the publications. These sorts of tangible/measurable deliverables served as indicators that were used by the FAAC executive and funders to measure progress of the project.

## 4. Evaluating the Project

The evaluation of the project was ongoing even during the execution of the various activities. The thorough planning at the initial stage of the project produced the work plan that guided the implementation of the project.

On a weekly basis there was a review meeting by the executive of the FACC to check progress against work plan and incorporate any lessons learnt or observations made during the previous week. The results of these evaluations fed directly into the decisions that carried into the next activities of the project. There was also mid-term review of the project carried out by the donor to measure and ensure that targets were met and plans followed. During this review, challenges and progress of the project were examined and ideas about solving them discussed. For instance, at the time of the mid term review, it was still a challenge to actively involve some of the federal law makers in advocacy efforts; the donor offered to speak to some of them on Fantsuam Foundation's behalf, and one eventually took interest and was the keynote speaker at the Day of Change event.

One of the methods used to collect feedback from boundary partners during and after the project for purposes of evaluation was informal interviews and discussions to determine the impact of the interventions in the communities.

## 5. Conclusion

Through using various methods of participation, the project improved the managerial and technical capacities of the target groups by exposing them to a number of different skills and training them in these capacities. Among the skills that the children were encouraged to develop were acting, writing and parliamentary procedure, as a direct result there were obvious changes in their fluency and command of the English language. The same was noticed in their confidence levels. The older children were involved in advocacy efforts that allowed them to develop the skills needed for future careers in law or humanitarian efforts. Two youth representatives were included in the executive of the FACC, giving them exposure to the operation of an organization and allowing them to develop the managerial skills inherent in the running of such a group.

Fantsuam Foundation was also improved by the establishment of FACC through the development of skills in the area of advocacy, which have been under-developed in the organization to date. The organization also developed skills in other areas that will cross over to the other functions performed by the organization, including the creation of newsletters and other promotional activities.

The implementation of the FACC project did not always go as planned, there were instances that called for the review of certain actions in order to proceed. Of note was a particular instance involving members of the children's parliament.



*Census being conducted by a member of the FACC*



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During the census to determine the demographics of children in bayan loco, while visiting a couple of houses to count the number of children, there were reports that some of the parliamentarians we driven off and warned not to return. On further inquiry it was discovered that some parents thought the census was a ploy to initiate their children into witchcraft.

The FACC team along with the children met to decide how best to sort the problem out, there were various suggestions from the children that included the FACC executive visiting the particular homes they got driven out from to enlighten the parents about the mission of the FACC. The executive accepted the suggestion and visited the households to speak with the parents and explain what the FACC children were doing. This proved very effective and not only allowed the children continue the census without fear of further intimidation but also allowed the FACC to reach people that had firmly believed that children had no rights.

Other constraints that exist in Kaduna State as a whole that were challenges for the FACC project included; a fundamental lack of education and appreciation on the part of adults in the area regarding the needs of children. Children are often regarded as being no different from adults and of lesser consequence in many cases. Abuses occur because the children are seen to exist to serve the interest and pleasure of the adults and not as individual human beings. At the institutional level, the interests of children have been assigned a lower priority because they do not possess the capability to influence the direction of government. This ignorance has become ingrained in the government, so any organization seeking to change the government's position on children's rights will be significantly challenged to do so. To be able the change this perspective by the majority of people living in our communities projects like FACC have to continue to be successful in raising awareness and bringing about first changes in attitudes, then changes in behaviour.

Another lesson learnt from the FACC project was that, children who were accused of witchcraft and had to be rescued from their families or other relation's required more than just safety and the sensitization of the abusers. These children needed medical, psychosocial and nutritional care, and in some cases they also needed financial and educational support. Therefore, children that have been abused usually need holistic care that incorporates all aforementioned attributes and any project that seeks to address these issues had to put these into consideration.

A very important lesson learnt during the project was that, most of the time, if people do not have complete information about an issue, they are bound to misunderstand it. Thus if you are not able to get them to understand and accept what is right, there will be someone whom they respect and listen to that you can reach and can help you make them understand. This was proven to be true at various stages in the implementation of the FACC activities, whenever there was a problem; the team would convene to determine what exactly was the root cause. The solution almost always was to involve the concerned parties more deeply in the execution of the project by asking them to help in sorting out the problem.

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# Participatory Research Study on Community Capacity Building: Efforts in Disaster Preparedness in Sri Lanka with Special Reference to 2004 Tsunami Disaster

By Mallika R. Samaranayake

## 1. Background and the Need for the Research

The Tsunami disaster in 2004 affected 60% of Sri Lanka's coastline, killing 35,000 men, women and children, displacing more than 250,000 families and disrupting the livelihood of the people inhabiting in the affected areas. It was the single disaster in living memory in Sri Lanka that caused such large-scale destruction to life and property. It highlighted the need for Capacity Building Programs for Disaster Management and Mitigation with institutionalized capacities within communities established on a sustainable basis. The spate of capacity building programs for disaster management and mitigation carried out on a large scale by Governmental and Non Governmental Organizations revealed the need for such capacities to be built and Institutionalized.

In the above context *capacity building programs* were carried on a large scale in response to the devastation caused by the Tsunami. These needed to be assessed *to ascertain their relevance, adequacy, efficiency, effectiveness and the sustainability* of community capacities built, resulting from the post Tsunami capacity building exercises during the period 2005 – 2007. The Cabinet Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights was established in terms of the gazette notification issued on 20th of February 2006. The newly created Ministry of Disaster Management and the Institutional structures being established at District level country-wide, the need for an assessment of the status of disaster management and mitigation capacities that existed within the community and the status of capacity building programs implemented by the Government and the Non-Governmental Agencies was considered a high priority. The case study presented here has been focusing on the degree to which the Government Organizations, International and National Non-Government Organizations and Community Based Organizations have been engaging in capacity building efforts in disaster preparedness and how the service providers perceive the impact of such capacity building efforts to be. Similarly, there is a need to obtain views of the communities at large, in order to ascertain how the interventions towards capacity building for disaster preparedness are perceived by them and affect them.

Oxfam America assigned the Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) to carry out a study to bridge the information gap. The study was carried out from June 2007 to February 2008. Oxfam America as an International Non-Governmental Organization a member of the Oxfam family considered it timely to initiate this participatory research study on community

capacity building efforts in disaster preparedness in Sri Lanka and to obtain views from all related stakeholders, their perceptions with regard to previous community capacity building efforts and suggestions as well as their recommendations for future capacity building strategies for disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction management.

Apart from direct involvement in disaster management interventions, attention also needs to be focused on what and how capacities to face disasters have been already strengthened. Some of the development initiatives of the Government, Non-Governmental Organizations and the Community Based Organizations engaged in activities which address social and economic issues have disaster management concerns addressed through their initiatives.

## 2. The Objectives of the Research

The proposed research was to study community capacity building efforts and community institutional capacity needed to cope with and respond to natural and human-made disasters, drawing from the experiences of the December 2004 Tsunami, with the primary objective of facilitating disaster preparedness and risk reduction in future disasters.

### *The specific Objectives addressed by the Research*

- Review of different community capacity building efforts of selected organizations in relation to their objectives and methodologies, and the effectiveness of those efforts to cope with and respond to disasters.
- Document best practices of such selected community capacity building efforts/ case studies
- Identify the aspects of community institutional capacity that are crucial during and following a disaster and towards which capacity building efforts and future strategies need to be directed, and
- Identify capacities and competencies, which are most needed by communities in order to cope with and effectively respond to both natural and man-made disasters in selected geographical areas.
- To determine the degree to which prior capacity building efforts of the selected organizations addressed the gender issues.

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### 3. Sample Selection

The selection criteria included the geographical coverage, vulnerability to different types of disasters in Tsunami affected and non-Tsunami affected areas, socio-cultural and socio-economic factors as well as livelihood types of the affected communities, consideration of natural as well as human made disasters and equity in terms of ethnic groups.

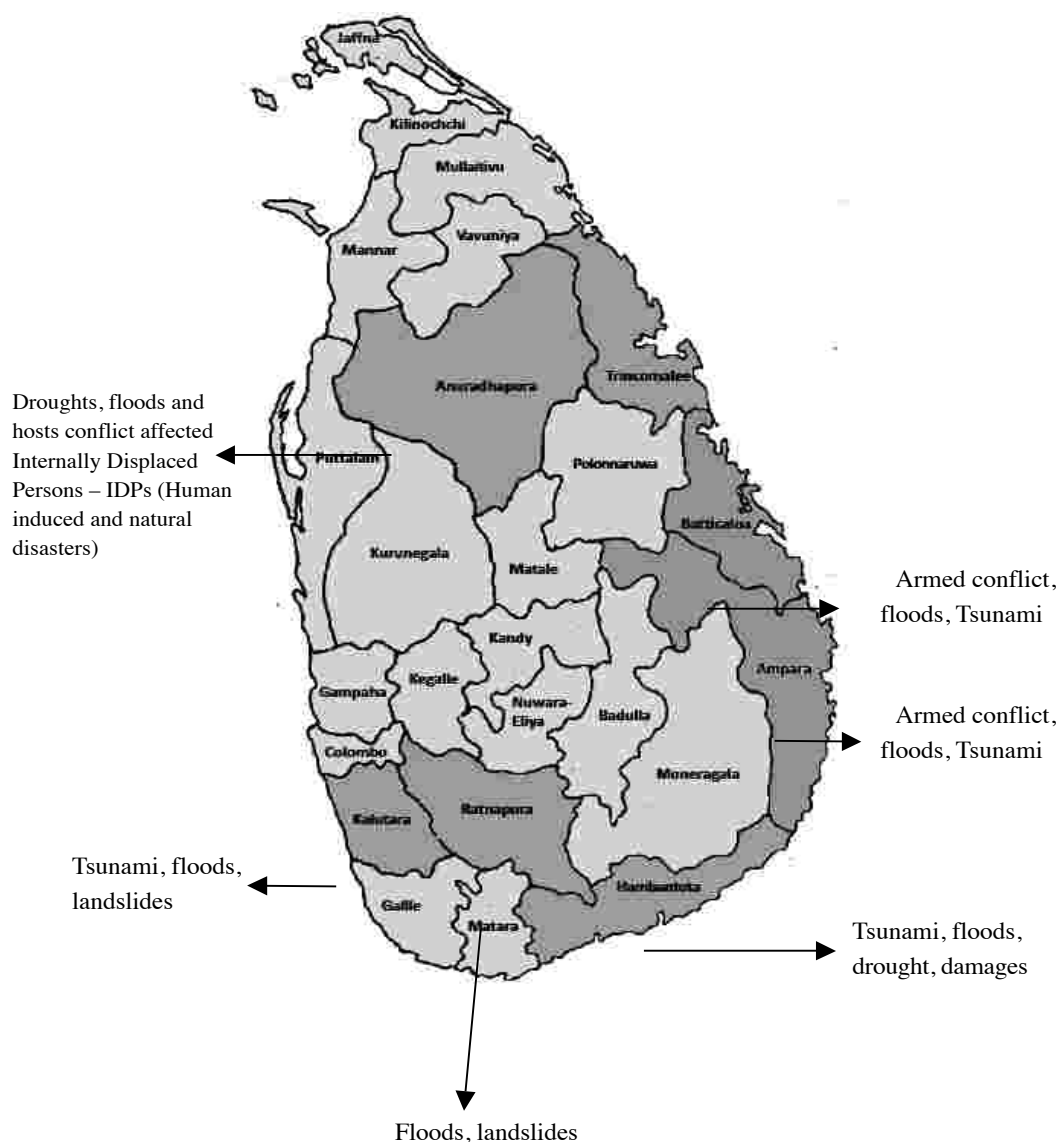
The geographical area selected for the study consisted of six districts (Figure 1) with special focus on those that were exposed to the Tsunami in December 2004. The districts Hambantota, Kalutara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Ampara were affected by the Tsunami. Anuradhapura and Ratnapura were not affected by the Tsunami but are prone to a mix of natural and man-made disasters. The Research Team undertook field visits to all districts except Trincomalee due to security constraints owing to the conflict situation that prevailed in the district at that time.

The *security situation* in the Eastern Province required participants to leave early, thereby causing a further limitation on the time available for interactions. The researchers had to adapt to the situation.

During the process of the study it became evident that a range of disasters affect different Districts. Some disasters are common to a number of Districts. The frequency of these disasters though varied is regular in occurrence. Floods are common during the South West and the North East monsoons. Between the monsoonal periods droughts take place. Epidemics associated with floods and droughts follow. Landslide damages occur periodically with heavy rains. Crop damages by wild elephants and other forms of wild life affect districts such as Hambantota and Anuradhapura during cultivation seasons and droughts. The conflict situation had continued for nearly two and a half decades at the time the study took place.

The communities interacted with were selected on the basis of disaster affected locations. The capacity building programs such communities were exposed to were therefore, limited to that particular disaster. The study sample selected purposively from identified locations in the above six districts involved primary stakeholders, the community. The sample was mixed purposively based on ethnicity and gender.

However, except in one workshop it was not possible to generate gender segregated information due to the composition of participants which did not enable gender-segregated groupings. As most of the males were involved in day-to-day livelihood activities, females attended the workshops. *Inadequate participation of males* was a limitation in obtaining their perceptions.



#### The districts selected for the research and the disasters affecting them:

Tsunami affected communities from two locations/ villages from each district were identified for intensive interaction during the process to obtain people's perceptions on the capacities and competencies needed to cope with and respond to the effects of these disasters and also to study community perceptions on capacity building programs of Government Organizations (GOs) and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Thus, 422 community members were engaged in a total of 12 half day participatory workshops involving 36 mixed community focus groups running parallel.

In addition, a representative sample of service providers engaged in capacity building process in the respective districts from among the Government and Non-Governmental sectors at different levels were identified for participation at the Stakeholder Workshops to ascertain their point of view as well as for triangulation. A total of 221 Officers participated in 06 one day workshops involving 12 focus groups with 23% female representation.

However, in several districts only a few NGOs participated in the assessment workshops. This was a limitation in that the necessary information relating to programs conducted/ participated by others could not be obtained in full. This limitation was there particularly in Kalutara and Ratnapura districts.

## 4. Methodology Adopted

A participatory research methodology/ approach was adopted in designing and implementing the study. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methodologies were applied for the purpose enabling the ownership of information to remain with the community and the participating stakeholders.

Several participatory tools such as Semi Structured Interviews (SSI), Focus Group Discussions (FGD), Key informant Interviews, Structured Formats with an adapted version of the score card system, *Venn Diagrams for institutional analysis* (Refer Figure 2 for an example) were used to assess the effectiveness of capacity building of communities conducted by various service providers. During the study process, the steps perceived by the community as important in community capacity building was elicited based on their hands-on experience in the aftermath of the tsunami. Case studies/ good practices from selected districts and video recordings of field activities complemented the literature review.



Group Work Session with Community in Elapatha-Karangoda, Ratnapura District

### Data Collection and Analysis - Methods used

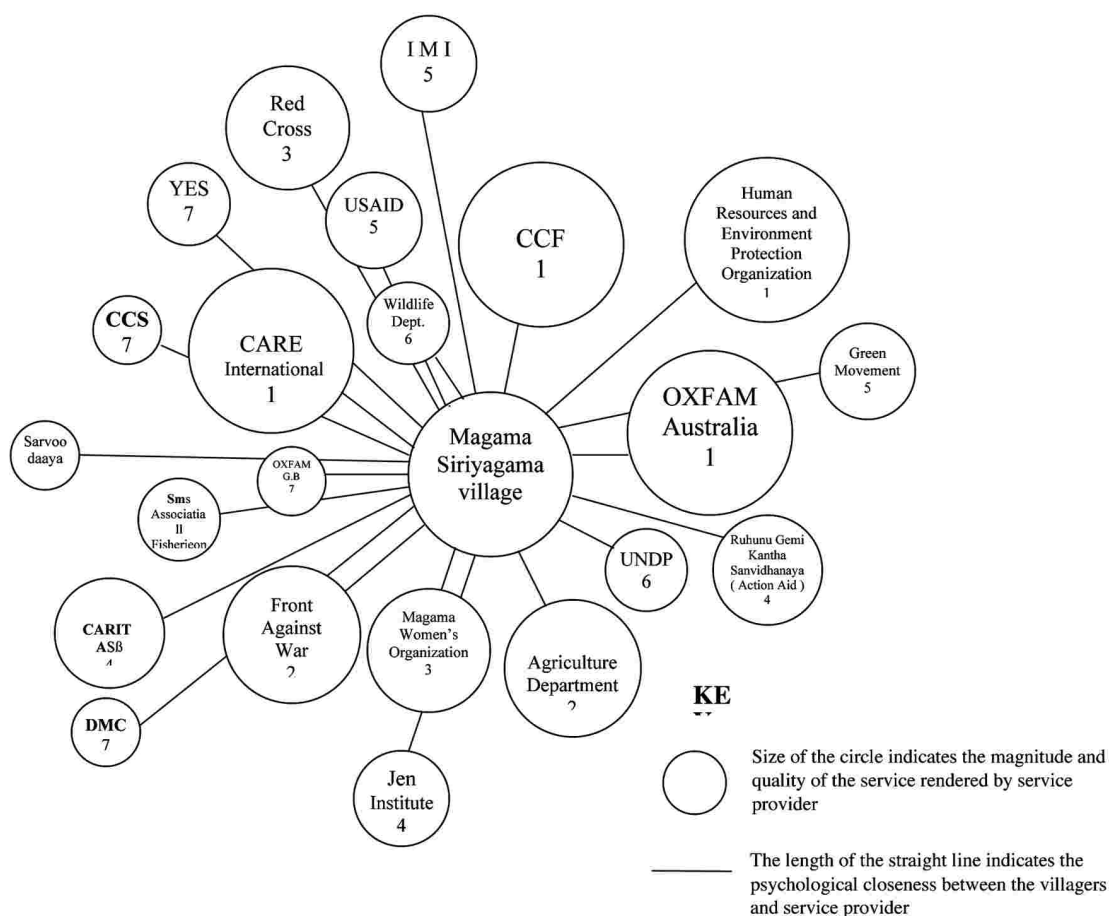
Research Questions and Information Collected	Study Approach	Methods / Tools Applied
<b>1. Disasters experienced in the District and their impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type of disasters faced by the community</li> <li>The probability of occurrence</li> <li>Number of families affected</li> <li>Impact on the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participatory approach in obtaining consensus through discussions with Government and Non Government officers in each district (using pre-prepared formats during the six workshops)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi- Structured Interviews (SSI) using structured formats</li> <li>Focus Group Discussions with GO and NGO representatives in each District</li> <li>Pre-prepared structured <i>Format No. 01</i> used for generation and analysis of information under each District</li> </ul>



<p><b>2. Assessment of capacity building Programmes conducted to Mitigate Impact of Disasters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of capacity building programs</li> <li>• Conducted by whom</li> <li>• Assessment of the adequacy to face future disaster situations by scoring</li> <li>• Reasons and suggestions for improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory approach in obtaining consensus through discussions with Government and Non Government officers in each district (during the six workshops conducted)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi- Structured Interviews (SSI) using structured formats</li> <li>• Focus Group Discussions with GO and NGO representatives in each District</li> <li>• Pre-prepared structured <i>Format No. 02s</i> used for generation and analysis of information under each District.</li> <li>• An adapted version of the <i>Score Card System</i> was used particularly for analysis of information for Assessment of Adequacy of the Capacity Building Programs to face disasters. A five point scale was used as follows; 5=very good, 4= Good, 3= Above average, 2=average and 1= below average</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Suggestions for future capacity building Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior to disaster</li> <li>• During the disaster</li> <li>• After disaster</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory approach in obtaining consensus through discussions with Government and Non Government officers in each district (during the six workshops conducted)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi- Structured Interviews (SSI) using structured formats</li> <li>• Focus Group Discussions with GO and NGO representatives in each District</li> <li>• Pre-prepared structured <i>Format No. 03</i> used for generation and analysis of information under each District</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Based on Experience the Shortcomings / Weaknesses of the Capacity Building Programs conducted in relation to Disasters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of programme</li> <li>• Shortcomings / weaknesses</li> <li>• Suggestions for improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory approach in obtaining consensus through discussions with Government and Non Government officers in each district (during the six workshops conducted)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi Structured Interviews (SSI) using structured formats</li> <li>• Focus Group Discussions with GO and NGO representatives in each District</li> <li>• Pre-prepared structured <i>Format No. 04</i> used for generation and analysis of information under each District</li> </ul>

<p><b>5. Assessing community capacity Building Programs by the Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of capacity building Programs</li> <li>• Conducted by whom</li> <li>• Assessment by scoring with reasons</li> <li>• Suggestions / recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory approach in obtaining consensus through discussions with the community in two locations/ villages in each district (during six community workshops conducted)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi- Structured Interviews (SSI) using structured formats</li> <li>• Focus Group Discussions with community in two locations/ villages in each District</li> <li>• Pre-prepared structured Format No. 05 used for generation and analysis of information under each District.</li> <li>• An adapted version of the Score Card System used for analysis of information particularly for assessment of adequacy of capacity building programs to face disaster situations. A five point scale was used as follows; 5=Very Good, 4= Good, 3= Above Average, 2=Average and 1= Below Average</li> <li>• The scoring was explained with reasons</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Specific features of Capacity Building Programs as perceived by the Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparedness for disasters</li> <li>• During the disasters</li> <li>• Strategies to face disasters (during and after)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory approach in obtaining consensus through discussions with the community in two locations/ villages in each district (during the six community workshops conducted)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi- Structured Interviews (SSI) using structured formats</li> <li>• Focus Group Discussions with community in two locations/ villages in each District</li> <li>• Pre-prepared structured <i>Format No. 06</i> used for generation and analysis of information under each District</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Assessment of Capacities of Institutions/ Organizations which Provide Services to the Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What Institutions / Organizations / groups / individuals interacted with the community and to what extent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory approach building on community perceptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group Discussions with community in two locations / villages in each District</li> <li>• Venn Diagramming with the community for obtaining information and analysis</li> <li>• The analysis is captured in the diagrams under Chapter 5.0 in each District</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The magnitude of services provided</li> <li>• The psychological distance as perceived by the community</li> </ul>		
<b>8. Learning from Best Practices in the context of Capacity Building initiatives in Mitigating Impact of Disasters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory approach in eliciting individual/ organizational efforts with a learning focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Case studies/ best practices based on individual/ organizational experience</li> </ul>
<b>9. Involvement of different Service Providers (Government and Non Government Sectors) in Capacity Building related to Disasters</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengths and weaknesses of capacity building programs conducted by various actors</li> <li>• Impacts of Disasters and Capacity Building Programs carried out in selected Districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory approach emphasising interactive discussions</li> <li>• Drawing from documented information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Literature review</li> <li>• Secondary data and information</li> </ul>



### Venn diagram Female Group – Magama Siriyagama village

The reasons for prioritization in the Institutional Analysis (an example from above) were as follows:

Name of institution/ organization	Priority	Reasons
Oxfam Australia	01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided houses to affected people</li> <li>• Mobilized communities for self employment</li> <li>• Implemented home development program</li> <li>• Conducted training programs</li> <li>• Helped during floods</li> </ul>
CARE International	01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided sanitation facilities</li> <li>• Selected children for assistance</li> <li>• Helped to construct kitchens</li> <li>• Helped to construct roofs of damaged houses</li> <li>• Formed children's Societies</li> <li>• Provided Flood Relief</li> <li>• Issued plants for home garden program</li> </ul>

*The methodology was adapted to elicit responses to open ended inquiry from stakeholders rather than close ended interrogations based on questionnaires administered on them with limited and structured pre-determined responses to choose from.*

*Research questions* were formulated to address specific objectives of the study. Free and open discussion was facilitated through the use of visualization techniques such as pre-coded colour cards (flash cards) and pre-prepared formats. Formats were used to elicit perceptions of Service Providers, both officials of Government Organizations and NGOs/CBOs (Community Based Organizations) at different levels, which contributed towards a comparative analysis. Different formats were used to obtain perceptions of community members (beneficiaries/ target group).



*Institutional Analysis (Venn Diagram) with Community in Helambagaswewa, Anuradhapura District*

However, language was a limitation to some extent in conducting the study in Batticaloa and Ampara Districts, constraining free and open discussions even though translation was provided in the local language. *Use of participatory tools* enabled triangulation and reaching consensus based on facts as perceived by the community in particular and the other stakeholders in general.

## 5. Evaluation of the Capacity Building Programs

The general impact of the disasters were marked by loss of life, displacement of the affected population, crops losses, property and infrastructure damages, health hazards, disruption of children's education, livelihood activities of communities, psycho-social problems of the disaster affected individuals, spread of disease and epidemics and socio-economic hardships.

*Four formats* introduced by the Research Team to enable the participants to visually display consensus arrived at in assessing the programmes by the GOs and the NGOS are as follows and comprise relevant information under each format.

**Format 01** – *Disasters experienced in the District and their Impact* (Type of Disaster, Probability of Occurrence, No. of Families Affected by the Disaster (approximately) and General Impacts)

**Format 02** – *Assessment of Capacity Building Programs conducted to Mitigate Impact of Disasters* (Type of Training/ Awareness Program, Conducted by whom, Adequacy to Face Future Disaster Situations using

“Scoring system”: 1= below average, 2= average, 3= above average 4=good, 5 = very good”,  
Reasons for the score and Suggestions/Remarks for Improvement)

**Format 03** – *Suggestions for Future Capacity Building Programs* (Prior to Disaster, During the Disaster and After Disaster)

**Format 04** – *Shortcomings / Weaknesses of the Capacity Building Programs conducted in relation to Disasters based on Experience* (Type of Programme, Short comings / Weakness observed and Suggestions for improvement)



NGO Participants in Group Work Sessions, Amapara District



GO Participants in Group Work Sessions, Batticaloa District

The formats 5 and 6 adopted for participatory assessments by the community participants in selected GN divisions are as follows:

**Format 05** – *Assessment by Communities of Capacity Development Programs conducted by the GOs, NGOs and CBOs.* ( Type of Capacity Building Program, Conducted by whom, Assessment using scoring system : 01 = below average, 02= average, 03 = above average, 04 = good and 05 = very good, Reasons for the score and Suggestions / Recommendations for improvement).

**Format 06** – *Specific features of Capacity Building Programs as perceived by the Community* (Preparedness for Disasters, During Disasters and Strategies to Face Disasters during and after / plans to be implemented.

*The communities interacted with* were selected on the basis of disaster affected locations. The capacity building programs such communities were exposed to were therefore, limited to that particular disaster.

*The brainstorming sessions of the three stakeholder groups; GOs, NGOs and the Community were held separately and as such, they did not look at the same capacity building programs.* Therefore, even though valuable feedback could be obtained on the programs that they were familiar with based on their own experience, it was not possible to do a comparative analysis on a program basis.



*The participants were encouraged to look at capacity building in a broad sense going beyond training and awareness creation.* However, the participants capacity to grasp the broader context of capacity building facilitated through the provision of technical support activities, including coaching, training, specific technical assistance, resource networking and enhancing organizational/ Institutional capacity of the community was found to be difficult and therefore, there were limitations in the output focusing more on training and awareness building programs conducted by the service providers.

## 6. Conclusion

The know-how gained through this study could contribute effectively to improve the quality of capacity building interventions by all activists whether they be Governmental, Non-Governmental or Community Based Organizations and Institutions. *Best practice* cases on community capacity building efforts and disaster management experiences were identified and documented in the publication<sup>(44)</sup>. The study process was documented as a *Video* “Participatory Research Study on Community Capacity Building Efforts in Disaster Preparedness in Sri Lanka with Special Reference to 2004 Tsunami Disaster”<sup>(45)</sup>.

In the context of the specific Governmental initiative in the form of establishing Disaster Management Centers and formulation of disaster management plans countrywide, there is an opportunity to promote coordination of capacity building efforts by the interested parties including NGOs and CBOs. *Lack of coordination resulting in duplication and the absence of consultation with the affected population in the formulation of plans and strategies* have surfaced as weaknesses which could be addressed effectively in the course of the current initiatives pooling resources and coordinating plans. The weaknesses observed in the past could thereby be minimized. It is due to this reason that the current study becomes significant. With these developments described above it has become essential to have “*disaster management as a discipline*” to be taken up in the country. It makes this study all the more relevant in the given context.

Analysis by the stakeholders of capacity building programs point to the fact that in many an instance *Needs Assessments had not been carried out before planning the programs*. Besides, it was also evident that sufficient attention had not been paid to *gender issues when planning capacity building programs*. Having implemented the programs, it was observed that no clear effort seemed to have been made either by the GOs or the NGOs to ascertain how effective and sustainable these programs were. This was particularly significant in respect of *resource persons* deployed in some locations who were not adequately competent. Neither had there been any attempts made to follow up on the programs. Presumably there had been no monitoring of these programs designed in such a way to get feedback either.

1- This article is based on the publication “Participatory Action Research Study on Community Capacity Building Efforts in Disaster Preparedness in Sri Lanka” - 2008 by Mallika R. Samaranayake, Chairperson Institute for participatory Interaction in Development (IPID)

2 - Copies available on request from IPID, 591, Havelock Road, Colombo – 06, Sri Lanka

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The adoption of an interactive process, providing space for a participatory approach in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of capacity building programs using PRA tools/ techniques have proved valuable to the programs establishing ownership with the community. The study carried out using participatory methodologies reaching out to stakeholders at different levels including the members of communities highlighted the need for planning capacity building programs using participatory tools and tailor made programs relevant to disasters affecting each of the Districts. The opportunity to obtain the foregoing feedback from the stakeholder participants in the current study is attributed to the participatory interactive sessions carried out among and between the different stakeholders. The Stakeholders were facilitated by Researchers experienced in participatory methodologies, a fact highly appreciated by all stakeholder participants at the end of interactive sessions.

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