A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN PRACTICE: UNDERSTANDING FIELDWORKERS' USE OF PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL IN ACTIONAID THE GAMBIA

IDS WORKING PAPER 123

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SUMMARY

Why do fieldworkers use participatory approaches as they do? This paper uses a case study of fieldworkers' use of Participatory Rural Appraisal in ActionAid the Gambia to address this question. Original empirical material that focuses on fieldworkers' perception of the factors that influence them is examined through the conceptual framework of structuration theory. The paper argues that the practice of a participatory approach emerges from a complex process of negotiation where fieldworkers are subject to unique combinations of competing influences from the organisation they work for, the communities they work with and their own personal characteristics. It suggests that fieldworkers can actively pursue personal agendas and can also be involved in changing the structures that condition their actions. However, the paper concludes that elements of the organisational structure can leave little room for fieldworkers to use their agency positively. Managers need to change this structure if the gap between the policy and practice of participatory approaches is to be reduced.

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

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PREFACE

This working paper is part of a series of papers arising from the *Pathways to Participation* project. The *Pathways to Participation* project was initiated in January 1999 with the aim of taking stock of experience with Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). In the ten years since PRA first began to gain popularity in development, it has come to be used by an enormous range of actors and institutions throughout the globe. Promoted as a common sense, inclusive, accessible and above all 'people-centred' approach, PRA has gained currency in diverse circles and given rise to as diverse an array of practices. Yet what 'PRA' means to the different people who use, commission and experience it has remained rather opaque. From the generalised promotion of PRA to generalised critiques, there is little of that clarity that Cohen and Uphoff (1980) argued so passionately for at the end of a decade in which participation first entered the mainstream of development practice.

The *Pathways to Participation* project grew out of a linked set of concerns. On the one hand, practitioners had been raising questions about issues of quality, depth and ethics for some years. With the rapid uptake of PRA, these concerns were deepening. On the other, with the multiplication of meanings and practices associated with PRA, it seemed increasingly important to gain a clearer sense of what was being done, as well as what worked, for whom and how. Building on the tradition of critical reflection that is embedded in many participatory methodologies, the *Pathways to Participation* project sought to set the meanings and uses of PRA within the particular contexts in which it is practised and with regard to broader currents in participation in development. As an action research process, the project has sought to catalyse and support processes that share the ultimate goal of deepening reflection in order to identify positive measures that could help enhance the integrity and quality of PRA practice. The variety of activities supported by the project range from collaborative case study research, national and international reflection workshops, networking activities, video and practitioner exchanges.

An initial process of open-ended dialogue with a spectrum of actors engaged in various ways with PRA in three focal countries – Kenya, Nepal and Mexico – formed a preliminary starting point for project activities. Three preliminary, agenda-setting country reflection papers were produced, giving rise to a series of focused case studies which explore different dimensions of participatory practice. Two of these initial reflection papers are reproduced in this working paper series; the case studies are to be produced locally. The third paper is to be published as part of a separate publication drawing together case studies from Mexico. The project also supported in-depth field research that sought to explore in depth the practices associated with PRA as set within particular organisational, cultural and social contexts. Studies in India, the Gambia and Vietnam provided further comparative material. National-level workshops and an international gathering of PRA practitioners served as fora for reflection and debate. The latter has given rise to two publications, a detailed workshop report and a collection of papers reflecting on individual practitioners' own pathways to participation, capturing both a diversity of perspectives on PRA and practitioners' views on current and future challenges.

This working paper series includes an overview of key lessons learnt and their implications for practice, country reflection papers from Mexico, Kenya and Nepal, and three case studies from Kenya, India and the

Gambia. The *Pathways to Participation* project was funded by Sida, DFID and SDC, as part of support to the Participation Programme at IDS. As a collaborative initiative, the project took shape through the involvement of numerous individuals and organisations, who played a vital part in realising project activities and in the processes of reflection that the project helped set in train. While these papers represent some of the formal outputs of the project, the project has given rise to a wealth of informal forms of sharing lessons learnt and reflections on the past, present and future. It is our hope that this project has helped serve as a stimulus for ongoing processes of critical reflection from which so much remains to be learnt.

Andrea Cornwall and Garett Pratt, IDS, November 2000

ABBREVIATIONS

AATG	ActionAid The Gambia
AAUK	ActionAid United Kingdom
AFD	Agence Francaise de Developpment
APB	Annual Plan and Budget
CAP	Community Action Plan
CBM	Community Based Management
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDW	Community Development Worker
DA	Development Area
DFID	Department For International Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEC	General Executive Committee
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PMID	Programme Monitoring and Information Department
PMIS	Programme Monitoring and Information Systems Officer
PO	Programme Officer
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SSI	Semi-Structured Interviews
TANGO	The Association of Non Governmental Organisations
VDG	Village Development Group

1. INTRODUCTION

The 1990s saw the concept of 'participation' enjoying greater official legitimacy in the international development community than ever before (Stiefel and Wolfe 1994). Participatory approaches have been widely incorporated into the policies of non-governmental and state organisations involved in development activities (Blackburn and Holland 1998). There has, however, frequently been a gap between participatory rhetoric and participatory practice (Nelson and Wright 1995). Many development organisations are now wanting to apply participatory research and development more effectively and are asking how to institutionalise such approaches into day-to-day practice (Thompson 1995).

To respond to this concern, the factors that have a positive and negative impact on the practice of participatory approaches must be identified so that these can be either promoted or resolved (Chambers 1994c). However, to understand such practice it is necessary to understand the actions of staff working at the field level. Although their role has been relatively neglected in development literature, fieldworkers are critical to the participatory process as they implement the organisations' policies and facilitate the participatory activities.

This paper examines how and why fieldworkers use participatory approaches in the way that they do. It focuses on the use of the participatory approach Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in The Gambia and examines the case of fieldworkers employed by the non-governmental organisation ActionAid The Gambia (AATG)[1]. It uses an actor-orientated perspective that emphasises how the fieldworkers themselves perceive the factors that influence their behaviour. It aims to explain why there is a gap between the current policy expectations of AATG and PRA practice and suggests how AATG can achieve their objectives more effectively in the future. As it is now two years since the original research, ActionAid the Gambia have moved forward with their own reflection process on participation in their programmes. Many of the issues raised in the paper have also been discussed by the staff, and have started to be addressed through organisational changes. This paper is thus a snapshot of the state of practice within ActionAid at a point in time. For readers interested in more current information about ActionAids' own reflections and change, more information is included in Annex 1.

The paper uses a theoretical framework based on the longstanding social science concern with the respective roles of structure and agency in determining behaviour. Attention is given to how structural factors, such as the organisation, the communities that it aims to serve and the social context, interact with fieldworkers' agency. The agency of fieldworkers, based on personal characteristics, attitudes and behaviour, includes an individual's ability to choose between various courses of action and inaction, impose their own agendas and change the structural factors that are influencing them. The paper concludes by arguing that, despite the importance of their agency, fieldworkers require minimal structural conditions within which to operate and that the managers of development organisations attempting to implement participatory approaches are largely responsible for providing them.

Chapter 2 will discuss locate the study in the relevant literature. Chapter 3 will provide background information to the case study. Chapters 4-7 will examine the empirical material and discuss alternative

explanations for fieldworkers' PRA practice in AATG. The final chapter will reflect on the opportunities for change that exist and draw lessons for development management and research.

2. STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

Much of the literature concerning the use of participatory approaches by fieldworkers in developing countries emphasises the central role of the organisational structure. The manipulation of an organisation's structure – its policies, resources, governance mechanisms, social relations and institutions – is seen to be able to influence the behaviour of employees so that they will implement policy effectively. There has been a particular concern that 'bureaucratic institutions try to embrace participatory approaches without changing their operation procedures and organisational culture' (Thompson 1994: 56). For participatory approaches to become effectively institutionalised, 'complex organisational changes' (Blackburn and Holland 1998: 3) are seen to be required. A range of organisational structural factors that frequently inhibit participatory approaches, but will enable such approaches if changed, have been identified in this literature: policy documentation, hierarchy, accountability, rule systems, planning procedures, physical targets, financing mechanisms, incentives, rewards, sanctions, recruitment, training, and the learning environment and organisational culture. [2]

There are, however, limitations to how the existing literature has used the concept of structure in understanding fieldworkers' practice of participatory approaches. First, the focus has been on organisational structure. The influence structural factors outside the organisation, such as wider social relations and clients, have been largely ignored (Degeling and Colebatch 1984). Second, in demonstrating the important influence of organisational structures on fieldworkers, fieldworkers are often depicted as more powerless than they actually are. The approach tends to assume that if the structure is understood then it is possible to understand people's behaviour. It tends to deny the extent to which human agents have freedom to choose how they behave. As a result, it becomes difficult for such an approach to explain the variation in fieldworkers' behaviour within the same structural conditions. In addition, if structure simply determines behaviour, it is unlikely that the structure itself, or the resulting behaviour, will change. Therefore, a structural approach cannot adequately explain why structures and practices change as they do or the role of fieldworkers in this change. These limitations suggest that it is necessary to incorporate the notion of actors and agency in the understanding of fieldworkers' behaviour and use of participatory approaches.

'Actor-orientated' approaches emphasise the both the structural and non-structural explanations that actors attach to their own actions and attribute to the actions of others (Degeling and Colebatch 1984). They assume that patterns of practice are partly created by the actors themselves. However, although these approaches overcome the problems of structuralism, an actor-orientated perspective has been criticised for a tendency to adopt a voluntaristic view of decision-making and action where actors are seen to act independently of any structural influence. Some of actor-orientated approaches have attempted to explain social behaviour primarily in terms of individual motivations, intentions and preferences and have given insufficient attention to examining how individual choices are shaped by larger frames of meaning and action (Long 1990). However, the most recent actor-orientated studies, including those reflecting on fieldworkers'

use of participatory approaches, emphasise the role of actors within a theoretical stance more closely associated with the 'structuration theory' of Giddens (1979; 1984).[3] This theory suggests that actors actively engage in the construction of their own social world through their 'agency' and yet their behaviour is also shaped by the social and organisational structures within which their lives are embedded.

Actor-orientated research programmes, in a wide variety of countries and sectors, have often demonstrated how 'intended beneficiaries' of development interventions actively shape patterns of development while embedded in, and simultaneously reproducing and transforming, their own specific structural circumstances (Long 1989). For example, Crewe and Harrison use various case studies, including one describing how a local woman became trained and then employed by a stove-making project in Kenya, to discuss how 'all actors are constrained by various pressures and limits but create their own space for manoeuvre when they can' (1998: 175). Studies such as these highlight the existence of choice, resistance and struggle of intended beneficiaries and emphasise the negotiated character of development outcomes rather than the linear implementation of a predetermined policy.

Such actor-orientated studies join others (e.g. Wade 1992) in identifying the key position that fieldworkers hold in this mutual determination of the development organisation/project structure and the actions of individual beneficiaries. It is increasingly recognised that practices and perceptions of fieldworkers have been relatively neglected due to the dominant organisation-centred literature that tends to assume that implementation is a mechanical process of carrying out orders (Booth 1994). However, although usually on the lowest rung of the organisation in terms of status and authority, these fieldworkers are capable of making or breaking a project (Jackson 1997a). As a result, actor-orientated approaches have also been used to specifically examine the role and experiences of fieldworkers in development programmes.[4]

Lipsky (ibid.) describes such actors as 'street-level bureaucrats' - public service workers who interact directly with the public in the course of their day to day work. They include police officers, teachers, health workers and, in the case of rural development programmes, fieldworkers. Lipsky argues that street-level bureaucrats have considerable power to influence how their organisation performs. This is because of the degree of discretion such street-level bureaucrats have in determining the nature, amount and quality of the service provided by their organisation to its clients. A worker has discretion wherever the effective limits on his/her power leave him/her free to make a choice among possible courses of action and inaction (Davis 1964 cited in Hill 1997a: 181). Street-level bureaucrats have such 'room for manoeuvre' (Clay and Schaffer 1984) because the nature of service provision 'calls for human judgement that cannot be programmed and for which machines are not a substitute' (Lipsky 1980: 161). Lipsky suggests that street-level bureaucrats can use their discretion to influence their organisation's structure in their position as 'de facto policymakers' (ibid.: 24). He understands an organisation's policy as that which is actually experienced by clients rather than simply as 'written statements of intent'. The degree of discretion available means that the decisions and actions of street-level bureaucrats can become significant determinants of such policy, although such actions are seen to be embedded within specific social and organisational settings. Goetz (1996), for example, uses these concepts to demonstrate that fieldworkers, by exercising their agency, can shape a rural credit programme through their personal choices, opinions and behaviour.

A focus on fieldworkers as social actors and discretionary agents, with the ability to determine their own actions, has provided a central theme to some streams of literature on participatory approaches, particularly those surrounding PRA and the writings of Chambers. Chambers (1995) emphasises the 'primacy of the personal' and feels that the choices of individual development professionals are key in determining how participatory processes are utilised. He believes that if participatory practices are to be improved, and participatory approaches are to be successfully institutionalised in organisations, personal change by development professionals is required (Chambers 1998). Chambers, and other proponents of this view, suggest that the focus of personal choice and change by facilitators of participatory approaches should be their 'attitudes and behaviour': 'The way we act, and more particularly the behaviour we display and the attitudes we hold, have a profound effect on others' (Blackburn and Holland 1998: 5).[5] Many see 'Attitudes and Behaviour Change' as the basic 'ABC' needed for good PRA within development organisations (Kumar 1996). The attributes of attitudes and behaviour commonly referred to in this context are listed in Box 2a.[6]

Box 2a: Appropriate attitudes and behaviour of PRA facilitators

- Outsiders sitting down
- Listening and learning rather than lecturing and imposing
- Relaxing and not rushing
- Handing over the stick
- Embracing error and falling forwards
- Being transparent
- Asking them
- Unlearning
- Using your own best judgement at all times

These ideas have been influential in the growing research and training literature on PRA. However, they have also been criticised for presenting a voluntaristic notion of fieldworker behaviour that ignores the role of both social and organisational structures. Brown (1997: 6) cites Chambers' argument that such changes in attitudes and behaviour by development professionals are possible and can lead to organisational change:

> Individual behaviour is not fully determined…Political, social and economic forces do operate, but when they are dissected, sooner or later we come to individual people who are acting, feeling and perceiving (Chambers 1983: 191).
>
> People can choose how to behave and what to do … Personal belief, behaviour and being are then the crux. If whole systems are to shift and transform, it will be because of the sum and the interaction of innumerable personal actions and changes in what sort of people we are (Chambers 1997: 13, 232).

Brown (op.cit.) criticises this perspective as highly individualistic and 'as sceptical of the conditioning influence of society as the most hardened Thatcherite'. In addition, with respect to organisational structure, Brown (ibid.: 7) believes that 'the institutional dimensions of the situation are consistently discounted, and the argument is diverted from the structural relationships to individual responsibilities'.

However, while clearly focusing on the attitudes of development professionals in personal and structural change, Chambers does show some consideration of the constraining and enabling nature of more structural issues. He recognises the existence of factors within development organisations that condition the use of participatory approaches by lower-level workers (1998: xv). As a result, he believes that:

> the changes needed extend back up hierarchies to include the cultures, procedures, incentives, rewards, and recruitment and staffing policies, of NGOs, and of government and donor agencies (ibid.: xiv).

Few empirical studies have been conducted on the agency of fieldworkers in a participatory project.[7] Such research is important for understanding the practice of participatory approaches because of the challenges often faced by fieldworkers in the utilisation of such approaches. As Lipsky (1980) suggests, it is when street-level bureaucrats face a situation that challenges their desires, preferences and commitments that they are most likely to use their discretionary power to devise strategies to improve their working environment, albeit within certain structural constraints (Hudson 1989). Pratt (1998) discusses this issue in his examination of a participatory Watershed Development programme in India. Pratt (ibid.: 20) cites Wilson (1989: 231), who suggests that street-level bureaucrats are more likely to accept practices that are 'familiar, easy, professionally rewarded, or well adapted to the circumstances in which operators find themselves'. However, as Pratt (op.cit.: 20) argues, for many fieldworkers 'participatory approaches are likely to be unfamiliar, difficult, professionally unrecognised, and in the perception of bureaucrats, poorly suited to their work environment'. They are therefore likely to use their discretion to make their working practices more conducive to their own objectives. Such practices, however, may not comply with the organisation's participatory goals and policies.

This paper uses an actor-orientated perspective to examine in detail how fieldworkers use a participatory approach in practice. The following chapter provides some background material to the case study.

3. BACKGROUND

Participatory Rural Appraisal

This paper focuses on fieldworkers' use of the participatory approach called Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA has been described as a family of approaches, methods and behaviours to enable poor people to express and analyse the realities of their lives and conditions, and themselves to plan, monitor and evaluate their actions (Chambers 1994a). PRA evolved out of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). RRA emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s as an alternative to conventional methods of appraisal and surveys based on questionnaires from a variety of disciplinary and methodological streams. It developed as an effective information-gathering approach for external professionals to learn about local people and conditions. In 1988, the term Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was first applied. It distinguished itself from RRA by its emphasis on the active participation of rural communities in the generation, ownership and use of the resulting information (Chambers 1994a). The methodological basis of PRA centres on 'setting up a structured dialogue using a variety of methods to share knowledge and analysis to develop practical actions' (Guijt and

van Veldhuizen 1998: 8). Table 3a presents the methods frequently associated with PRA. Recently greater emphasis has been placed on the attitudes and behaviour of external facilitators using these methods.[8]

Table 3a: PRA methods

Teamwork methods	Sampling methods	Discussion and interviewing methods	Visualisation methods
• team contracts • team reviews • peer assessments • interview guides and checklists • work sharing in local activities • local presentations • process notes and personal diaries	• transect walks • wealth ranking, well-being analysis • social maps • interview 'chains'	• semi-structured interviewing • direct observation • focus groups • key informants • ethnohistories and biographies • case studies	• participatory map/model • social map and wealth ranking • seasonal calendar • daily routine • historical profile • trend analysis • matrix scoring • preference/pair-wise ranking • Venn diagrams • network diagrams • systems diagrams • impact diagrams • pie diagrams

Source: Guijt and van Veldhuizen 1998: 10

Initially, PRA became particularly associated with three institutions that first supported the dissemination of its innovations: the Institute of Development Studies (IDS, UK), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED, UK) and Clark University (USA). However, although only one of many participatory approaches used in rural development,[9] in the last few years PRA has been applied in dozens of countries by thousands of organisations (Chambers 1997).

Many writers have critiqued PRA processes and outputs.[10] As with many participatory approaches development organisations have found it difficult to maintain quality and to implement their PRA policies as intended. For example, issues such as the lack of time and money (Leurs 1998), the routinisation of methods (Goyder 1998), the impact of social differences and power relations on participation and outputs (Mosse 1994; Guijt and Shah 1998) and inappropriate attitudes and behaviours of facilitators (Chambers 1997) have been identified. For managers, these challenges translate into questions about how to most effectively and efficiently improve the quality of such approaches. Most of these challenges, and possible solutions to them, are discussed in the following case study.

Participatory approaches in The Gambia

The case study investigates the use of PRA by a development organisation in The Gambia, West Africa. Box 3a summarises some background information on the country.

Box 3a: The Gambia

- The Gambia is one of Africa's smallest countries with a population of 1.1 million (Map 3a).
- It surrounded on all sides by Senegal, except for its short Atlantic coast.
- The country was under British colonial administration until 1965.
- There are five main ethnic groups, each with their own language (Mandinka, Fulani, Wolof, Jola and Serrahule).
- About 85 per cent of the population are Muslim but many hold traditional beliefs.
- 64.5% of people are illiterate.
- Life expectancy is 46 years.
- Over half the population do not have access to safe water.
- 1 in 8 children die before they are 5 years old.

Sources: ActionAid (1998); Sarch *et al.*, (1993)

Table 3b shows the range of participatory approaches used by international organisations, government departments and development organisations in The Gambia.[11] PRA is the most frequently used set of 'participatory methods' although PRA is used in a variety of ways (Table 3c). However, micro-planning, involving problem identification, needs assessment and the production of a community action plan has, so far, been the main application of PRA in The Gambia.[12] The practice of PRA during implementation, monitoring and evaluation appears to have been limited, despite some attempts in recent years.

Despite the emphasis on PRA methods for planning in The Gambia, most organisations interviewed use broader participatory approaches in addition to, or instead of, PRA. These have been more likely to involve people's participation at other stages in the project cycle. In particular, many organisations are involved in some form of Community-based organisation (CBO) development and capacity building that aims to encourage the participation of intended beneficiaries and/or their representatives in the implementation and management of development initiatives. The use of peer education and the operation of apex membership organisations, while not widespread across different organisations, are other examples of participatory approaches being used during implementation. Similarly, community advisory committees and stakeholder workshops have been used by some NGOs to encourage participation in monitoring and evaluation.

The participatory methods associated with PRA have grown in prominence in The Gambia from the early 1990s. In 1991, the then Director of the Department of Community Development, Mr Kuyateh, took part in a PRA exercise conducted by Land Tenure Centre (LTC) of Wisconsin University for USAID. He was then trained in PRA by LTC in Senegal. Also in 1991, three staff from ActionAid The Gambia (AATG) attended a PRA training course in Sierra Leone and, later that year, IIED conducted the first PRA training in The Gambia for forty AATG staff (IIED 1992). In early 1992, AATG organised another PRA training by Clark University for one hundred personnel from both government departments and NGOs (Ford *et al.*,

1992). These early training sessions have had a substantial impact on how PRA was and is understood and used in The Gambia. For example, the Clark University training portrayed PRA as a 'package' for the development of 'community action plans' (CAP).[13] As a result, much of the subsequent PRA training sessions and practice in The Gambia appears to have involved this 'package' approach.

Table 3b: The types of participatory approaches used in The Gambia

Participatory approach	Organisation example
Public meetings	National Environment Agency
RRA	ITC
PRA	ActionAid The Gambia
PLA/ PRA/ community forestry 'hybrid'	German-Gambian Forestry Programme
ZOPP	Food for Hunger Campaign
DELTA	Catholic Relief Services
Peer Education	Gambia Family Planning Association
Stakeholder workshops	Gambia Rural Development Agency
Community representatives sitting on advisory committees	Trust Agency For Rural Development
Membership organisations and elected representatives in apex organisations	Association of Farmer Educators and Traders
CBO development and capacity building	Association for Development of Women and Children

Table 3c: Uses of PRA in The Gambia

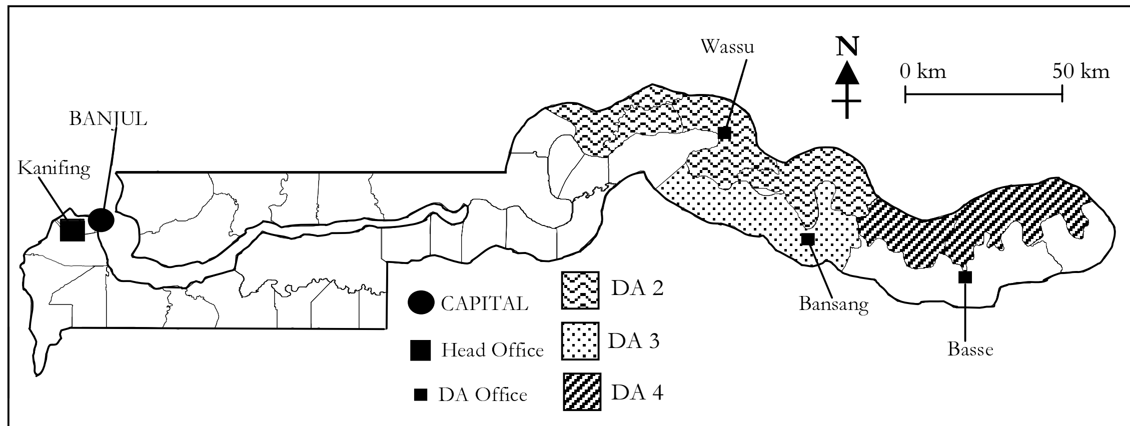
Use of PRA	Organisation example
Micro-planning: community plan development	ActionAid The Gambia
Macro-planning: organisation policy development	National Environment Agency
Awareness and education	Stepping Stones
CBO assessment	Agency for Personnel Services Overseas
Impact evaluation	Concern Universal

Since 1993, extension agents at The Gambian Rural Development Institute have received basic PRA training. Also from this period, PRA training has been conducted within many development organisations in The Gambia. Mr Kuyateh, the European Development Fund (EDF) and past and present AATG staff members have been the key trainers involved. Although PRA training has played an important role, these methods have also spread informally, particularly by the movement of trained staff between organisations on secondment or through new employment. However a particularly important formal training took place in February 1999. The Household Food Security component of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) /Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Poverty Alleviation programme organised PRA training for 340 development workers, involving participants and trainers from a wide range of government departments and NGOs. The FAO has recently submitted a funding proposal for extensive PRA training and attempts to further institutionalise PRA into government activities at all levels.

ActionAid The Gambia

ActionAid is the UK's third largest development non-governmental organisation (NGO). It works with over five million people in more than thirty countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (ActionAid 1998). ActionAid began operating in The Gambia in 1979 and it is the largest operational NGO in the country (Davies *et al.* 1999). ActionAid The Gambia (AATG) currently operates in three Development Areas (DAs) (Map 3a) and has a total of 195 staff, 45 of whom are fieldworkers (AATG 1998).

Map 3a ActionAid in The Gambia



(Adapted from Hussein *et al.* 1999 and AATG 1999)

Originally focusing on child education, AATG moved to a wide ranging service delivery approach offering a 'set menu' of programmes. However, since 1993, AATG has attempted a strategic shift towards a system of 'Community Based Management' (CBM). This aims to build community capabilities through local institutions so that people can manage the process of their own development (Saussier 1993). Although orientated towards seven-interlinked 'problem' areas associated with rural development (community institutions, water, food, environment, income, literacy and health), CBM involves AATG serving as 'a technical backstop, facilitator and advisor only' (AATG 1994: 5). Communities are encouraged, through their Village Development Group (VDG), to develop a Community Action Plan (CAP) and then implement and manage their own development priorities through resources largely provided by AATG in a revolving credit fund. Communities interact with AATG through a recently introduced decentralised management structure.

Community Development Workers (CDWs), as AATG's fieldworkers, are the main interface between AATG and the communities. The primary function of a CDW is to facilitate the CBM process at the community level.[14] They are allocated a Block of between nine to nineteen[15] communities depending on the size and location of the villages. A Programme Officer (PO) is responsible for the three to five CDWs in their Zone. There are about four Zones in each DA. The Specialists based at the DA office include those responsible for auditing, literacy, programme monitoring and information systems (PMIS), institution building and sponsorship as well as the administrative staff. Programme Monitoring and Information Department (PMID) manages the monitoring and information systems within the DAs.[16] PMID and the three DAs are responsible to those in the Head Office. AATG receives support from, and is ultimately accountable to, ActionAid in the UK.

Table 3d: Common template for a CAP in AATG

Village name:								
Problem?	Cause of problem?	Who is most affected?	What coping strategy is used?	What opport-unities are there?	What source of funding could be used?		When will this happen?	Comm-unity based indicators
					Comm-unity	External		
1. 2. 3.								

The policy and practice of PRA in AATG

There is no definitive written policy on PRA within AATG. However, the organisation's statements of intent surrounding CBM provide much of the policy framework for CDWs' use of PRA. These statements can be found in AATG's 'CBM Manual' (Baldeh 1997).[17] This Manual requires community-based planning to be:

> a process of assessing community needs, concerns/priorities, resource base and possible outside assistance for development programming (ibid.: 30).

The Manual states that this planning should take place during AATG's initial interaction with a community and should lead to the production of a Community Action Plan (CAP) on which all future development activities are then based. PRA is identified as the participatory methodology to be used in the 'CAP development' process. CDWs are required to conduct a PRA exercise, compile the findings (in English), present this to the community to review and produce a final version. A copy is then to be given to the community and is used by the CDW to design more detailed project proposals for all development activities. The community is supposed to feel ownership of the CAP and use it in their interactions with other development organisations. The Manual requires that there is 'continuous' 'CAP updating'[18] due to the 'dynamic nature of the communities with their ever changing needs and priorities' (ibid.: 31). It also emphasises the need for 'an effective monitoring and evaluation system set up by the people themselves' that is integrated into AATG's own M&E systems (ibid.: 69). This should be established at the community planning stage through the identification of 'community signposts of success' (ibid.: 44). These are included in CAPs as community-based indicators (CBIs). The Manual states CBIs should be developed and then assessed through PRA (ibid.: 71).

A targeting strategy, directing the organisation's attention to the 'very poor' rather than all community members, has recently been introduced into AATG's CBM approach, particularly in DA4. This has led to the identification of people with different levels of poverty during the initial CAP development using PRA.

According to the former Assistant Director, Policy and Research:

> communities should be given the choice to determine the poor among themselves, supported by good wealth ranking methods (Cham 1997: 35).

The CBM Manual contains what AATG sees as the rationale of PRA and a selection of PRA methods are described. However, this manual does not attempt to cover all the components of how AATG's management wants CDWs to use PRA. In fact, the remainder of this 'policy' is not written as statements of intent but comes from the PRA training received by CDWs.

PRA training appears to have three functions in AATG: first, to transfer the requirements contained in the written policy statements to CDWs; second, to fill in the detail of what is expected of CDWs in their use of PRA; and third, to enhance the PRA skills of staff. Karafa Manneh, manager of PMID, explained that there are currently two forms of formal PRA training for CDWs. There is a two-hour introduction to PRA as part of a one week 'orientation' training that takes place each year at the DA level for all new staff. There is also 3-5 days of training that occurs as a 'refresher course' every time there is a 'specific exercise' using PRA to be done.[19] This longer course usually involves group work, role-plays and, sometimes, practical sessions in villages with an opportunity for reflection afterwards. The trainers are usually AATG staff. According to the notes used by these trainers,[20] and depending on the time available, the origins, principles (including appropriate 'team etiquette'), advantages and drawbacks of PRA are discussed and a selection of PRA methods are taught. It is therefore from these training sessions, together with the policy statements, that CDWs and their supervisors learn AATG's 'policy expectations' towards PRA.

Table 3e presents the current 'policy expectations' of AATG relating to PRA and the common practice of CDWs in their use of PRA.[21] The large amount of information contained in this table will be examined in the subsequent case study. It is placed here to introduce the current situation so that general points about policy and practice can be made. Most importantly, it shows that PRA policy has a significant impact on PRA practice in AATG. This policy appears to determine what PRA is used for, where it takes place, who is involved and how it is used within AATG. However, Table 3e also shows there are a number of areas where there are substantial differences between AATG's PRA policy expectations and what CDWs usually do.

The following chapters will attempt to describe common PRA practice within AATG in more detail and examine on why the gap between policy and practice portrayed in Table 3e exists.[22] These chapters use an actor-orientated perspective to examine how PRA practice emerges from interactions between elements of structure and the agency of fieldworkers. Chapter 4 describes the impact of the organisational structure of AATG on CDWs' agency. Chapter 5 examines the impact of the communities that the organisation serves. The role of CDWs' characteristics is then discussed in Chapter 6.[23]

Table 3e: PRA policy and practice in AATG

	AATG's PRA Policy Expectations	Common PRA Practice In AATG
Purpose	CDWs should use PRA in the following activities: • Community-based planning for community action plans (CAP) • CAP development • CAP updating • Community-based Monitoring and Evaluation • Targeting These activities are expected to be implemented as described above.	• CAP development is sometimes completed with a large team of facilitators organised from all DAs spending 1-2 days in each village using a variety of PRA methods (e.g. DA4). However, CAPs are also developed with a small Zonal team and very few PRA methods (e.g. cases in DA3) • Copies of CAPs frequently not left/kept with communities • According to CDWs, the communities often feel the CAP is 'ActionAid's' rather than their own and rarely use it in their interactions with other development organisations (This appears to be common in DA3 but less like the situation in DA4) • CAP updating only takes place once a year • Community based indicators are often not established or used and Community-based Monitoring and Evaluation through PRA is not occurring • Targeting through PRA usually only conducted in DA4
Preparation	• Careful planning and preparation should take place by the facilitator	• Sometimes insufficient
Physical resources	• Facilitators should have access to adequate materials (pens, paper etc) and transport. For the large scale PRA exercises CDWs should have an allowance for food and accommodation	• Sometimes insufficient
Human resources	• PRA activities should be done in a team and include an Observer, Recorder and a Facilitator • Team members should be of different disciplinary backgrounds and genders • Team members should include staff from other organisations operating in the area • Facilitators should be adequately trained in PRA	• CAP updating often conducted by only one CDW • When a team, there are often a limited range of disciplines and a poor gender balance • Other organisations usually only regularly involved in DA4 • Many staff with inadequate PRA skills
Training for communities	• Communities should be trained so that they can use PRA, develop CAPs, update CAPs and design project proposals by themselves	• Minimal transfer of PRA skills to communities has occurred. No community has used PRA by themselves. All CAP development, updating and project proposal compilation is facilitated by the CDW • CDWs use PRA to organise information (e.g. for CAP development/updating). Little direct PRA training of communities has taken place
Season	• PRA should be done in the dry season	• PRA usually done just before or during the rainy season
Length	• PRA activities should not be rushed but not take up too much time	• PRA activities often rushed

Introduction	• The purpose of the PRA should be carefully explained	• Successful
Location	• At the village *Bantaba* (meeting place) where it is open, central and seating is provided	• Successful
Participation	• As many people as possible from the community should be involved • A cross-section of all in the community should be present • All ideas should be fairly represented during PRA activities • The community should usually be divided into groups of men and women for PRA exercises	• Attempts are usually made to get as many as possible, and a full cross-section involved, but this often proves difficult • Some CAP updating takes place only with the General Executive Committee (GEC) of the Village Development Group (VDG) • Despite attempts at fair representation, gender and power bias is common • Gender groups often not used during CAP updating
PRA Methods	The following methods should be used flexibly, and adapted, as appropriate: • Focus Group Discussions (FGD) • Mapping • Transects • Time lines • Trend lines • Seasonal calendars • Venn diagrams • Matrix ranking • Access to Resource /Wealth ranking • Preference ranking	• PRA methods are rarely used by CDWs outside CAP development and updating • Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is the most common method used. It is sometimes the main tool for CAP development and usually the only tool used for CAP updating • There is little adaptation of PRA methods by CDWs and they are often used in a standardised sequence
Attitudes and Behaviour of facilitators	PRA is seen to require: • Optimal ignorance: try not to find out more than what you need • Appropriate imprecision: try not to measure more accurately than necessary • Avoiding the extremes of unchallengable teacher and passive spectator • The capacity to listen, stay in the background, be critically self-aware, to allow local people to dominate the discussion and to be taught rather than to teach	• Many CDWs were more aware of, and placed more emphasis on, the appropriate attitudes and behaviour of facilitators than the policy expectations required of them. It was, however, unclear what attitudes and behaviour emerged in practice.
PRA Report	• The facilitators should produce a report promptly after conducting PRA activities. It should include the objectives, methodology, findings and recommendations	• PRA reports are often completed for CAP development but not for other PRA activities

Sources: Baldeh (1997); Cham (1997); AATG (1999); AATG PRA trainers notes; interviews.

4. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FIELDWORKERS' AGENCY

Within AATG's policy framework, CDWs are given the freedom to manage their own work, arranging and conducting PRAs, meetings and activities with the communities in their Block as they feel appropriate. Osman Cham, a former Assistant Director of AATG, emphasised that much of the success of AATG's interventions relied on the personal judgements of CDWs. As in other organisations:

> areas of discretion are created in which individuals have freedom to interpret their tasks within general frameworks provided by their superiors (Simon 1957 cited in Hill 1997b: 187).

However, when this 'sanctioned discretion' allows for 'unsanctioned discretion' to take place, fieldworker discretion becomes a 'problem' for an organisation. 'Unsanctioned discretion' occurs in AATG when CDWs use their agency to subvert the plans of management and move outside the policy framework.

Any attempt to explain the behaviour of CDWs needs to establish why CDWs use their discretion in a particular way. Individuals are likely to choose among the possible courses of action and inaction according to what, to them, appears to have the most favourable outcome in a given set of circumstances. Therefore, while the discretion of CDWs is only sanctioned where the freedom to choose promotes AATG's policy expectations, CDWs can also use it to follow other options that more appropriately match their abilities and preferences. Policy implementation, where employees have a high degree of discretion, can therefore be seen as a matter of negotiation between managers and employees. Such negotiation occurs in AATG as managers attempt to persuade CDWs to exercise only sanctioned discretion and comply with policy expectations. How AATG managers do this, and the extent to which they are successful, will now be discussed.

Managerial manipulation of organisational structure

Policy knowledge

The management of AATG recognises that CDWs are unlikely to choose to comply with PRA policy expectations if they do not know and understand what these expectations are. AATG attempts to inform CDWs of their expectations for PRA through policy statements and training. CDWs suggested that written statements of intent were important in framing their use of PRA.[24] Apart from some recent employees, most CDWs had a copy of the CBM Manual (Baldeh 1997) and felt that it was a valuable 'reference document for CDWs – when you have a doubt you can refer to it' (CDW 9).[25] However, CDWs believe PRA training has had far more influence on their PRA practice.[26]

> The way you are introduced to PRA will be an important influence. First impressions last longer. If you are not given a good first orientation of PRA this will affect the way you do things (CDW 3).

This has important implications because the majority of respondents feel that AATG's PRA training is currently inadequate. Common complaints by CDWs were that the trainings were too short (not enough covered and what was covered was to an insufficient depth), too infrequent, too much focus on theory rather

than practical exercises and no training certificate was provided. A particular concern was that the longer training courses were only conducted when there was a need for large-scale appraisals in a particular area:

> ActionAid shouldn't wait until it needs it. We need PRA knowledge in our field activities – to update CAPs, for example. It is a skill we should have as fieldworkers (CDW 3).

CDWs are unlikely to use PRA as AATG management desires if they do not fully understand what is expected of them.

An example of limited policy knowledge is how PRA should be used in CAP updating. The policy expectations suggest that a range of PRA methods should be used. AATG's Assistant Director, Falie Baldeh, confirmed that CAP updating 'requires a variety of tools to reassess and come up with new solutions' and he described a number of visual PRA methods he considered appropriate. However, the majority of CDWs felt that a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in the form of a general meeting with the Village Development Group (VDG) was all that was required. This is partly because of the training programme. Karafa Manneh, who is responsible for, and has been involved in, most of the internal PRA trainings in AATG, said that PRA for CAP updating only needed to incorporate FGD, interviews with key informants and the CDWs' prior knowledge of the communities: 'If you have been in the community for some time then you don't need to use visual tools'.

However, despite the concerns of CDWs, the PRA training, in combination with the written policy statements, does seem to have been relatively successful in transferring knowledge about policy requirements. Interviews suggested that most CDWs that had received PRA training knew how they were expected to use PRA.

Resources

AATG managers appreciate that if CDW discretion is to remain sanctioned and within the PRA policy framework CDWs will need sufficient physical, financial and human resources. A few CDWs felt that an inadequate supply of stationery materials hindered their ability to conduct PRA activities as they would like. Others believed that the food and accommodation allowances given to CDWs during the large-scale PRA exercises were insufficient. However, most CDWs did not identify the lack of such physical and financial resources as constraining factors for PRA in AATG.

There were, however, a number of issues raised by CDWs relating to the quantity and quality of human resources within AATG. The availability of suitable staff to make up a PRA team was seen as a particular problem. For example, AATG policy identifies gender and disciplinary background as important elements of PRA team composition. However, the small proportion of women working for AATG makes it difficult for PRA facilitators and teams to be gender balanced. Although AATG is increasingly employing female staff, only 24 per cent of all CDWs in the organisation are women (AATG 1998). A disciplinary balance has also been a challenge. Since 1993, CDWs have worked as multi-disciplinary facilitators within their Blocks while maintaining a secondary role as disciplinary specialists at the Zonal level. However, only some disciplines are represented in each Zone and Zonal PRA teams can be biased towards particular disciplines.

The quality of AATG staff using PRA is largely determined by AATG's recruitment, contract termination and training activities. The staff employed as CDWs within AATG are predominately male, 25–35 years old, have a post high school certificate in a discipline relevant to rural development and have some work experience, usually with a government department. In the opinion of Osman Cham,[27] despite some of their limitations, 'the CDWs of ActionAid are very good – the best fieldworkers I know'.

CDWs claimed that the PRA training of staff is especially important. While some CDWs learnt about PRA as part of their formal education[28] or during their previous employment,[29] most have had no PRA training or experience before working with AATG. However, as identified above, many CDWs believe this training is inadequate. The staff felt that the current training situation prevented CDWs utilising PRA appropriately.[30] Karafa Manneh considered that a lack of PRA training and skills had led to the minimal use of community-based indicators by CDWs and this had prevented the use of participatory and community-based monitoring.

Governance mechanisms

Much of the organisation-centred literature argues that, given the existence of sufficient policy knowledge and resources, managers can control employee behaviour through administrative mechanisms that create appropriate motivating factors. If CDW behaviour can be controlled so that all their choices operate within policy limits, unsanctioned discretion relating to PRA can be prevented. Moore (1992: 65–73) describes the three types of governance mechanisms that frequently used to control employees' discretion: the Weberian approach, the market approach and the human relations approach. This section will examine how successful AATG managers are at using such elements of organisational structure to enable and constrain the way CDWs use PRA.

The Weberian model of pubic administration suggests that policy will be implemented effectively through appropriate use of supervision and hierarchical authority. AATG managers use this approach as part of their attempt to get CDWs to implement their policies. If a CDW is found to be performing poorly, disciplinary procedures (including meetings, letters and official warnings) are in place through which hierarchical authority can be imposed. This authority is enhanced through the additional use of market mechanisms of control. The market approach suggests that employee behaviour can be largely influenced through contractual arrangements and material incentives. CDWs, like most AATG staff, are on a one-year renewable contract conditional on performance throughout the year and an annual interview. In addition to job security, letters of commendation, merit awards, training opportunities and promotion have been given to CDWs as rewards for good performance.

However, CDWs felt that these mechanisms had little influence on how they used PRA.[31] One explanation identified was the difficulty of performance measurement. The effectiveness of these structural mechanisms depends on the ability to accurately measure performance. This is possible in a situation where information about the processes, outputs, and outcomes of workers' tasks is easily obtained by supervisors. However, as found elsewhere, when the task is the implementation of complex activities, such as participatory approaches, performance measurement can be very difficult (Israel 1989; Wilson 1989;

Pratt 1998).[32] Many of the 'policy expectations' in Table 3e refer to the CDW's facilitation of the PRA process but getting accurate information to monitor this process can often only be obtained by a supervisor being physically present. Direct observation of CDWs does occur when supervisors (e.g. POs) and other staff (e.g. Specialists and other CDWs) are part of a PRA team, although the PRA reports produced do not specifically refer to the performance of individual CDWs. There is also some direct follow up of CAP updating, where POs and DA level staff visit villages independently and talk to village members about the CDW's work. This is, however, only occasional and does not appear to include specific questioning about the PRA process. Despite the improvements that could be made, interviewees argued that the direct monitoring of all the CDWs' tasks is impossible due to the time and resource constraints on supervisors.[33] In addition, the monitoring of PRA facilitation is also difficult even if the supervisor is actually present. As Pratt (ibid.) suggests, the PRA literature argues that flexibility, innovation and variation is a sign of good practice and this makes establishing clear and unambiguous criteria for evaluating PRA performance problematic.

The alternative is to indirectly measure performance through the outputs and outcomes of PRA. However, this can also be a challenge because they are often unobservable. Supervisors suggested that it was difficult to judge accurately a community's feelings of ownership towards a CAP and then accurately attribute this feeling to the PRA practices of the CDW. There are, however, more tangible results. Potentially observable outputs identified by CDWs include PRA visual outputs (maps, diagrams etc), copies of updated CAPs, CDWs' notes in the 'visitors books' that are kept by some VDGs, PRA reports, CDWs' work diaries and the records of PRA activities in CDW's monthly reports. Despite this, copies of CAPs and PRA reports seem to be the only outputs that supervisors in AATG monitor with PRA in mind. The limits of output measures are that the PRA process can be overlooked. For example, CDW 6 suggested that FGD is often the only PRA method used because 'You can get the CAP without using other PRA techniques. It is a short cut'. Davies *et al.* (1999: 31) felt that the performance measurement for PRA was currently insufficient:

> given the importance of the CAPs…it might also be expected that some effort would be put into the quality control of the CAP process and product, by PMID or other staff. This has not been the case.

Observable outcomes include the successful and sustainable implementation of the CAP through the facilitation of programme activities. CDWs explained how each year, based on the CAPs from villages within the Zone, Zonal staff contribute to the AATG's Annual Plan and Budget (APB). After the APB is approved CDWs develop a 'workplan' with their POs so that all the activities proposed in the CAPs can proceed. The monitoring of this workplan's implementation was identified by interviewees as AATG's main instrument in attempting to prevent unsanctioned discretion in all aspects of CDWs' work. However, given the numerous contingent variables involved, the completion of programme activities cannot be solely attributed to the PRA process. Such outcome monitoring is, therefore, an inadequate indicator of how CDWs conducted PRA.

CDWs' PRA performance has, therefore, received little measurement. This is partly because of inherent measurement difficulties but also because of insufficient attempts by supervisors. Supervisors in AATG, in response to the requirements of their managers, tend to monitor only a few easily observable outputs and

outcomes and give minimal attention to the process of PRA. This has limited the ability of Weberian and market motivating and constraining factors to successfully control the agency of CDWs in their use of PRA.

The third structural mechanism available for AATG managers is the human relations approach. This approach stresses the importance of developing a desirable organisational culture to foster the commitment and engagement of employees so that they will want to do the tasks expected of them (Goetz 1996).[34] The approach still appeals to the workers' rational interests but promotes non-material rewards such as a sense of duty, purpose and status derived from recognition and solidarity with other members of the organisation (Wilson 1989). Given its relatively subtle nature, the extent to which managers of AATG have intentionally used this approach to influence the PRA practice is not immediately clear. However, such an approach is often particularly attractive to managers in situations where employees have a lot of discretion and performance measurement is difficult because, if used successfully, workers are more likely to use their discretion as sanctioned within the policy framework. A change in organisational culture has been identified as necessary for the successful institutionalisation of participatory approaches (Thompson 1995; Fowler 1997). The following discussion will emphasise the elements commonly associated with this approach that are identified by CDWs as influencing their PRA practice.

Many CDWs believed the mission and goals of the organisation were a key element affecting their use of PRA[35]. AATG's mission statement is its 'Tendaba Declaration' (November 1991):

> Development is people, people taking control, able to remove the constraints that hinder their ability to effectively use opportunities and resources to improve their quality of life. ActionAid supports and responds to the people's agenda. ActionAid helps communities to identify, articulate and address their own agenda.

Wilson (1989) suggests that a well-defined and widely understood sense of purpose in an organisation can lead to the internalisation of the organisations' goals by employees. This appears to be largely the case in AATG. Many CDWs specifically referred to elements of the Tendaba Declaration during interviews and most believed that the organisation's objective of participatory people-orientated development was legitimate and the organisation's management was genuinely committed to it. Similarly, most CDWs accepted AATG's portrayal of PRA as a vital component of any attempt to meet the aims of the Declaration and fully supported the increasing use of PRA within the organisation. Many stressed the value of PRA in promoting the sustainability of AATG's activities by enabling communities to identify their own problems and develop their own solutions.

Some CDWs also suggested that the general organisational culture of AATG was important.[36] Although they did not think they were particularly influenced by the example of superiors or the recognition and respect of colleagues,[37] other factors that were seen to contribute to the shaping of organisations' culture, such as material incentives and staff recruitment and training, have already been discussed. The role of informal 'training' in the reproduction of organisational culture should also be noted. For example, CDWs who have been working in the Block where a new CDW is placed, spend between one and three weeks with the new employee to brief them about the communities, past activities and AATG's procedures. According

to CDW 4, it is often during this orientation that the norms and expected behaviour of AATG are transferred. A similar orientation often takes place when CDWs are internally relocated from other Blocks. These and other interactions between CDWs (during workshops, meetings and programme activities, for example) can reinforce the organisation's culture by building social ties.

In 1993, Dillon and Fowler characterised the majority of AATG staff as highly motivated, dynamic and professional but argued that this 'does not simply stem from the fact that AATG is one of the best paying development organisations in the country' (1993: 23). Interviews and observations confirmed that this motivation is still present and suggested that it is partly a result of a clear sense of purpose provided by the internalisation of AATG's mission and goals and maintained through the effective reproduction of the organisation's culture. With respect to PRA, this influence is apparent in the results of the 'My ideal PRA' exercises conducted with interviewees. These exercises involved CDWs visually identifying the characteristics associated with an 'ideal' PRA so they could then assess and explain how these ideal characteristics compare to their own individual practices and the practices of AATG. Many of the 'ideal' characteristics of PRA identified were similar to the organisation's own PRA policy expectations. It would therefore appear that elements of the human relations approach used by AATG have been very successful in conditioning CDWs understanding of PRA.

However, an important qualification needs to be made. Although the components of the human relations approach appear to have positively influenced the attitudes of CDWs, it is their use of PRA that is ultimately important. Table 3e shows many instances of unsanctioned discretion by CDWs that have not been solved by the human relations approach. It is clear that AATG managers have, as yet, been unable to successfully determine the PRA practices of CDWs.

Unintentional influence of organisational structure

Giddens (1984) argues that intentional acts often have unintended and unanticipated consequences. The rest of this chapter examines some components of the organisation's administrative structure that are functioning as intended by managers for non-PRA policy objectives. However, by influencing the agency of CDWs, these components can lead to unsanctioned discretion and unintended consequences for PRA practice.

Time constraints

Managers want to successfully implement all of AATG's policies, not just those relating to PRA. They use organisational mechanisms, like those discussed above, to persuade CDWs to meet diverse policy objectives. This places a high demand on the time of CDWs. As described in Chapter 3, a CDW is responsible for facilitating the CBM process in AATG's seven designated interlinked development sectors in up to nineteen communities. Frequent interaction with each of these communities is required and travelling between them takes time.[38] In addition, CDWs identified teamwork at the Zonal level, communication with AATG (including meetings, trainings, and report writing) and fundraising activities (such as collecting messages from sponsored children for their sponsors), as also required. Collaboration with other development organisations operating in the Block was also seen to take time.

Many staff were concerned that, despite a commitment to their work, CDWs' workload was so great that it was not possible for them successfully fulfil all AATG's policy requirements:

> [Even] if you really want to deliver according to the job description you do not have time (CDW 8).
>
> With all seven areas, the workload becomes too much … With one person doing all this you can't do it effectively (CDW 3).
>
> Sponsorship work – you have to do it. It takes time. It is a big problem (CDW 7).

Interviewees frequently felt that excessive work demands led to the unsuccessful implementation of many PRA policy expectations by CDWs. In a typical comment, PO 2 argued: 'CDWs are loaded with many other requirements so it is not possible to do PRA properly'. CDWs explained that time constraints prevented longer periods in each village during CAP development so that PRA was often rushed or the quality of participation was poor. CDWs said that they usually did CAP updating individually because of work pressures as staff didn't have time to come together and form a Zonal team. As a result of this, many concluded that they were unable to use most of the PRA methods because they felt that such techniques required three staff members: a facilitator, observer and recorder. In addition, CDWs said that the need to do other programme activities limited the range of PRA methods used, prevented appropriate feedback to communities and inhibited effective training of communities in the use of PRA methods.[39]

CDWs felt that time was a particular issue in the use of PRA for CAP updating because of the Annual Plan and Budget (APB). Staff described two forms of unsanctioned discretion that are perceived to result from the APB. First, CAP updating occurs annually rather than 'continuously' as advocated by the policy expectations. APB preparation is the only time that management monitors the completion of updated CAPs and therefore the only time CDWs 'need' to do it. Second, a number of CDWs felt that the quality of CAP updating can be affected because:

> CDWs are very rushed. The time given to update CAPs – from when we are informed to when it has to be submitted - is very short (CDW 8).

For example, some CDWs do not encourage full community participation for CAP updating because of time constraints:

> Most of the time CDWs just meet with the GEC…if you are expected to do so much in a short time then you cannot be effective (PO 1).

Alternative priorities

However, although a common explanation given by respondents, the workload and the lack of time available to CDWs does not in itself explain why PRA is not practised as AATG policy intends. Individuals will choose to do whatever they perceive as preferable. The discretionary choice available to CDWs is based on priorities. As CDW 7 implies above with regard to child sponsorship messages, if 'you have to do it', an

activity still gets done even when it takes time. The squeezing out of PRA by other activities can therefore be partly explained, as discussed in Chapter 4, by the failure of structural mechanisms to provide adequate motivation for CDWs to implement PRA policy. However, it is also because there are additional rewards available for CDWs to make alternative use of their limited time.

The role of the 'workplan' in performance measurement was introduced above. Its importance is explained by two CDWs:

> At the end of the year [the workplan] is evaluated. Targets are looked at and if they are not reached you are asked why. You will not be popular in the eyes of managers if you don't achieve the targets. It will be unpleasant for you (CDW 8).

> [The workplan] is guiding you to do well. If you do well then you are not afraid when the redundancies come (CDW 7).

Workplans can influence PRA practice when they divert the attention of CDWs away from the PRA process. This occurs because they tend to emphasise programme activities (e.g. in the seven interlinked sectors) and immediately observable activities (e.g. number of wells dug or CAPs updated). As a result, CDWs usually give 'priority to the programme activities … At the end of the day, the CDWs are measured on their workplan not the PRA process' (PO 2). The workplan encourages CDWs to emphasise the quantity of outputs and outcomes within a given timeframe rather than the quality of process. CDW 3 explained he only uses a small number of PRA methods to develop a CAP because 'we are more interested in getting a CAP so we can start working with the village'. Although, as PO 1 suggested, 'there is a direct link between development outcomes and the [quality of the] relationship between communities and the CDW', this link may only become apparent in the long term, well after the annual CDW review.

Job insecurity was also identified as an unintended consequence of the organisational structure that can divert CDWs' priorities away from complying with PRA policies. As previously stated, CDWs are on one-year renewable contracts. Many believed that there were going to be major redundancies when the 'phase out' of DA3 takes place at the end of 2000. Although it could be argued that job insecurity should heighten employees desire to perform well so that they get re-employed on merit, respondents commonly felt that it 'seriously affects motivation' (PO 1). As one CDW suggested:

> At the end of the year you are left at the mercy of God. This affects the type of job we deliver. If you feel that you are not secure you may not perform to expectation (CDW 2).

CDWs felt that this loss of motivation, and the time needed every year to look for another job 'just in case', detracted from their current work and likelihood that AATG's policies, including PRA, would be implemented effectively.

This chapter has shown that understanding the shape of AATG's organisational structure is an essential dimension of any explanation of CDWs' use of PRA. However, while necessary, this analysis does not sufficiently explain CDWs' PRA practice as portrayed in Table 3e. For example, a focus on organisational

structure neglects the influence of factors outside the organisation. CDWs identified the communities they work with as an important 'structural' element influencing their discretion.

5. COMMUNITIES AND FIELDWORKERS' AGENCY

So far, the explanations for PRA practice by CDWs have emphasised the power of AATG's managers through the potential influence of the organisation's structure. However, as Wilson (1989) suggests, when street-level bureaucrats encounter situations where discretion must be exercised, the behaviour of their clients is likely to shape what they do. CDWs confirmed that community members influence the processes they participate in and, therefore, affect how PRA is practised by CDWs.

The impact of the participating communities on PRA practice can be discussed in two ways.[40] First, the actions of these 'clients' can be seen to reflect and perpetuate their social, economic, political and environmental context. Elements of the macro social structures in Gambian society can therefore influence the implementation of AATG's PRA policy expectations. Second, the nature of the relations between the CDW and community can be important in enabling and preventing sanctioned discretion.

Characteristics of the participating communities

CDWs claimed that the participating communities, embedded in wider social structures, have characteristics that influence their use of PRA. For example, CDWs explained that the existing power relations within communities in Gambian society, based on gender, age, ethnicity, access to resources and political/religious authority, often need to be explicitly addressed during the PRA process for the policy expectations relating to 'participation' to be met. CDWs described how they attempt to do this through a careful initial explanation, splitting the community into gender groups[41] and sensitive facilitation. However, many CDWs felt that, despite this, the existing power relations often affected the final PRA outputs. Cases were cited where PRA activities had led to a construction of local knowledge that was strongly influenced by one or more of the men, the old, the rich, an ethnic group and/or the village head or their relatives:

> Some people don't want to open up, especially the women. In a large group the women will not like to express themselves … Everyone is invited but it is often the powerful or those who are related to the powerful that speak … The very poor come off worst. It is the set up (CDW 7).

Given the extent of their discretion it is essentially the CDW's choice as to how much effort they put in to ensure full and fair representation, participation and decision-making during PRA activities. Unsanctioned discretion is likely in a situation where these challenges are great, overcoming them is not sufficiently rewarded and CDWs have significant time constraints with alternative priorities.

CDWs felt that the time constraints of those within the participating communities also prevented the effective implementation of the PRA policy expectations relating to 'participation'. The communities involved have the least time for PRA during the wet season when they have to spend most time on their farms. This season, however, is when AATG often conducts PRA. AATG staff were concerned that 'AATG

does not plan with the people when it is best to do PRA' (CDW 8) and 'the farmers' seasonal calendar is not honoured' (DA3 Workshop participants).[42] However, CDWs felt their freedom to choose was constrained because of 'bureaucratic delays' (PO 1) and, as already discussed, the linking of CAP updating with the APB process. The interaction of such unintended consequences of organisational structure with the communities' time constraints can lead to 'low participation' and/or a situation where communities 'do not do [PRA] seriously and leave out certain information' (CDW 9).

Many CDWs also felt that community illiteracy and language skills prevented the community themselves achieving the policy expectation that PRA documents should be written and in English:

> 'Although some could write for themselves with Arabic or their own language, it is far more common for just the CDW to do the writing and develop the CAP' (CDW 6).

Some were concerned that, because 'it is written and done in a language that they cannot understand' (DA2 Workshop participants), the expected feeling of ownership of the process and outputs by communities, the ability of CDWs to feedback to communities and the likelihood that the communities will 'market' the CAP to other development organisations is inhibited.[43] A CDW described a case of CAP updating where:

> some of them forgot the projects that they had put in the CAPs and others were saying 'this is not our CAP' … the problem was that the villagers didn't record things themselves (CDW 1).

Finally, the traditional forms of decision-making in Gambian villages may also influence the fieldworkers' practice of PRA. For example, these cultural traditions could partly explain the emphasis given to 'FGDs' by CDWs in their use of 'PRA' during CAP updating. 'FGD' is the name given by AATG staff to community meetings, either with the whole community or with subgroups, to discuss development initiatives including community plans. As Karafa Manneh explained:

> FGD has some cultural traditions. It is how people traditionally look at village problems and think about doing something about them. [The communities] find this more appealing [than other tools].

Given this situation, and despite the limitations of such community meetings, the introduction of other unfamiliar 'PRA methods' was seen an unnecessary burden by some AATG staff.

The communities' relationship with CDWs

CDWs also suggested that the relationship the participating communities had with them influenced PRA practice.[44] CDWs felt that the relations between AATG and communities were generally very good. They believed this was because CDWs live and work with communities, share in their social lives and are confident, honest and transparent. However, they also recognised that features of the relationship can make it difficult for CDWs to use their discretion to comply with AATG policies, including those of PRA. As one CDW suggested, 'If you don't have the respect and trust of the community then the community will not respond to you' (CDW 9). CDWs believed that challenges to this relationship emerged from an interaction

between the particular nature of the communities, the CDW, the unintended consequences of implementing other AATG policies and wider social relations. The relationship is different in the two common uses of PRA in AATG; CAP development and CAP updating.

In CAP development, the community has not usually dealt with AATG before and so the initial perceptions of the community are based on what they may have heard about the organisation and the resources the CDWs represent. Some CDWs felt that 'communities are not influenced by what ActionAid can provide. They just say all the problems that they have' (CDW 7). However, the DA2 Review believed that 'the partnership is admittedly unequal. AATG has the resources – communities receive the resources' (AATG 1997: 31). As a result of such disparity, a number of CDWs felt that:

> Communities are becoming so sensitive of ActionAid now. Whatever they do [in PRA] they try to relate it to what ActionAid is doing. They have seen ActionAid giving certain things so they say 'We need seeds, seed stores, a well and we need a training on tie and dye'. They have seen these things have come as a result of involvement of ActionAid in other villages (CDW 4).

In addition, as Ousman Cham suggests, the CDW

> is always perceived by the poor people not only as the agency representative but an outsider. This perception is usually accompanied by suspicion and lack of trust on the side of the poor (Cham 1995: 4).

This has been found to affect the findings of AATG's PRA activities. For example, CDW 2 described a process of CAP development where it was only discovered later that what had been considered 'embarrassing information' had been intentionally withheld by the community.

In CAP updating, CDWs claim the situation is different because they have personal relationships with the communities. A typical response was:

> when I first arrived I was seen as an outsider … but I live at their own level. We eat together, drink together and go to the same place to wash! … They don't treat me exceptionally but like one of their sons (CDW 4).

However, CDWs are faced with the continual challenge of building these relationships with communities because they are frequently moved by AATG to new Blocks.[45] CDWs suggested that this can lead to difficulties when small communities have to arrange suitable accommodation for CDWs to move into and, more importantly, the frequent need to learn a new language on arrival. Some felt that language was not a problem because it was usually possible to speak through a second language or someone from the community interpreted. However, others found that their work, and their relationship with communities, was affected until they had learnt the local language:

> This area is Wolof and Fula. I am Mandinka. The first three months were very difficult as we didn't understand each other (CDW 9).

The relationship between communities and CDWs developed through other programme activities will also affect the practice of PRA. Some CDWs felt that this relationship was hindered because AATG's decision-making processes are not sufficiently decentralised:

> ActionAid recognises that everything should come from the bottom but you can sometimes find this is frustrated by what is coming from the top (CDW 8).

In particular it was felt that the project and credit approval system within AATG takes too long and is often delayed. If inputs (e.g. seeds) are needed at a particular time but there are delays in approval then the CDWs' relationship with the community can suffer and 'the tensions can affect the rest of the CDWs' work' (CDW 8). A number of staff felt that:

> There is too much bureaucracy in AATG. So many layers…If there is to be community-based management then the CDWs need to have more decision-making power (PO 2).

CDWs also described the implementation of the credit policies give rise to challenges affecting the CDW-community relationship. For example, CDWs felt that communities often do not understand the need to repay credit or, if they do, it is usually the powerful (usually the men or those with political authority) in the communities that are the defaulters and others are unwilling or unable to pay. As a result, when CDWs implement AATG's credit policy of repayment collection and only recommending another loan after full repayment, there can be negative consequences for the relationship between the community and themselves.

There are, however, also issues where relationships with some in the community can be 'too close', isolating others in the community. This can occur if, for example, attention is focused on the GEC rather than the whole VDG (AATG 1997) but also where community members attempt to actively cultivate particular relationships with CDWs. As CDW 2 explained:

> When you visit village leaders they give you milk, fowl etc. so they can win your confidence and anytime they approach you, you will be obliged to help them. A sort of bribe. This can be difficult to reject but you need to put it at the back of your mind so you are not easily influenced.

Also, as the relationships with CDWs develop, some people in the community begin to learn the 'language of participation' (Jackson 1997a: 246) as portrayed by AATG. For example, CDW 2 described a situation where an individual wanted to start a 'sheep fattening project' because 'he thought he would get a lot of benefits'. However, he told the CDW that the 'the community' wanted it. He felt that this was the best way of getting credit for the project. CDW 2 organised a general meeting where 'the people said it was a good initiative but it had never been discussed with them'. These relationships with communities can influence PRA if CDWs allow some people and/or ideas to get greater prominence than others during PRA activities.

6. FIELDWORKERS' CHARACTERISTICS AND FIELDWORKERS' AGENCY

The previous two chapters have emphasised the importance of fieldworkers' agency in CDWs' interaction with the structures of AATG and communities to produce PRA practice. They have, however, focused attention on the conditioning role of structural forces and ignored the influence of the fieldworkers' personal characteristics on PRA practice. This chapter discusses CDWs' views on the role of their identity and experience in PRA practice in AATG. It shows how these personal characteristics are also influenced by structural factors. The role of CDWs' individual attitudes is examined in the following chapter.

Socially constructed identities

The personal characteristics of CDWs lead to particular social identities of fieldworkers given the wider social structure and power relations present in The Gambia. These social identities have the potential to influence PRA practice. However, most CDWs did not consider the personal characteristics and social relations of gender, class, generation and ethnicity, to be particularly important in how PRA was practised.[46] The impact of such social identities on CDWs' interactions with communities is difficult to determine. This is partly because CDWs have similar personal characteristics as established by the organisational structure through selective recruitment, contract termination and training in AATG. It is also difficult to distinguish the potential effects of such factors from the power relations, discussed above, that result from the fact that CDWs represent the resources of the organisation to the community. However, the impact of gender relations on the behaviour of CDWs was apparent. In general discussions about the work of CDWs, some felt that 'gender makes no difference' (CDW 8) but most believed that the gender of CDWs either helped or hindered the implementation of AATG's policies.[47]

Some suggested there were distinct benefits of being a female CDW within the context that AATG operates. In particular it was felt that female CDWs are able to improve the participation of women as a traditionally marginalised group within communities. Falie Baldeh, for example, felt that 'it is easier for women to talk to women'. This was seen to be important because 'most of the groups in the villages are women groups' (Specialist 4). The biases against women's participation in community meetings and their low involvement in some development initiatives (e.g. literacy programmes) was seen to be effectively challenged by female CDWs through direct persuasion and by example. Others felt that total participation is better with female CDWs because they are more readily accepted and trusted by both men and women in communities.

However, others argued that male CDWs were better for programme effectiveness. Female CDWs often do not go out for evening or night meetings, even though this is often the most convenient time for communities to gather. Some are unable to ride motorbikes, and it was felt that they visit communities less frequently and spend more time travelling. Some believed that because female CDWs have to take time out from their work or miss training sessions because of pregnancy and childcare, they are less productive than male CDWs. There was also concern that while 'CDWs need to be active, vocal, bold, strong and confident before the people will become confident, not many of the female CDWs are like this' (CDW 10). In addition, some felt that AATG is more likely to employ female CDWs straight from college and as a result they are often inexperienced.

Although only a few staff explicitly linked gender with PRA practice, given these comments it would seem sensible to conclude that the gender of facilitators is likely to be important during PRA exercises. The responses suggest that the few female CDWs present during PRA exercises will affect the success of the 'participation' expectations of PRA policy. The importance of this socially constructed identity for PRA was confirmed by PO 1:

> Gender is always a problem during PRA … The PRA teams should be multi-gender as well as multi-disciplinary but ActionAid is lacking in female CDWs … Most of the information and views we currently get from PRA are not gender sensitive.

Experience and practical consciousness

CDWs felt that their experience of PRA training and practice is very important in affecting how successfully the current PRA policy is implemented.[48] However, explaining current PRA practice through past experience implies a different form of motivation for the action of CDWs than has been previously discussed. Such motivation can be understood in relation to Giddens' (1984) ideas of 'practical and discursive consciousness'. The discussion of discretion in Chapter 4, and the concept of motivation implied in much of the analysis that followed, focuses on 'discursive consciousness'. The factors motivating a CDW in the use of their discretion were seen to influence the 'rational-choice' of CDWs as they analyse and reflect on how to maximise their preferences at a particular moment in time. As Giddens suggests,

> To be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons (Giddens 1984, cited in Cassell 1993: 90).

However, according to Giddens,

> the actions of human agents should be seen as a process rather than as an aggregate of separate intentions, reasons, motives and acts (Giddens 1984, cited in Cleaver 1998: 14).

Where action emerges from 'the capability to 'go on' with the routines of social life', Giddens describes it as 'practical consciousness' (Giddens 1984, cited in Cassell 1993: 91). As Handy (1993: 43) suggests, 'Most decisions in life are based on precedent'. Previous actions, rather than current analysis and reflection, can be seen to be motivate current PRA practice.

One example is the practical consciousness initiated by the PRA training by Clark University PRA 1992. In this training AATG fieldworkers experienced a 'package' approach to PRA. This experience was reinforced over time by similar internal PRA training sessions and practice. This was identified as leading to the current perception among most CDWs that PRA is a large-scale event consisting of particular tools with a preferable sequence for the purposes of needs-assessment and planning.[49] Such perceptions, combined with a preparatory training programme and some direct and indirect performance monitoring, appear to have successfully prevented unsanctioned discretion during recent multi-team CAP development phase-in

activities. However, the perception also seems to inhibit the requirements of the current policy expectations that encourage a relatively flexible and innovative use of PRA for multiple purposes.

The distinction between discursive and practical consciousness, and the understanding that practical consciousness develops over time through experience, shows that organisational structure and participating communities will not only influence PRA practice through the current rational choice of CDWs.[50] A CDW's experience of past structural factors and practices can condition their current actions and can, as a result, cause unsanctioned discretion.

7. VARIATIONS IN PRA PRACTICE

The last three chapters have shown that PRA policy implementation can be seen as a complex process of bargaining and negotiation where CDWs, as actors with agency, are at the centre of competing influences and alternative choices. However, responses from CDWs suggest that this cannot completely explain PRA practice. The previous discussion has concentrated on the 'common' practice of PRA in AATG. This abstraction treats 'CDWs' as a unified subject and neglects the different and complex positions of real individuals in diverse structural settings (Cleaver 1998). Variation in PRA practice will occur where there are differences in the structural context and between individuals.

Variations in structural factors and CDWs' characteristics

The identities and experiences of CDWs are positioned within specific webs of structural relations to produce particular forms of PRA practice. This can be illustrated by examining the PRA practice of an individual CDW in AATG, such as CDW 5 in Box 7a.[51] This case illustrates a situation where PRA practice is different from the common PRA practice in AATG. CDW 5's CAP updating does not involve PRA methods or processes and she doesn't use PRA in any other activities. CDW 5 illustrates how difficult it can be for a working woman in Gambia society to challenge existing social norms. It appears that, in this combination of specific factors, her gender is an advantage in encouraging the participation of women, she currently has a relatively small number of villages and she has a considerate PO. However, child care responsibilities, transport problems, alternative work priorities, the impact of other work on community relations, the particular hierarchical power relations in her villages and the challenge of language all impinge on the implementation of PRA policy, and prevent common practice. However, the variation from the norm in PRA practice appears to be largely because CDW 5 was not aware of AATG's PRA policy and had no PRA training or experience and so was unable to use her discretion as sanctioned. The case shows that the particular pattern of constraining and enabling contextual factors that CDW 5 faces, combine with her personal characteristics, to produce particular outcomes that vary from common PRA practice. In this sense, the way CDW 5 chooses to practice 'PRA' is substantially determined by chance combinations of elements largely outside of her control.[52]

Variations in CDW attitudes

However, while the above case suggests that variable structural factors interact with variable personal characteristics of CDWs to produce PRA practice, the actor-orientated perspective has often attempted to explain 'differential responses to *similar* structural circumstances' (Long 1990: 6, emphasis added). Such responses are seen to be, in part, the creation of the actors themselves. CDWs are not simply passive recipients of structural conditions or disembodied social categories of 'personal characteristics' but active participants with different agendas. As Long and Van der Ploeg (1994) suggest, social actors are only ever partly enrolled in the 'projects' of others as they attempt to strategically articulate their own interpretations, values and preferences. The implication is that an understanding of differential patterns of social behaviour must be grounded in terms of 'knowing active subjects' (Long 1990: 10) because where such 'attitudes' vary, behaviour will vary.

Box 7a: the case of CDW 5

CDW 5 joined AATG in January 1998 after completing a two-year post high school course in 'Integrated Rural Development'. She had one week of 'orientation' with an experienced CDW where she visited communities and learnt about AATG's procedures and processes. The first Block she was allocated in DA3 had sixteen communities and, because she was pregnant, it was 'too big because I was unable to ride a motorbike'. Her PO therefore moved her to her current smaller Block in April 1998. From July to September 1998 she was on maternity leave. While caring for her child she missed a PRA training course and she has not had any PRA training since. She missed most of a recent general training because her child was ill. She had not seen the CBM Manual. She has nine villages in her Block but finds the communities that are not on the main road difficult to get to because she is waiting for a new motorbike. It takes her two hours one way to walk with her child to the furthest village. She visits every community in her Block once or twice in a week. The collection of child sponsorship messages for donors takes most of her time and she also considers this as the 'most important' part of her work: 'The Director said 'You should not play with this because if you do you are playing with your job. If anyone has a problem with this you will be dismissed'. Her Block contains Mandinka, Fulani and Serrahule communities. She only speaks Mandinka but can now understand the other languages. She thinks that most people understand when she replies in Mandinka. She feels that she has a better relationship with the community where she lives than the previous CDW because she is a married woman: 'It is a Serrahule community and they prefer a woman CDW especially when married. They think that a male will follow their wives'. She explained how they had given the previous male CDW a 'bad room' to stay in. However, she finds it difficult to ensure the participation of women during community meetings and, because of ethnic traditions, this is particularly the case in the Serrahule communities she works with. She described some of the communities in her Block where 'people are afraid of the village leaders'. In one of her villages, 'the Alkalo [village head] wanted to be in charge' and 'was always directing the GEC meetings'. When she continued to work with the VDG President, the Alkalo came to her house and there was a major 'quarrel' and this affected her relations with members of the village. She also finds credit collection difficult in some of her villages. As a last resort, she has 'seized' some farming equipment that was bought with the credit and put them in a store: 'Some people have paid as a result and I will keep the property of the others until they do pay'. Some community members were unhappy with her as a result. She described the CAP updating she conducted as follows:

> When you go to communities you identify the problems that were not solved. The priorities that have been solved I cross out and put a note on. The other priorities remain the same. There is no problem in updating CAPs … I just meet with the GEC.

She explained how in one village she 'sensitised them towards having a vegetable garden'.

Responses from CDWs suggest that the variable attitudes of facilitators can influence PRA practice in three interrelated ways. First, CDWs have different interpretations and understandings of PRA. This can lead to the pursuit of alternative agendas and varying practices. The 'My ideal PRA' exercises suggested that CDWs' views differed regarding certain specific characteristics of PRA. For example, suggestions regarding the most

suitable frequency of PRA activities ranged from every six months to every five years. CDWs also disagreed whether, in an ideal situation, external facilitators should be involved. Opinions also varied regarding the timing of PRA activities (e.g. always in the dry season or an individual community should choose when), how long PRA activities should take (suggestions ranged between one to 10 days), whether to divide communities into sub-groups during PRA activities and what PRA methods should be used. However, CDWs explained that the structural factors previously discussed prevented any significant variation in these areas in practice. The only situation where there appears to be a direct link between an alternative interpretation of PRA and a variation in PRA practice involves the methods used for CAP updating. One of the reasons that FGD is often the only 'PRA method' used during CAP updating is that most CDWs consider that this is sufficient to get the information they need. However, despite a similar structural conditions, a few CDWs feel very differently and act accordingly.[53] CDW 8 claimed to use 'access to resources' and, occasionally, a seasonal calendar during CAP updating because:

> To many people FGD is enough but it is not. You will not get enough information or be able to analyse effectively or plan timing of other interventions without other tools (CDW 8).

Second, CDWs have different levels of enthusiasm and commitment to using PRA. Chapter 4 argued that the organisational culture of AATG had resulted in a high staff commitment to the goals of the organisation and PRA was generally perceived as a legitimate and necessary mechanism to meet these goals. However, this chapter also suggested that, because of other structural factors, such general attitudes had not been translated into the successful implementation of specific PRA policy expectations. However, some AATG staff suggested that individual professionalism and commitment was still important in explaining PRA practice.[54]

> Some people like to take the short cut and others take the straight line (Specialist 1).

> Some of [the CDWs] are lazy but some of them are wonderful…it depends on their own commitment (CDW 8).

For a few CDWs their commitment to PRA and/or the outcomes of PRA encouraged them to overcome structural constraints. As the case of CDW 3 illustrates (Box 7b), such active interplay between CDW agency and structural circumstances can contribute to variations in PRA practice in AATG.

CDW 3 does not meet all of AATG's PRA policy expectations. However, it would appear that, in structural circumstances similar to those faced by all CDWs, CDW 3 is able to use PRA in a way that is much closer to the organisations' requirements than the common practice. This may be because his education, abilities and other personal characteristics make it easier for him to choose to use PRA in this way. However, CDW 3 also manages to express a particular self-motivation and commitment to using PRA and so circumvents some structural constraints to result in outcomes more in line with AATG's policy expectations.

Box 7b: The case of CDW 3

CDW 3, like CDW 5, joined AATG at the beginning of 1998. However, he had spent some time previously working with the Department of Agriculture as a Senior Agricultural Assistant. He is one of the few CDWs in AATG to have completed a post-high school course and a higher diploma, both in 'Agriculture'. He currently has thirteen villages in his Block and was concerned that he did not have enough time with each given the range of activities CDWs are supposed to be responsible for. He felt that building the capacity of community institutions was the most important part of his work but also the most challenging and time consuming. He considered some communities in his Block 'difficult' to work with but he felt he had good relations with them. He had learnt to speak the languages of the communities in his Block and he had no transport problems. He had only attended one training session in PRA. It was for five days before going to DA4 as part of a team to use PRA for phase-in activities. He said that,

> The trainings are very specific – limited in nature – they prepare you to conduct the following PRA rather than giving you a broad understanding of what PRA is … it covers principles and theory but brushed over this and concentrated on the tools that AATG is immediately interested in.

CDW 3 had, however, also done his own reading:

> I read some PRA books, PRA reports, the CBM manual and other development books and newsletters … I did not just rely on the training I received. I wanted to realise the potential for PRA.

On his arrival, he had initiated CAP development in three villages in his Block that did not have CAPs. Four people from the Zone including his PO were involved in this. They used 'FGD and Venn diagrams and through the discussion developed a CAP'. He also had updated the CAPs in his Block 'shortly before budgeting' with another CDW from his Zone and by using the same methods as before. He also was one of the very few CDWs who used visual PRA methods (in his case, time lines and seasonal calendars) while individually interacting with communities on a daily basis. He explained that:

> As an extension worker you are trying to bring about change, but you can only do this if you know them very well. PRA puts me in a better position to work with the community and will increase my performance … PRA is a set of tools so it doesn't mean that all PRA needs all those people [a PRA team]. What can prevent you doing a time line by yourself?

CDW 3 said that he always updates CAPs and uses PRA during a general meeting of the community. He was very aware of the appropriate attitudes and behaviour required to facilitate PRA and, while he said that he could still improve, he felt that full and fair participation was not usually a problem.

The third way that CDWs suggest variable attitudes can lead to differences in PRA practice is the facilitators' 'stance' (Fowler 1997: 84) towards participants during the PRA process. This is the 'attitudes and behaviour' of development professionals referred to in Chapter 2 and Box 2a that has received so much attention in the PRA literature. It is considered to be an important factor affecting the quality of the PRA process and outcomes because of the nature of participation:

> [P]ersonal behaviour and attitudes are crucial. Participation is about how people interact. Dominating behaviour inhibits participation. Democratic behaviour to enable and empower encourages it (Chambers 1998: xv).

CDWs identified the importance of attitudes and behaviour of facilitators during PRA.[55] Despite an apparent lack of emphasis on this in the training documents and the policy expectations, most CDWs considered such issues to be crucial. As CDW 6 explained: 'You need good attitudes towards the people otherwise you will

fail'. Many CDWs described a wide range of characteristics they felt were required. Box 7c is an aggregated list of these.

Box 7c: Aggregated list of attitudes and behaviour felt to be necessary by CDWs in AATG

Those conducting the PRA should be:

- curious
- patient
- a learner, not a teacher
- a listener, not a talker
- encouraging
- active
- observant
- critically minded
- respectful
- accepted and trusted by the community
- time conscious
- participatory
- sensitive to the discussion

They should not:

- ask leading questions
- be aggressive
- shout

They should:

- concentrate
- seek clarification
- probe
- take notes of salient points
- be accurate in recording

Knowledge and skills required:

- be literate
- have thorough understanding of norms and values and traditions of the community
- have good analytical skills
- have a good understanding of the local language
- know the tools and techniques well

The extent that these characteristics were represented in practice in AATG is unclear. While evaluating their own and others attitudes and behaviour during the 'My ideal PRA' exercises, CDWs were not very self-critical, frequently giving themselves a high score. However, a number of interviewees identified various characteristics where 'others could be better' (CDW 8). PO 1, for example, thought that 'some CDWs are very aggressive'. Ousman Cham felt that many CDWs in AATG were 'very good at talking to people but not good at people talking to them'. He also felt that for some CDWs:

> The quality of reflection is very low. They are not continually asking 'what opportunities are we missing out on, what did I learn new, how can I improve?'

However, CDWs and other staff felt that attitudes and behaviour did vary to some extent between CDWs and that this affected PRA practice. CDW 4 said that the quality of a PRA exercise,

> All depends your relationship with the people and the way you want to behave. This is different for every CDW.

This chapter has shown that because of the variations present it is theoretically and empirically unsatisfactory to base an analysis of PRA practice on the assumption that homogenous structural factors determine the actions of homogenous fieldworkers. However, this chapter is still limited in that it portrays PRA practice as the result of a one-way flow of influence where isolated factors determine unchanging outcomes. Far closer to reality is the understanding that PRA practice emerges out of a complex dynamic network of factors that is produced and reproduced by the actors involved and the outcomes resulting from it. The concluding chapter will discuss where such dynamism presents the opportunity for positive change in participatory approaches through the interaction of structure and agency.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discusses the opportunities for reducing the gap between the policy and practice of participatory approaches in development organisations. It examines, in reverse order, the potential for change in the factors influencing AATG's PRA practice identified in the previous sections and links the findings to the wider literature. The role of different actors, particularly fieldworkers and managers, is discussed.

Opportunities for change

Changing CDWs' attitudes

The agency of actors occurs when particular actions of an individual 'make a difference' to a pre-existing course of events (Giddens 1984). This can occur when actors attempt to pursue particular goals by actively constructing their own patterns of action, within the limits they face, by imposing their own subjectivity, preferences and attitudes (Long 1990).

The study of AATG suggests that fieldworkers' attitudes can influence participatory approaches. CDWs believed that, given their varying understanding, commitment and stance, they have sufficient discretion for their attitudes to affect their use of PRA. Such a link between attitudes and behaviour is of course not always positive. Jackson (1997b: 161) suggests that this link may prevent successful policy implementation:

> The thought that the outcomes of projects and policies are only partly and indirectly related to intentions and plans, and mediated by agency, is depressing, for ambitions for planned progressive social change can be subverted by the ability of individuals to override and redirect policy intentions.

Jackson (ibid.: 161) argues, along with much of the PRA literature, that attention needs to focus on the changes in the attitudes of individuals 'so that agency becomes an opportunity rather than a (subversive) constraint'.

Chambers and others have argued that, because of the personal nature of such attitudes, fieldworkers are responsible for their own personal change and action:

> One person cannot change it is said, unless others change, unless the whole system changes. This is a convenient but false position. In reality, every person always has some room for manoeuvre (Chambers 1995: 7).

These opinions would appear to be shared by CDW 3, discussed in Box 7a, whose particular commitment enabled him to improve his understanding and practice of PRA and, arguably against the odds, move closer towards AATG's policy expectations. However, such self-motivated positive practice was unusual. This study has shown that although individual CDWs do have some 'room for manoeuvre' they still tend to follow common practice and this common practice represents unsanctioned discretion and unsuccessful implementation of policy expectations. As Goetz (1996: 35) notes, with reference to the implementation of a gender policy, while there may be a case for supporting examples of positive discretion to counteract other fieldworkers' negative discretionary practices:

> it is important not to romanticise these subversions, to make more of them than they are. By any standards of measurement, they represent minute, molecular expressions of opposition perspectives.

While there is always a possibility for new and unpredicted action to take place as a consequence of such active agency, the large gap that exists between policy and common practice suggests that it would be unwise to rely purely on CDWs' personal responsibility and personally initiated attitudinal change to significantly improve PRA policy implementation. There are two reasons for this. First, although there are some differences, most CDWs in AATG have very similar attitudes towards their understanding, commitment and stance towards PRA. Even if changes in attitudes led directly to changes in behaviour, with such similarities it is unclear where, why or when self-motivated positive attitudinal change would occur. Second, although some link between CDWs' attitudes and behaviour has been shown in AATG, this study has also found that many other factors influence fieldworkers' PRA practice. This raises the question of how strong the link between attitudes and behaviour actually is.

Wilson (1989) argues that, in an organisational setting, the belief that attitudes have substantial power to influence behaviour is largely unfounded. After discussing a number of studies he concludes that 'psychologists do not find much evidence that behaviour is explained by attitudes' (ibid.: 51). Wilson supports the findings from AATG by suggesting that employee behaviour is influenced not only by their attitudes towards an activity but a range of social and financial rewards and penalties associated with alternative courses of action. He argues that:

> 'when we realise that attitudes must compete with incentives for influence over our behaviour, it is not surprising that attitudes often lose out to the rewards we seek or the penalties we try to avoid' (ibid.: 51).

This view does not deny the importance of attitudes entirely and recognises that attitudes are likely to have some influence on how a job is performed when an employee has a large degree of discretion. However, by accepting that attitudes are only one factor in a dynamic constellation of influences, the implication is that even when attitudes do make some difference, it may be possible for fieldworker behaviour and PRA practice to change without a change in employee attitudes. Some of the available options are discussed below.

Changing CDW characteristics

A number of writers support the case study's findings that the fieldworkers' characteristics of identity and experience are important influences of participatory approaches. As Hagmann *et al.* (1998: 55) suggest, the quality of PRA practice is 'dependent largely on personality types' and Fowler (1997: 84) believes that fieldworkers require particular characteristics for an appropriate participatory stance. Fieldworkers are able to choose how to act within their socially constructed identities, relating to gender, age, class and culture. However, the ability of an individual fieldworker to control or change the impact of his/her own identity on PRA practice is restricted by the particular social relations within which he/she operate. Gaventa (1998: 165) highlights the importance of the conditioning influence of broader social relations on the institutionalisation and practice of participatory approaches:

> The scaling up of participation will be different in Indonesia, or Estonia or Zimbabwe, not for institutional reasons only but for historical, political, cultural and social reasons. We need to understand far better the links between these levels of analysis in order to determine the necessary conditions for our strategies of personal and institutional change to be effective.

As previously suggested, the identities of CDWs emerge, in part, through strategies to recruit and retain[56] particular types of people by AATG within a 'Gambian' society. It is therefore possible, in the medium to long term, for managers to 'change' the identities of fieldworkers by changing these strategies. Recruitment and retention strategies could also be used for issues surrounding experience of participatory approaches, where inappropriate understandings and practices are ingrained in fieldworkers' behaviour from previous experience. However, further training, that specifically emphasises how the approach should be practised differently from past practices, together with supportive incentives, could provide a more suitable opportunity for change. The case study suggests that it is particularly important for AATG to overcome the interpretation of PRA as a 'package' if its policy expectations are to be successfully implemented.

Changing Communities

The case study suggested that the people whom fieldworkers are attempting to support have a significant impact on the practice of PRA. The influence of clients' characteristics and relationships on fieldworker

behaviour has been 'largely unrecognised in project planning and management' (Jackson 1997a: 245)[57]. Goetz (1996: 10) highlights the dilemma faced by fieldworkers where they 'have to balance a commitment to their clients interests with a preoccupation with personal security and advance' through effective implementation of their organisation's policies (Goetz 1996: 10). As Arce and Long (1993: 181) comment, this can result in fieldworkers having to be part of 'two contrasting and often conflicting social worlds'.

There are, however, opportunities for CDWs to change the characteristics of communities constraining PRA practice if they are able to successfully implement some of AATG's other policies. For example, as poverty targeting and women's empowerment becomes an increasing focus of the organisation's intervention activities, issues of unequal power relations during PRA are more likely to be addressed. However, given the present circumstances, these issues are likely to remain a challenge for some time and they deserve particular attention by CDWs during current PRA activities. Opportunities for change could include:

- the use of gender and age sub-groups and/or selected individuals as an element of all PRA activities
- developing CAPs in the most appropriate local language and encouraging literate community members to write and/or translate their own documents. In addition, participatory methods and outputs could be adapted and developed by staff to reduce the need for those who use them to be literate.
- a realised commitment to fit the organisation's activities around the communities' schedules rather than the other way around.
- a more substantial effort to train communities in the use of a range of PRA methods. Communities could then make a knowledgeable choice to use and adapt the most suitable technique for their own activities and CDWs would not be encouraged to simply facilitate community meetings as in the past.

However, even if fieldworkers had the space and incentives to carry out such changes to communities' characteristics, wider organisational change is likely to be needed to change aspects of the communities' relations that constrain PRA practice. For example, if CDWs are allocated to spend longer in each Block then it is possible that the current problems of being an 'outsider', finding suitable accommodation and learning another language can be reduced. In addition, attempts to reduce the negative impact of other policies and an explicit recognition of the risk of patronage in training and monitoring of CDWs could provide further opportunities for change.

Changing organisational structure

The case study has confirmed the findings of many of the organisation-centred studies described in Chapter 2 by emphasising the importance of the organisational structure for the practice of participatory approaches. Fieldworkers can be involved in changing the structure of an organisation in two ways. First, as discussed previously, Lipsky (1980: 24) proposes that lower-level workers are '*de facto* policymakers' through the feedback effect of their accumulated decisions and practices. Lispky (ibid.) sees policy as the practices experienced by clients. In this sense, the common practice of PRA in AATG in Table 3e could be seen as 'policy' determined by CDWs and there is the potential for this to occur more positively. However, this feedback can also be through more formal mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation. Assessments of PRA

in AATG, including the internal review recently carried out by the PMID of AATG (AATG 1999), the evaluation currently being conducted by external consultants for the Department for International Development (UK), and even this paper, provide an opportunity for fieldworkers' voices to be heard and offer the potential for positive structural change.

Second, there is an opportunity for fieldworkers to actively pursue change. Joshi (1997) describes the adoption of Joint Forest Management policy in Western India. It is an example demonstrating both the influence of participating communities on fieldworkers and the potential for fieldworkers to actively change the structure of an organisation. She suggests that front-line forestry officers were successful at lobbying their managers in response to difficult working and living conditions that were created by the communities dissatisfied with existing policies. Although no evidence was found in AATG of such action by fieldworkers, there is the opportunity for CDWs to influence the organisational structures that constrain them. However, although this opportunity should not be ignored, especially if strong motivation through another factor (such as the community) develops, it is unlikely that such active promotion of positive change by fieldworkers will occur in AATG to any great extent. The case study has demonstrated the power of the organisation's structure to constrain fieldworkers' agency. As Craig and Porter (1997: 235) recognise,

> Pressures of work mean that there is little time, or reward, to think about how the system might be changed, let alone what it would look like if change occurred.

Even if such attempts are made, or assessments occur, the weak position of fieldworkers compared to others in the organisation may limit their potential influence.

The case study suggests that the provision of policy knowledge, resources and the intentional and unintentional role of material and non-material rewards and sanctions significantly condition fieldworkers' use of participatory approaches. It has shown that these elements of an organisation's structure can have a direct influence over fieldworkers' agency but can also influence other factors, such as participating communities and a fieldworker's characteristics and attitudes, that compete to motivate fieldworkers to act in a particular way. Given the extent of this influence, and the challenges for fieldworkers to change their circumstances, the responsibility for change lies largely with the organisation's managers. Suggestions for how managers can change the organisation's structure to develop the personal characteristics of fieldworkers and community relations necessary for the successful implementation of PRA policy have already been discussed. Opportunities for managers to change the organisational structure to influence fieldworkers' attitudes and agency will now be described.

Appropriate training of CDWs in PRA would enhance their policy knowledge, skills, understanding and stance. Managers could ensure that this training, in addition to the suggestions discussed above, be longer, more practically orientated and occur more frequently than prior to large-scale appraisals. They could also emphasise flexibility and adaptation rather than a particular set of tools and give far greater attention to the facilitators' stance by attempting to increase CDWs' continuous self-awareness and critical reflection on analysis, truth, ethics, attitudes, social difference and participation.[58]

The appropriate use of governance mechanisms was also found to be crucial in the case study. This confirmed the findings of authors identified in Chapter 2 where material and non-material incentives are seen to be significant in influencing the practice and attitudes of PRA facilitators. In particular, despite the difficulties of performance measurement, key elements of the PRA process in AATG were identified where monitoring was currently inadequate or ineffective and could be improved by managers to encourage the implementation of the policy expectations. Managers could also introduce participatory monitoring and evaluation where communities assess fieldworkers' use of PRA through their own criteria. This would provide managers with useful information about the PRA process as well as increase the communities' understanding of PRA and encourage fieldworkers to be accountable to the communities they serve as well as to their managers.[59] AATG is in the fortunate position to already have an organisational culture that appears to be successfully promoting appropriate values and attitudes within the organisation. Managers are the ones most able to ensure that this culture is maintained during other organisational changes.

The unintentional consequences of organisational structure relating to time, alternative priorities and job security were identified as essential dimensions of the factors preventing the practice of PRA policy. Managers could change the organisational structure to ensure that fieldworkers have enough time to do the work expected of them by reducing the number of communities the organisation is working with or employing more staff.[60] In addition, the case study implied that if managers removed the direct link between the budget process and PRA activities, PRA practice would have a chance to improve.[61] Managers could also change organisational structure so that that performance measurement does not deflect attention from the PRA process and job insecurity is not a constraining factor.[62]

It is therefore managers who currently have the most control over the specific combination of the influencing factors that impinge on an individual fieldworker's agency. Through careful integration, allocation and the development of a more participatory organisational structure that includes the decentralisation of decision-making to lower-level supervisors and CDWs themselves, managers could ensure that the most appropriate combination of organisational elements, communities and individual fieldworkers is present to maximise the success of the organisation's policies, including that of participatory approaches.

PRA practice, structure and agency

The paper's findings offer a contribution to the literature on participatory approaches in two ways. First, while recognising the importance of enabling and constraining circumstances, this paper confirms the central role of fieldworkers' agency in rural development organisations. As Goetz (1996) and Jackson (1997a) suggest, a better understanding of fieldworkers and recognition of the struggles that they face is long overdue in development studies and management. Further investigation of the unique interactions of structure and the agency of fieldworkers in other development organisations is required regarding their use of different types of participatory approaches as well as other activities. The paper has shown that an effective way of doing this is to focus on fieldworkers' practices as represented and analysed by the fieldworkers themselves. Fieldworkers are reflexive actors conscious of the circumstances and consequences of their actions (Giddens 1984).

Second, this paper suggests that despite the complex web of social relations involved in the implementation of participatory approaches, some actors and factors have more influence than others. While recognising the importance of fieldworkers' agency, the limited variation in the 'common practice' of PRA in AATG implies that structural factors are a particularly dominant force in this case. In addition, while accepting that the influence of the communities and fieldworkers' characteristics and attitudes need to be taken into account, this paper has highlighted the significant influence over the practice of participatory approaches that fieldworkers attribute to the organisational structure. It questions the extent to which fieldworkers are actually able to implement PRA policy when ineffective, inappropriate and/or unintentional policies and practices exist within a development organisation. The current organisational structure of AATG leaves little room for fieldworkers to use their agency positively. Minimum structural conditions, such as those discussed above, need to exist if fieldworkers are to be able to practice participatory approaches as the policies expect.

While recognising the potential for fieldworkers to change the structures influencing them, the opportunity to change the structural factors to improve the implementation of PRA policy is largely the responsibility of an organisation's managers. The managers have the most power to take various elements of structure and fieldworker agency into account and improve the effectiveness of existing organisational mechanisms, overcome the unintended consequences of other policies and positively influence the participating communities and the characteristics and attitudes of fieldworkers to ensure effective PRA practice. Managers are also the ones able to encourage a more participatory organisational structure.

Although this paper has emphasised the role of fieldworkers – their perceptions, their agency and their practice of PRA - given that managers appear to be the actors most able to reduce the gap between the policy and practice of participatory approaches, the following questions remain: Why have managers of many development organisations not used their agency to reduce this gap? To what extent are managers' practices towards participatory approaches a product of the relationship between macro structural factors and their own agency? What are the roles of donors, parent organisations (e.g. AAUK), the national government and other development organisations in determining what managers can and cannot do? To what extent are managers constrained and enabled by the organisational processes and systems of the past? Are managers able to successfully facilitate the implementation of existing participatory policies given their personal characteristics and attitudes, the quantity and quality of resources available and the socio-economic context? How should managers attempt to change these existing policies? The behaviour of managers is, therefore, a key area for future research so the practice of participatory approaches can be more completely understood and policy expectations have a chance of being fulfilled. Given the rapidly growing use of a wide variety of participatory approaches in development organisations in The Gambia and elsewhere, a deeper understanding of both fieldworkers' and managers' motivations and actions is necessary and urgent.

ANNEX 1: RECENT CHANGES IN ACTIONAIDS' POLICY AND PRACTICES

By Garett Pratt

This annex is based on very helpful comments gathered from members of the AATG staff by the director, Sylvia Wachuku-King, namely: Mr. Janko, Buba Fabureh, Matarr Gaye, and Omar Badjie.

The research that makes up this paper was timely, as ActionAid staff were entering a period of reflection on their own participatory practices and policies in order to improve their work. They found some of the findings generated for this paper useful in their own thinking.

The staff held two seven day retreats on participation this year. The new thinking from that retreat is to shift from 'doing a PRA to facilitating participation'. There is a commitment to involving community members in all phases of the work, from planning to implementation and evaluation. There is also a new commitment to involve other stakeholders, such as partner organisations in the DAs, and government officials, in ActionAid's work.

Some changes since the writing of the paper include:

- Frontline staff are no longer on one year contracts.
- AATG is moving beyond measuring staff performance in terms of outputs, such as seed stores constructed or the number of wells sunk. As part of an international shift in ActionAid procedures, AATG is moving towards an evaluation system that emphasises more downwards accountability to poor and marginalised people. The reporting system thus focuses more on positive or negative changes (impacts) in the eyes of the communities rather than on outputs.
- There is a general commitment to produce a phase out strategy for every DA, following from the experience in the DA1.
- The country programmes has rethought its country strategy, and has now changed the seven inter-linked problem areas mentioned in this case study towards six strategic areas instead.
- The shift towards a system of CBM is not just an attempt, but the CBM approach was piloted, reviewed and adopted in full fledge in the DAs. Thus it was a complete strategic shift based on the recommendations of the review after the pilot phase.
- The paper talks about a targeting strategy, directing the organisation's attention to 'the very poor' rather than all community members. Targeting is directed to the poor and the very poor. This is only in the area of credit to the communities, but the social services do benefit all the community members. Targeting was piloted in DA4 and reviewed last year and the recommendations of that review have now led to the agency-wide adoption of the strategy.

ANNEX 2: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Name	Position	Activity	Date and Location
Claire Ansell	Desk officer, West Africa, ActionAid London	Informal interview	10 May 1999, London
Mary O'Donovan	Non-Sponsorship Fundraising Officer, AATG	Informal interview	23 May 1999, Kanifing
Ebrima Sanneh	Post – Phase Out Co-ordinator, AATG	Interview	24 May 1999, Kanifing
Abdoulie Jawo	Assistant Non-Sponsorship Fundraising Officer, AATG	My ideal PRA	25 May 1999, Kanifing
Margaret Bakurin	Senior Development Communication Officer/Gender Co-ordinator, AATG	Interview	26 May 1999, Kanifing
Ousman Cham	Country Programme Manager, Christian Children's Fund (Former Policy Director, AATG)	Interview	29 May 1999, Kanifing
Karafa Manneh	Manager, Programme Monitoring and Information Department, AATG	Informal interview	31 May 1999, Sapu
Lamin Juwara	Assistant Sponsorship Officer, DA3, AATG	Interview	1 June 1999, Bansang
Amadou Cessay	CDW, Zone K, DA3, AATG	Interview, My ideal PRA, Card sorting	2 June 1999, Faraba
Terakita Manneh	CDW, Zone J, DA3, AATG	Interview, My ideal PRA, Card sorting	3 June 1999, Jahanka
Alpha Khan	PO, Zone J, DA3, AATG	Interview, Card sorting	3 June 1999, Kerr Ousman Boye
Pa Ebrima Jammeh	CDW, Zone L, DA3, AATG	Interview, My ideal PRA, Card sorting	4 June 1999, Nyameng Kunda
Awa Ndimballan	CDW, Zone L, DA3, AATG	Interview, My ideal PRA, Card sorting	7 June 1999, Misira
Falie Baldeh	Assistant Director: Programmes, AATG	Interview, Card sorting	7 June 1999, Bansang

Muhammad Tambajang	Human Resources and Administrative Assistant, DA3, AATG	Interview	8 June 1999, Bansang
Dodou Jobe	CDW, Zone I, DA3, AATG	Interview, My ideal PRA, Card sorting	9 June 1999, Brikama Ba
Amie Nyang	PO, Zone I, DA3, AATG	Interview, Card sorting, Field visit	9 June 1999, Brikama Ba
Mangma Sonko	CDW, Zone I, DA3, AATG	Interview, Field visit	10 June 1999, Taifa
Edrisa Korita	CDW, Zone L, DA3, AATG	Interview, My ideal PRA, Card sorting	11 June 1999, Bansang
Workshop participants	24 AATG staff from the 3 DAs	Our ideal PRA	12 June and 16 June 1999, Janjanbureh
Ebrima Janneh	CDW, Zone K, DA3, AATG	Interview, Card sorting	14 June 1999, Sapu
Lamin Jobarteh and Dembo Touray	Programme Monitoring and Information Department, AATG	Meeting on the Internal PRA Review report	14 June 1999, Sapu
Famara Fadera	CDW, Zone J, DA3, AATG	Interview, My ideal PRA, Card sorting	15 June 1999, Bansang
Bully Sanyang	Audit Officer, DA3, AATG	Informal interview	15 June 1999, Bansang
Sinajo Dampha	CDW, Zone L, DA3, AATG	Interview, Card sorting	16 June 1999, Santanto Bubu
Momodou Barrow	PMIS Officer, DA3, AATG	Interview, Card sorting	17 June 1999, Bansang
Karafa Manneh, Lamin Jobarteh and Dembo Touray	Programme Monitoring and Information Department, AATG	Presentation and discussion of preliminary findings	18 June 1999, Sapu

ENDNOTES

1 This paper is based on fieldwork conducted by the author during two trips to The Gambia in 1999. The first trip (five weeks) was funded by the Institute of Development Studies and ActionAid The Gambia. The material obtained on the second trip (two weeks) was for a review of participatory approaches in The Gambia by Overseas Development Institute for the Department for International Development.

2 This list was developed from Blackburn and Holland (1998), Craig and Porter (1997), Hagmann *et al.* (1998), Howes and Roche (1995), Jupp (1996), Kar and Phillips (1998), Kumar (1996), Leurs (1998), Mosse *et al.* (1998), Musch (1998), Pretty and Chambers (1993), Shepherd (1995), and Thompson (1994; 1995).

3 Giddens is by no means the first or only writer to try and overcome the structure-agency dualism. Bryant and Jary (1991) suggest there are least five others. Of these, Bourdieu (1990), and his concept of *habitus* (or 'embodied history'), is especially important (cf. Mahar *et al.* 1990; Mosse *et al.* 1998). However, it is not practical to include an examination of these other writers here.

4 A good example is Goetz (1996). She examines how fieldworkers in rural credit programmes in Bangladesh interpret and implement policies promoting women's rights. She uses a framework, based on the ideas of Lipsky (1980) in his study on 'street-level bureaucrats' in the USA, to investigate 'fieldworker discretion'. The following section draws on both Lipsky (1980) and the interpretation of his work by Goetz (1996)

5 In addition to the writing of Chambers (1983; 1994b; 1995; 1997; 1998), writers who emphasise the role of facilitators' attitudes in PRA practice include Bauer and Hoffman (1997), Blackburn and Holland (1998), Leurs (1998), Nabasa *et al.* (1995), Paul (1998), Pretty and Chambers (1993).

6 This list is developed from Chambers (1995: 2) and (1997: 105). Refer to these sources for an explanation of the terms used.

7 Examples include Goetz (1996), Jackson (1997a; 1997b) and Pratt (1998).

8 Box 2a lists the attitudes and behaviours emphasised.

9 Guijt and Veldhuizen (1998: 3) identify thirty-three participatory methodologies that have been used in agricultural research and extension since the 1970s.

10 For summaries of the main arguments see Hailey (1998) and Leurs (1998).

11 Further on these approaches and organisations can be found in Holmes (1999). Tables 3b and 3c do not intend to show a 'hierarchy' of approaches. In both tables, the examples of organisations using each approach are for illustration only and, while they are used by them, these organisations may not wish to be particularly associated with this approach. Most of the organisations interviewed use more than one participatory approach.

12 These different uses in Table 3c may not necessarily be mutually exclusive (e.g. micro-planning may lead to macro planning and/or education).

13 In the Clark training, 'PRA was designed to elicit community backing for a unanimous CAP' (Ford *et al.* 1992: 41). Even if it was not its intention, this training implied that this 'package' represented 'best PRA practice'.

14 See Baldeh (1997: 108) for the full job description of AATG's CDWs.

15 The numbers in this paragraph are based on the current situation in DA3.

16 Since the fieldwork took place the PMID has been closed. It is not yet known what w ill replace it.

17 This manual was published in 1997 but a similar document, the CBO Handbook, had been in use since 1994.

18 Although not defined as such in the organisation's literature, AATG staff frequently used the phrases 'CAP development' and 'CAP updating'. They will be used in this paper so as to distinguish between the different types of PRA that they involve.

19 Karafa is referring here to the training that occurs before large scale activities such as the poverty assessment and initial CAP development that took place in DA4 in 1997 where, according to CDW 6, about twenty staff in four teams spent fifteen days conducting PRAs with one or two days in each village.

20 These were obtained from the 'PRA Training' file at the PMID, Sapu.

21 There is a risk that some policy expectations in Table 3e may have been misrepresented because, as discussed, many are not written statements of intent but have to be interpreted from other sources. The sources used were AATG training documents, the perspectives of senior managers regarding what they expected and CDWs' views on what they felt was expected of them. It should also be emphasised that the representation of 'common PRA practice' is developed from interviews with CDWs and other staff in DA3 (i.e. not from personal observation of PRA activities or interviews with staff in other DAs). However, discussions with workshop participants and PMID staff, and the findings of the internal PRA Review (AATG 1999), confirmed most of these interpretations of both policy and practice.

Two key methods were used to explore fieldworkers views own analysis of their use of PRA. One important method used for interviewing staff members was 'My ideal PRA' diagrams. The 'My ideal PRA' exercise involved CDWs visually identifying the characteristics they associated with an 'ideal' PRA so they could then assess and explain how these ideal characteristics compare to AATG's and their own practices. The 'Our ideal PRA' exercise had the same objectives but took place with workshop participants over two sessions.

The respondent(s) was asked to complete a spider diagram on their own 'ideal PRA' through the following stages. First, the respondent wrote 'My ideal PRA' in the centre of a large piece of paper and put a circle around this phrase. Second, lines were drawn by the respondent that came outwards from this circle and at the end of each

line write a characteristic of their 'ideal PRA'. It was emphasised that the characteristics could be anything that they thought important, and that these characteristics were to include factors related to the process of PRA and not just the tools themselves.
Prompting by the facilitator took place when a characteristic identified needed further clarification. Subdivisions from individual characteristics were often drawn in response. Prompting continued when the respondent said that they had identified all the characteristics they could identify. At this point the facilitator suggested that the respondent might like to think about other characteristics of their 'ideal PRA' by using the following checklist: how?; what?; when?; who?; why?; where? When this was complete, the facilitator sometimes asked their views on specific characteristics of PRA in an attempt to obtain information for comparative purposes e.g. 'how long should your ideal PRA take?'
When the spider diagram was complete, the respondent was given two pens of different colours and asked to choose one colour to represent themselves and one colour to represent AATG. The respondent was then asked to evaluate each characteristic they had identified using scores of 1–5 (where 5 = 'an ideal PRA') for both themselves and AATG. It was explained that the score they were to give AATG was to relate to how successful they felt the whole organisation was at attaining the ideals identified, while the score they were to give themselves referred to their personal success in meeting these ideals in their own use of PRA. After all the characteristics had been scored, the respondent was asked to explain why such scores for the organisation and themselves had been given. Discussion focused on the characteristics that had been given scores of less than 5. Explanations were sought as to why respondents felt the their ideals were not being met in each case.
A second key method for gaining views on the factors influencing CDW's use of PRA was card-sorting. 26 pre-prepared index cards were given to the respondent. These cards were developed from the organisation-centred literature and actor-orientated literature relating to participatory approaches discussed in Chapter 2. Each card showed a factor that could potentially influence the practice of PRA by a CDW. The respondent was asked to: sort cards into two piles – those factors seen as relevant, those factors seen as having no influence; identify any additional factors that were not on the cards and write their own cards if necessary; rank the cards seen as relevant in influencing how a CDW conducts PRA; lay the cards out in a list with the top card having the most important influence and the bottom card having the least influence; explain the rank order and how each factor influenced CDW PRA practice.

22 This paper focuses on the practice of participatory approaches and takes the current policy expectations as given. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine policy change or evaluate AATG's PRA policy. See Chambers (1994c: 1440), Pratt (1998) and Thompson (1995: 1521) for attempts to explain how and why policies of participatory approaches have emerged into their current forms in development organisations.

23 The relationship between the government and other organisations in The Gambia and AATG's practice of PRA practice is not examined. Although these organisations and their fieldworkers may be important, the nature of this link was not established in interviews with fieldworkers. 'The influence of other organisations' was ranked 18th in the card sorting exercise. An examination of the role of these organisations is an important area for further research.

24 'AATG's PRA/CBM policy, guidelines and manuals' was ranked 7th in the card sorting exercise.

25 To ensure the confidentiality of staff responses, a coding system is used to refer to the CDWs, POs, and Specialists interviewed. However, because AATG's senior staff were interviewed in their official capacity, and their identity would be impossible to disguise, the names of these staff are given. A full list of the names and positions of all those interviewed is provided in Annex 2. The codes do not in any way represent the interview sequence.

26 'The amount/nature of PRA training received by CDWs' was ranked 1st in the card sorting exercise.

27 As well as being AATG's former Assistant Director, Ousman Cham is currently the Chairman of TANGO, the umbrella organisation of NGOs in The Gambia, and the Programme Manager of the Christian Children's Fund.

28 Those trained at the Rural Development Institute at Massokonko had attended some introductory classroom sessions on PRA.

29 One CDW, who had just joined AATG from the Government's Community Development Department, had had three weeks PRA training.

30 The inadequate nature of AATG's PRA training programme was first raised in 1993 by Dillon and Fowler (1993: 31). The recent internal PRA review that concluded that, because of insufficient training, CDWs' PRA knowledge and skills are currently 'limited' (AATG 1999).

31 In the card sorting exercise, 'Material incentives (e.g. merit bonus, promotion, job security)' was ranked 16th, 'Sanctions/penalties if do badly' was ranked 22nd, 'Direct observation by superiors' was ranked 21st, and 'Indirect performance measurement by superiors (e.g. reports, CAPs, outcomes)' was ranked 20th.

32 The following analysis on performance measurement incorporates Wilson's (1989: 155–75) ideas that Pratt (1998: 39–58) adapted to examine the use of participatory approaches by fieldworkers in a government programme in India.

33 For example, in one Zone in DA3, the PO was responsible for 4 CDWs working with a total of 69 communities.

34 'Organisational culture' is used here to refer to 'a persistent, patterned way of thinking about the central tasks and human relationships within an organisation' (Wilson 1989: 91). Although most organisations have multiple cultures and these are often in conflict, this approach attempts to develop 'a widely shared and warmly endorsed' culture to provide a basis for socialising employees (ibid.: 95).

35 In the card sorting exercise, 'To fulfil AATG's mission and goals' was ranked 4th.

36 In the card sorting exercise, 'Organisational culture of AATG' was ranked 10th.

37 In the card sorting exercise, 'Following the example of superiors' was ranked 18th and 'Recognition and respect from colleagues' ranked 19th.

38 Most CDWs said that they tried to visit every community in their Block at least once a week. In DA3, one CDW (CDW 2) had a village in his Block that was 10km away from where he stayed while it took another (CDW 5), without a motorbike, 2 hours to get to her furthest village. One small community in DA3 had been given a loan by AATG but had, for some time, been 'forgotten about' because 'it was so far away' (PO 1).

39 In DA3, only one exercise in one Zone had been conducted for specifically for the training of community members in PRA methods.

40 It is recognised that 'community' is a problematic concept that inaccurately implies a spatially and temporarily distinct group that is homogenous, equal and consensual (Eyben and Ladbury 1995; Li 1996; McLain and Jones 1997). As will be discussed, such 'communities' are internally and externally heterogeneous and contain unequal power relations and arenas of conflict. The term is used here because it is frequently used by CDWs to refer to the villages and people within their Blocks.

41 Some CDWs mentioned dividing the gender groups again into 'young' and 'old', or having groups of men and women and a third group for 'youth', but these options did not appear to be common for CAP development or CAP updating in DA3. Community meetings were rarely split into any groups during CAP updating in DA3.

42 In the card-sorting exercise, 'Weather' was ranked 12th, with most referring to the inappropriate season.

43 Given the low levels of female education in The Gambia the reliance on literacy and English may also have implications for the unequal control over the contents and use of CAPs by different genders.

44 In the card-sorting exercise, 'Recognition and respect from the community working with' was ranked 8th.

45 The average length of stay in one Block is 2–3 years.

46 In the card-sorting exercise, 'Gambian culture' was ranked 14th, 'Gender of CDW' was ranked 17th and 'Economic and social power differences between CDWs and community members' and 'Age' were jointly ranked 23rd.

47 The following divergent responses were not simply the opposing opinions of the respective gender groups. However, it was the case that more women spoke favourably about female staff and more men spoke favourably about male staff.

48 In the card sorting exercise, 'Prior PRA experience' was ranked 2nd. The issues raised by the current PRA training in AATG have already been discussed in Chapter 4. Here the focus will be on past training and practical experiences.

49 One CDW referred to the difficulties of using detailed household questionnaires in PRA. It emerged that such questionnaires were seen by some staff as part of the PRA package because 'PRA teams' had used them in DA4 in 1997 for poverty assessment purposes during the CAP development process.

50 Such rational choice does involve a temporal element in the sense that the perceived success of past actions and experiences are considered but this is incorporated in discursive consciousness.

51 By focusing on real individuals in real situations all of the variations of the elements discussed in the previous sections will not be covered. However, this approach has been chosen to highlight the individuality of PRA practice. The two cases described in this chapter have been selected to illustrate the extremes of PRA practice in AATG. Both are unusual. They are based on interviews with these CDWs and most of the 'explanations' for their behaviour are their own. It should be emphasised that judgements on particular personalities and behaviour are not intended. The aim is to identify how particular people are constrained and enabled in particular settings. The issue of confidentiality raised by such detailed illustrations was carefully considered. It was felt that the alternative use of 'composite' examples would have been unsatisfactory given the attempt to demonstrate the unique complexity of a genuine situation. While it may be possible for some colleagues to identify the CDWs described, it was concluded that, given that permission to use interview material had been sought, the use of a code name was sufficient.

52 As previously suggested, the identities and experience of CDWs are largely determined by the organisational structure through its recruitment policy, contract termination, training programmes and past policy and practice.

53 Of the sixteen CDWs participating in a workshop session a straw poll indicated that during CAP updating all used FGD, three also used problem ranking with a visual matrix and one also used resource ranking.

54 In the card sorting exercise, 'Sense of professionalism by CDW' was ranked 6th.

55 In the card sorting exercise, 'Attitudes of CDWs' was ranked 8th and 'Values and beliefs of CDWs' was ranked 15th.

56 Retention policies are emphasised here because of the current short-term nature of employment contracts in AATG. Although there are disadvantages to such contracts, if they are maintained the composition of CDWs in AATG can be changed relatively quickly.

57 Examples where the influence of communities has been appreciated include Goetz (1996; 1997), Jackson (1997a, 1997b) and Joshi (1997).

58 Writers who discuss the necessity of these elements in PRA training include Crewe and Harrision (1998), Fowler (1997), Goyder (1998), Guijt and van Veldhuizen (1998), Kumar (1996), Paul (1998), Pretty and Chambers (1993), Pretty and Scoones (1995), Shepherd (1995), Thompson (1995), and Wordofa (1998).

[59] The literature referring to the participatory monitoring and evaluation of participatory development includes Blauert (1997), Estrella and Gaventa (1997), Gaventa (1998), Hagmann *et al.* (1998), Howes (1992), Pratt (1998) and Schmidt and Rifkin (1996),

[60] Mosse *et al.* (1998) and Pratt (1998) also emphasise the need to solve the problems of time constraints on those implementing participatory approaches.

[61] Reference to the constraints of budgetary procedures on participatory approaches is included in IDS Workshop (1998), Leurs (1998) and Thompson (1995).

[62] The use of performance targets is criticised by Chambers (1995), Jupp (1996), Kar and Phillips (1998) and Shepherd (1995). IDS Workshop (1998: 147) suggests appropriate performance measurement, rewards and sanctions can be developed through consultation with employees. Paul (1998) identifies the need to overcome issues of job insecurity if PRA facilitators are to be effective.

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