currents 28

PARTICIPATION - WHERE IS IT HEADING?

In this issue

On the illustrations:
Obviously participation is a complex theme, articles on which are not easily illustrated by diagrams or pictures. Photo illustrations and accompanying texts in this issue have no direct relation to the articles, but raise important and critical questions. Photos are sometimes taken out of their original context. No conclusions regarding the future of participation should be read from this story. A few puns were allowed, but participation remains a serious matter.

Editorial

'Participation' has come of age. In some form or other it is now a must in proposals to donor agencies and frequently features in government strategies and implementation plans. NGOs have long claimed to work in a participatory fashion. At Currents we have felt a need to cover this theme but also suspected that there is much more to it than finding the status of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). And, indeed, so it turned out to be!

This issue seeks to bring out the trajectories of participation in development: the shifting meaning of the concept, the buzzwords and approaches that have characterised the historical evolution, and the motives behind participation ranging from purely instrumental for increased project implementation efficiency to empowerment and strengthening citizen participation as a democratic and human right.

Participatory approaches have had a remarkable spread in recent decades but have also been the subject of internal critique and more fundamental critiques of the discourse of participation. A multi-facetted critical review is provided in the thought-provoking book *'Participation: The New Tyranny?'*. A summary is given in this issue to bring out the challenges that participation as a concept and approach has to deal with.

Up-scaling and mainstreaming participation in development means moving beyond the project/community level and involving secondary stakeholders; institutions, donor agencies and others. Mainstreaming participation in donor organisations is illustrated with examples of where Sida and the World Bank, with external collaborating partners, stand and how they manage the change process. It continues to be a challenge but the reasons and constraints are complex.

But participation should not be exclusively associated with donor or NGO initiatives. An article in this issue forwards propositions on how citizens can be linked to the state for participatory local governance. Obviously, this has a relevance far beyond the sphere of donors and developing countries.

PRA has become part of the taken-for-granted language used by development professionals and practitioners around the globe. It has become increasingly hard to tell what people mean by the term 'PRA'. Many people agree there is something wrong with the current state of PRA practice. In a concluding article, three distinct narratives articulated by different development professionals in Nepal explain 'the problem with PRA'.

There are many resource groups involved in development of participatory methodologies. The Participation Group of the Institute of Development Studies, which substantially contributed to this issue, is one player. A fact sheet on the Group is included and their home page is a good entry point for those who want to follow how international work on this issue is branching out and progressing.

Johan Toborn
Guest editor

Participation in Development: Tracks and Traces

by Andrea Cornwall

Participatory approaches to development are increasingly converging with concerns about democracy and citizenship. The intersection of growing demands to be included with the widening of political space, in some contexts through changes in laws and policies, have made available a broadening array of spaces for more active citizen engagement with decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods. Different spaces for public involvement have emerged in different places at different times, contributing to the complex muddle of institutional forms, meanings and practices that now characterises participation in development. This article explores shifts in development discourse over the last few decades that have led to the emergence of new spaces for public involvement and uses this as a lens through which to examine participation in contemporary development practice.[1]

Trajectories of Participation in Development

Participation first caught the attention of mainstream development agencies, grappling with how to make their interventions more effective, in the mid-1970s (Cohen and Uphoff 1980). By the early 1980s, 'community participation' had come to be associated with the sharing of benefits by the poor, project efficiency and effectiveness, and cost sharing (Bamberger 1986),[2] with scant attention to the empowerment or capacity building goals that were on the 1970s self-reliance agenda (Paul 1987). Beneficiary participation was a matter of pragmatism rather than principle: to achieve cost-effectiveness and compliance. And one of the best ways to do this was by getting local people organised, either in self-help groups or in committees of various kinds, through which they could have some input into project implementation - if not identification and design.

The 'projects with people' (Oakley et al. 1991) era of the 1980s gave rise to the establishment of new local level institutions that continued to multiply over the following decade, crowding the local institutional landscape. These ranged from sectoral committees for joint forest or community health service management to village and district development committees (see Poffenburger and McGean 1996, Leach et al. 1998).

As Esteva commented in the mid-1980s, one consequence of this expansion in local institutions was that 'democracy turns into bureaucracy' (1985:79). The template for this form of participation, as for the use of community development, was already in place in many ex-colonies.[3] Ribot compares current 'community-based' natural resource committees with their colonial counterparts, arguing that they constitute a 'modern reproduction of indirect rule when it uses non-state authorities to legitimate and carry out external projects of the state and international organisations' (1996:44).

What is evident from a closer look at some of the spaces that came to be created in this way is that there is nothing inherently democratic about them: what matters is what happens within them, who enters them, and who or what those who take part represent. Questions about representation and accountability highlight some of paradoxes of this variant of participatory development, traces of which remain evident in interventions such as social investment funds and 'community-driven development' (see Abbot and Covey 1996, www.worldbank.org). As a Mexican participation practitioner commented:

'Giving (the community) responsibility without training or consciousness-raising is very dangerous. The government has an idea of participation, but most programmes limit this to the formation of committees. They give money to a community, but only to do what the government already had in mind. They don't really listen to the community, though they call it participation' (cited in Moya and Way forthcoming:18)

Just as governments can use community-based institutions to shunt provisioning burdens onto local people, for legitimisation or for political capital, so too can dominant interests within communities use them to reinforce, rather than transform, existing power relations. Cases exist where devolving control to 'the community' has undermined existing rights of more marginal actors (Agarwal 1997). By conflating a 'com-

munity-based' structure with representation of 'the community' and its interests, dissent, inequity and exclusion *within* communities falls out of view.[4]

As similar kinds of institutions continue to be created, the connections between newly created structures and existing institutions, either 'traditional' governance structures and local associations, or those produced by previous waves of enthusiasm for community participation, are becoming increasingly important to understand (see Tandon, 2002). The ambiguities of these institutionalised spaces raise a number of questions.

Where local planning or service user committees spring up overnight through donor whim or local government fiat, those who fill the space may be 'gatekeepers' of power in their communities and may reproduce existing relations of exclusion. Community organising may facilitate excluded minorities to mobilise around their rights, yet in the process may rely on creating social forms - women's groups are a good example - that have little connection with how people organise or even perceive themselves and their common interests.

'Community participation' and the forms of participatory development associated with it since the early 1980s often worked by creating groups who would participate collectively to improve their circumstances. The consumer ethos that became so prominent over the 1990s worked by recasting beneficiaries and 'communities' as consumers of services - 'users and choosers' (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001) whose contributions became the basis for a more active engagement in securing effective outcomes - the emphasis came to be placed on the individual. Induced participation had, it was argued, not given people enough responsibility for the success of development projects; after all, it was argued, people value things more if they pay for them. For many development agencies, 'stakeholder' and 'ownership' became the watchwords; participation and empowerment were progressively recast within the market idiom (see, for example, UNDP 1993, WDR 2000/1). Embrace of the consumer ethos reached its apogee in USAID's 'customer' approach, in which participation was proclaimed the lynchpin (see Attwood 1993, LaVoy 1998).

Within mainstream development, participation was largely seen as a means to involve people in activities initiated by development agencies or the state. Participation became what Foucault (1991) terms a 'political technology': used to manage and control projects and processes, bounding the possibilities of popular engagement and disciplining subjects.

Yet at the same time, countervailing discourses continued to fuel more radical forms of empowerment and social action, largely at a remove from the 'officialising strategies' (Bourdieu 1977) used to domesticate participation. Proponents of Participatory Action Research (see Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991, Rahman 1995), and the streams of thinking and action that grew out of the adult education movement, articulated and enacted alternatives. These were to blossom in small-scale initiatives, but impinged relatively little on a mainstream in which terms like 'participation' and 'empowerment' came to be appropriated

One of the challenges of participatory methodologies is how to deal with power. Photo: Trond Isaksen/PHOENIX

and imbued with rather different meanings.

New Spaces, New Actors: From 'Civil Society' to Citizen

The influences came to shape the wave of enthusiasm for participation that swelled in the 1990s represented in many respects a convergence of positions that sought above all to reposition external actors, particularly the state. The 'do it by yourself' ethos with which efforts to promote participation resonated brought together the most unlikely bedfellows, from hard-line neoliberals to communitarians. Two shifts in the directionality of aid and in development practice were particularly salient in the 1990s. The first was increasing donor and lender support to 'civil society'. In the marriage of liberal democratic theory and neo-liberal economic policy, 'civil society organisations'- at best a residual category into which disparate actors were to be lumped together - were presumed closer to 'the people', both a check on the state and an extension of it. The darlings of development agencies, NGOs played an increasingly significant role, absorbing a growing proportion of aid budgets (see Hulme and Edwards 1997).

This 'associational revolution' (Salamon 1993: 1) fostered the proliferation of 'civil society organisations' representing and servicing the needs of 'marginalised groups'. These in themselves constituted new spaces for participation. In some of these spaces, excluded individuals could find a collective presence and voice. Disability rights and AIDS treatment activism are powerful examples of organising from the margins to affect mainstream policies and institutions (see Barnes 1999, Geffen 2001). In other spaces, marginalised groups were spoken about and for by a new breed of 'public servant', the 'civil society' professional. In some contexts 'civil society organisations' took over social sector activities to such an extent that they supplanted the state, becoming part of a reconfigured 'public sector' whose accountability, as Tvedt (1998) notes, often left something to be desired.

The second key feature was increasing use of 'participatory approaches'. Mainstream support was won for their contributions to efficiency, as a means of enabling consumers to exercise responsibility and choice (Tandon and Cordeiro 1998). Civil society actors- consultants as well as NGOs - were critical to the development and spread of participatory approaches, carrying them into government (Singh, 2001; Blackburn with Holland 1998). While 'civil society' may have *delivered* the consumerised services envisioned by the likes of the World Bank, a number of NGOs continued to talk of empowering the poor, about rights, recognition and redistribution. And participatory approaches offered strategies for enabling marginalised groups to recognise and strengthen voice: for 'people's self-development' (Rahman 1995) rather than for inserting 'the people' into development, to develop the capacity to negotiate on new terms with the powerful, including the state (Stiefel and Wolfe 1994).

More malleable than other methodologies on offer, an approach that came without ideological baggage and could suit any agenda, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) soared in popularity

Groups and communities are not as homogenous as they may seem. Photo: Johan Toborn

during this period. It provided *both* a way to make 'communities' and 'local knowledge' legible to development agencies (see Scott 1998), *and* held the potential of democratising decisions and discussions that tended to be dominated by those who were older, male and better-off. Most importantly, it created new *kinds* of spaces: not simply more institutionalised bodies, such as user groups and sectoral committees, but temporally bounded opportunities for dialogue. International agencies began to make more and more use of it in their projects and programmes (see Pratt 2001, Cornwall et al. 2001, Moya and Way, forthcoming).

Interesting contradictions emerge between the growth of popular organisations *of* and *for* particular groups, and the use by development agencies of approaches like PRA to reach out to ordinary people, and especially to the poor. Sometimes attempts were made to link the two. Links between the transient space of the participatory encounter with institutionalised spaces gave rise, in some places to the creation of new institutions to execute or oversee 'community action plans'. These initiatives often existed at a remove from government, sometimes bypassing it entirely.

A Return to Politics?

The recuperation of the state and its role in public policy in development discourse of the later 1990s generated new spaces for public involvement as *citizens*, rather than simply as consumers (see Cornwall and Gaventa 2001). In some settings, decentralisation reforms presented new opportunities for citizen engagement; in others, experimentation with new forms of democratic practice opened new possibilities for public involvement in priority setting and resource allocation (Fung and Wright 2001; de Sousa Santos 1998). It became clear that effective use of these new opportunities for citizen involvement in governance required *both* an effective, responsive state *and* an aware and organised citizenry (Gaventa, this volume).

Onto a terrain littered with versions of participation and the traces of older meanings and practices, some development agencies began to talk once again about rights and social justice at the close of the 1990s. Participation was again advocated as a basic right, the starting point for defining and asserting the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and demanding that the state honour its obligations (see Ferguson 1999; DFID 2000; Cornwall 2000). With the turn to rights, 'the people' or 'the poor' become not passive beneficiaries or consumers empowered to make choices, but agents: 'makers and shapers' of their own development (see Cornwall and Gaventa 2001). In this vein, DFID's recent strategy paper, *Human Rights for Poor People*, recasts 'development' as: '... a process of political struggle over priorities and access to resources…', arguing that 'the human rights approach to development reveals these competing claims and legitimises excluded peoples' efforts to strengthen their voice in the political process' (2000:13).

DFID's formulation of 'development' brings back to centre stage questions of power and politics. With this emerge contested intersections between 'spaces of radical possibility' - spaces chosen and created by and with those struggling for rights and recognition - and those made available by the powerful.

Networks of citizens are increasingly becoming connected across the globe, strengthening each other's hands in local struggles as well as engaging in contests on the global stage (see Edwards and Gaventa, 2001; Patel et al. 2001). Yet, at the same time, foreign governments and supranational financial organisations grow ever closer in their prescriptions and funding for particular kinds of solutions. The instruments for 'participation' developed and favoured by the most influential among them, the World Bank, from the resonant moral authority of their versions of the 'voices of the poor' to the involvement of 'civil society organisations' as proxies for 'the people' in PRSPs, open space yet circumscribe its contours. Concerns about who participates, with what and on what basis, how, and how their views and voices are mediated and represented have, as a result, become ever more pressing.

Conclusion

The contemporary development landscape is covered with traces of different eras of enthusiasm for and interpretations of participation. The gamut of possibilities that invited participation represents has absorbed increasing political space - to the cost, some might argue, of other forms of political participation.

The political ambiguities of invited participation lend it particular qualities for strengthening the legitimacy of those who use it, as well as of democratic practice. Much depends on who they are, how they involve people, and in what. What shape participation within these spaces take is also influenced by what takes place *outside* invited spaces, on the connections of people and ideas that span invited and other spaces, and on the configuration of political interests within any particular place. And how citizens participate may depend on their perceptions of citizenship, rights and entitlements, as well as the possibilities of holding those who invite participation to account.

Assessing the potential of new spaces for citizen participation requires making sense of these dynamics, positioning participation on a broader social, cultural and political canvas. Spaces that currently exist for public involvement become sites for genuine citizen participation when those who participate gain meaningful opportunities to exercise voice and hold those who invite them to take part to account. Older forms of participation persist in the practices of most development agencies - including those espousing all the right language about rights and democracy. Instrumental efforts at inclusion remain in the ways in which 'stakeholders' are identified and involved in development decision-making.

The mess of institutions created by decades of invited participation will not go away with the sweep of a new magic broom. Making sense of these traces, however, rather than ignoring them in enthusiasm for the new, can offer insights that can help to develop strategies for strengthening citizen participation as a basic democratic and human right.

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Notes

[1] This is a shortened and revised version of an article published in the IDS Bulletin 'Making Rights Real: Exploring Citizenship, Participation and Accountability', Vol. 23, No. 2, April 2002.

[2] The US Foreign Assistance Act of 1973 was the first foreign government statement on the benefits to development of participation, and was in this vein (see Cohen and Uphoff 1980).

[3] Presley (1988), for example, documents the use of participatory strategies by community development workers to 'rehabilitate' insurgent women in colonial Kenya.

[4] The gender dimensions of this have been well documented (see Guijt and Kaul Shah eds. 1998).

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Participation: The New Tyranny?*
A summary of conclusions

Participatory approaches have had a remarkable spread in recent decades but have also been the subject of internal critique and more fundamental critiques of the discourse of participation. The above book, with a deliberately provocative title, has its origin in a conference organised by the University of Manchester. The primary aim of the book is to provide a set of more rigorous and critical insights into the participatory development discourse than has hitherto been the case. Three sets of tyrannies have been identified: the tyranny of decision-making and control, the tyranny of the group, and the tyranny of method. Some of the main points in the 11 contributions making up the book are summarised in the following and constitute the challenges participation as concept and approach has to deal with. The titles of the different articles are given at the end of the text.

David Mosse questions that attention to 'local knowledge' through participatory approaches will change the relationship between local communities and development organisations. Based on case studies he shows planning processes and outcomes often rather structure 'local knowledge'. 'Local needs' were shaped by local ideas of what development agencies could be expected to deliver. 'Participatory planning' may be viewed as acquiring and manipulating a new 'planning knowledge' rather than taking 'people's knowledge' into account in project design. Participatory ideals are often constrained by institutional contexts. Participation nevertheless remains important as part of a project. Ideas of participation are then oriented towards external concerns, not necessarily relating to local practice or providing guidance on project implementation, but of importance in negotiating with donors.

Frances Cleaver draws experience from case studies of water resource usage and questions the development impact of participatory approaches and underlines the importance of understanding social structure and of individual agency in shaping participation. Participatory development, it is suggested tends to conflate social structures with institutions. However, participatory development bureaucracies prefer institutional arrangements that may not correspond with those of 'participants'. Problems are found in how formal versus informal institutions are dealt with, the different forms of participation that different institutional types require; and the questionable assumptions about 'community'. Participatory approaches' models of individual agency and the links between these and social structures are considered inadequate. Understandings of the motivations of individuals to participate, or not, are vague. Simplistically it is rational to participate and irrational not to. Participatory approaches fail to recognise how the identities of individuals impact upon their choices about whether and how to participate. They further overlook the potential links between participation and subordination.

Nicolas Hildyard, Pandurang Hegde, Paul Wolvekamp, studying participatory forest management, look at conflicts over the concept of 'participation' and 'forests'. They argue that the failure by donors to implement policies on participation is institutionally deep-seated and structural. Through participatory development grassroots organisations can become a vehicle for making investments with least local opposition. Though participatory forest management arose from popular unrest about the commercial exploitation of forests and local people's exclusion from forest resources, it nevertheless served to maintain that exploitation and exclusion. Further marginalisation, loss of livelihoods and increased hardship of already disadvantaged groups is demonstrated as the result of the studied participatory Joint Forest Management project. Participatory processes have to take into account the relative bargaining power of so-called stakeholders unless they are to merely provide opportunities for the more powerful.

Paul Francis focuses on approaches to participation employed by the World Bank, notably PRA. PRA's methodological and epistemological bases are set out. The relationship between the 'community' and 'the professional' is questioned, suggesting i.a. that the impor-

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tance of charismatic specialists recalls the role of the shaman. PRA is suggested a rite of communion. Francis analyses the *World Bank Participation Sourcebook* as 'part self-improvement manual and part mythical text'. The reductionist simplifications of PRA techniques are noted. Use of participatory approaches in the light of the new emphasis on the social dimensions at the Bank is considered. It is argued that the determinants of well-being are given little attention. This is reinforced by the individualist nature of PRA. The absence of any real alternative vision of development leaves PRA vulnerable to opportunism and co-option.

John Hailey draws on a range of ideas to question the formulaic approaches to participatory decision-making promoted and even imposed by donors and other development actors. He reviews recent research into successful South Asian NGOs that suggest that NGO success resulted from the understanding of, and responses to, the needs of local communities with which they worked. This closeness to communities arose not from the application of the well-known formulaic approaches to participation. Rather, success was achieved by a long-term effort by NGO leaders to build close personal relationships with individuals and groups in the communities with which they worked, and with NGO staff. Three explanations for the absence of formulaic approaches to participation are offered. They have real operational limitations, they are culturally inappropriate, and their history and the reality of their practice indicate that they might be seen as a means of imposing external control.

Bill Cooke uses four concepts from social psychology to demonstrate how individuals' thoughts, feelings and behaviour are influenced by the presence of others. These concepts suggest that problems can arise as a consequence of the face-to-face interactions that are inherent in participatory development. The four concepts suggest that participatory processes can lead people to take collective decisions that are more risky than those they would have taken individually; that they can lead to people taking a decision that participants have second-guessed is what everyone else wants, when the opposite is the case; that a belief in the inherent morality of what is being done, self-censorship, and the existence of 'mindguards' can lead to evidently wrong decisions; and that the manipulation of group processes can lead to malign changes in ideological beliefs, or consciousness. All concepts put participatory development's claims for effectiveness and empowerment in question, and suggest a disciplinary bias that permits the use of a technology on the world's poor without the safeguard that the rich would expect.

Participation is also about listening and learning but not being co-opted. Photo: Johan Toborn

Harry Taylor questions Robert Chambers' parallels between participatory development and participatory management. He argues that participation in both cases is part of a wider attempt to influence power relations between elite groups and the less powerful. Both project beneficiaries and employees within organisations are in relative terms dependent and powerless. Considering arguments from mainstream management it is suggested that even on its own terms doubts about its feasibility and desirability exist. From a more critical management perspective it is argued that participation is always constrained, and conceals and at the same time conserves certain power relations.

Uma Kothari challenges claims made that participatory approaches generate better knowledge. She proposes understanding of power as something which circulates, rather than something which is divided between those who have it and those who do not. The latter approach is typical of participatory development but severely simplified power relations. PRA seeks to reveal the realities of everyday life, but because of its public nature means that the more participatory it is, the more the power structure of the local community will be masked. Participatory research structures local knowledge and potentially marginalises information that does not fit the structure. At worst the ritual practices of PRA may actually serve to subvert it, by producing front stage performances that conceal the "real" reality of the back stage, and are taken for that reality.

Giles Mohan criticises participatory practices, notably the ways in which local knowledge is supposedly generated as an alternative to 'top-down' approaches. Based on postcolonial studies it is argued that that a subtle Eurocentrism pervades the interventions of non-local development workers. Focusing on the personal and the local, participatory approaches minimise the importance of the other places where power and knowledge are located, e.g. the Western development community and the state. It is possible to move beyond these pitfalls with a radical hybrid form, beyond bounded notions of self/other and insider/outsider; scale up lo-

cal interventions, and link them to the complex processes of democratisation, anti-imperialism and feminism.

Heiko Henkel and Roderick Stirrat are concerned with the practices, ideas and cosmologies of those who plan and practice 'development projects'. They look at origins, seen primarily as religious, covering the Reformation, the nineteenth-century British non-conformism to the founding of British development NGOs. Henkel and Stirrat address the notion of 'empowerment' which may not be as liberating as the new orthodoxy suggests. Rather than asking how much people are empowered one should ask for what. Their answer to this question is that participatory approaches shape individual identities, 'empowering' participants 'to take part in the modern sector of developing societies'. This empowerment is therefore tantamount to subjection.

The articles demonstrate what can happen with participatory development. This is a systemic problem. Is participatory development then inevitably tyrannical? The editors of the book conclude 'that there are more overarching and fundamental problems with participation than those reflected in earlier critiques. … those that are most apparent to us are the naivety of assumptions about the authenticity of motivations and behaviour in participatory processes; how the language of empowerment masks the real concern for managerial effectiveness; the quasi-religious association of participatory rhetoric and practice, and how an emphasis on the micro level of intervention can obscure, and indeed sustain, broader level macro-level inequalities and injustice.

… these themes … point to what for us is the fundamental concern. It becomes clear from a reading of the chapters in this book that the proponents of participatory development have generally been naïve about the complexity of power and power relations.

… this book identifies a more nuanced set of understandings of the workings of power as being necessary, in order to uncover its varied and subtle manifestations in the very discourse of participation.

… This confirms, for us, that we were right to discuss participation in terms of

its tyrannical potential, remembering that tyranny is precisely about the illegitimate and/or unjust uses of power. The question that we will not answer here, however, is whether this potential can be overcome. What we do suggest, however, is a starting point for those who might try to redeem it. This is to build in a more sophisticated and genuinely reflexive understanding of power and its manifestations and dynamics.' (pp 13-15)

Adapted from Chapter 1 by staff writer.

Using Participatory Approaches in Bilateral Development Co-operation
Some Sida Experiences 1980-2000*
A summary

For Sida and other bilateral and international develop- ment co-operation organisations, participation is today seen as an essential element in all strategies for poverty reduction. Still, the mainstreaming of participation in development co-operation continues to be a challenge. Some reasons for this according to interviewees are a lack of conceptual clarity of what participation is and involves in terms of planning and practice; distance to beneficiaries and insufficient knowledge about and contact with practices and experiences in the field; a lack of indicators concerning participation, and plan- ning and administrative routines that do not easily allow the mainstreaming of participation.

This article is a summary of a report by Per-Ulf Nilsson and Prudence Woodford-Berger commissioned by Sida's Secretariat for Policy and Socio-economic Analysis, finalised in September 2001. The report presents the findings and con- clusions from an inventory study of Sida experiences with participatory approaches that was carried out March-June 2000. The study focused on a selection of ten projects and programmes supported over the past twenty years.

Projects considered to have pronounced participatory components from vari- ous sectors, and in different geographic regions were included. The period 1980- 2000 was chosen to reflect changes over time in terms of international and Sida awareness of, knowledge about, and work with participatory approaches. The projects as such are very different in terms of content, scale, and the orientation of participatory work (Table 1). In this summary most references to individual projects have been left out to reduce the length of the article. Those interested in specific projects will find fact sheets and additional comments in the full report.

A brief history of participation policy

The *community development* approach was promoted and used in the 1960s and early 1970s primarily by NGOs and in small-scale projects with social devel- opment objectives. It was felt that project implementation would improve, and that the benefits and impact of projects would be distributed more fairly if local people were involved in their implemen- tation. Participation was a means to the end of ensuring smoother implementa- tion and better project results.

From about 1975 to 1985 *popular participation* became the preferred means of donor agencies and multilat- eral organizations as well as grassroots activists. It was felt that participation would better incorporate (poor) people's needs and give them better access to the means by which their lives and live- lihoods could be improved. Participation became also a means to the end of pov- erty reduction and rural development.

In 1981 the 'SIDA Strategy for Rural Development'[1] was developed and launched. Popular participation at this time was something that took place pri- marily at the project level, while at the policy level thinking was still predomi- nately top-down and technocratic. Swedish bilateral development co-opera-

tion - like that of most other donor countries - continued to be government-to-government, and was distinct from support channelled, for example, through NGOs. At this time, the concept of consultation became current, where the emphasis was usually on consensus seeking through public meetings. It later became clear that participation by women, poor people, minorities, children and young people, marginalized or discriminated groups was extremely limited or absent altogether.

Due to the centrality of the state in a number of Sida's partner countries at that time, support to 'participation' often coincided with state strategies to mobilize rural populations for the purpose of implementing the state's own policies for the good of or on behalf of these populations, despite whatever wishes, needs, or priorities the people themselves felt and identified.

As the 1980s drew to a close, participation began to acquire new policy dimensions and connotations which carried over into and were current throughout the 1990s. As a result of processes of economic liberalization and emphasis on marketisation, the language was of the market and principles of efficiency reigned. Beneficiaries became 'users' and 'clients', while implementers became 'owners' and 'partners' in development. This trend was reinforced by the rise of democratisation movements and processes in many partner countries, and by the increased concern during the 1990s with social development issues.

At the same time, there was growing international concern with sustainability issues. Briefly, this 'changing roles' strategy was an attempt to improve the performance and sustainability of projects by shifting responsibility for Swedish development co-operation interventions and processes firmly onto national governments and institutions. Relations between Sweden and partner countries were, as a result of 'changing roles', to be characterized by partnership and the new concept of 'ownership' of projects by the partner countries themselves.

Since the early 1990s participation has increasingly been linked with 'empowerment' - social and political as well as economic empowerment - that is, the increased autonomy of female and male primary stakeholders compared to more powerful interests and stakeholders. Efforts are being made to 'scale-up' or 'institutionalise' participation beyond

Table 1. *Participation in Selected Sida Interventions*

Project/Programme	Dates	Forms for Participation
PDRI - Programa de Desenvolvimento Integrado Rural - Guinea-Bissau	1981 - 1996	Farmers participation through extension services and workers; village associations; and annual evaluation and planning meetings.
LSFP - Lao-Sweden Forestry Programme Laos	1977 - 2001	Extension, village participation in land use planning, land allocation and applied research.
KWASP - Kwale Rural Water Programme - Kenya	1985 - 1997	Water use committees; training for women in pump maintenance and environmental sanitation, cost-sharing, construction, an NGO for studies, sociological input and training.
Lok Jumbish People's Movement for Education for All - India	1992 - 1998	NGO management; Village mobilization, training and involvement in participatory data collection and analysis through school mapping and presentation of demands to authorities for education for all; participatory monitoring.
PRODEL - Local Development Programme - Nicaragua	1993 - 2001	Urban community participation in urban upgrading, housing improvements and micro-enterprises.
The Song Hinh Multi-purpose (hydropower) project - Vietnam	1996 -	Village participation in planning implementation and monitoring of resettlement.
PROSILAIS -Health Sector Reform - Nicaragua	1991 - 2004	Health system decentralisation; participatory LFA with consultative councils.
CUP - Comprehensive Urban Plan - Port Elisabeth, South Africa	1997 - 2000	Methodology development and public consultations for urban plan development.
Community-Based Building of Peace & Democracy - Somalia/ Life&Peace Inst.	1992 - 2001	Strengthening district councils and local administrations; mobilization of local village committees through training for long-term peace building.
Community Forest Management - India/ SSNC: RLEK	1996 -	Advocacy NGOs; Committees at community and cluster levels for participation in planning and ownership of forest management

villages or other local community settings, and to link it to broader issues of governance, public sector management and institutional strengthening, democracy and human rights, decentralization, and privatisation. There has thus been a shift toward 'demand-driven' as opposed to 'donor-driven' development.

Despite the promotion of 'participatory development', and the prominence of participation in policy rhetoric since the 1970s, little change has taken place in actual practice. Participation is still usually participation 'by invitation', that is development organizations or the state decide which target group is to be invited to participate in an already defined project or programme. Such a process tends to use people's participation as a means of serving the project's agendas or goals, and includes no true negotiation on new terms of decision-making or authority over project budgets between the powerless and those with power, including the state.

Participation in operational practice

Participation can be understood, categorized and analysed in a number of ways based, for example, on which individuals and groups are doing the participation and on what more precisely they are participating in. Participation has often been described or defined in terms of analytical *typologies*. While they may help us understand or follow the progress of specific instances of participation in a general sense, such typologies may be ill-suited to guide operational practice because most of them focus solely or primarily on the intentions of the donors or implementers who initiate the participation, while the perspectives of those who are to do the participating, particularly the intended beneficiaries, are neglected.

It is also very difficult to capture the dynamics of a participatory process in a single definition or typology. It appears that single or absolute definitions of participation can even be misleading, implying uniformity and precision in a situation that is inevitably complex and fluid. The study indicates that idealised definitions of participation are used as rather inflexible planning blueprints by development practitioners, when in fact such definitions need to be contextualised and adapted to the realities of the setting, and to the agreed-upon purpose of the participation.

Participation according to Sida

The main policy and planning documents defining Sida's current priorities and intentions were written in the late 1990s and vary considerably when discussing participation. Generally speaking, the more central documents mention participation and its importance in development processes frequently. Commonly, it is prescribed in *instrumental* terms, that is, as a means for achieving project or programme objectives and policy goals. Rarely does it appear to be discussed in *transformative* terms, as an end in itself, although the action programmes for gender equality and for peace, democracy, and human rights do link participation to empowerment, which is seen as a main purpose of Swedish development cooperation.

At policy levels then, Sida considers (stakeholder) participation to be fundamentally important and something that staff are obliged to encourage and promote, work for and with. However, it is not clear how participation should be done or monitored. Many different definitions are offered, and much of the information is fragmentary and rather abstract in other key respects, such as how participation in a specific intervention relates to participatory or democratic development in a wider sense.

Sida and Sida's investments in understanding and developing participation policy thinking during the 1990s took the form of support to a number of external agencies, such as the World Bank and IIED, and IDS in the UK. Participation, according to Sida itself and definitions promoted by the World Bank and OECD/DAC among others, constitutes '...a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions, and resources which affect them.

While these broad definitions recognize that participation is indeed a process, and that they do have an empowerment dimension in that they refer to sharing control and decision-making as well as influencing public and political life, it is apparent that exactly how these policy notions of participation should be linked in concrete interventions is unclear, as is how operational concepts of participation are linked to the concepts of 'ownership' and 'partnership' that are so central to Sida's current thinking. The way the relationship between ownership, partnership, and participation is perceived by key stakeholders - including Sida - will have a significant impact on how well participation works, so it is essential to understand these perceptions.

Ownership, according to Sida involves the command of resources and the demonstration of commitment. However, the study found that ownership in relation to intervention resources is one thing, while ownership of and commitment to the concept of participation in an intervention is quite another. Manifestations of ownership can vary quite radically, and a high degree of shared responsibility for an intervention that includes primary stakeholders as well as Sida and partner governments tends to yield good results.

Interestingly, the review showed that there were clear, positive links between how much primary and other key stakeholders felt they owned the projects reviewed, the nature of the partnership between or among key stakeholders (including Sida), and the extent to which responsibility for participation was shared. The nature of ownership and the way the partnership worked also affected how everyone understood and could agree on the purpose of participation, as well how viable and sustainable the participation was.

Participation is a very political issue, and a government may be reluctant to encourage a lot of popular participation if this is likely to increase the demands on them or encourage voters to challenge or oppose them. In some cases a government may only be out to enhance its own political support or to get people to do the work themselves to save the state money or to implement state policy. That does not mean they will be open to sharing ownership, responsibility, control and decision-making, as the PDRI and Laos forestry programmes demonstrate.

It is equally important that *all* stakeholders understand and 'own' the principles and methods of participation. In

It is also vital to get a broad representation…. Photo: Gustaf Eneroth/PHOENIX

the projects studied this conviction is often strong among individual Sida staff, secondary stakeholders such as implementing and intermediary organizations, consultants, and research institutes, but weak at central government levels.

In the resettlement and compensation process of the Song Hinh hydropower project (the only aspect of the project with a participatory dimension), the commitment to popular participation was highest among the 'beneficiaries' and the consultants who instigated and were contracted to support the process. Local authorities did come around to supporting community participation in resettlement plans, but the central authorities and project leadership accepted it only reluctantly, and only because it was to take place at local levels and make implementation more efficient. Sida also felt participation was necessary for efficient implementation, but acknowledged a human rights perspective as well – the right of the affected people to take part in the decisions about relocation that would so thoroughly change their lives.

Other interventions demonstrate the close relationship between governments' general policies and principles on the one hand, and their support for popular participation in development projects and programmes. Popular participation in PDRI in Guinea-Bissau was also part of government policy, but as it was developed under authoritarian and centralized regimes - at government as well as at programme levels - viable, autonomous and democratic popular participation was still not achieved.

Judging from the projects reviewed, there is no doubt that there is a connection between the level of government commitment to participation and positive outcomes with respect to participation in the projects.

Stronger popular participation can be noted in smaller projects and in projects where government either has a stated policy of encouraging participation, or has come to embrace participation ideals due to persistent persuasion from others within a long-term, trustful dialogue.

Participation ideologies and rationales

The study found that the definition and rationale for participation often varies between Sida and partner governments or institutions. While Sida normally will enter into the project with a view of achieving a representative participation, giving people a voice and shared power, and with a view of transformative participation reaching a process of empowerment, the strongest rationale for the partner will most often be instrumental participation to increase efficiency.

In the process of negotiation about these and other sensitive issues, Sida has compromised its own ambitious goals as a concession to partner country ownership.

A mix of representative and instrumental participation has been the primary rationale for Swedish support for the participatory approaches in projects such as the LSFP, PROSILAIS and PRODEL in Nicaragua, KWASP in Kenya, and PDRI in Guinea-Bissau. Lok Jumbish and LPI/HAP also emphasized

transformative objectives. Cases such as LFSP and KWASP, where participation began by being instrumental but ended with enhanced skills and autonomy for, and the devolution of some decision-making power upon, primary stakeholders, as well as in increased insight and capacity for secondary stakeholders, are valuable operational experiences.

For the projects and programmes begun during the 1980s and early 1990s, the initiative to include or strengthen a particular participatory approach normally came from Sida, while in the case of some projects from later years, the impetus to promote participation stemmed more often from the partner government or institutions themselves.

Linking policy to participation in practice

Although Sida and other bilateral donors appear genuinely to want to 'mainstream' participation in development cooperation planning and implementation, there is a surprising lack of specific policies, or of usable donor-generated guidelines or other operational tools geared to this end. A 1995-96 OECD/DAC review on participation and evaluation[2] showed that donor agencies and international organizations have few explicit policies, action programmes or guidance frameworks to assist practitioner in bridging the gap between policy and practice to implement.

In the main overall planning instrument that Sida has used since 1996 - the Country Strategy with its country analysis - participation by partner country governments and other actors has been framed in very imprecise terms and seems to have been secondary to the information gathering, analysis, and presentation done and co-ordinated by the Swedish staff or consultants. It is hoped that the process now underway to formulate new guidelines for country strategies will address issues of participation more thoroughly.

Rather astonishingly, as far as we have been able to determine, no Northern donors or multilateral organizations appear to have incorporated partner perspectives on participation or participatory development in their policies, key agency manuals, or guidelines.

It also appears that few if any donors have studied the positive and negative 'lessons learned' from their own experiences with participation. There is very little documentation of concrete donor experiences. So the ways of actually going about 'participation' in various policy and intervention contexts and of harvesting useful lessons learned continue to be very poorly understood. Particular problems include issues of difference, power, and inequalities and, related to these, issues of relevance and representation in the selection of participants.

Who participates and in what?

One of the most interesting and remarkable revelations of our study has been that neither the documents nor the former staff can definitely answer the question 'Who participated?'. Most project documents discuss 'community participation' without looking closely at who within the community was involved, or distinguishing different segments and categories of people within the community. There appears also to have been very little attention to issues of relevance and if those who participated were representative. Poor women and girls with few resources and no power or voice may be entirely excluded.

Sida has a clear overall policy goal of reducing poverty and supporting the poorest and most disadvantaged. If it really hopes to use participation to reach disadvantaged groups, strengthen their capability, and improve their access to benefits, then it is essential that local socio-economic conditions and power structures are analysed at the outset. Evidence from Lok Jumbish and KWASP shows that 'insider' perspectives can introduce knowledge that is relevant or adaptable to the environment the project is working in. In this case the 'relative insider' can also be a future agent for change outside the project, and that can strengthen learning in the national context.

The meaning of 'participation' for participants

As pointed out earlier, the meaning of participation for the 'target groups', 'beneficiaries', or 'primary stakeholders' is rarely documented in project reports.

Where the question has been asked, participants often disagree. If a project works hard to produce commitment and foster an understanding of what is involved, and also includes those often excluded from participation (because of, for example, their poverty, age, gender, social isolation, inexperience, lack of self-confidence, social restrictions on mobility, work duties, etc.) then 'participation' can grow to empower and affect real change. This process was observed in a number of the Sida projects, where generally the meaning of participation and the nature and vitality of the participation itself has been strengthened and become more deeply rooted over time.

In Lok Jumbish participation was able to take place in terms of transformative objectives mainly because of the strong and competent commitment of the Lok Jumbish project leadership, as well as of Sida's willingness to listen to the project's ideas. Interestingly, this cultivation of participation seems to be able to happen regardless of whether the impetus for participation is 'top-down' (or external), or not, if responsibility for the intervention and its participatory outcomes is shared.

On the other hand, Lok Jumbish also illustrates how vulnerable participation can be even if short and medium-term indications of success are strong. On this project Swedish support was suddenly and prematurely withdrawn, and the new national and state governments were looking to appropriate parts of the project for their own purposes, weakening the project's presence and work in the villages. The future of the project and the sustainability of its positive results are uncertain, and it is not known whether the empowerment at the village level had reached a level of dynamism and viability that will enable it to survive and flourish on its own.

The other projects and programmes studied are even more complicated, thanks to a multiplicity of implementing agencies. It is common for these to be a funding agency, Sida, the host government, and relevant ministries or local authorities. The project organization itself is yet another actor, as are its staff, consultants, and advisors, all of whom will influence the way 'participation' is directed. Rarely it seems, do all these

..... where young and old have a say. Photo: Sean Sprague/PHOENIX

interest groups explicitly negotiate a shared view of what 'participation' means, why it is required, how it should be implemented, and what forms it should take.

There is little evidence of the monitoring or evaluation of participation in the projects and programmes reviewed. The exceptions are Lok Jumbish and possibly Kwale, although even these two rarely report on how participants perceive their participation and its development and progress.

While we can guess that most of the female and male farmers in the village associations in PDRI probably felt manipulated, and that this is the reason for the decrease in associations and in association applications to the programme, we do not know what their perceptions of the manipulation were, and therefore whether their own ideas about correcting the situation could have been something that the programme, the implementing consultant, or SIDA could have acted constructively upon. From what we have learned, there has also

been very little effort to measure the effects of participation on the lives of individuals.

It is equally difficult to discover the actual effects of participation on groups from the documentation. While most interventions reported where relevant that groups had been established or elected, information about the functioning and development of these groups for example, are not reported on and, it appears, not even known.

In effect, projects confirmed that target groups did participate, but they did not describe, analyse or noticeably reflect upon the quality and depth of this participation, nor the short-term or long-term effects of participation within the concerned community. In the worst cases, which feature long-established, recalcitrant unequal power structures, discrimination against weaker subgroups in the community might have become worse. Nothing in the project documentation indicates this, but the absence of participatory monitoring and evaluation leaves the question open.

The role of supporting agents and intermediaries

'Participation' often generates a dynamic of its own, as advisors, consultants, and implementing teams develop the programme. These supporting agents and intermediaries can, and often do, have a decisive influence on the kind and degree of participation that is achieved.

If Sida is to mainstream participation in its work, from the formulation of country strategies through to sector programmes and in planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, it will need to draw on a network of expertise as well as enhance its own capability. In many cases, closer and longterm co-operation with such expertise can be developed within the different countries and regions.

Optimum rather than maximum participation?

This study shows that it is essential that participation is mentioned or prescribed in project documents. What is infinitely

more important is how participation is discussed and defined. As we have said, in practice, participation is usually mentioned only in general terms, with surprisingly unclear links to real involvement and people. Social, poverty, and gender descriptions and analyses of stakeholder categories are extremely weak, and participation analyses are rare, as are explicit links between the two types of analyses.

In many cases, participation was part of the original project planning and design, and in a few - such as PDRI - studies were carried out before the project started to identify needs and priorities to help mobilize people. In others, participation appeared in later phases once the value of participation had been learned. In LSFP, for example, the need for community participation and participatory extension structures was recognized and the training developed and introduced in the planning of the third phase, then in the fourth phase it became one of the main objectives.

In terms of the extent or depth of participation, communities are still generally *not* allowed to participate in identifying needs and problems during the initial design and planning of projects. It is particularly striking to find that there was virtually no participation in data collection and analysis in the studies - neither during the initial studies for planning and design nor later on in the monitoring and evaluation exercises. This means that information about what primary stakeholders think of the interventions are at best third-hand, and at worst not represented at all. Two key questions might then be asked:

(1) For whom or what target groups are studies, and monitoring and evaluation done and reports written?

(2) How are these studies and reports used and by whom?

The considerable work that has been done in recent years on participatory research, policy studies, and monitoring and evaluation does not seem to have greatly influenced Sida's information systems.

It would be particularly interesting to learn whether the participation of primary stakeholders could in some cases be carried forward yet another step. Is it possible to actually hand over full ownership to the 'beneficiaries'? This is being tried out by other funding agencies in various countries, for example in Zimbabwe, where both the EU community programme and the door-funded government poverty programme are giving full control to communities of project funds and implementation after project plans have been approved.

Consideration of the idea of *optimum participation* should also include a look at the role and shared responsibility of Sida, since in those projects and programmes where objectives were achieved through the central role of participation, Sida has been pivotal in three ways:

1. It has been involved with the country at different levels over a long period of time, has accumulated valuable experiences, and has become a respected and trusted dialogue partner.

2. It has been receptive to ideas and plans involving trials, and periods of methodology development and entry, rather than insisting on immediate implementation with production targets as primary goals.

3. It has been very active in working with the implementers and has demonstrated sustained interest in the project by participating in joint seminars, assessments, and monitoring exercises.

This of course has implications for Sida's own capacity, will, and competence to actively support participatory processes in its work at Stockholm headquarters, in the embassies, and through intermediary parties.

As with all other Swedish development co-operation work, conditions and opportunities for key stakeholder participation in sectors, programmes and projects should be examined, discussed, and analysed as part of the country strategy process. Political participation and the nature and viability of civil society organizations should also be analysed, along with local social and political structures.

References
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Footnote

IDS-Sida Collaboration:

Making Sense of Participation:
Action Learning on Participation in Sida's Programmes

The Participation Group, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, has made a proposal for the first phase of a two year action research project on participation in Sida's programmes. The first phase includes convening an action learning group of Embassy staff in Kenya, and an action learning group at Headquarters. The project aims to involve Sida staff in making sense of the meanings and practices of participation in their work for themselves, enabling them to learn and to improve their practice.

Background

With the mainstreaming of participation in the 1990s, large development organisations sought to scale up and institutionalise participatory approaches. This gave rise to a series of 'second generation' challenges for participation in development, as it became increasingly clear over the course of the decade that commitments in principle were no guarantee of success in implementing a participatory approach. Recent IDS research on the meanings and practices associated with Participatory Rural Appraisal - *Pathways to Participation* – reveals some of the complexities at stake in the ways in which the participation agenda has been interpreted, taken up and made use of by development organisations. [1]

It has highlighted the continuing gap between what is said and what is done in the name of participation. Studies conducted for the project also revealed the extent to which even within a single organisation, staff members have very different visions of what participation is - and thus what they are attempting to institutionalise.

Turning policies or principle into practices that work to enable greater participation in the development process requires a shared understanding and commitment to change within organisations, and between them and the other development actors with whom they work. As the *Pathways* project demonstrated, the diverse understandings of participation that may co-exist within organisations are usually left unexplored. Colleagues rarely spend time together discussing their different perspectives and interpretations and the way that these are expressed in their individual working lives, nor exploring the forms of participation that are made possible by the processes and procedures in their organisations.

One important finding from the *Pathways* project was the sense of dissonance that many PRA practitioners expressed between the values they associate with participation, and the practices they are asked to join in as part of their day to day work. For them, this came about through constraints on what was possible that flowed from the processes, procedures, and understandings of par-

Make space for critical reflection in participatory work or the result becomes fussy! Photo: Johan Toborn

ticipation in their own organisations, and often in the organisations that fund their work.

Opportunities for staff to make more explicit the different understandings of participation that exist within the organisation, to negotiate towards a shared vision, and to explore the changes needed to turn that vision into everyday practice may lead to organisational change. Findings from *Pathways* suggest a need to move beyond the one-size-fits-all prescriptions that characterised the advocacy of PRA in the 1990s, to a more nuanced understanding of what works and what does not, given particular contexts, and the particular versions of participation being pursued by different organisations. Rather than further refining policies, what is needed is an active process of engagement through which development professionals create solutions to institutionalising understandings of participa-

tion that they develop together, for themselves. The *Pathways* project sought to provide spaces for people to take stock of experience and reflect on pathways to participation in their context. Looking back to move forward has proved to be an extremely valuable way for people to recapture their sense of the important changes that have already happened, as well as to raise questions for themselves about earlier hopes that are as yet unfulfilled. People are often re-energised by analysing the way that the pathway they are on now was made - recognising that people in their organisations like themselves have shaped past procedures and policies, and that they are thus capable of questioning and changing them. This project would thus create an opportunity for Sida staff to deepen their analysis of the current situation by exploring their own organisational history, and setting their own practices within the broader context of

shifts in development to embrace participation.

Sida has consistently been at the forefront of efforts to promote greater participation by poor and marginalised people, including women, in the development process. For the last twenty years, Sida has played a critical role in supporting initiatives and processes that have sought to play a transformatory role in development.[2] But within Sida, there is a feeling among some that the organisation may not always find ways to realise these commitments through its own internal culture, procedures, and structures. Understanding why this is the case is critical in order to map out the most effective route to turning commitment into effective and transformatory practice. Making sense of Sida's experience with participation also involves making sense of their relationships with partners. Many partners share Sida's commitment to

participation. But like staff in Sida, the staff in these organisations may not have had the opportunity to share and deepen their understanding of participation. Nor may they have had a chance to evaluate the way their processes and procedures, and their relationship with Sida, enable or constrain them in pursuing their vision of participation. Nor, indeed, might they have shared their vision and analysis with Sida.

As part of a broader programme of work on institutional change and informed by discussions with Sida on the value of such a process of learning and reflection, IDS proposes a collaborative action-research project with Sida and some of its partners. Drawing on co-operative enquiry and action learning methodologies, groups of Sida staff will take stock of the past and exploring everyday practices in the present, generating deeper insights into the opportunities and challenges of participation. Based on their analysis, the action learning groups will formulate ideas about changes they can make in their own organisations to strengthen participation for development. They will be asked to reflect on the experience of implementing those changes, and to continue in a cycle of action and reflection. Sharing across, as well as within, groups will enable other actors within the organisations to gain greater insight into how their different perspectives on participation, and the practices they engage in, affect their interactions with one another. Again, this process of reflection may give rise to concrete strategies for change.

Objectives

The objectives are:

♦ To enable members of staff of the organisation to develop their own analysis of the challenges of institutionalising participation, to develop strategies for improving the ways they support participation in their work, to implement those strategies, and to learn lessons through reflecting on the implementation

♦ To deepen understanding of the history and organisational dynamics of different development organisations' efforts to institutionalise participation

♦ To learn about the potential of action learning groups in combination with commissioned research as a methodology for enabling organisational change

♦ To share lessons between organisations about their efforts to institutionalise participation, and about co-operative inquiry and action learning methodologies for doing so.

Scope of the project

As an international organisation, it is important to gain a sense of how meanings and practices of participation translate from headquarters to country office to interactions with partner organisations, as well as from wider international policies to localised practices. In order to begin to do this the first phase of the project will provide IDS support to activities in two locales: Sida headquarters in Stockholm and Sida staff in the Embassy in Kenya.[3]

At headquarters, an IDS staff member would work together with a Swedish counterpart researcher within and across different departments. Through their role in policy formulation, their relationships with other international development actors, and their role in decision making over grants, headquarters staff exercise an influence on the way participation is understood throughout Sida and on the way Embassy staff relate to partners. Thus in making the links between policies, practices, and what happens on the ground, it is important to include headquarters staff.

In Kenya, an IDS staff member and a local counterpart researcher would work both within Sida itself and with a number of Sida's development partners, depending on their interest in engaging with the project. The Embassy staff in Kenya has been chosen because Sida has a long-standing engagement there and has funded some significant and innovative participatory work, which has had an important policy influence in sectors including water and sanitation, and agricultural extension. The IDS team would bring an understanding of the general state of play of participation in Kenya from research in the first phase of the *Pathways to Participation* project[4] and other ongoing work on organisational learning[5].

Methodology

The project would draw on methodological tools developed for action research on and for organisational change, building substantially on the co-operative enquiry approach developed by Peter Reason and John Heron[6], and on the action learning approach.[7] Co-operative enquiry is used in organisations to enable groups of people in a similar position to gain a better understanding of their everyday experiences, and from that to develop new and creative ways of making changes in order to do what they do more effectively. Action learning works through 'sets' of colleagues who provide concentrated support to helping one another analyse the current problems and challenges they are facing in their work, and to find solutions. As a cyclical process of analysis, action and reflection, these action research approaches enable people to apply what they have learnt to their everyday work and to evaluate changes they may make as a result of that learning. As such, action research is an effective tool for working with organisations on the kinds of institutional changes required to make their practice of participation consonant with their policies.

Action research, however, has a number of limitations. First, 'pure' action research relies entirely on group members as researchers. Inquire in any depth into making sense of the institutional dimensions of participation, however, requires time.

For most agency workers, time is at a premium and this kind of research remains - sometimes frustratingly - out of reach. Second, there are some issues and some questions that those internal to an organisation may not think to ask; there are others that may be virtually impossible for staff members to ask others within or outside the organisation. This may limit the process of enquiry to within particular conventions or parameters. Equally, relations of power between actors - donors and grantees, senior managers and junior workers - may make it difficult to explore certain issues, articulate dissent or to ask particular kinds of questions. Lastly, while a learning process that is internal to a group is extremely valuable for those involved, its impact may be limited unless there is

some way of linking that process across levels and involving other actors in it.

The proposed methodology seeks to overcome these potential constraints through an innovative combination of action research and organisational ethnography. An IDS staff member, coupled with a counterpart researcher in each of the field sites, would co-ordinate and document the action learning groups, and facilitate linkages between groups and levels. As researchers, they would serve as a resource for groups to draw on to answer particular questions, for example, through conducting short pieces of research on issues raised by the group. They would also feed into the group process insights on research themes established jointly with the action learning groups. The groups would be encouraged to use this mechanism to explore the historical roots of their current practice, and the lessons that can be drawn from experiences beyond their personal involvement in the organisation.

The groups should hold regular reflection meetings. At the meetings, the groups would agree on the area for inquiry, within the broad topic of institutionalising participation. They would continue to reformulate and develop their research questions as the analysis moves forward. The IDS researchers would act as facilitators in these meetings. Between meetings, the group would actively analyse and record day-to-day experience in the light of the questions raised by the group, through methods agreed amongst the group. They then report their reflections back to the group at the next meeting, gradually deepening and extending their analysis over time.

Members of the group would be expected to initiate 'experiments' with changes in their day-to-day behaviour, and organisational processes and procedures, based on their analysis of what needs to be done to make their vision of participation a reality. These changes and their implications would become the focus for reflection and analysis, which would be fed back into subsequent meetings. The learning process in Sweden and Kenya would be closely supported by IDS for six to eight cycles of reflection, including an international sharing

event for some of the group members, over a period of approximately eight or nine months.[8]

The IDS participation group is also working on issues of organisational learning and change in co-operation with other development organisations. These other processes include the rolling out of the Accountability, Learning, and Planning System by ActionAid internationally, the establishment of a learning group for sustainable livelihoods within DfID, and a project on linking pastoralists into official agencies and policy processes in the Horn of Africa in association with UNICEF. IDS would convene three meetings of an Organisational Learning Forum over the life of the project to allow the sharing of lessons across these projects.

Time line

The period April - September 2001 was used for proposal preparation. From September 2001 to August 2002 implementation of the project in Kenya and the first stage at headquarters are planned to take place. The Headquarters activities begins with a training course for a group of staff in participation issues (funded separately from this project). A subgroup of the workshop participants would form an action learning group. The group will meet six times over the course of October 2001 to June 2002. Between meetings, group members will

PRA fatigue - always asked to take part and never getting anything back. Photo: Johan Toborn

carry out research activities compatible with their work schedules, supported and supplemented by the IDS researcher and Swedish counterpart, who will carry out documentary analysis, participant observation and interviews. The inquiry will begin by deepening understandings of meanings and practices of participation in Sida's everyday work and policies, moving from this to focus on the organisational issues raised by this reflection. Six group meetings will take place, concluding with a closing workshop which will provide an opportunity to share the group's learning with a wider audience within Sida. The workshop will also lead to consideration of directions for a possible second phase of the project.

The Kenya action learning group will meet monthly from October until May, a total of eight times. The IDS Research Officer and local counterpart will find ways with the Embassy staff to work differently with Sida's local partners, on a case by case basis. This may be collaborative work that involves partners in an action research process of their own, and in other cases will be more oriented towards qualitative research on the activities of the partner. A report on the methodology and lessons learned through the project will be prepared by the end of this phase. A review of the experience will inform discussions over the possibility of holding another inquiry in a second country as part of Phase II of the project.

Directions for Phase II should emerge from Phase I of the project and is therefore inappropriate to discuss in detail at this time. The intensions are that work will continue from September 2002 to September 2003 with a second country study and by embedding more action learning work in Headquarters.

Indicative outputs
Given the process-based nature of this action learning project, the principal intended outputs are the opportunities the process will afford for learning and change for Sida staff. The process will, however, be documented in various ways to enable lessons learned to be more widely shared within and beyond the organisation. Indicative outputs, then, will include:

• an accessible briefing paper on the lessons learnt from the project as a whole, with contrasts and comparisons from country level and headquarters;

• a report on Kenya which will include an in-depth exploration of the challenges of institutionalising participation in that contexts, changes the action learning group has attempted to make to improve the practice of participation in their organisations and their evaluation of those changes

• research reports produced in response to issues generated by the co-operative enquiry groups, on specific topics

• (possibly) a methodology guide, which could offer tools for use within other organisations and by other Sida country offices.

Endnotes
[1] As part of the project, studies in Kenya, Nepal, Mexico, India, Vietnam, China and the Gambia documented diverse interpretations of participation within specific historical, political, cultural, and organisational contexts. See *Pathways to Participation* Working Papers Series, IDS 2000-1.

[2] For example, Sida support to the World Bank Learning Group on Participation in the early 1990s was crucial in seeding new ideas within the Bank; Sida backing for IIED's RRA/PLA Notes was critical in early attempts to spread and extend the use of participatory methods; Sida funding to the Participation Group at IDS has been an important source of support for a range of catalytic processes and projects.

[3] In the second phase, we propose fieldwork in a second country, to provide the basis for comparative analysis of the how participation is understood and practiced in specific contexts.

[4] Relevant outputs from the Pathways project include, Andrea Cornwall, Samuel Musyoki, and Garett Pratt, 'Reflections on PRA and participation in Kenya: feedback from the Pathways to Participation consultative meetings,' unpublished mimeo, 1999; Melanie Speight, Kimanzi Muthengi, Cristine Kilalo, '' unpublished mimeo, 2000; PAMFORK, 'Report on the Pathways to Participation Project Workshop,' unpublished mimeo, 2000.

[5] This includes work with ActionAid Kenya on implementing the new Accountability, Learning, and Planning System, and work with Kenyan pastoralists on finding ways to participate in national policy making and creating better interfaces with the UN system.

[6] John Heron and Peter Reason, *The Practice of Co-operative Inquiry: Research 'with' rather than 'on' People*, in Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, eds. **Handbook of Action Research: participative inquiry and practice**, Sage Publications, UK, US and India, 2001

[7] For a description of the methodology drawing on the voices of many past action learning group members, see Krystyna Weinstein, **Action Learning: A Practical Guide**, Gower, Aldershot, England, 1999. Also see writings by the 'founding father' of action learning, Reg Revan, 1982, **The Origins and Growth of Action Learning**, Chartwell Bratt, Bromley

[8] Subsequent work in Phase II of the project will build on the enquiry made by the first groups. We intend to draw on the experience of the first groups to deepen and extend the learning experience of the action learning groups in the first country, through exchange between members of the established and new groups. As the work in headquarters shifts from the first phase to the second, the process will move along a continuum. From a focus on meanings and understandings of participation, and forming a pilot group, the enquiry will move towards a focus on the organisational issues raised by reflection on participation, and efforts to embed ongoing learning processes about participation in Sida.

Adapted by staff writer from 'Making Sense of Participation: Action Learning on Participation in Sida's Programmes'. Final Proposal. September 2001.

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The World Bank:
From PRA to Voices of the Poor

As apparent from many articles in this issue, institutionalising, mainstreaming and scaling up participation is a challenge. At the World Bank efforts to use participatory approaches in project and programme design can be traced back to the late 80's. The World Bank Participation Sourcebook of 1996 is an expression of the early focus. Since then a shift has occurred from participatory methods for making project and programme design and implementation more efficient to building ownership from the bottom up. This involves moving beyond the project framework and change institutions at all levels to forge better partnership with secondary stakeholders, incorporating participatory methodologies in the work of institutions dealing with project and policy development, implementation and evaluation. Scaling up participation means increasing the number of participants or expanding people's participation to more activities. The guiding principles of the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) for more effective poverty reduction reflect much of these insights. Country-level participatory poverty assessments (PPA) gradually institutionalised at the Bank are claimed to reveal more about the dynamics and complexity of poverty and make policy makers better aware of the harsh realities. Voices of the Poor is a major research project attempting to create a general understanding of what poverty means.

Through its work on participation the World Bank has involved an impressive number of resource persons and institutions. Obviously, the Bank is more a lender than a grantor which poses a constraint on how far and fast the Bank can change. How popular is participation in the Bank? Is participation promoted for instrumental reasons or is there a truly transformative ambition? These questions, relevant with respect to other donor organisations as well, have no simple answers.

Participation in The World Bank

The World Bank Participation Sourcebook, published in 1996, was prepared by the Bank's Environment Department's Social Policy Division. Many other people inside the World Bank provided valuable contributions, advice and comments. All told, more than 200 Bank staff and consultants contributed directly to the contents of the Sourcebook. The Sourcebook builds on the work of the four-year Bankwide Learning Group on Participatory Development. 20 steering committees composed mainly of Bank staff prepared technical papers for the Sourcebook. In addition to direct contributions to its contents, the Sourcebook has benefited from the comments and feedback of several hundred reviewers both inside and outside of the Bank.

The Sourcebook is one substantial outcome of the work of the Bank. It is primarily project focused but also provides examples of participation in poverty assessments and policy contexts.

Ample documentation on the Bank home pages provide illustrations of how problems in the project cycle have caused a variety of new lending instruments that are flexible, iterative and process-oriented.

The greatest strides with regard to participation possibly lie in policy formulation and analytical work. Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) formulation by now have an element of participa-

tion; the pertinent question is rather the quality of participation. Major policy reviews are usually made in a consultative and participatory manner. Poverty assessments, on which more is said below, increasingly rely on participatory research methods with the objective of understanding poverty from the perspective of the poor by focusing on their realities, needs and priorities. A growing knowledge of institutional and in-country constraints is being generated.

Voices of the Poor

(An interesting development in recent years is the research project Voices of the Poor. Based on experience from participatory poverty assessments, the Bank concluded there was need to better understand how the poor view their situation.

The approach further described below is an illustration of how participatory methodologies can be used to generate valuable knowledge to and influence decision makers. It also raises the interesting questions how context specific qualitative information can be aggregated and generalised and what bias and institutional filters are possibly introduced in the process).

What is poverty? Who are the world's poor women and men? What are their aspirations? Why do the poor remain poor?

As the new millennium begins, the World Bank has collected the voices of more than 60,000 poor women and men from 60 countries, in an unprecedented effort to understand poverty from the perspective of the poor themselves. *Voices of the Poor*, as this participatory research initiative is called, chronicles the struggles and aspirations of poor people for a life of dignity. Poor people are the true poverty experts. Poor men and women reveal, in particular, that poverty is multidimensional and complex — raising new challenges to local, national and global decision-makers. Poverty is voicelessness. It's powerlessness. It's insecurity and humiliation, say the poor across five continents.

The immediate impetus for the *Voices of the Poor* study was to prepare the forthcoming World Development Report (WDR). Published every year by the World Bank, the World Development Report is a leading resource on development strategies. In the *World Development Report 2000/1* on "Attacking Poverty", the World Bank wanted to make sure the voices of the poor - their experiences, priorities, and recommendations - would be taken into account.

To understand what poverty means, researchers visited poor urban and rural communities around the world and facilitated discussions on four issues:

⬥ What is a good life and bad life?

⬥ What are the poor people's priorities?

⬥ What is the nature and quality of poor people's interactions with state, market and civil society institutions?

⬥ How have gender and social relations changed over time?

In presenting the study findings during the 1999 Annual Meetings, World Bank President, James Wolfensohn said:

"These are strong voices, voices of dignity... There needs to be a passionate rededication to each other as we enter the next century. All of us have to assume a responsibility for global equity which is the only assurance of peace."

Are you listening? Photo: Johan Toborn

The Voices

Below are some of the major conclusions of the study (for examples of the individual voices, visit the home page: http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/voices/index.htm

The poor view wellbeing holistically.

Poverty is much more than income alone. For the poor, the good life or wellbeing is multidimensional with both material and psychological dimensions. Wellbeing is peace of mind; it is good health; it is belonging to a community; it is safety; it is freedom of choice and action; it is a dependable livelihood and a steady source of income; it is food.

The poor describe ill-being as lack of material things - food especially but also lack of work, money, shelter and clothing — and living and working in often unhealthy, polluted and risky environments. They also defined ill-being as bad experiences and bad feelings about the self. Perceptions of powerlessness over one's life and of voicelessness was common; so was anxiety and fear for the future.

Insecurity has increased. Violence is on the rise, both domestically and in the society. And the poor feel they have been bypassed by new economic opportunities.
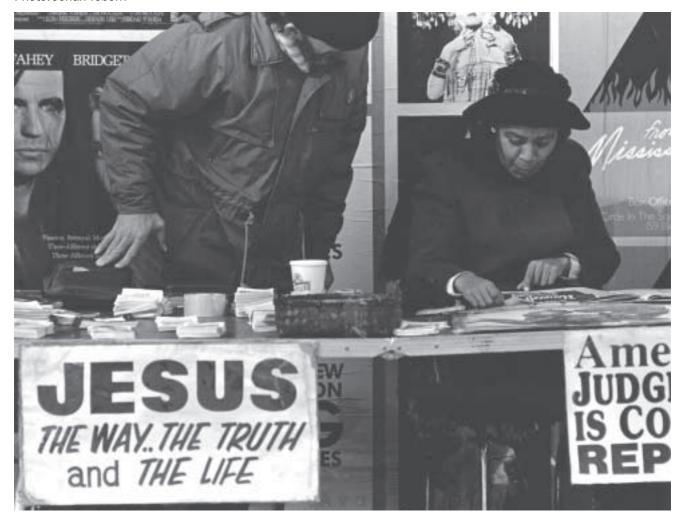
By and large poor people feel they have not been able to take advantage of new economic opportunities because of lack of connections and lack of information, skills and credit. Unemployment and lack of food and money appear as problems in many communities. The poor, who work primarily in the informal sector, report experiencing life as more insecure and unpredictable than a decade or so ago. This is linked to unpredictability of agriculture, jobs that are unreliable and with low returns, loss of traditional livelihoods, breakdown of the state, breakdown of traditional social solidarity, social isolation, increased crime and violence, lack of access to justice, extortion, and brutality from the police rather than protection. Illness is dreaded and lack of affordable health care pushes many families into indebtedness and destitution.

Gender inequity is widespread, domestic violence pervasive and gender relations stressed.

With increased economic hardship and a decline in poor men's income earning opportunities, poor women across the world report "swallowing their pride" and going out to do even demeaning jobs to bring food to the family. In their struggles to adapt to changing economic roles in the household, women widely report greatly increased work burdens; and men

To some participatory methodologies become a religion with the charismatic PRA facilitator being the high priest.
Photo: Johan Toborn

in many communities express frustration and humiliation with the lack of livelihood opportunities. This loss of traditional male "breadwinner role" and female "caretaker role" is traumatic for both genders, and family breakdown, domestic violence and increased alcoholism among men are often mentioned. In some communities, awareness raising by NGOs, churches and women's groups is contributing to changing social norms and eventually to harmony and equity within the household.

The poor want governments and state institutions to be more accountable to them. Corruption emerges as a key poverty issue.

Corruption emerges as a core poverty issue. Poor people engaged in the study reported hundreds of incidents of corruption as they attempt to seek health care, educate their children, claim social assistance, get paid, attempt to access justice or police protection, and seek to enter the marketplace. In their dealings with officials, poor men and women are subject to insults, rudeness, harassment, and sometimes assault by officials. Harassment of vendors in urban areas is widespread.

Poor people's evaluations of institutions that are important in their lives show that while politicians, state officials and public servants are sometimes viewed as important they rarely show up as effective, trustworthy, or participatory. There are exceptions. Provision of basic infrastructure is valued and has made a difference.

NGOs seen as important but many unaccountable.

Where NGOs are at work in communities they are appreciated, but they are not as present as often believed. In the absence of public services, NGOs fulfil vital roles in the lives of the poor. While there are regional differences, NGOs are often touched by the same problems as the state; the poor feel they are excluded from the decisions of many NGOs and difficulties with accountability and the quality of NGO services and projects are reported.

The poor rely on informal networks and local institutions to survive, including the local holy man and the local nurse.

Local groups and actors emerge as the key institutions which help out in times of crisis. However, poor people recognize that there are limits to how much "one hungry man can help another hungry man." In many communities facing increased hardship, the poor spoke painfully about the breaking down of kinship ties and community cohesion.

Poor people seek institutions that are "effective," "trustworthy," "uniting," "dependable," "respectful," "courteous," "truthful," "listening," "not corrupt" and "not corrupting." They want to develop their own organizations so they can effectively negotiate fair partnerships with governments, with traders and with NGOs; they want direct assistance and local ownership of funds through community-driven programs, with governments and NGOs accountable to them.

Study design
Voices of the Poor consists of three books which bring together the experiences of over 60,000 poor women and men. The first book, *Can Anyone Hear Us?*, gathers the voices of over 40,000 poor women and men in 50 countries from the World Bank's participatory poverty assessments; the second book, *Crying Out for Change*, draws material from a new 23 country comparative study. The final book, *From Many Lands*, offers regional patterns and country case studies.

The study consists of two parts: a review of participatory poverty studies conducted in the 1990's covering 40,000 poor people in 50 countries around the world; and a series of new studies undertaken in 1999 in 23 countries engaging over 20,000 poor men and women. An extensive search was conducted in 1999 of existing participatory studies conducted by the World Bank, other donors, NGOs, and research institutes. Over 130 studies were then reviewed and analyzed, and the identification of patterns and systematic content analysis was aided by the social science software QSR*NUDIST.

In 1999, fieldwork was carried out in 23 countries in partnership with local research institutes, universities and NGOs. This comparative study uses participatory and qualitative methods to examine issues of poverty and illbeing. The study was undertaken to inform poverty strategies at the global, national and local levels. To ensure such follow-up, the study was carried out in countries where there was a strong demand for it. Demand was assessed by a willingness to share the management responsibilities and costs for undertaking the study. Most studies are linked to World Bank policy, sector or project work.

The methodology was piloted in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Bolivia in late 1998. The *Methodology Guide* provides information about the research agenda and participatory methods used by the field teams. Most of the study teams received field-based training from participation specialists on the methodology and report preparation. Researchers with more experience in the methods received briefer orientations.

More than 260 communities were visited by the teams, and in most countries this included a mix of poor urban settlements and rural villages. The communities were purposively selected to reach the most important poverty groups in the country. Within each community, discussion groups were held with poor men and women separately and sometimes together. Researchers also conducted open-ended interviews to gather mini-profiles of men and women who had remained poor their whole lives, had slid into poverty, or had become better off.

The project team, including the lead in-country researchers, met for a workshop in New Delhi, India in June 1999 to present and discuss first drafts of the national reports and begin preparations on the global report. A final Global Synthesis Workshop was held in Washington, DC in September to discuss the draft *Global Synthesis*; and there were also regional and country-specific workshops and a one-day meeting with the WDR team. At the country level, local researchers are disseminating their reports and holding workshops with government, civil society groups, and think tanks.

From Voices to Action

The dissemination, discussion and follow-up of the Voices of the Poor work is only just beginning inside and outside of the World Bank. The study is a powerful call to action to development actors at all levels engaged in fighting poverty. Economics Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen says these "unrestrained voices deserve attention not only of scholars and academics, but also of governments, international institutions, business communities, labor organizations, and civil societies across the world."

I would like to say that, as far as the Bank is concerned, this listening to the voices [of the poor] and acting on the focus of their remarks is going to be central to our work as we move forward. Both institutionally and as individuals, we have to judge what we are doing vis-à-vis these voices. — World Bank President James Wolfensohn, September 1999 Address to the Board of Governors.

In response to the study, the World Bank will be scaling-up its portfolios of community-driven development (CDD) programs and carrying forward such programs that more directly benefit the poor. Community-driven initiatives transfer authority and control over development funds to community institutions and give priority to strengthening the local groups' organizational capacities to identify priority needs and to manage development projects. In addition, many decisions that affect the wellbeing of poor women and men are made well beyond the community level. On this broader agenda, development partners need to explore and support national and international processes that will help to give poor people more voice on development policies and actions.

To reduce poverty, actions are needed at the global level to remove constraints poor countries face, for example in exporting agricultural products; at the country level, to ensure that poverty reduction strategies have clear goals, are designed and monitored with the help of the poor, and focus on actions that will actually make a difference.

The studies are already beginning to have an impact in the 23 countries that participated in the 1999 fieldwork (for more information, read or download the Voices national reports). In Vietnam government officials were actively involved in designing the Voices of the Poor research. The findings were discussed and debated with national officials at local-level feedback sessions, and most recently at a round-table meeting with donors. High-level officials requested donor support for main-streaming participatory tools into policies; and at the local level, authorities are already requesting support for addressing the problems raised by the study. The World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Oxfam (UK) and others are working together in new "pro-poor" partnerships there.

Elsewhere the study findings are serving as important inputs to World Bank strategy documents and projects. In Nigeria, the study is informing two community-based poverty projects for urban and rural areas. In Argentina, Ecuador, Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia, and Vietnam, among other countries, the Voices of the Poor work is being incorporated into poverty assessments and country assistance strategies. The national Voices reports are informing poverty reduction strategy processes among a wide range of international and national development partners in Bolivia, Bulgaria, and Kyrgyz Republic. In Brazil, where the study was carried out in poor urban settlements, it is contributing to a Bank urban improvement strategy. Other participatory studies that directly engage the poor are underway on a wide range of issues, including social exclusion in Paraguay; informal social protection strategies in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador; and the links between poverty reduction, off-grid electrification and gender in China, India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

Many others besides the World Bank are of course on the frontlines of making sure that poor people's views and priorities become key inputs into development policies and actions. News from other partners is just starting to trickle in of projects being launched in communities that took part in the Voices research. In Bowerbank, Jamaica, projects are underway with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) that respond to the priority problems identified during the fieldwork for Voices. We have news from Argentina that the Government there used participatory tools for the first time in a poverty study. Similarly, several donors and NGOs have let us know that *The Methodology Guide* is a useful reference tool for their work.

Towards Participatory Local Governance: Six Propositions for Discussion*

by John Gaventa

Introduction

For the last twenty years, the concept of 'participation' has been widely used in the discourse of development. For much of this period, the concept has referred to participation in the social arena, in the 'community' or in development projects. Increasingly, however, the concept of participation is being related to rights of citizenship and to democratic governance. Nowhere is the intersection of concepts of community participation and citizenship seen more clearly than in the multitude of programmes for decentralised governance that are found in both Southern and Northern countries.

Linking citizen participation to the state at this local or grassroots level raises fundamental and normative questions about the nature of democracy and about the skills and strategies for achieving it. The literature is full of debates on the meanings of citizenship and of participation, on the role and relevance of 'the local', especially in the context of globalisation, and of course on the problem of governance itself. In this article, I pose six propositions which link to this debate and which raise critical challenges for how it may be pursued further.

Proposition One: A key challenge for the 21ˢᵗ century is the construction of new relationships between ordinary people and the institutions - especially those of government - which affect their lives.

Recently, a number of studies have pointed to the growing gap that exists within both North and South between ordinary people, especially the poor, and the institutions which affect their lives, especially government. For instance, the recent *Voices of the Poor* report, prepared for the WDR 2000/1, finds that many poor people around the globe perceive large institutions – especially those of the state – to be distant, unaccountable and corrupt. Drawing from participatory research exercises in 23 countries, the report concludes:

From the perspectives of poor people world wide, there is a crisis in governance. While the range of institutions that play important roles in poor people's lives is vast, poor people are excluded from participation in governance. State institutions, whether represented by central ministries or local government are often neither responsive nor accountable to the poor; rather the reports details the arrogance and disdain with which poor people are treated. Poor people see little recourse to injustice, criminality, abuse and corruption by institutions. Not surprisingly, poor men and women lack confidence in the state institutions even though they still express their willingness to partner with them under fairer rules (Narayan, et. al. 2000:172).

The *Voices of the Poor Study* is not alone in its findings. Another study by the Commonwealth Foundation (1999) in over forty countries also found a growing disillusionment of citizens with their governments, based on their concerns with corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor, and the absence participation or connection to ordinary citizens.

The empirical evidence on the crisis in the relationship between citizens and their state is not limited to the South. In a number of established democracies, traditional forms of political participation have gone down, and recent studies show clearly the enormous distrust citi-

zens have of many state institutions. In the UK, for instance, a recent study sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation points to the

need to build a new relationship between local government and local people. There are two reasons for this. The first has to do with alienation and apathy. There is a major issue about the attitudes of the public, as customers or citizens, towards local government …This is a symptom of a lack of deeper malaise, the weakness or lack of public commitment to local democracy (Clarke and Stewart 1998:3).

Other data in the United States, most notably the work by Robert Putnam, points as well to the decline in civic participation and the growing distance between citizens and state institutions.

Proposition Two: Rebuilding relationships between citizens and their local governments means working both sides of the equation - that is, going beyond 'civil society' or 'state-based' approaches, to focus on their intersection, through new forms of participation, responsiveness and accountability.

As Fung and Wright (2001:5-6) observe, the right has taken advantage of the decline in legitimacy of public institutions to 'escalate its attack on the affirmative state… Deregulation, privatisation, reduction of social services and curtailments of state spending have been the watchwords, rather than participation, greater responsiveness, and more effective forms of democratic state intervention.' They and of course many others argue that the response to the crisis should focus not on dismantling the state, but on deepening democracy and seeking new forms for its expression. They argue that the 'institutional forms of liberal democracy plus techno-bureaucratic administration - seem increasingly ill suited to the novel problems we face in the twenty-first century'.

However, those who have sought to deepen democratic governance have often been divided on their approach to the problem. On the one hand, attention has been made to strengthening the processes of citizen *participation* – that is the ways in which poor people exercise voice through new forms of inclusion, consultation and/or mobilisation designed to inform and to influence larger institutions and policies. On the other hand, growing attention has been paid to how to strengthen the *accountability* and *responsiveness* of these institutions and policies through changes in institutional design, and a focus on the enabling structures for good governance.

Increasingly, however, we are beginning to see the importance of working on both sides of the equation. As participatory approaches are scaled up from projects to policies, they inevitably enter the arenas of government, and find that participation can only become effective as it engages with issues of institutional change. And, as concerns about good governance and state responsiveness grow, questions about how citizens engage and make demands on the state also come to the fore.

In both South and North, there is growing consensus that the way forward is found in a focus on **both** a more active and engaged civil society which can express demands of the citizenry, **and** a more responsive and effective state which can deliver needed public services. In focus groups around the world, the Commonwealth Study, for instance, that despite their disillusionment with the state as it is, poor people would like to see strong government which will provide services, facilitate their involvement and promote equal rights and justice. The Commonwealth Study argues that that at the heart of the new consensus of strong state and strong civil society are the need to develop both *'participatory democracy* and *responsive government'* (76): the two are mutually reinforcing and supportive - strong, aware, responsible, active and engaged citizens along with strong, caring, inclusive, listening, open and responsive democratic governments' (82).

Similarly, Heller (2001:133) discusses the limits of both of the 'technocratic vision', with its emphasis on technical design of institutions, and of the 'anarcho-communitarian model', with its emphasis on radical grassroots democracy. Rather, he calls for a more balanced view (the 'optimist conflict model') which recognises the tensions between the need for representative working institutions, **and** the need for mobilised and demand making civil society. The solution is not found in the separation of the civil society and good governance agendas, but in their interface. The IDS study by Goetz and Gaventa (2001) extends this argument further by examining over sixty concrete cases of citizen voice and state responsiveness, and discusses further the mechanisms and conditions through which they intersect and interact.

Proposition Three: The call for new forms of engagement between citizens and the state involves a re-thinking about the ways in which citizens' voices are represented in the political process, and a re-conceptualisation of the meanings of participation and citizenship in relationship to local governance.

Traditionally in representative democracies, the assumption has been that citizens express their preferences through electoral politics, and in turn, it was the job of the elected representatives to hold the state accountable. In both North and in the South, new voice mechanisms are now being explored which argue as well for more direct connections between the people and the bureaucracies which affect them. In the UK, for instance, the White Paper on Modern Local Government puts an emphasis on more active forms of citizenship, and on the concept of community governance:

Local authorities are based on the principles of representative democracy, yet representative democracy has become passive. Rather than expressing a continuing relationship between government and citizen, the citizen is reduced to being a periodic elector. It is as if the idea of representative democracy has served to limit the commitment of the citizen to local government. At the same time, representative democracy and participatory democracy have been argued as mutually exclusive opposites. In fact, an active conception of representative democracy can be reinforced by participatory democracy - all the more easily in local government because of its local scales and its closeness to the local communities. (Quoted in Clark and Stewart 1998).

Similarly, the Commonwealth study argues that:

In the past the relationship between the state and citizens has tended to be mediated and achieved (or thought to be) through the intermediaries, elected representatives and political party structures. But this aspect of participation in governance for a good society requires direct connection between citizens and the state. This interface has been neglected in the past. The connection between the citizen and the state must be based on participation and inclusion (82).

Increasingly around the world, a number of mechanisms are being explored which can foster these more inclusive and deliberative forms of engagement between citizen and state. These go under various labels, ranging from 'participatory governance', to deliberative democracy, to 'empowered deliberative democracy' (Fung and Wright 2001:7) defined as:

⬩ '*democratic* in their reliance on the participation and capacities of ordinary people,

⬩ *deliberative* because they institute reasons-based decision-making, and

⬩ *empowered* since they attempt to tie action to discussion'.

Such an approach, later re-labelled 'empowered, participatory governance by Fung (2002:3-4) involves linking 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' forms of governance to create 'a new architecture of governance that cuts a middle path between the dichotomy of devolution and democratic centralism'.

Around the world, there are numerous examples of innovations which incorporate this approach, ranging from provisions for participatory planning at the local government level in India and the Philippines, to participatory budgeting in Brazil, to citizen monitoring committees in Bolivia, to forms of public referenda and citizen consultation in the Europe. Most of these approaches involve new legal frameworks for local governance which incorporate a mix of direct forms of popular participation with more representative forms of democracy. (For a review of a number of these mechanisms, see Goetz and Gaventa, 2001 and also 'Online Bibliography on Citizen Participation and Local Governance, www.ids.ac.uk/logolink. The IDS

LogoLink project is currently undertaking a further review of these legal frameworks, forthcoming.)

As discussed in previous papers linking participation to the political sphere means re-thinking the ways in which participation has often been conceived and carried out, especially in the development context (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). In the past within development studies, the drive for *'participatory development'* has focussed on the importance of local knowledge and understanding as a basis for local action, and on direct forms of participation throughout the project cycle (needs assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). A wide range of participatory tools and methodologies have grown from this experience which now may have application in the field of *'participatory governance'*.

On the other hand, work on political participation growing out of political science and governance debates has often focused on issues largely underplayed by those working on participation in the community or social spheres. These include critical questions dealing with legitimate representation, systems of public accountability, policy advocacy and lobbying, rights education and awareness building, and party formation and political mobilisation. Yet, the political participation literature has paid

Mainstreaming starts from the bottom and involves all layers, including the invisible top. Photo: Johan Toborn
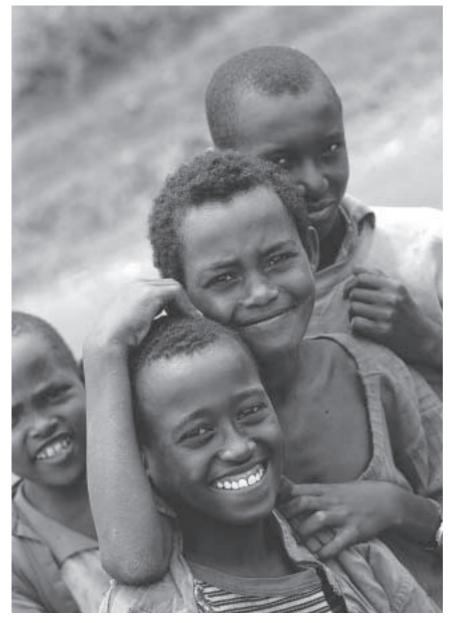
less attention to issues of local knowledge, participatory process, or direct and continuous forms of engagement by marginalised groups.

Each tradition has much to learn from the other. Increasingly, they brought together, especially in the development field, under the concept of *'citizenship'*, which links participation in the political, community and social spheres. But the concept of 'citizenship', itself, has long been a disputed and value-laden one in democratic theory (Jones and Gaventa 2002; *IDS Bulletin* 2002) On the one hand, citizenship has traditionally been cast in liberal terms, as individual legal equality accompanied by a set of rights and responsibilities and bestowed by a state to its citizens. Newer approaches aim to bridge the gap between citizen and the state by recasting citizenship as practised rather than as given. Placing an emphasis on inclusive participation as the very foundation of democratic practice, these approaches suggest a more active notion of citizenship, which recognises the agency of citizens as 'makers and shapers' rather than as 'users and choosers' of interventions or services designed by others (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000 and 2001). As Lister suggests, 'the right of participation in decision-making in social, economic, cultural and political life should be included in the nexus of basic human rights… Citizenship as participation can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents' (Lister1998:228).

At the same time, there is a growing recognition that universal conceptions of citizenship rights, met through a uniform set of social policies, fail to recognise diversity and difference, and may in fact serve to strengthen the exclusion of some while seeking inclusion of others (Ellison 1999). With this has come a renewed concern on questions of identity, diversity and inclusion. The DFID paper on *Human Rights for Poor People* calls for participation of the poor in decisions which affects their lives to be included in the list of universal human rights (DFID 2000). The right to participate is also linked to rights of *inclusion*, and to rights to *obligation*, through which poor people may expect to hold governments more accountable and responsive.

Realising these rights poses enormous challenges for local governance, and the new deliberative mechanisms for citizen engagement increasingly associated with them. Whose voices are really heard in these processes? What about issues of representation and accountability within them? How will various forms of local governance accommodate differing meanings of citizenship that cut across gender, political, cultural, and social lines? Without attention to these questions, increased participation in local governance for some may simply re-enforce the status quo.

Proposition Four: While the search for new democratic processes of local governance is critical, far more needs to be learned about how they work, for whom, and with what social justice outcomes. In general, while there is some evidence of positive 'democracy' building outcomes, there is less evidence about the pro-poor development outcomes of participatory governance.
The promises on behalf of democratic decentralisation, especially in its newer more innovative forms, have been great. As Blair (2001: 23) summarises one line of argument:

Can anyone hear us? Photo: Johan Toborn

the hope is that as government comes closer to the people, more people will participate in politics...that will give them representation, a key element in empowerment, which can be defined here as significant voice in public policy decisions which affect their futures. Local policy decisions reflecting this empowerment ill serve these newer constituencies, better living conditions and enhanced economic growth. These improvements will then reduce poverty and enhance equity among all groups.

On the other hand, the evidence about the degree to which these outcomes have been realised is mixed.

Traditionally, the more pessimistic argument has been that democratic decentralisation simply opens up space for the empowerment of local elites, not for consideration of the voices and interests of the more marginalised. Obstacles of power, social exclusion, minimal individual and collective organisational capacity mean that few gains will be made by the poor. As Manor observes, he has 'yet to discover evidence of any case where local elites were more benevolent than those at higher levels.' (Manor 1999: 91, quoted in Blair 2001).

On the other hand, more recent studies of participatory forms of local governance have begun to point to some more positive outcomes. Blair's own study of democratic local governance in six countries, for instance, points to some gains in accountability and as well as participation and empowerment goals. Moreover, some improvement may be seen in 'universal services', such as education and health care - arguably because these served to benefit the local elites as well. Less success was seen in programmes targeted for the poor themselves, as these were more likely to be 'captured' by local elites. Osmani's review of the literature, however, points to any number of examples of where 'truly participatory decentralisation' has contributed to both to greater equity and efficiency of local services, because it allows responsiveness to local services. But, he is also quick to point out that attempts to take such cases to scale have faced obstacles both of the unwillingness of those at the top to give up power and gaining involvement of the poor from the bottom.

Heller's study (2001:158) of democratic experiences in Kerala, Port Alegre, and South Africa is more positive, at least when it comes to what might be termed 'democratic process outcomes.' He finds that the synergy of state and society in local governance:
- creates new associational incentive and spaces
- allows for a continuous and dynamic process of learning
- promotes deliberation and compromise
- promotes innovative solutions to tensions between representation and participation
- bridges knowledge and authority gap between technocratic expertise and local involvement

On the whole, the evidence on both the pro-poor and the democratic outcomes of experiments in new forms of participatory governance is as yet inconclusive. Many of the studies that have been done have been on the impact of decentralisation in general, not on the more democratic and participatory innovations we have begun to see in recent years. Far more work needs to be done on the impact of these newer sets of innovations.

Proposition Five: The enabling conditions for the better known 'successful' experiments in participatory governance are limited to a few countries. Effective intervention strategies in most cases therefore must begin with how to create the pre-requisite conditions necessary for participatory governance to succeed.

Many of the experiments which are often held up as recent 'success' stories in participatory local governance are limited to a few places in the world, which often reflect contexts and conditions which are not widely found elsewhere. For instance, Heller's study (2001) in Brazil, India, and South Africa points to three enabling conditions or participatory governance:
- strong central state capacity;
- a well developed civil society and
- an organised political force, such as a party, with strong social movement characteristics.

How many countries (or indeed how many places in these three countries)

are such pre-requisites found? Of the over 60 - 70 countries where experiments of democratic decentralisation are taking place, no doubt very few.

This has enormous implications for strategies of replicability, or for intervention in countries where these conditions do not pre-exist. In such cases, more work will need to be done on the preconditions of participatory governance, including awareness building on rights and citizenship; building civil associations and social movements engaged in governance issues; and strengthening institutions of governance, both at the local and central levels. Merrifield's (2002) work raises important challenges for how to promote 'citizenship learning' in places where strong awareness of rights and responsibilities do not previously exist. Osmani (2000) argues for the ongoing importance of supporting empowerment strategies, through economic livelihoods, social mobilisation, and advocacy, as a necessary pre-condition for taking participatory governance to scale.

The work by Fung and Wright (2001) on innovative deliberative mechanisms in the US, Brazil and India, points to three principles that are fundamental to EDD (empowered deliberative democracy) and three which 'design principles' for institution building. They are perhaps helpful starting points for democracy building strategies:

Principles of EDD (empowered deliberative democracy)
- focus on specific, tangible problems
- involvement of ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them
- deliberative development of solutions to these problems

Design principles for EDD
- devolution of public decision making authority
- formal linkages of responsibility, resource distribution and communication
- use and generation of new state institutions to support and guide these efforts.

However, they also point to one background enabling condition, which is by no means universally found in work on

participation and local governance. That is, 'there is a rough equality of power, for the purposes of deliberative decisions, between participants' (2001: 25). To gain such conditions means that the work on local democracy building must also be linked to work on empowerment, especially of oppressed and marginalised groups, as discussed briefly above.

Proposition Six: While the 'local', and related themes of 'participation' and 'empowerment' are increasingly part of the development discourse, the 'local' has many conflicting political meanings, and is itself a problematic concept, especially in an era of increased globalisation.

Historically, the 'local' has been considered a key site for democracy building and citizen participation. It has been there that 'people usually come into contact with politicians or public officials, receive services and benefits from the state, and organise together in communities' (Lowndes 1995:161). Citizenship was thought to derive largely from community identification and membership; civic action and political participation were thought to be concentrated at the local level; and local governance provided a learning ground for broader understandings and forms of citizenship (Lowndes 1995).

However, in the current climate, the focus on the 'local' is increasingly problematic, for at least two reasons. First, as Mohan and Stokke (2000) remind us, we need to carefully examining the concept of locality, and how it is being used by a variety of non-local actors. Increasingly, ideas of participation and local governance are being promoted by a wide variety of actors, ranging from grassroots social movements and political parties, to mainstream development organisations, such as the World Bank, UNDP, USAID, and many others. As concepts of local participation are being mainstreamed throughout development discourse, they are also being used to support and justify a variety of agendas, ranging from consolidation of central powers, to support for a neo-liberal agenda and structural adjustment, to promotion of more progressive notions of development and democracy build-

People are assumed to find it rational to take part, but is it necessarily so? Photo: Johan Toborn

ing. Again quoting Mohan and Stokke (2000: 263-264):

the paradoxical consensus over the role of 'local participation' in a globalising world, is fraught with dangers. Local participation can be used for different purposes by very different ideological stakeholders. It can underplay the role of the state and trans-national power holders and can overtly or inadvertently, cement Euro-centic solutions to Third World development. There is a need for critical analysis of the political use of the 'the local', but also a need to develop a political imaginary that does not repeat these weaknesses.

Given the widespread adoption of the discourse of participation, we need both to critically examine how and for what

purposes the agenda is being used, and also to develop a clearer analysis of under what conditions the mainstream development discourse creates spaces for positive engagement. That is, how do we assess when engagement with large institutions that are promoting participation discourse will widen the opportunities for genuine democracy building at the local level, and under what conditions will it risk co-optation and legitimisation of the status quo?

A second problem surrounding a narrow focus of the local is the way in which the discourse may screen out the importance of extra-local factors that equally shape the possibilities for democratic participation locally.

At one level, of course, this is seen in the importance of national legal frame-

works, and strong central governments, for making local democratic innovations more effective. At the same time, a focus on the local without attention to the national may in fact diffuse national reform strategies. Some see the decentralisation agenda as a way of undercutting work on human rights, especially for women, much of which has been carried out at the national and international levels. In such situations, work on national level reforms, such as participatory constitutionalism, may be a pre-requisite for local work. But there are important strategic questions: How can national level advocacy groups and reform processes build and support a local constituency? Conversely, how can local groups scale up their demands for reform in the national legal and political process? What are the enabling legal frameworks created 'from above' that strengthen the possibility of effective democracy building 'from below'?

The problem becomes more complex when questions of global governance and global citizenship are also taken into account. Increasingly assertions of universal global rights (of the woman, of the child, for participation, etc.) may shape or conflict with understandings of local rights and citizenship. Local actors may use global forums as arenas for action (e.g. Narmada Dam; Chiappas), just as effectively - or more effectively - than they can appeal to institutions of local governance (Edwards and Gaventa 2001). Conversely, expressions of global civil society or citizenship may simply be vacuous without meaningful links to the local. The challenge is not only how to build participatory governance at differing levels, but how to promote the democratic and accountable *vertical links* across actors at each level. As Peieterse puts it, 'this involves a double movement, from local reform upward and from global reform downward - each level of governance, from the local to the global, plays a contributing part' (quoted in Mohan and Stokke 263).

Conclusion

The widespread engagement with issues of participation and local governance creates enormous opportunities for redefining and deepening meanings of democracy, for linking civil society and government reforms in new ways, for extending the rights of inclusive citizenship. At the same time, there are critical challenges to insure that the work promotes pro-poor and social justice outcomes, to develop new models and approaches where enabling conditions are not favourable, to avoid an overly narrow focus on the local, and to guard against co-optation of the agenda for less progressive goals. These are important challenges for the broader agenda of promoting *both* participatory democracy *and* development, for theorists and practitioners alike.

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What is Wrong with PRA?:
Three Narratives from Nepal

by Garett Pratt

Introduction

PRA has become part of the taken-for-granted language used by development professionals and practitioners around the globe. It is commonly accepted as a way for development organisations to put ideas about 'participation' into practice in projects and programs. Yet because it has become so widespread in such a short time, and has been taken up in different guises by actors with diverse values, political ideologies, and institutional positions, it has become increasingly difficult to tell what people mean by the term 'PRA'. Cohen and Uphoff wrote in 1980 that discussing participation by the poor was 'to compound one complex and ambiguous term with another, even more complicated and amorphous'. Speaking of 'PRA' as a way to gain people's 'participation' brings together two similarly nebulous and contested terms.

The tangle of meanings that have evolved in association with PRA and participation, as both terms have enjoyed increased mainstream currency over the last decade, has led to a growing sense of disquiet amongst the many development professionals who support or practice some version of PRA. Practitioners feel that PRA is commonly 'misused or abused', or that the version of 'participation' that is used is inadequate, limited, or wrong. But although many people agree that there is something wrong with the current state of PRA practice, they do not agree on what the problem is. This paper will lay out three distinct narratives articulated by different development professionals in Nepal that explain 'the problem with PRA'.

Narratives and development

Roe (1991, 1994) argues that development narratives are repetition of simple stories used to simplify, stabilize, and enable action to be taken on complex, contested, uncertain policy issues. These simple stories commonly have a beginning, a middle, and an end, explaining the origin of the problem, what the problem is now, and what will happen if we do not take the necessary action to solve the problem. Interviews with Nepali PRA practitioners, trainers, and development professionals showed that there are clear narratives about the 'problem with PRA', but that they do not necessarily agree either on the analysis of the problem, or in the solutions they advocate. Many people have a narrative about why PRA was needed and popularised by development professionals, about what the current problem with it is, and about what needs to change in the future, sometimes with the warning of a crisis if practice does not improve.

Roe argues that it is unrealistic to think that we will enter a world that is free of these stabilising, simplifying narratives, but rather than by being conscious of them we can work with them strategically. To some extent, research can demonstrate that some narratives are more 'true' than others. Yet experience has also shown that even when empirical research contradicts dominant narratives, the narratives can and do persist (Leach and Mearns 1996). Narratives that dominate development debates can change over time, with new narratives gaining dominance. But it is unlikely that we will enter a world where narratives are replaced by more complex, nuanced, and uncertain statements of problems and solutions. The claims that are made about the difference PRA will make to development, or what will happen if we do not change the way PRA is practiced, are not easily supported with empirical evidence and are not contested on this basis. There have been very few efforts made to identify the effects of practicing PRA on development outcomes, or to distinguish carefully between specific forms of PRA practice and the different outcomes in which they

result (Jones and SPEECH 2001; Holmes 2001). Such a research task is inherently extremely problematic (Cornwall and Pratt 2002). Narratives about the problem with PRA seem to exist largely in debates between practitioners based on their own experience and their values and political positioning. Thus in examining narratives about PRA, the purpose is not to argue which are more 'true' or 'untrue' but rather to look at the implications for change implied if these narratives guide actions taken to influence, and attitudes towards, PRA practice. In the next sections, three distinct narratives about the 'problem with PRA' will be presented. We will then return to the question of why it is useful for development actors to distinguish between these different narratives about PRA existing in their working contexts.

Doing development projects better

The most common narrative about PRA in Nepal is that it emerged as a response to the past failures of mainstream development initiatives. Many development professionals complain that the steady flow of donor funds to Nepal has not made a major impact on poverty. They blame past failures on 'top down' or 'bureaucratic' approaches. With the popularisation of PRA throughout Nepal in the 1990s, and as participation became a common term in international development discourse, professionals hoped for these new approaches to show better results. As one practitioner said, 'No-one can say that the bureaucratic approach is better than the participatory approach'. Another said, 'PRA has become a fashion. People think that if they don't talk about PRA, other people will not accept them'. Yet it is not clear that using PRA widely or adopting the concept of participation has made any major difference to the impact of development funds. As the narrative goes, if professionals can only learn to do PRA better, to do 'true' PRA, then it will start to fulfil its

promise of improving the impact of development.

Practitioners have many complaints about the 'misuse and abuse' of PRA. For example, practitioners manipulate the outcomes of PRA exercises, intentionally or unintentionally, to suit their previous agenda. A practitioner from an INGO said of his own organisation, 'The programme that we implemented after this PRA was not very different than what we used to implement in the past…

Women are important to include in participatory work, but do they express their opinions and are they listened to? Kathmandu, Nepal.
Photo: Lorenz Christensen/PHOENIX

Although there's a difference in the approach and processes,… in terms of project activities, it didn't really bring much change…' This is seen as a failure to practice PRA in a fully participatory way. Another common complaint is that practitioners use the PRA tools to generate data, but they reserve the analysis and decision-making based on that analysis for 'back in the office' rather than sharing it with people in the field. Practitioners also argue that conduct-

ing a PRA should obligate the agency to then undertake some kind of development project, while in fact often a PRA does not lead to any further contact between the community and the development agency. Professionals complain about falsely raising community members' expectations for a development project.

The narrative ends with the warning that if PRA practice does not improve, it will not improve the outcomes of development projects. The same old failures will continue, as development funds are wasted on projects that do no meet local people's needs and priorities, that do not have their ownership, and thus are not sustainable. People in local communities may become 'burnt out' and even less willing to co-operate with PRA practitioners and other development workers than before they were asked to 'participate'.

To avoid this situation, practitioners have many ideas about what needs to improve. They tend to focus on improving the quality and nature of training. People and organisations need to lean to do PRA 'properly' in a way that reflects the 'philosophy of PRA'. For example, development organisations must only initiate a PRA if they follow through with development activities. They must use PRA to enter an open-ended discussion with communities on priorities and needs, unlimited by their own sectoral interests. If development organisations only work in one sector, they must be transparent from the beginning about their capabilities. If they are unable to meet the priorities of the communities, they must put the community members in contact with another organisation that can fill their needs. If practitioners start practicing PRA 'correctly', the promise of improved impact and sustainability from development projects may yet be fulfilled.

From projects to politics

There is a small minority of practitioners in Nepal who start their narrative about the problem with PRA by questioning mainstream project-based development as a whole. They question the ability of two or three year projects, initiated by outside agencies, to address the underlying roots of poverty and to have sus-

tained impact. They are suspicious of the ability of 'technocrats' or 'bureaucrats' to advocate the social changes necessary to reduce poverty. PRA does not correct the failings of development projects. As a manager working in an international NGO argued,

'Many people have used PRA, even now, as basically an exploratory tool, rather than as an empowering tool. Therefore many communities have not benefited from the empowerment aspect of PRA. They might have benefited from having one or two projects in their area, but the real empowerment that should come through the whole process hasn't come, because it has just been used to explore, an extractive tool.'

He argued against the common claim that PRA is 'empowering'. 'I think again we are making the whole notion of empowerment weak, not strong... Using twelve, thirteen techniques in the community for twelve days, and saying that the community is empowered in the course of the analysis, I would really question that... You would have to redefine empowerment...'

In this view, PRA should not be viewed as a tool to gain participation in projects and programs. It should be used as a methodology for helping poor people to analyse the social and political origins of their poverty, then to organise themselves to fight for their rights. In this narrative, fighting poverty is understood as a question of social justice and redistribution. Given the ongoing Maoist insurgency in Nepal, and government efforts to quell unrest, discussing the politicial origins of poverty, as well as redistribution and social justice as a solution, is risky. However, there are a few PRA practitioners who argue that PRA should be used to help citizens to see the structural social relationships, sometimes framed in Marxist terms as relations between warring classes, that prevent them from improving their living conditions. The caste system, or bonded labour which has recently been outlawed in Nepal, are two such examples of these types of poverty perpetuating relationships. PRA can be used to raise the general consciousness of the social origins of poverty, and to direct people to take political action to improve their lot. Once conscious of

the problem, and organised into grassroots groups, citizens can hold government to account for providing the services it is committed to producing in its own legislation.

In this narrative, PRA needs to be presented in training as a method for social analysis. This presentation may include an explicit discussion of class conflict, exploitation, human rights and social justice. Development professionals working in civil society organisations should think in terms of advocacy, campaigns, policy change, rather than service provision. They have to be willing to take sides with marginalized groups, and to engage in conflict with the local elite rather than working within the existing social relationships in 'communities'. Development organisations need to engage with community members on a longer term basis. If PRA is not recast in this different view of what 'development work' means, poverty will persist despite a continuing flow of donor funds into 'projects'.

PRA as personal change

A third commonly articulated narrative about the 'problem with PRA' in Nepal focuses on the personal characteristics of development professionals, and echoes long running stream in international PRA discourse (Chambers 1997; Kumar 1996). This narrative is related to the first one, in which the reason behind adopting PRA is the need to move forward from the past failures of development projects, which did not respect the priorities of local people, had little or no impact on poverty, were not sustainable, and thus wasted development funds. PRA was meant to go some way towards fixing these problems by increasing the respect for the needs and priorities of poor people.

The current failing with PRA, however, is in the personal 'attitude and behaviour' of development professionals. They have failed to 'internalise' the right attitudes and reflect them in their behaviour when they interact with poor people. They don't listen, they do not respect poor people, they do not live humbly. The 'essence' of PRA is being someone who listens, who learns from others, who strives to understand and work with their opinions. PRA, in this

narrative, becomes a 'way of life' that development professionals have failed to take on. As a well respected practitioner said,

'People say very beautiful things, beautiful words. People write very beautiful phrases and sentences using 'participatory approach of development'- it is more than PRA, bigger than PRA, and it is a holistic approach and all. But while looking back to him or her and these activities at office, maybe at home, the approach is not being practised. That is complete nonsense. For me it does not make any sense - what you say you have to follow.'

As the quotation makes clear, professionals should reflect the right attitudes and behaviour in all of their interactions, not only with poor people, but with the other development professionals, particularly those who are lower in the organisational hierarchy than themselves. They must also display these attitudes in interactions with family and friends.

If not, people will see through their dishonest use of PRA in their work, and it will undermine their efforts at development work. As one person said,

'People look at you, at what you are doing, actually. Then people will believe in you and your saying, your writing. If you write something else and do something other, and people may not trust you and the approach will be flying somewhere in the sky. It will not be practised on the ground. That is the frustrating thing.'

Another person emphasised judgements made by community members,

'I have to supervise people working at grassroots and I have talked with local people- very illiterate, very poor people. They are quite capable to evaluate you, you know, as a development professional… Who is doing what: Who is supporting the poor? Who is supporting the villagers? Or who is just grabbing his salary and doing nothing? They're very much clever evaluators of the development professionals.'

Thus if a PRA practitioner does not consistently demonstrate the right attitudes and behaviour throughout their life, local people will see the professional's hypocrisy and not participate themselves. Thus PRA will not work,

and nor will the development projects and programs that are meant to follow make an impact on poverty and be sustainable.

In this narrative, the solution to the problem with PRA becomes personal transformation through various means. The main means is critical self reflection. People are meant to develop a heightened awareness of their own behaviour, and through reflection and a concerted effort to change, practice the 'right' attitude and behaviour in their daily life. Another means to the transformation is to gain help from a 'guru' figure who displays the right attitudes and behaviours in their own life. One can learn more by observing the person and trying to emulate them than by hearing their teachings. Without this personal transformation, PRA will not make any meaningful difference to development practice.

Why do these narratives matter?

What can we learn by identifying these distinct narratives about PRA? As Roe and many others would argue, understanding and working with narratives in development is important. We cannot escape them, but by harnessing them and working with them strategically they can be useful to development practitioners. If one understands the different narratives about PRA existing in their working context, it can help with decision-making and strategy for the variety of actors involved in PRA practice, whether they are managers in organisations applying PRA, field workers, consultants, or donors funding others who practice it. The different narratives have distinct political implications for development professionals and the people their efforts are meant to assist.

PRA was introduced, as all the narratives reflect, as a challenge to development professionals to rethink what they have been doing, and served as a rallying point for professionals with diverse but overlapping commitments to 'doing development better' over the last decade. But as the language of PRA and participation has become both mainstream and more nebulous, it is losing the value it had in challenging conventional practice and patterns of power, and encouraging innovation, learning and change.

As an influential NGO leader involved in the promotion of PRA in Nepal since the early days said,

'The threat now is… whether this participation just becomes a level of rhetoric that does not challenge what is going on… This has become a problem now. Papers are very good, they explain everything very well, but how can we really ensure that this is also translated into action?'

Distinguishing between different narratives about PRA helps to sharpen the different directions for change that practitioners see as desirable and possible. It helps to draw clearer lines around networks of professionals who see the potential of PRA in the same way. Deliberation amongst practitioners about the different narratives they draw and act upon may lead to more focussed efforts to pursue forms of practice which challenge, rather than re-enforce, the past failings of development efforts. By distinguishing amongst these different narratives, we can see a range of strategic and political choices facing professionals involved in PRA in Nepal. What are the implications of choosing to re-enforce and act on these different narratives? They place the responsibility for change with various actors. Some have more radical implications than others, as they suggest more challenges to established patterns of power.

The first narrative on PRA in projects and programs is the most conservative of the three. The prescriptions it suggests have been repeated in PRA circles since PRA began- training must improve, people must do PRA 'properly', they need to be more transparent in their dealings with communities, they need to follow up studies with action, organisations need to reduce their own fixations on certain sectorally defined problems and solutions, development efforts need to be co-ordinated amongst different organisations to reflect the holistic needs of communities. The Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) has been promoting measures along these lines for several years, attempting to improve the accessibility of PRA training, providing access to documentation of good practice to its members, and encouraging ongoing sharing and learning of PRA techniques. Yet after a de-

cade of PRA practice, these solutions are neither widely adopted, as reflected in the continued existence of the narrative, nor is there any way to provide strong evidence that PRA practice and the outcome of development efforts are improving together. This is not to argue that the narrative is 'wrong', but simply that it has become a conservative argument. While one can see many side effects and surprises that have resulted from sustained effort to take up messages like these (Cornwall and Pratt 2002), this narrative is losing its motivating drive as it becomes a familiar part of mainstream development discussions without more transformation taking place.

The narrative about PRA as personal change offers a very challenging agenda for change, but the prescription largely leaves the change in the hands of individuals to take up or not as they choose. To repeat the prescription, practitioners need to examine their own attitudes and behaviour and transform themselves. Pressure for them to do so can be exerted by other people through the PRA training that they are exposed to, and through repeating the narrative. In Nepal, the moral pressure on individuals to examine and change themselves through talk about reflection, meditation on one's actions, and personal transformation is high, because it resonates with widely held spiritual beliefs. This resonance makes the narrative more powerful, but it leaves it very much to individuals whether they examine their behaviour when in positions of power, a choice that many professionals will not voluntarily make.

The narrative embraces the idea that for the most part, individuals must reflect and examine their own behaviour, as others cannot transform them without their active efforts to learn. The narrative does not include prescriptions for institutionalised pressure by either those with or without power to influence the attitude and behaviour of others. As someone with power in development organisations, such as a manager in an NGO, one could aim to recruit professionals with the 'correct' attitudes and behaviours, track improvements in attitudes and behaviour during staff appraisals, or support staff to change through targeted training programs, long-term counselling, or even spiritual retreats.

But for most managers, this type of action would transgress normal ideas about what is within the legitimate realm of professional interactions, as it would involve making very personal judgements about the behaviour of staff both inside and outside their work. The narrative about PRA is not yet mainstreamed enough that these kinds of interventions are seen as legitimate. On the other hand, the narrative could conclude that people affected by those who display the 'wrong' attitudes and behaviour, like junior staff in NGOs, or

The way ahead for participation? Photo: Jean-Léo Dugast/PHOENIX

community members 'PRAed' by insensitive practitioners, should actively challenge those in power and demand improvements in their behaviour. This would also be a very radical suggestion. Existing hierarchies dispose 'lowers' against challenging 'uppers' even when their professional views and decisions are leading projects or programmes to fail (Chambers 1997). Institutional mechanisms like juniors evaluating seniors in performance appraisals are a new and uncommon practice in development organisations. Community members may draw their own conclusions about the attitude and behaviours of development professionals, but there are no institutionalised mechanisms for these views to be gathered by organisations. For 'lowers' to make criticisms of their seniors' personal behaviour would be very counter-cultural in Nepal as in most contexts, and could likely result in problems for the juniors. The narrative falls short of prescribing actions in which people challenge one another, and focuses instead on voluntary individual efforts to change.

The projects to politics narrative has the most far-reaching implications for the way development, PRA, and participation are understood and practiced. Perhaps because it is the most radical, it is a view held by a small minority of practitioners in Nepal. It contains a prescription for different roles for many development actors, particularly for NGOs and other civil society actors concerned with development, a role in challenging the power held by governments. It complements the shift towards using the language of rights and citizenship in development, and thus works with other changes happening in the language of development. It is the most radical narrative in terms of transforming the role of citizens in relating to development organisations, as it encourages citizens to actively challenge people in positions of power, including the type of professionals who use PRA as part of development organisations.

However, taking this line in Nepal is very risky, given the context of conflict between the government and the Maoist insurgents. As mentioned above, talking about the political causes of ongoing poverty immediately attracts the at-
tention of authorities who identify this type of discourse with the Maoist insurgents. But as advocates of this narrative are careful to make clear, it is distinct from the ideology preached by the insurgents, as it encourages peaceful advocacy against the powerful, not their overthrow through force. In fact, it has tremendous potential in Nepal as being reframed as a narrative about the cause and solution of the insurgency itself- if people are encouraged to find peaceful ways to demand better services from government, and governments open themselves to criticism and acting for social change, there would not be need for a violent conflict. PRA could be practiced as a way for people to discover peaceful means to address the underlying social injustice that fires violence.

The many development professionals in Nepal involved in using and shaping the understanding of PRA in any given context can make use of narratives like these in their own strategising. Whether one is a PRA trainer, an NGO manager, an academician using or presenting PRA to students, a reformist government official, a donor, or a consultant, these narratives can be used to direct the efforts invested in using and improving PRA. When choosing to repeat, reframe, or act on one of these narratives, social actors are making political decisions about who needs to change, who challenges whom, and whom should take power through their actions.

With the terms 'PRA' and 'participation' having been co-opted into mainstream development language, social actors who aim to challenge the patterns of power in development work need to continue to contest and redefine these terms in ways that challenge, rather than re-enforce, institutionalised forms of power. In Nepal, re-enforcing or re-framing the more radical of these narratives can remake PRA as a challenging, innovative practice, a status which it has lost somewhat with the continued dominance of the PRA for doing projects better narrative.

PRA narratives in context

Strategising in other contexts would have to start with developing a similar understanding of the major narratives
about PRA. The discourse surrounding PRA has very distinct streams in different national contexts, given different development thinking, historical experience, and experience with various streams of participatory methodologies (Way 2000; Cornwall et al 2001; Cornwall and Pratt 2002). In many contexts, one finds narratives that frame PRA as a practice within long-established relationships between poor people and development agencies, and other narratives which raise challenges for these relationships. For example, an Indian practitioner says of PRA in general in India, 'It's hoodwinking- governments have done PRA and think they have got people's participation. [People] lose whatever little rights they had.' Yet the same practitioner has used PRA in the course of a campaign against the potential patenting of the genetic material in subsistence farmers' crops by multinational corporations. A Mexican professional argued that, 'It is very directed participation with the issues already decided. It's only varnish.' Yet Mexico has a long tradition of Freirean participatory work that practitioners around the world are combining with PRA methods in an approach called REFLECT, including advocates of the projects to politics narrative in Nepal. Practitioners will continue to frame PRA within narratives. They can make strategic and political choices about what narratives they re-enforce and act upon, which can potentially reshape PRA from a mainstream method that re-enforces patterns of power, to a radical practice that empowers citizens.

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Footnote

This article is based on findings generated by a study resulting in the publication *Practitioners' Critical Reflections on PRA and Participation in Nepal*, Garett Pratt, IDS Working Paper 122, Institute of Development Studies, 2001. ISBN 1 85864 338 4.

Garett Pratt is Research Officer and member of the Participation Group, IDS. He is a Political scientist with special interest in participation and development. Current research interests include the spread, diverse application, and effects of PRA methods. Other interests include processes of organisational change in development organisations adopting more participatory approaches in their work, and linking participatory methods to social mobilisation and rights-based development.

The Participation Group of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex

The Participation Group is part of a global network of practitioners and researchers who are engaged in sharing knowledge, leaning new skills and clarifying ethics around participation in development. The aim is to strengthen the capacity of people, institutions and networks to engage in, spread and support high quality participatory processes.

The group consists of close to 20 staff members. Support with advice and learning is given by people in over 70 networks and institutions in more than 50 countries, individual practitioners of participation, students and many others. Financial support comes from several national and international organizations.

An informative home page gives details of the activities of the Group, including many documents in PDF format (http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/index.html).

The work of the Group in the 1990s contributed to a rapid spread of participatory methods around the world. Recently the work has changed to deepening the questions about participation in general and widening the understanding of its applications to the spheres of government, institutions and society. Research work covers four key themes:

1) Participation, poverty and policy
Getting it right
Participatory poverty assessments
Consultations with the poor
Participation in poverty reduction strategies

2) Citizenship, participation and governance
Local governance
Citizen participation in social policy
Global citizen action

3) The theory and practice of participation
The Pathways project
Theories and critiques of participation
Participation and gender
Participation and health care
PRA: participation, reflection, action
Participatory approaches in emergencies
Popular communications

4) Institutional change and practice
Participatory monitoring and evaluation
Institutional learning

On the Resource Centre pages are a searchable collection of documents and videos on participation, the Group's recent publications, a newsletter and links.

The Group also regularly arranges workshops relating to the research programme. More information is available from the workshop pages. Also the networking pages are worth a visit.

The Marine Initiative of the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment

The problem setting

The current environmental degradation and destruction of ocean and coastal zone ecosystems threatens not only the biological diversity and ecological health of the ecosystems but also increase the vulnerability of poor people and endanger their health. Deficient legal frameworks and land grabbing in various forms reduce traditional and local access to and usage of land, water and coastal areas and add to the vulnerability. A shrinking natural resource base invites conflicts within or between countries. Coastal zones cover 20 % of the land area but house a much larger proportion of the world's population. Also urban growth is increasing in the coastal zones. In developing countries urban growth in coastal zones takes place with limited planning of sewage management, industry location, etc. Fish and other aquatic organisms are often the primary protein and vitamin source for poor people. Both oceanic and coastal zone fish resources are overexploited. Decision makers in the South need increased knowledge of the importance of ocean and coastal zone ecosystems for the poor as well as for the nations as such.

Basic principles and approaches

The Stockholm Conference 1972 and the UNCED conference 1992 are the corner stones in the Swedish environment thinking and acting. Marine environment and coastal zone development are prioritised areas in Sida's action programme for sustainable development which traces back to the Agenda 21. A number of related international conventions and agreements and the Agenda 21 establish the norms and frames for a rational utilisation and protection of ecosystems and natural resources in the oceans and along the coasts.

The current environmental degradation to a great extent depends on the divided responsibility for these areas between sectors, functions and levels of decision. A more efficient coordination or integration between the sectors is obviously called for. Ocean issues by their nature call for coordination between global, regional and national activities. Utilisation of these natural resources has to be sustainable also for future generations which requires clear and coherent institutional frameworks and action programmes combining development with minimising negative effects. Conflict preventive measures should be given priority with respect to shared and common resources within or between countries. Dealing with specific ecosystems and natural resources, responsibility and economic resources should be decentralised to the level of actual utilisation as far as possible. Cooperation and dialogue within Sida will be a necessity!

Strategic choices

A starting point for strategic choice is that support from the Department to these areas shall contribute to poverty reduction through increased food security based on sustainable utilisation/production and conservation of natural resources.

For food security/sustainable production, the following areas of intervention are of primary concern:
  ⬧ Normative work on sustainable fishery. Implementation of the code of conduct for responsible fishery
  ⬧ Strengthening of a limited number of regional fishery organisations
  ⬧ Support to processes contributing to the removal of current fishery subsidies which are the main cause of contemporary over-capacity
  ⬧ Environmental certification of fish products based on sustainable catch levels
  ⬧ Development of management structures to deal with ocean and coastal zone issues that may contribute to sustainable development, in particular for local communities in coastal areas.

For conservation of the natural resource base the following areas of intervention are of primary concern:
  ⬧ Policy development, monitoring and measures to protect and sustainably use different ecosystems
  ⬧ Coordination and management concerning transboundary environment problems
  ⬧ A study of the conditions for support to prevent and demarcate marine pollution and discharges.

For other issues of strategic importance the following measures are of primary importance:
  ⬧ Monitoring and follow-up of the international marine development and debate and relevant advise to concerned government departments
  ⬧ Ensuring that the country strategy processes fully bring out the relations between poverty and ocean and coastal zone issues
  ⬧ Strengthening the internal dialogue at Sida for increased cooperation with other departments.

Working procedures and choice of channels

With limited personnel resources for the initiative at the Department, interventions that are easily managed and followed up become a necessity. This points to the need for package programmes under a common umbrella, integration of initiatives in RD or water management programmes of the Department, co-financing activities with other donors through sector or programme support, utilisation of institutional and commercial consultants.

Development of human resources

Swedish authorities generally have a good competence but may lack experience in implementation of development coop-

eration and international work. Opportunities for long-term engagement, including so-called twinning arrangements, may be one remedy. The Swedish human resource base should also be encouraged to apply for international posts, including various associate and junior professional expert posts.

Forestry support as part of the Swedish private sector development programme in Bolivia

Swedish support to private sector development (PSD) in Bolivia started in 1993 and is administered by INEC (the Department for Infrastructure and Economic cooperation). The support has been organised in direct co-operation with private sector organisations and the principal counterpart has been the regional chamber of industry in Santa Cruz, CAINCO, through its special unit Programa para el Desarrollo Empresiarial Boliviano, PDEB. Key sectors of cooperation have been the forest industry, the capital market, environment protection and quality, legislation and promotion of business contacts.

A new country strategy for Bolivia for the period 2003-2006 is being developed. The focus of interventions for the coming 3-5 years should form an integrated part of a new, solid strategy for the PSD programme. The focus of interventions should be on two areas: the forest industry and general PSD support. The PSD programme consists of a number of projects, many in their initial or final stages, while a few are under implementation.

PDEP is managing nine projects. Three are in their final stage, while another two are in an early exploratory phase. Of the four projects in their initial stage Academic Wood Engineering Education at the private university UPSA is of special concern to national resources development. During 2000/01 a series of lectures on wood engineering was held at UPSA in cooperation with Linköping University and the Bio-Bio University in Chile. This was seen as the first step towards the implementation of an ambitious academic programme within wood engineering at UPSA. The Bolivian wood manufacturing industry lacks qualified wood engineers and technicians, which constrains Bolivia on international markets. A complete project proposal has long existed. Preparations for Swedish support to a Faculty of Wood Technology are now in progress.

Apart from the projects managed by PDEB, four other projects also make up part of the Swedish PSD programme, three of which are related to the forestry sector.

The Forest Industry Development Project (FIDP) started in 1997, and is the largest individual project realised within the Swedish PSD programme in Bolivia so far. The principal stakeholders of the project are the Bolivian Chamber of Forest Industry (CFB) and its technical branch, Promabosque, and the Swedish consulting firm Scandiaconsult Natura (SCC/Natura). FIDP has addressed sustainable management of natural forests, improved wood processing and marketing of forest products and institutional capacity strengthening. The first three components were applied within four so-called model companies. After five years of operations an extension of 18 months has been agreed upon.

In spite of successful implementation of a number of project components, the competitiveness of the Bolivian forest industry has deteriorated during the course of the project. The fact that forest management has improved in the model companies, forest certification has successfully been introduced, the use of non-traditional species has increased, etc. cannot compensate for the dramatic decrease in exports to neighbouring markets, particularly Argentina.

The problematic situation of the Bolivian forest industry is a combination of external and internal factors. Poor infrastructure and lack of governmental support are factors pointed at, but the main explanation of the weak competitiveness can probably be found among the forest companies themselves. The company ownership structure and the limited competence of the top management of most of the forest companies obstruct the necessary modernisation of the industry. To cope with this problem it is proposed as an important measure during Phase 2 to develop two investment projects, with access to large concessions and based on modern technology and modern management principles. The investment projects

should start from scratch without being burdened by structures, commitments and perceptions of the past.

National Board of Forestry

The National Board of Forestry (SIF), has existed since 1997, and is an independent unit, with restricted resources, entrusted the task of supervising the management of the huge forest resources of Bolivia, including preventing and fighting forest fires. SIF has turned to Sida for technical and administrative assistance. After studies and internal processing Sida has agreed to institutional development of SIF during 2002-2005 at approximately SEK10 m. The development objective of the project is to contribute to a sustainable development of the forest resources and that sustainable management of forest land contributes to national development, poverty alleviation, and a stable institutional development, and legal security and non-corrupt administration for actors in the sector. The purpose of the project is to provide SIF with better and decentralised organisation and administration systems, a strategic plan for institutional development, improved information system and more efficient and faster handling of matters brought to SIF by the sector. Swedish services form an important input in the project.

Vocational training, saw-mill technicians

An important project during the first phase has been the vocational training in industrial carpentry, exercised by the training institute INFOCAL. Sida has encouraged INFOCAL to develop a project proposal concerning education of saw-mill technicians.

Adapted from Börje Svensson, March 2002. Sida Support to Private Sector Development in Bolivia; PM on support to the National Board of Forestry, April 2002, the Swedish Embassy in La Paz.

Bolivia becomes world leader in FSC-certified tropical forest

It is worthwhile in this context to point out that WWF, the conservation organisation, on the 22 of March 2002 celebrated a remarkable achievement by the Forestry Chamber of Bolivia — certification of one million ha of tropical forest under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) scheme. Bolivia now has the largest area of certified natural tropical forest in the world, with 520,000 ha located in the Amazon region, one of the most biodiverse areas on earth. Forest Certification is a system of forest inspection plus a means of tracking timber and paper through a "chain of custody" — following the raw material through to the finished product. The FSC-certified one million ha represents 20 per cent of the area under forest concession in Bolivia, and demonstrates that Bolivia's forestry sector is convinced of the value of forest certification.

Excerpts from the WWF press release of 22 March 2002

The National Forest Programme Facility

The National Forest Programme Facility established by FAO is an innovative partnership designed to support the implementation of national forest programmes in developing countries.

The initiative to establish the Facility is the result of an intensive collaborative effort between a small group of partner countries, FAO, UNDP (PROFOR), institutions from developing countries and NGOs. The projected cost of the Facility for five years is US$32 million. As the Facility becomes operational, its partners will include multilateral and bilateral agencies supporting national forest programme processes, as well as other service providers to national forest programmes, including international NGOs, research institutions and private-sector organizations. Sida will be one of the partners.

Through capacity building and information sharing, the Facility will seek to assist countries in tackling the challenges and constraints to implementation of national forest programmes. An emphasis will be placed on addressing issues related to poverty alleviation and governance, through empowerment of civil society and encouragement of greater participation by all stakeholders.

National forest programmes are holistic, comprehensive, multisectoral approaches to sustainable forest management. The important role of national forest programmes in addressing issues in the forestry sector was recognized during five years of discussion conducted under the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), and confirmed in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decision to establish the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF).

However, the formulation and implementation of national forest programmes in many developing countries is constrained by a number of critical factors. These include:

♦ lack of knowledge on how to address key cross-sectoral and economy-wide constraints to sustainable forest management,
♦ lack of knowledge on how to increase the forestry sector's contribution to the achievement of broader development objectives, as well as on how to gain increased political support for the sector,
♦ inadequate knowledge and information on how to create an enabling environment for forestry sector development through the design and implementation of effective forest policies,
♦ poor mobilization and use of existing knowledge and information by actors at all levels involved in national forest programme processes,
♦ weak capacity to manage and implement national forest programme processes that are participatory, multi-sectoral and country-led,
♦ broader constraints related to governance, accountability and transparency of sectoral information.

The challenge for the Facility will be to assist countries in tackling these constraints to the successful implementation of national forest programmes.

The Facility will meet this challenge firstly by strengthening the knowledge and information base in support of the implementation of national forest programmes, and secondly by improving the processes and mechanisms for sharing and using this knowledge and information.

The Facility will pursue two lines of action.

1)   Provide direct support to national forest programme processes

2)   Create and maintain an international forest information platform.

The operation of the Facility will be guided by a governing body of representatives from partner institutions and country stakeholders. A small staff, based at FAO headquarters in Rome, will take care of core functions.

Swedish Environmental Secretariat in Asia, SENSA

In order to strengthen environment cooperation in Asia a regional Sida unit will be established – SENSA, Swedish Environmental Secretariat in Asia. Initially SENSA will be linked to the Swedish Embassy in Bangkok. Its duties will be to identify/strengthen synergies between various activities financed by Sida, develop contacts with and work for exchange of experiences between actors in Asia and in Sweden, and strengthen regional processes for sustainable development. Its geographic focus will be Southeast Asia and China in the first phase. There will be a thematic concentration on Agenda 21/environmental and natural resources issues with regional dimensions and on environment conventions where north–south cooperation is essential.

The Asian strategy launched by the Swedish Government in 1999 stresses the importance of increased Swedish – Asian cooperation on international environment conventions and sustainable development; institution building, education/research, environment legislation and popular movements. A need for increased Swedish coverage of the environment in Asia is mentioned specifically.

SENSA will start with a two-year pilot phase. The unit will be attached to Sida. Close cooperation with involved embassies/bilateral projects and regionally stationed Sida advisors is envisaged. This is a long-term initiative of at least 10 years, conditional on the expected value added produced. The tentative budget for the two-year pilot phase is 14 million SEK.

The long-term objectives are to contribute to improved management of natural resources and reduced degradation of the environment in the region by strengthening processes that generate

⬧   Access to new knowledge (technical/institutional)

⬧   Increased information flow to society (the democracy part)

⬧   New contacts within and outside the region (the networking part).

The Secretariat will become staffed in September and a first working programme will be elaborated during the autumn in collaboration with Sida HQs and concerned embassies and bilateral projects.

New regional programme for sustainable natural resources management in Central America

The Swedish government has adopted a new strategy for development cooperation in Central America 2001-2005. The strategy states that the main goal should be to increase the living standard of the poor, which requires consolidated democracy as well as economic growth and social adjustment. Environment and natural resources issues will be considered in specific environment projects and also as an important cross-cutting theme within other projects.

The Dept. for Natural Resources and Environment (NATUR) has been asked by the Dept. for Latin America (RELA) to take part in the design and preparation of the future regional support to natural resources and the environment in cooperation with the embassies in Nicaragua and Guatemala, including the office in Honduras.

The countries of Central America have many problems in common. One of them is the overexploitation and misuse of natural resources. The high concentration of land owning in combination with few possibilities to work outside the agricultural sector force the poorest groups to subsistence farming on marginal lands. A main cause of rapid deforestation of natural forests is again the shortage of land for poor farmers who have to move into remaining natural forests. A combination of deforestation and unsustainable agricultural methods on slopes leads to soil erosion, which, in turn, reduces agricultural yields. A reallocation of land is therefore necessary, but also creation of alternative income and employment opportunities among the poor and more sustainable use of the existing natural resources. Lack of sewage systems and treatment works in urban areas, uncontrolled use of pesticides in agriculture, discharges from industry, causing water pollution, add to the picture. Lack of clean drinking water is common.

In recent years the regional cooperation on environment and natural resource issues has been intensified through the establishment of CCAD, the Central American Commission for Environment and Development. After Mitch, so-called watershed management has been massively introduced in the region financed by development aid.

Due to practical constraints as well as lack of resources, Swedish development cooperation cannot possibly cover all environment problems in this regional programme. Therefore, areas dealing with sustainable natural resources that are directly connected to the problematics of poverty and ecological vulnerability in rural areas will be prioritised. A number of studies will be carried out to exploit possible projects.

Areas of strategic importance and suited for this type of regional programme are: higher education and related research; methods development and exchange of experience and infor-

mation on poverty-oriented natural resource management models and institutional arrangements; cooperation between the countries on common strategies and policies.

Already existing regional support includes CATIE (regional centre for higher education/research in Costa Rica), FOCUENCAS (watershed management project, implemented by CATIE in Nicaragua and Honduras); EARTH (agricultural school in Costa Rica with international orientation; PRISMA (NGO in El Salvador, addressing research, information and education); and institutional support to CCAD.

Objectives and direction of the future regional support

The following goals are proposed for the new programme:

To contribute to decreased poverty and reduced ecologic vulnerability among rural people in Central America by:

⋄ promoting human capacity building in sustainable management of natural resources

⋄ promoting adapted methods and models for improved management of natural resources

⋄ promoting development of policies for and dialogues on sustainable management of natural resources and improved environment at regional level

⋄ promoting practical application of sustainable management of natural resources through support to projects/programmes involving several countries, or activities that include exchange of knowledge and experience between the countries in the region.

The overall strategy to reach the objectives is to concentrate on a combination of training activities, trial- and method development projects in the field, including applied research, information dissemination and exchange activities, institutional support to organisations formulating policy at regional level, and, if relevant to the overall aim, regional implementation projects. Cooperation with other donors should be aimed at.

Identification and preparation of new projects will take place over time keeping pace with the phasing out of on-going projects and agreements.

Some experiences from a Minor Field Study on agricultural extension in Kenya

Torbjörn Karlsson, Sara Sundberg and Malin Wigren

*Kenya is fantastic country! We, three students from SLU, had the opportunity
to visit the country during a three-month Minor Field Study
in the spring of 2001.*

**The study was carried out in Mbeere
and Kirinyaga districts,** situated in the
central part of Kenya, a few hours travel
by car north of the capital Nairobi. These
areas are suitable for farming because
of the fertile land, and are also among
the most heavily populated areas in the
country. This is in contrast to the vast
areas, up to 75% of the land, that are
covered by dry and infertile semi-deserts
and very sparsely inhabited by nomadic
tribes.

**The pressure on land is enormous in
Kenya.** Despite increasing urbanisation,
subdivisions of farms accelerate, lead-
ing to a difficult situation for a farmer
struggling to make a living on a farm
smaller than the one of his father. Land
pressure also forces many farmers to
cultivate very marginal land, normally
not suitable for cultivation. This is es-
pecially the case in Mbeere district
which, compared with Kirinyaga, is said
to be "very marginal" and with a rela-
tively low production.

Agricultural extension was the subject
of our study. In Kenya, like in many
other African countries, agricultural ex-
tension has had problems with low adop-
tion rates of technologies and informa-
tion disseminated. The objectives of our
study was therefore to try to find out
why, or why not, a farmer adopts new
techniques or farming practices that
might increase his yield.

Among several approaches that ex-
ist to train farmers, we chose to carry
out two case studies focusing on the
Farmesa Farmer Field Schools and the
Monsanto Demonstration Plots. Both
approaches focus on soil conservation,
though their ways to achieve increased
crop yields during dry conditions are
different.

Farmesa is an NGO funded by Sida,
working with Farmer Field Schools (FFS)
mainly in Mbeere District. Topics dealt
with are primarily different water harvest-
ing and soil and water conservation
techniques, but also the choice of suit-
able crop varieties, use of fertilisers and

livestock production. The approach of
Farmesa is thus based on less costly
implements, including water harvesting
structures made of material available "on-
farm".

Monsanto is a multinational company
dealing with seeds and agrochemicals.
Among other areas in Africa they are
active in Kirinyaga district in Kenya.
They hold field days for small-holder
farmers and arrange demonstration plots
to spread the use of conservation till-
age (CT), including the use of herbi-
cides, fertilisers and certified seeds.
Monsanto want to teach farmers "farm-
ing as a business" (a phrase commonly
used in their approach).

Both positive and negative experiences
could be revealed among the farmers.
Structures for water harvesting and soil
conservation that gave increased yields
to many farmers were very often costly
in terms of labour. In contrast, the CT
technology taught at Monsanto De-
monstration Plots required less work

The members of one of the Farmer Field Schools, Kabuguri, studied in the MFS, in front of their own demonstration plot.

than usual but cost a lot of money for buying the inputs required. The fact that labour access might restrict the yields in these heavy populated areas was an interesting outcome.

Drought was a severe problem for farmers in Mbeere district just as weeds and pests could be for farmers in Kirinyaga. New methods for saving water were therefore highly appreciated in Mbeere, although we experienced that many farmers expected to be given handouts as seeds, tools or even money. This might have caused disappointments among some individuals when they were given "only" the "know-how". The CT technology offered farmers in Kirinyaga an effective tool for controlling weeds, but only a few of them could afford to buy the inputs required. Micro credit systems might be a possible solution for more farmers to afford necessary investments.

In the future, both the Farmesa approach of transferring new technologies through Farmer Field Schools and Monsanto's demonstration plots might be important. The Farmesa approach intends to be participatory and farmer ori-

ented. Monsanto's strategy provides farmers who can afford the investments or access credits with an opportunity to increase yields and possibly perform farming as a business. Both approaches, and probably many others, will be necessary to increase agricultural production and make rural development succeed in Kenya.

This MFS was a fantastic experience for us in many ways. To see different ways of performing agriculture in Kenya was interesting, but most impressive was the generosity and hospitality of all people we met in the rural areas. This made our stay in Kenya a very positive experience, which will be remembered by us for a very long time.

Prize award to MFS students

Johanna Boberg and **Åsa Dyberg**, students in agriculture with specialization in soil/plant science at SLU, have been awarded Hampus von Post's prize for the best degree project at the Faculty of Agriculture, Landscape Planning and Horticulture this year. The project was carried out as a field study in southern Vietnam with the help of a Minor Field Study scholarship financed by Sida. The title of the paper is "The effect of fertilizer regimes on mycorrhizal colonization of mangosteen growing on an acid sulphate soil in southern Vietnam".

In May Johanna and Åsa received a plaque and 11000 SEK each from the hands of the Faculty Dean, Brita Fagerberg. The prize was established in 1923 in memory of a former teacher at Ultuna Agricultural Institute, Hampus von Post.

Supervisors in Sweden were Anna Hedlund, Dept. of Soil Science and Andy Taylor, Dept. of Forest Mycology and Pathology. In Vietnam the supervisor was Dr Bui Xuan An of the University of Agriculture and Forestry in Ho Chi Minh City.

Rural development Professionals abroad

ALBANIA
Kallin, Robert — HIFAB

BANGLADESH
Bergdahl, Jan — HIFAB
Bobillier, Claude — SWEDEC
Sandström, Lars — HIFAB

BOLIVIA
Burman, Anders — Svalorna
Marklund, Lars Gunnar — SCC NATURA
Nilsson, Annika — SCC NATURA
Restrepo, Yon — UBV
Thomsgård, Per — SCC NATURA

BRAZIL
Gliemann, Morten — UBV
Pruth, Charlotte — UBV

CHILE
Djurberg, Christine — UBV
Djurberg, Mats — UBV
Palselius, Maria — Framtidsjorden

CHINA
Gyllerup, Victoria — UNDP

COLOMBIA
Sindhøj, Erik — CGIAR/SLU

COSTA RICA
Costa Pinto, Armando — Kooperation Utan Gränser/SCC

EGYPT
Spännar, Gunnar — Swedesurvey AB

EL SALVADOR
Aliaga, Elisabeth — UBV
Hosseinien, Rofia — UBV
Lazo, Felipe — UBV

ETHIOPIA
Bäckström, Lennart — ORGUT-DANAGRO
Lidvall, Göte — ORGUT-DANAGRO
Homdrom, Öyvind — HIFAB
Höjlund, Anders — ORGUT-DANAGRO
Nonak, Ghatalia — HIFAB
Söderman, Torgny — SLU
Åhlander, Jan — HIFAB

GEORGIA
Melander, Emma — UNDP
Tinnberg, Morgan — Scanagri Sweden AB

HUNGARY
Adeberg, Johan — DeLaval

INDONESIA
Iwald, Johan — CGIAR/SLU

ITALY
Altrell, Dan — FAO HQ
Eriksson, Ingemar — FAO HQ

KENYA
Barklund, Åke — Sida, RELMA
Damgaard-Larsen, Søren — Sida, RELMA
Duveskog, Deborah — FAO
Eriksson, Arne — Sida
Horváth, Björn — Vi-skogen

Jeansson, Hélène — Kooperation Utan Gränser/SCC
Karlén, Lars — Sida
Karlsson-Lindqvist, Anna — Sida, RELMA
Kimanzu, Norman — Vi-skogen
Lindqvist, Hans — CGIAR/SLU
Suazo-Toro, Jorge — Vi-skogen
Tegbaru, Amare — Sida
Winberg, Rolf — Sida, RELMA

KYRGYZSTAN
Lauri, Bo — Swedesurvey AB
Lundgren, Elisabeth — Swedesurvey AB
Persson, Rutger — Scanagri Sweden AB

LAOS
Dahlberg, Bo — HIFAB
Ekelund, Stefan — HIFAB
Engström, Jan-Erik — HIFAB
Juville, Marc — Scanagri Sweden AB
Lann, Hans — SCC NATURA
Lindemalm, Frida — SCC NATURA
Mossberg, Carl-Gustav — SCC NATURA/ÅF-SMG
Mårdbrink, Kent — HIFAB
Overgoor, Paul — SCC NATURA/ÅF-SMG
Ratcliffe, Derek — SCC NATURA
Veselinovic, Zoran — HIFAB/ITTransport

LITHUANIA
Bartling, Mats — HIFAB

MACEDONIA
Lundin, Sten-Rune — Scanagri Sweden AB

MOZAMBIQUE
Blid, Nina — Africa Groups of Sweden
Lundqvist, Staffan — SWEDEC
Novela, Juliäo — Africa Groups of Sweden
Rein, Mikael — ORGUT
Salomonsson, Camilla — Sida
Siikanen, Petri — Africa Groups of Sweden

NAMIBIA
Rydén, Anders — Swedesurvey AB
Seger, Magnus — Africa Groups of Sweden
Seger Smedmark, Mary — Africa Groups of Sweden

NICARAGUA
Baumeister, Eduardo — ORGUT
Bayona, Luis — ORGUT
Büschting, Juana — ORGUT
Cuéllar, Guillermo — ORGUT
Cuéllar, Melinda — ORGUT
Hals, Anders — Forum Syd
Luna, Javier — ORGUT
Rizo, Elisabeth — ORGUT
Salcedo, Guillermo — ORGUT
Soto, Sandra — Svalorna
Sparrman, Gunnar — HIFAB/KM

NIGERIA
Röing, Kristina — CGIAR/SLU

PAKISTAN
Olsson, Per — Agriconsulting SpA

PARAGUAY
Westlund, Björn — HIFAB/Swedesurvey AB

PERU
Herrmann, Louise — World Bank
Marquardt, Kristina — CGIAR/SLU

POLAND
Hallgren, Hans — DeLaval

RUSSIA
Albornoz, José — Swedesurvey AB
Andersson, Jan-Olof — HIFAB
Olsson, Åke — Swedesurvey AB
Runnedahl, Hans — HIFAB
Strömgård, Nils — DeLaval

SOUTH AFRICA
Bergseng, Erik — DeLaval

SUDAN
Eriksson, Helena — FAO

SWITZERLAND
Valnicek, Danica — UNEP

TANZANIA
Aikas, Untu — ORGUT-Scanagri Finland
Andersson, Roger — ORGUT
Cedmert, Maria — Sida
Eilertsson, Bertil — HIFAB
Einarsson, Tomas — Vi-skogen
Eklöv, Ann-Britt — Forum Syd
Eklöv, Staffan — Forum Syd
Falk-Rehn, Harriet — ORGUT
Fidjeland, Linda — ORGUT
Jensen, Lenn — HIFAB
Jern, Ulla-Maj — ORGUT-Scanagri Finland
Johansson, Elisabeth — Vi-skogen
Johansson, Lena — Forum Syd
Kimanzu, Norman — Vi-skogen
Krook, Malin — Sida/FAO
Lager, Bo — Vi-skogen
Lindén, Monica — Vi-skogen
Murless, Peter — Forum Syd
Olsson, Karl-Henry — HIFAB
Rege, Sigurd — HIFAB
Sillevis, Robert — ORGUT
Tadesse, Maria — ORGUT
Tufvesson, Anna — HIFAB
Vukovich, Istvan — Forum Syd
Öckerman, Torbjörn — ORGUT

UGANDA
Abelin, Charlotte — UNICEF
Kimanzu, Norman — Vi-skogen
Lindgren, Ulf — Vi-skogen
von Mitzlaff, Ulrike — ORGUT-HIFAB
Settergren, Gunnar — HIFAB
Zetterqvist, Karin — ORGUT-HIFAB

UKRAINE
Bjerlestam, Sven — Scanagri Sweden AB
Rosenqvist, Bo — Scanagri Sweden AB
Svantesson, Per — DeLaval

USA
Dahlstedt, Jarl — DeLaval
Tropp, Håkan — UN HQ

VIETNAM
Fagerström, Minh Ha — CGIAR/SLU

Folkesson, Börje — ORGUT
Green, Hans — Scanagri Sweden AB
Hopkins, Thomas — ORGUT
Lindskog, Eva — SEI
Weir, Andrew — ORGUT

ZAMBIA
Anckar, Björn — HIFAB
Appell-Jonsson, Eva — ORGUT
Björck, Anders — HIFAB
Hoffner, Reidar — HIFAB/SGAB
Jannesson, Lars — HIFAB
Jonsson, Lars-Ove — ORGUT
Karle, Lotta — HIFAB/Indevelop
Lundqvist, Sören — Swedesurvey AB
Malmberg, Göran — HIFAB
Otteby, Olle — Terra Nova
Pettersson, Ulf — SEI
Pöppel, Emma — Swedesurvey AB
Robson, Trevor — HIFAB

ZIMBABWE
Doyle, Eddie — Forum Syd
Johansson, Bo — Kooperation Utan Gränser/SCC
Johansson, Göran — Kooperation Utan Gränser/SCC
Skagerfält, Joacim — Sida

B Sverige porto betalt

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