

PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

INTRODUCTION

The principle of participation – the active involvement and empowerment of stakeholders – is the core of all our work.

We have an international reputation in the use of participatory approaches in the following areas:

- ◆ project design and project management
- ◆ needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation
- ◆ teaching and training
- ◆ workshop facilitation
- ◆ research
- ◆ community development
- ◆ social development
- ◆ gender awareness
- ◆ conflict management

We have experience of applying participatory methods in different sectors / contexts:

- ◆ urban / rural / post-conflict / post-industrial renewal
- ◆ governance, peace-building, justice and citizenship
- ◆ environment, natural resources and sustainable livelihoods
- ◆ education and health

We use participatory methods with a range of stakeholder groups in UK and across the world:

- ◆ multi-level workshops, for example: public sector senior managers, practitioners and community members
- ◆ cross-sector partnerships
- ◆ bi-national / bilingual workshops
- ◆ youth, parents, senior citizens, disabled citizens, diverse ethnic backgrounds
- ◆ development professionals
- ◆ higher education staff and students

The participatory approach involves:

- ◆ sharing of knowledge and experience
- ◆ recognising and encompassing different perspectives
- ◆ working in teams on practical tasks
- ◆ the use of visualisation and analytical tools, imagination and drama
- ◆ an open-ended creative learning process
- ◆ the development of shared understanding and jointly owned plans or other products
- ◆ the capacity for reflection and self-assessment

PARTICIPATORY LEARNING AND ACTION

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is an approach for learning about and engaging with communities. It combines an ever-growing toolkit of participatory and visual methods with natural interviewing techniques and is intended to facilitate a process of collective analysis and learning.

The approach can be used in identifying needs, planning, monitoring or evaluating projects and programmes. Whilst a powerful consultation tool, it offers the opportunity to go beyond mere consultation and promote the active participation of communities in the issues and interventions that shape their lives. More traditional, extractive research tends to 'consult' communities and then take away the findings for analysis, with no assurance that they will be acted on. In contrast, PLA tools combine the sharing of insights with analysis and, as such, provide a catalyst for the community themselves to act on what is uncovered.

The approach has been used, traditionally, with rural communities in the developing world. There it has been found extremely effective in tapping into the unique perspectives of the rural poor, helping to unlock their ideas not only on the nature and causes of the issues that affect them, but also on realistic solutions. It enables local people to share their perceptions and identify, prioritise and appraise issues from their knowledge of local conditions. In the UK, PLA approaches are increasingly used in a range of community-based poverty-reduction and regeneration projects – wherever the active participation of the community is prioritised. By utilising visual methods and analytical tools, PLA enables all community members to participate, regardless of their age, ethnicity or literacy capabilities.

We have built on our PLA experience from South to North and West to East in a variety of contexts: we know it works!

EXPERIENCE OF USING PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

Here we provide a flavour of the variety of recent experience we have in the field.

Rural communities in Wales and Eire

For many years CIDT staff and course participants have carried out PLA work with rural communities. The learning derived from these activities has been used by the communities in drawing up rural, forestry and agriculture plans.

Nepal / UK Community Forestry Project (DFID)

A series of consultancy visits to carry out training needs analysis and design of a staff development programme for a research team. Training workshops were subsequently provided for Nepal Forestry Department staff on PLA techniques to strengthen their ability to facilitate local user groups to actively manage their forest resources on an equitable and sustainable basis.

Jigawa Enhancement of Wetlands Project, Nigeria (DFID)

During the inception phase of this project, we provided PLA training to support the development of stakeholder collaboration between civil servants, NGOs and primary beneficiaries (farmers, herders and fisher-folk). This included community baseline surveys exploring the links between of a) access rights and conflict management b) poverty, environment and livelihoods.

Jamaica All-Age Schools Project (DFID)

Participatory methods were used to involve parents and community members in the process of School Improvement Planning as part of this 3-year CIDT-managed project. This helped to underpin rural development through small income-generation projects, communal efforts to upgrade the school environment as well as parental support for raising standards of teaching and learning.

Helping Parents evaluate SureStart programmes (NHS)

SureStart is a UK government initiative that aims to increase the availability of childcare, improve health, education and emotional development for young children and support parents in employment aspirations. We continue to provide training for parents and SureStart staff in participatory methods for evaluating service provision.

Social Mitigation in Mine Restructuring in Romania (World Bank)

We provided training in participatory community profiling and community development for the World Bank / AZM Partnership Project, to help communities affected by mine closures to develop new livelihoods options and thus prevent conflict with the mining authorities.

Evaluating Community Safety and Crime Reduction (UK)

PLA training for community researchers and use of participatory approaches to assess people's perception of crime and the differences between perceptions and the actual recorded rates of crime as part of the development of an evaluation strategy for Wolverhampton City Council.

TRAINING IN PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

We offer a range of short courses in participatory approaches, which can be tailored to your particular needs and context. In addition, we offer Training of Trainers courses, providing you with the capacity to multiply your own learning.

- Facilitating Participatory Learning
- Participatory Project Planning
- Participatory Learning and Action / Participatory Rural Appraisal
- Creative Conflict Management
- Programme and Project Cycle Management
- People and Participation
- Facilitating Workshops
- Facilitator Training

[For more information, go to our Short Courses page](#)

Or email: cidt@wlv.ac.uk

PUBLICATIONS AND MATERIALS ON PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

United Kingdom

Baker, B., Dearden, P. and Thomas, S. (2003) [Consultation for a Change \(PDF\)](#) Conference Proceedings, Wolverhampton: CIDT/RRIOxfam/SPA

Baker, B. and McEntegart, T. (2003) [Community Perspectives on the Future Development of Breidden Forest \(PDF\)](#) Telford: CIDT

Daniel, P. (2001) [Developing a participatory approach to urban regeneration \(PDF\)](#) CIDT/CASR Seminar 24th May

Daniel, P. (2002) Using PLA in evaluating HAZ projects and programmes, Wolverhampton Health Action Zone www.healthactionzone.co.uk

Nigeria

Allen, C.R., Daniel, P. and McEntegart, T. (2003) [Conflict and Livelihoods in Northern Nigeria](#), CIDT [Reflections 1](#)

Brazil

Daniel, P., Dearden, P.N. and Lopes, S. (2003) [Widening Participation at the Universidade Federal da Region Amazônica \(UFRA\), Belém, Brazil \(PDF\)](#) presented at International Workshop on Teaching and Learning Participation in Higher Education held at Institute of Development Studies 2nd-4th April

Romania

SurrIDGE, M. (2003) [Community Profiling /Mapping \(PDF\)](#) from the Romania AZM / World Bank Partnership Project

Jamaica

Kennedy, D. (2003) [A Sense of Self Worth: Action Research in the Jamaica All Age Schools Project \(PDF\)](#) Kingston, Jamaica: MOEYC/CIDT (ISBN –904780-02-4)

Flett, P. (2003) [Roads to Success: A participatory approach to school improvement planning \(PDF\)](#) paper presented at Comparative and International Education Society Annual Conference, New Orleans, March 12th-16th

SurrIDGE, M. (2003) [Participation and Change: China and Jamaica \(PDF\)](#)