

BETWEEN TYRANNY AND UTOPIA: PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION FOR PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT

A Discussion Paper
By Linda Mayoux,
on behalf of The PARC

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BETWEEN TYRANNY AND UTOPIA: PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION FOR PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT

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[When Participatory Learning and Action is done well] “local people, and especially the poorer, enjoy the creative learning that comes from presenting their knowledge and their reality. They say they see things differently. It is not just that they share knowledge with outsiders. They themselves learn more than anyone knew alone. The process is then empowering, enabling them to analyse their world, and can lead into their planning and action. It is not the reality of the outsider which is transferred and imposed but theirs which is expressed, shared and strengthened. In this final reversal, it is more the reality of local people than that of outsider professionals that counts.

(Chambers 1994c and quoted in a number of donor agency Evaluation Manuals)

[Participatory monitoring and evaluation] is an added burden that the poor can ill afford to have to mine for information as well as for food, for shelter, for an income.

(Zimbabwean interviewee at a workshop on participatory monitoring and evaluation
Lloyd Laney, ITDG 2003)

INTRODUCTION

Participatory research and participatory action methodologies date back to at least the 1970s. They are now commonly used in project and programme-level planning, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment. Since the mid-1990s most multilateral and bilateral donors have produced Manuals on tools and methods for participatory research and impact assessment. There are an ever increasing number of websites with libraries and bibliographies on different types of participatory evaluation methodology. The most comprehensive and fully documented initiative was World Bank's Participatory Poverty Assessments which brought together subjective experiences from 60 countries into an overall analysis of poverty culminating in the 2000 World Bank Development Report 'Attacking Poverty'.

This interest in participatory evaluation has been based on a number of assertions:

- ***Rights argument:*** Participation, and particularly and explicitly participation of the poorest and most vulnerable participants is a human right and an inherent and indivisible component of pro-poor development strategies and empowerment.
- ***Relevance argument:*** Participation of the main stakeholders increases the relevance of the questions being asked to the realities of peoples' lives and policy processes.
- ***Accuracy argument:*** Use of participatory methods overcomes the limitations of fragmentary individual views to increase the reliability of the information collected and likelihood of identifying realistic recommendations.
- ***Effectiveness argument:*** Involvement of the main stakeholders in collecting information increases awareness of the issues and ownership of the evaluation

¹ This is an ongoing paper which I am hoping to update later in the year. I would be very grateful for any comments to l.mayoux@ntlworld.com.

process and hence likelihood of implementation of recommendations – the main stated aim of evaluations.

- **Process argument:** the participatory evaluation process, through building skills, capacities and networks is a contribution in itself to pro-poor development, civil society and empowerment.

At the same time, alongside the promotion of participatory methods has come increasing realisation, by proponents as well as sceptics, of the potential challenges which need to be addressed. The term Participatory Evaluation has been applied to a wide variety of types of participatory process, data collection methods and policy purposes. Although many of the Participatory Poverty Assessments of the 1990s did make a serious attempt to involve and engage poor people in the consultation process, these need to be built on rather than marginalised in current Poverty Reductions Strategy Papers (McGee and Norton 2000), and Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPS) (Brown et al 2001). This is partly due to lack of institutional commitment and capacity to implement effective pro-poor participatory processes. This lack of commitment is also due to scepticism about the possibilities of resolving not only the many shortcomings in existing participatory practice, but inherent challenges in participatory methods themselves. These challenges relate to the very concept of 'participation' and the ways in which existing inequalities in power and resources may be compounded in participatory processes initiated by development agencies. This potentially undermines both reliability of the data and the asserted benefits of the participatory process. Conventional approaches to evaluation generally ignore these challenges, but they become more visible and open to scrutiny in evaluation processes claiming the moral highground of empowerment.

This paper draws on experience of programme level participatory evaluation but focuses mainly on issues involved in macro-level participatory evaluation of policies explicitly aiming at **pro-poor development**. A full discussion of the underlying concept of pro-poor development² is outside the scope of this paper but the goals and policy levels underlying discussion here are summarised in Box 1.

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| BOX 1: CONCEPT OF PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT |
| GOALS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• pro-poor growth• increased wellbeing• human rights• environmental sustainability |
| POLICY LEVELS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• policies targeting the poor• policies targeting those who are not poor but can promote the above goals, |

² The relative importance of the different goals and levels is inevitably contentious, as are the concepts of growth, wellbeing, rights and sustainability. For quick access to sources underlying the approach taken here see the Pro-poor Development links on my website www.lindaswebs.info forthcoming April 2005.

- ***an enabling environment which ensures that a) policies are mainstreamed and the benefits of b) policies go disproportionately to the poor.***

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

- participation
- inclusion
- equity
- transparency
- accountability

The paper discusses the competing claims, theoretical and practical challenges and proposes ways forward in the light of recent and current innovations in participatory methods.

Part 1 Participatory Evaluation Revisited: Potential Contributions and Inherent Challenges gives an overview of participatory methods and recent critiques. It is argued that use of participatory methods cannot be seen as an end in itself. Evidence indicates that participatory evaluation has potentially significant contributions to make to increasing the relevance and reliability of evaluations, and to the pro-poor development process. At the same time participation also has potential costs as well as benefits for all concerned. Total participation by everyone at all stages of an evaluation is neither possible, nor desirable in terms of either empowerment or reliability of information. Importantly participation cannot be seen as an easy or cheap means for addressing (or circumventing) power relations, inequalities and conflicts of interest inherent in pro-poor development itself. Participatory processes do not substitute for institutional commitment to wider goals of pro-poor development which may or may not be key concerns of many participants. On the contrary, these goals need to determine the underlying and non-negotiable principles on which the participatory process is based.

Part 2 Between Tyranny and Utopia: A Strategic Approach argues that what is needed for participatory evaluation to achieve its potential contribution to pro-poor development within this broad framework is a much clearer and strategic commitment to:

- ensuring inclusion and informed participation of the ***most vulnerable stakeholders*** directly or indirectly affected by the particular issue concerned but who are commonly excluded from evaluation and decision-making processes – including many evaluations which claim to be participatory.
- including these stakeholders in those ***stages*** in evaluation where participation can be ***most directly empowering*** to them in terms of increasing their knowledge and their influence in decision-making processes. In some evaluations participation may be more important at the design, analysis and dissemination stages than the actual collection of information itself.

Beyond this, the most important issue in design of participatory evaluations is to ensure collection of reliable information so that the participatory and inclusive process of analysis and dissemination leads to implementation of effective pro-poor policies. Effectively addressing the simultaneous challenges of inclusion, accuracy and effectiveness requires facilitation skill and innovation in tools and processes.

Part 3: Participatory Evaluation for ProPoor Development: Towards a sustainable strategy argues that although any one single evaluation cannot resolve all the tensions and trade-offs inherent in pro-poor development, it can make a contribution as part of an ongoing multistakeholder learning process to:

- building up capacities and structures for ongoing representation of poor women and men and other vulnerable people in the policy making process.
- facilitating direct interaction between powerful stakeholders and poor people in order to break down the barriers of complacency, misinformation and prejudice which are in themselves key causes of poverty.

As a strategic process, building up of networks, partnerships and innovations through successive and cumulative participatory evaluations can not only progressively increase the cost-effectiveness of evaluations over time, but also significantly contribute to the effectiveness of the development interventions being evaluated. Achieving this longer term goal will require not only much greater institutional awareness and capacity to implement effective participatory evaluation but also greater commitment to pro-poor development itself.

PART 1: PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION REVISITED: POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND INHERENT CHALLENGES

'Participation' in the sense of 'taking part' in collective forms of action and decision-making at some level and between some individuals is an inherent part of all social life. 'Participatory development' in the sense of mobilisation of existing social networks and groups for 'the greater good' is also nothing new. Even slaves 'participated' in the building of ancient and recent empires. Many people 'participated' in the Nazi rebuilding of Germany and in ethnic cleansing of minority groups. All social research, including development policy evaluation, is in some senses participatory. Even scientific environmental or technology evaluation involves at least one investigator talking to at least one other person to obtain information about the issue concerned and reporting to at least one other person.

The issue for participatory evaluation which aims to make a significant contribution to pro-poor development policy is not therefore the existence of 'participation' itself but:

- **WHY** participation is being advocated
- **WHO** is participating
- **WHEN** they are participating
- **HOW** they are participating
- **WHO BENEFITS** from the participatory evaluation process
- **WHO BENEFITS** from the outcomes.

It is argued here that the goal of participatory evaluation needs to be clearly on this last issue ie ensuring that the poorest and most vulnerable people benefit most from the outcomes of the evaluation process. It is this concern which should determine decisions about who participates, how and when and not any inherent commitment to 'as much participation by as many and at any cost'. It is also crucial that these people should benefit directly and as far as possible from the time and energy they give to the evaluation process and not treated as unpaid data givers of information demanded by outsiders.

1.1: PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION AND PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT: EXAMPLES AND CONTRIBUTION

Participatory evaluation has its roots in organizational, research and planning methodologies developed in the 1970s as part of the increasing emphasis on popular participation in development (See details and references in Appendix 1). These methodologies include particularly:

- the techniques for community conscientisation and mobilisation developed under the various names of '**Activist Participatory Research (APR) and Participatory Action Research (PAR)**
- the development of diagrams and oral research techniques which originated in farming systems research and anthropology which became known as **Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)**, then **Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)** and more recently **Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)**.

These methodological developments were paralleled by discussions of 'deliberative democracy' and 'democratic evaluation' in political theory. By the end of the 1980s a focus on multistakeholder negotiation and community participation had become established elements in 'fourth generation evaluation' (Guba and Lincoln 1989).

In the 1990s methodological innovation accelerated at all levels: in peoples' movements, NGOs, research institutes and donor agencies. The focus on community-based participatory planning, including evaluation of existing policies, was taken further in Appreciative Inquiry and 'DIPs' (Deliberative and Inclusionary processes). NGOs experimented and innovated with systems of internal participatory monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.³ The World Bank began to emphasise the need for participatory consultations in the form of Beneficiary Assessment and use of participatory methods generally. These developments were paralleled in most other multilateral and bilateral aid agencies, many of whom published Manuals on participation and participatory methods⁴. As a somewhat separate development, Empowerment Evaluation looked at ways of facilitating people to conduct their own evaluations as individuals as well as groups. The Participatory Action Learning System (PALS) currently being developed by the author with a small network of NGOs is developing diagram Tools to enable non-literate people to collect their own information for their own needs as individuals and groups which will then feed into programme and policy evaluation and community advocacy.

The term participatory evaluation is currently applied to a wide range of different approaches and processes. The best documented and widely known are the Participatory Poverty Assessments by the World Bank at the end of the 1990s⁵. Other examples of processes involving participatory policy evaluation are given in Box 2. As can be seen these vary widely in:

- the actual purpose of the evaluation and who initiates it
- who is participating and how participants are selected
- stages in evaluation where participation occurs
- the tools and processes involved
- ways in which evaluation is linked to decision-making.

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| BOX 2: PARTICIPATORY POLICY EVALUATION: SOME EXAMPLES |
| SHRAMSAKTI INDIA 1988 |
| There were widespread participatory consultations in the late 1980s between NGOs, their women members and a receptive government administration to identify policies for women informal sector workers. Unfortunately this initiative was eclipsed by the subsequent change of government, but organizations like Self-Employed Women's Association have also been involved in WIEGO below. (Shramsakti 1998) |

³ For history and general overviews of issues in participatory monitoring and evaluation see Chambers 1994a,b,c and Estrella et al eds 1998. For particular examples see Action Aid's Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS Action Aid 2000) and the Internal Learning System being developed in Micro-finance Institutions in India and Bangladesh (Noponen 2005).

⁴ For example FAO's Participatory Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation (PAME) of the early 1990s (D'Arcy Case 1990); World Bank 1995; UNDP 1996; 1997; USAID 1996. See also GTZ's Participatory Impact Monitoring (PIM) www.GTZ.org.

⁵ For findings see Narayan, D., R. Chambers, et al. (2000); Narayan, D. and P. Petesch (2002) and for critical overviews of the Participatory Poverty Assessments in different countries see Booth et al (1998) and Brocklesby and Holland (1998).

WIEGO (WIEGO (WOMEN IN INFORMAL ECONOMY: MOBILISING AND ORGANISING))

WIEGO was formed in 1997 as a worldwide network of institutions and individuals concerned with improving the status of women informal economy. It was established by individuals from Self Employed Women's Association, India, researchers from Harvard University and UNIFEM. It aims to promote better statistics, research, programmes and policies in support of women in the informal economy. As such it conducts participatory evaluations of a range of policies affecting women informal sector workers, particularly urban policies, global markets and social protection, using participatory methods, national statistics and research⁶.

ANANDI AREA NETWORKING MELAS INDIA

ANANDI (Area Networking and Development Initiatives)⁷ is an Indian NGO working with the poorest women of the tribal and other marginalised communities in Gujarat to organize for collective action and gender advocacy. Since 1999 ANANDI and other partner organizations have been facilitating lateral learning through holding of area networking 'mela' events or fairs. These events have brought together anything from 300 to 700 women's representatives from the local groups to discuss issues, experiences and strategies in relation to many different issues and government policies: panchayat reform, cultural, ethnic and caste issues, basic needs and food security. The melas themselves are a focus for the ongoing process of reflection and action at mandal level. Since 2003 ANANDI has been adapting some of the PALS tools (See Appendix 1) for group-level planning and assessment to feed into the mela process.

PRAJATEERPU INDIA

A six day exercise in deliberative democracy in Andhra Pradesh, India June-July 2001. It brought together purposively selected small and marginal farmers and landless people, of whom two thirds were women, to evaluate alternative approaches for the State Government's Vision 2020 programme: modernised agriculture based on biotechnology, export-based cash cropping based on organic agriculture and localised food systems. It aimed to give participants as much information as possible on which to base their decisions through video scenario presentations by promoters of the three scenarios, witnesses and an independent oversight panel that ensured the process was fair and not captured by any interest group.⁸

PEOPLE'S BUDGETS, BRAZIL AND PERU

Municipal governments elected to power in several Brazilian cities in the 1990s introduced a participatory budget to allow the views and priorities of citizens to be incorporated in the design of annual budgets and public spending priorities. Participation is usually promoted by a team selected from the municipality. The team has direct contacts with the population and also carries out information campaigns to raise the awareness of citizens about their right to participate in the design of the budget. The team organises meetings in the different neighbourhoods to facilitate people selection of their own development priorities and representatives. The citizens' delegates are included in the process of budget design and approval in order to guarantee that the demands of the localities/neighbourhoods are taken into account. The methodology for incorporating participation into the budget planning is evaluated and updated every year. The government invest in projects which communities have identified as a priority needs. Given the citizen's right to have

⁶ www.wiego.org

⁷ www.anandiindia.org

⁸ PLA Notes 40 and 46

information make demands on the State, government agencies have to consider the feasibility of any request. If the citizen request is judged non feasible, the State agency has to demonstrate why this is so (Pimbert 2001). Similar initiatives have also been started in Peru (Hordijk 2002).

POVERTY RESOURCE MONITORING UGANDA

Kabarole Research and Resource Centre in Uganda has been facilitating a participatory process since December 2003 to monitor the effectiveness of pro-poor policies under Poverty Eradication Action Plan: Human development, governance, production, competitiveness and incomes, economic management and security, conflict resolution and disaster management. PALS tools (See Appendix 1) are used in village meetings for planning and monitoring government programmes, civil society interventions and their own community initiatives and draw action plans or build up recommendations that can be integrated in the development plans at parish and sub county levels.

HIV/AIDS COLLABORATIVE NGO STUDY

This was a longitudinal collaborative study between 1993 and 1996 involving 19 Southern NGOs and 13 UK-based international NGOs. It was funded by ODA-UK to assess the effectiveness of NGO-implemented HIV/AIDS-related activities and to document appropriate response and programmes. It also aimed to establish new models on methodologies for collaborative working. Methodologies in the field varied and included both staff research and external research. Many of the NGOs used participatory methods. (UK NGO AIDS Consortium 1996).

At one end of a 'grassroots' participatory spectrum are lobbying and advocacy processes involving high levels of citizen participation in 'peoples' budgets', people's juries, advocacy and lobbying for the informal sector, women's empowerment and food security. Although these processes are in some cases funded by donor agencies and/or governments, the main driving force and facilitating agents are NGOs promoting participatory development and policy critique. In many cases this has meant that actual policy change has often been less than hoped for, even if the evaluation itself produced reliable evidence. The term 'participatory evaluation' has also been applied to multi-stakeholder approaches set up by donors to evaluate their own policies and directly linked to decision making. In some cases participation has been limited to a few meetings of 'key stakeholders' defined as 'experts' and policy-makers to design conventional surveys which are then disseminated back to the same key stakeholders⁹.

There are numerous cases where participatory methods have been able to rapidly and reliably collect quantitative information, in some cases much more reliably than through conventional methods (See references in Mayoux and Chambers 2005). Some programme-level participatory processes have made significant contributions to policy change. Participatory methods have been used to investigate very sensitive issues like political and sexual violence. These are often difficult to evaluate through conventional methods and require follow-up to ensure that those giving information are not made more vulnerable (Moser and Holland 1998; Mayoux and ANANDI 2005). Where people have been facilitated to keep individual diaries these have been valued opportunities to bring about changes in their lives and for other forms of

⁹ For example the Education Impact Evaluations in McKay and Treffgarne exclude children and parents from the 'exhaustive stakeholder analyses'. (McKay and Treffgarne eds 1999).

lobbying outside the programme itself (Noponen 2005). PALS processes are also being continued by local groups and individuals themselves for their own purposes, including enterprise planning and increasing social and economic inclusion in groups (Mayoux and ANANDI 2005 and ongoing communications).

At the macro-level participatory planning and policy processes involving civil society organizations and movements have demonstrated that processes like the Shramsakti consultations, WIEGO, Peoples' Budgets and ANANDI's melas can lead to realisable and effective policies¹⁰. It is generally agreed that the World Bank Participatory Poverty Assessment process made a number of important contributions to understandings of poverty, understanding differences between poor people, stakeholder communication and policy changes. In particular it challenged the prevailing prioritisation of cash income concerns and marginalisation of gender issues (See Box 3). A DFID review of the Participatory Poverty Assessments concluded that:

Cumulative evidence from this review shows that the poor can provide analyses of the complex states of poverty and furthermore analyse policy solutions...In all the PPAs reviewed the poor showed an impressive ability to identify differences and suggest specific and realistic reforms tailored to their situation. These types of specificities highlight the need for policymakers and sector planners to listen carefully to the voices of the poor. The complexities and multifaceted nature of their lives are difficult to understand without engaging in continuous dialogue. If policymakers wish their services to be accessible and relevant it is clear the demands of messages of the poor are paramount.

(Brocklesby and Holland 1998 pp25-26).

BOX 3: PARTICIPATORY POVERTY ASSESSMENT: CONTRIBUTIONS OF PARTICIPATORY METHODS

HIGHLIGHTING CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF POVERTY

Rural conceptualizations of poverty likely to be conceived of in terms of

- *Community level:* Physical isolation, Access to safe water, Quality of land, Social capital
- *Individual level:* Ascribed attributes: gender (particularly widows, single mothers and to a lesser extent female heads of household often perceived as the poorest); age with the elderly being very poor; childlessness; health status and disability; Hunger and nutrition; Access to productive land; Access to productive assets like livestock; Access to health and education.

Urban conceptualizations more likely to be individual in terms of Individual ascribed status, particularly gender; Income and employment; Access to social and economic infrastructure

Common issues: seasonality, corruption, political exclusion, discrimination in access to health and education services

¹⁰ For numerous examples of DIPs, including Peoples' Budgets and Prajateerpu see papers in PLA Notes volumes October 1996; February and June 2002 and February 2003.

HIGHLIGHTING DIFFERENCE

The PPAs highlighted a number of womens' concerns to be fed into policy:

- relationship between polygamy and poverty
- importance of women's tenancy rights
- problems of increasing violence and conflict in the home

IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATION

A key contribution to the subsequent policy dialogue was the awareness-raising function of the participatory techniques which in many cases was the first real direct exposure which some senior policy makers had had to the problems of poverty.

POLICY CHANGES

These varied depending on issues identified and the adequacy or otherwise of structures for feeding the findings into the policy-making process. The changes included:

- greater emphasis on physical infrastructure like roads
- greater emphasis on public services and attitudes of public service providers
- greater attention to exposing and discussing corruption
- greater emphasis on gender issues.

Sources: Brocklesby and Holland 1998; Holland and Blackburn eds 1998 particularly papers by Robb and Norton.

1.2: PARTICIPATION AS TYRANNY? REALITIES AND CHALLENGES

At the same time there are undoubtedly many challenges to be addressed by participatory evaluation. Since the mid-1990s, parallel to the rapid expansion of participatory methods, have been a series of critiques of both practice and the underlying theoretical underpinnings of these methods. These critiques have come not only from sceptics, but also proponents and practitioners of participatory methods in relation to key areas like poverty analysis, gender and empowerment (Shah and Shah 1995; Guijt and Shah eds 1998; Mayoux 1995 and Johnson and Mayoux 1998). Participatory methods have in many cases been a victim of their own success. Even key promoters admit that since the 1990s with rapid spread and heavy demand, many claimed to be PRA trainers and practitioners who lacked experience, and whose behaviour and attitudes were inappropriate. Other problems were caused by the assumption that poor people would be willing to give up time and energy to poorly-funded participatory research determined by outside agendas. However shortcomings in practice are due not only to 'bad practice' but also inherent tensions (and some would say insuperable limitations) in the underlying understandings of participation and the ways in which it has been promoted by development agencies¹¹.

Firstly there will always and inevitably be questions about 'who speaks for whom' and 'whose voice should prevail and why'. Many of the theoretical critiques of participatory development have their roots in much earlier debates about the nature

¹¹ See particularly Mosse 1994; Kapoor 2002; Cleaver 1999; Cooke and Kothari eds 2001; DeStefano and Ryan eds 2004.

of democracy and political systems for representation. Participatory processes, even those initiated from the 'bottom-up' are not necessarily either inclusive or egalitarian. The extensive literature on People's Movements has shown how they frequently exclude or marginalise rather than include or privilege the very poor, women and other disadvantaged groups. Outsiders may further reinforce these existing inequalities because of their ignorance of local inequalities and/or their dependence on these power structures to gain access to 'communities'.

Secondly the nature of power and the ways in which information is disseminated mean that there are inevitably many things local people do not know – that is one of the causes of poverty. Local people, including extremely poor and non-literate people, undoubtedly know many things essential for pro-poor planning. It is essential that local views, particularly those of the poorest and most disadvantaged, are both listened to and prioritised in any strategy for pro-poor development. Participatory processes and tools can be extremely effective in bringing together fragmentary individual knowledge into a more complete 'jigsaw' of information. However participatory evaluations do not automatically produce reliable information. To assume that local knowledge and understandings are automatically more valid than other forms of knowledge is at best patronising and at worst can lead to serious mistakes (see the example of HIV/AIDS below). Poor people like everyone else also need to be provided with information in order to make informed contributions to participatory processes.

ARE THE PEOPLE ALWAYS RIGHT? SOME PITFALLS IN GRASSROOTS LEARNING

One very active REFLECT¹² literacy group involved in the extension of PALS¹³ in Kabarole Research and Resource Centre had done a thorough community mapping. They had also done body mapping as part of their identification of health problems. Linking the two processes of investigation they had identified two major community problems:

- HIV/AIDS and male sexual activity in particular.
- Population pressure within the village leading to families, including young people, living very closely together.

This led them to conclude that close proximity of young people was somehow related to spread of HIV/AIDS. The solution they identified was to persuade young men to build their houses outside the village or to move to urban areas, despite the dangers of them contracting or spreading HIV/AIDS there. Questions of gender inequality, women's control over their own bodies and reasons for female sexual activity and ways these could be addressed were not raised. This may have been partly because of participation of some older men in the group, some of whom were related to some of the young women.

Source: Mayoux fieldnotes Uganda 2002

¹² REgenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques. A methodology combining adult literacy with participatory diagram techniques developed by Action Aid. For more details see www.reflect.org

¹³ PALS is a Participatory Action Learning System. For further information see Appendix and the PALS section on www.lindaswebs.info

Thirdly power relations during the participatory consultation itself and also pervading the context in which it takes place, affect what people say and how they say it, to whom and under what circumstances.¹⁴ Even when very poor women and men attend meetings they do not necessarily participate in discussions or influence the outcomes because of the ways meetings are conducted. It may be very difficult for groups themselves to initiate discussion of sensitive issues, even if they are highly relevant. Underlying inequalities and vulnerability may not be seen as up for discussion. To be seen discussing such issues publicly and openly in a participatory process may make groups and individuals vulnerable to various forms of discrimination and even violence. Where the main outputs from participatory exercises are diagrams representing 'community consensus' then this process may be highly misleading in the consensus represented and positively disempowering for minority views.

EXTERNAL RAISING OF SENSITIVE ISSUES IN ANANDI

In the preparatory phase for the first mela (annual event) there was a lot of disagreement among the NGOs as to whether untouchability, alcoholism and violence against women should be listed as topics for discussion. They had not come up in the list of topics submitted by the groups. After much discussion, it was felt that only if the issues were explicitly raised would the extent of these problems amongst the groups be clear. Although women hardly ever articulated these social problems in the group meetings, in the large gathering of the mela a large number of groups identified violence against women, alcoholism and untouchability as priority concerns. During the 2003 Participatory Review however participatory tools proved very effective in obtaining reliable information on incidence and types of domestic violence and providing a space for open discussion of ways forward. The information obtained was in many ways quite shocking in indicating the extent of the violence, but would not have emerged without external facilitation.

Source: Mayoux and ANANDI 2005

Fourthly participatory methods can be as extractive as conventional methods, taking peoples' time and raising expectations with no visible benefit for those involved (See title quote no 2). Where information is neither representative nor reliable, it is unlikely to produce policy changes which benefit poor people. The participatory process, through giving the illusion and using the rhetoric of empowerment may disempower and create tensions and vulnerabilities which make people worse off. These challenges are particularly acute in the move to scale and where participatory evaluations are one-off exercises without sufficient information, time and resources for people to participate meaningfully.

Finally although participatory methods, when well-facilitated as part of an ongoing process, are a key part of any reliable evaluation, one-off participatory consultations cannot be seen as a substitute for in-depth research or for more strategic policies to address poverty, inequality and empowerment. Reference to 'cultural sensitivity' and the need for 'community participation' are often cited as reasons for not addressing gender issues even where the organizations or individuals concerned ever having conducted any serious participatory assessment of what gender concerns women or

¹⁴ See eg Mosse 1994. The gender dimensions of this have been a particular cause for concern See papers in Guijt and Shah eds 1998.

men may have (Mayoux 1995; Guijt and Shah eds 1998). A key concern in critiques of participatory methods from the empowerment/rights perspective has been the ways in which development agencies (from multilateral agencies to NGOs) and politicians have used the rhetoric of participation and participatory development to mask processes in which participation is extremely superficial and/or unequal and/or manipulated to support their own ends.¹⁵

PART 2: BETWEEN TYRANNY AND UTOPIA: A STRATEGIC APPROACH

However, although these 'participatory challenges' need to be constantly analysed and addressed, they do not constitute a basis for rejecting participatory development itself. Nor do they negate the need for participatory evaluation as part of this development process. Pro-poor development is inherently a complex process whereby addressing different dimensions of poverty may involve trade-offs for individuals, differences and conflicts of interest between different groups of poor people as well as the poor and the better-off. Effective pro-poor policy and change will inevitably need to directly address issues of power and inequality. Participatory evaluation attempts to grapple with these issues and address them, unlike conventional forms of evaluation which generally ignore them, assuming 'external expert objectivity'.

What characterises participatory evaluation as understood here are:

- ***Pro-poor development goal***
- ***Participatory process***
- ***Accessible tools***
- ***Capacity Building and Sustainable Learning***

The goal of pro-poor development underlies the design of the participatory processes and tools and the focus of capacity building and sustainable learning. As discussed in what follows, the ways in which the participatory challenges can be addressed will depend on the specific purpose of the evaluation, the issues being evaluated, context and capacities of the various interests involved.

BOX 4: PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION FOR PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT: KEY FEATURES

PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT GOAL

- prioritising the interests of the poor and disadvantaged
- changing attitudes and behaviour of powerful stakeholders

¹⁵ Mosse 2001; Cooke and Kothari eds 2001; DeStefano and Ryan eds 2004; Cleaver 1989; Kapoor 2002.

- linking reliable participatory investigation to effective participatory pro-poor decision-making and policy
- evaluation process itself to contribute to capacity and network building

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

- focus group discussions
- participatory multi-stakeholder workshops
- community-led research
- individual reflection and investigation
- participant observation and ‘immersion’

ACCESSIBLE TOOLS

- diagram tools like maps, matrices, circles, diamonds, road journeys, calendars
- oral methodologies
- role play
- visual media like photography and video

SUSTAINABLE LEARNING

- ongoing process rather than one-off event
- building capacity and structures for ongoing pro-poor accountability

2.1: WHY PARTICIPATION? EVALUATION FOR PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT

Early discussions of participatory development distinguished between:

- **‘bottom-up’ participation as an end in itself** on the assumption that participation was inherently empowering and that local level participation would develop skills and capacities for broader political participation and democracy – roughly corresponding to the rights and process arguments above. Various ‘participation ladders’ were proposed representing a progression from manipulation/contribution/ exploitation up to total control – this last being the ideal goal in terms of empowerment¹⁶.
- **‘top-down’ participation as a means** to more effective programmes: better responsiveness to needs of target population and context; increasing sustainability because of greater commitment to and identification with projects, roughly corresponding to the relevance, reliability and effectiveness arguments above. However in the context of decreasing aid budgets and cost-cutting participation often amounted to little more than mobilising popular effort to reduce programme costs¹⁷.

¹⁶ For overviews of these early debates see eg Nelson and Wright eds 1995.

¹⁷ This has been particularly evident in areas like micro-finance. For a critique of the ways concepts of participation and social capital have been integrated into financial sustainability arguments see Mayoux 2001.

The framework proposed here attempts to bridge the dichotomy between the means and ends arguments through putting pro-poor development (rather than cost-efficiency) as the central goal, and strategically designing the participatory process to maximise, rather than simply assume, empowerment outcomes for the most vulnerable (See Figure 1).

It cannot be assumed that 'more participation by everyone at all stages' is necessarily the best way forward either in terms of empowerment or reliability. Participation in evaluations may be empowering in various ways: in terms of increased understanding of the issues, improved understanding between different groups in communities and society, equitable participation in the analysis and conclusions reached, better networks for future investigations. It may also be necessary for effective pro-poor programmes. Nevertheless there are potential costs as well as benefits for all involved in terms of time and resources (Eyben and Ladbury, 1995). Very poor people like, and often more than, everyone else have many claims on their time, resources and energy. They have much to lose from badly designed policies and processes and/or where making their voices publicly known may have adverse repercussions. Even if it is their interests which are to be clearly prioritised it is important to ensure that their time, resources and energy are clearly focused on those issues and areas where their participation is most likely to lead to realisable benefits for them.

Rather than assuming any automatic benefits from participation the approach proposed here takes a much more critical approach, assessing the balance of anticipated costs and benefits for participants in terms of both pro-poor development policy outcomes and the evaluation process. As discussed below, this means taking a much more strategic approach to:

- ***who participates***: which stakeholders are targeted and whose voices are prioritised
- ***how participation is facilitated***: which particular methods are used at what levels
- ***when participation takes place***: at which stages of the evaluation process.

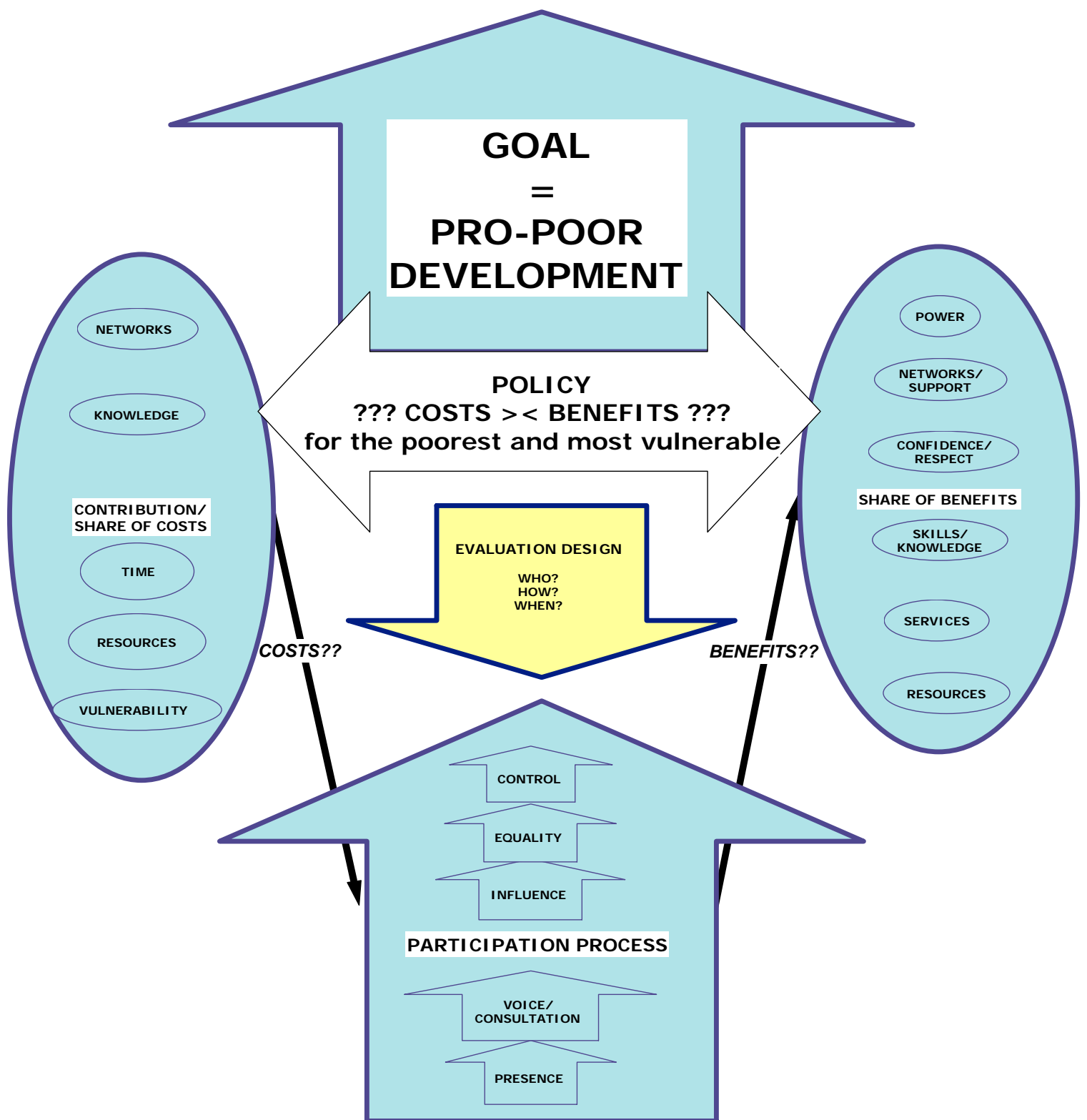


FIGURE 1: Framework for Participatory Evaluation

2.2: WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE? FROM STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS TO EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION

Stakeholder analysis is now an established part of most evaluations, including participatory evaluations¹⁸. Most participatory manuals include guidelines for stakeholder analysis, generally using Venn or Circle diagrams or matrices. These commonly distinguish between:

- Primary stakeholders
- Secondary stakeholders
- Key stakeholders

However this terminology is somewhat confusing. The ways in which these terms have been interpreted in practice and the degree to which stakeholder analysis has analysed inequalities and power relations have been very variable. It is common in 'multi-stakeholder processes' to focus on 'key' powerful stakeholders at the top, each separately represented even as individuals (eg heads of different enterprise sectors) while very distinct 'primary' community or producer interests at the bottom are conflated into large stakeholder groups and represented by only a few organization leaders who may or may not be representative. The poorest and most vulnerable stakeholders are often relegated to 'secondary' stakeholders – because they are excluded altogether from programmes which affect them and/or are often the most likely to drop or be forced out and seen as less important even if they may be seriously adversely affected. Where resources for the evaluation are tight, they are often excluded all together. These 'secondary' stakeholders, and less vocal 'primary' stakeholders are often deemed too numerous and difficult to reach through the channels immediately available to the evaluators.

Stakeholder analysis can never be an 'objective science'. The numbers of individuals directly or indirectly affected by most policies being evaluated is potentially extremely large, and some people are inevitably left out. At the beginning of an evaluation it is often unclear which stakeholder categories are most relevant for the issues concerned. Judgements based on imperfect information will inevitably need to be made about:

- Who of these many individuals each with multiple interests and identities should be grouped with whom as a 'stakeholder category' and what the most important dividing lines are: eg by gender, age, income level, ethnicity, economic activity, health status etc.
- The criteria on which to base prioritisation of the interests of one set of stakeholder category over another and how they can or should be represented in terms of numbers and power in the participatory process.
- What share of the evaluation budget/resources/energies can or should be allocated to ensuring meaningful and informed representation of stakeholders takes place.

However, stakeholder analysis can be more strategic in its identification the specific potential roles of different stakeholders at different stages of the evaluation. This would enable the resources and time available for the evaluation to be more effectively targeted and allow more effective representation of the currently excluded vulnerable stakeholders. Following the logic of the goal of pro-poor development, in

¹⁸ See eg DFID 1995; World Bank 2002; USAID 1996.

the view of the author, stakeholders can be most usefully differentiated¹⁹ according to:

- their relative power and hence priority status for policy outcomes
- their potential role in ensuring the reliability of the evaluation and implementation of the recommendations.

In Box 5 a distinction is suggested between five broad stakeholder categories with potentially different roles in different stages of an evaluation depending on the issue, context and local capacity:

- **Vulnerable stakeholders** are those who are already particularly vulnerable and who are likely to be affected directly or indirectly by the policies being evaluated, or by exclusion from those policies. These are the stakeholders whose interests must be clearly prioritised in the pro-poor policy outcomes and throughout the evaluation process. One of the principal barriers to inclusion of vulnerable stakeholders, apart from the prejudice of evaluators and policy makers and opposition from powerful stakeholders, are problems of how these often 'majority stakeholders' can be fairly represented. The communication skills and networks between vulnerable stakeholders may need to be progressively understood and built up.
- **Powerful stakeholders** are those who have power within the existing situation and who may be affected by the policies. They are likely to be key players in the effectiveness of the implementation of any recommendations. Some may be very supportive of change, either because there are substantial possibilities of 'win-win' outcomes, or because they have a commitment to broader social goals or equity and poverty reduction. They may also have very good networks and resources for reaching the vulnerable stakeholders. Others may be strong opponents of change and may need to be explicitly excluded or carefully managed so that they do not dominate the process for their own ends.
- **Other affected stakeholders** are those who are likely to be directly or indirectly affected by the policy but who are neither very vulnerable nor powerful.
- **Implementing stakeholders:** those who will be crucial as implementers of policies and recommendations and who therefore must be involved. These are the people most commonly involved in multi-stakeholder policy consultations. They may or may not have intimate knowledge of the situation, needs and aspirations of vulnerable stakeholders.
- **Knowledgeable stakeholders** are those essential to ensuring reliability of particular types of information – these may be vulnerable stakeholders, powerful stakeholders, other affected stakeholders or implementing stakeholders or other independent informants. But it is important to value and balance the different types of knowledge from vulnerable stakeholders as well as the powerful and policy makers.

Within each of these broad categories there are likely to be significant lines of difference eg by gender, age, income level, ethnicity, economic activity, health status etc. and by specific interests in the particular issue. There may also be crosscutting lines of common interest. Value judgements will inevitably need to be made about

¹⁹ The treatment here draws on the much more strategic treatment of stakeholder analysis in the literature on advocacy, value chains analysis and critiques of stakeholder theory in business management. See particularly Veneklasen and Miller 2002, McCormick and Schmitz (2001), Mayoux 2003c and Simanis 2004.

the boundaries of, and dividing line between vulnerable, powerful and other affected stakeholders. Value judgements will also need to be made about how far the potentially conflicting interests of different groups of vulnerable stakeholders, and also other affected and powerful stakeholders can or should be addressed both in policy outcomes and the evaluation process itself. Stakeholder analysis should be seen as an iterative and cumulative process. Understanding of the dynamics of power and difference within and between stakeholder groups, and the best ways in which the different interests can be represented and negotiated, will need to be continually refined as the evaluation progresses.

A particular challenge is how vulnerable stakeholders can or should be represented. Given the inevitable budget and resource constraints in any one evaluation, and the potential costs for participants themselves, it is neither possible nor desirable to include all vulnerable stakeholders as individuals. The very nature of poverty means vulnerable stakeholders have less access to and understanding of certain key types of knowledge which may be required. They are also less accessible to facilitators, evaluators and implementing stakeholders because of language, geography and also often lack of trust of outsiders. At the same time the inevitability of excluding some voices and the potential difficulties and costs should not be a reason for excluding vulnerable groups from the participatory process altogether. Following detailed stakeholder analysis in relation to the issue under evaluation particular locations, organizations and communities and individuals can be identified on whom to focus at specific stages of the evaluation as discussed below.

BOX 5: STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS FOR PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT: KEY QUESTIONS

VULNERABLE STAKEHOLDERS

- Of the intended beneficiaries who are likely to be the most vulnerable and disadvantaged whose interests need to be protected?
- Of those indirectly affected eg women, children in the same households, poorer people in the same communities and markets?
- Are any vulnerable groups likely to be indirectly affected through their exclusion from consideration? (eg gender-blind policies)
- How far and in what ways do the vulnerable stakeholders have common interests? conflicts of interest? eg by gender, age, income level, ethnicity, economic activity, health status etc.
- How can these different interests be represented in the evaluation process? By whom?

POWERFUL STAKEHOLDERS

- Of those affected who are the powerful stakeholders?
- Are there any people indirectly affected who are likely to affect the decision-making and implementation process? People in the same households, communities, markets at local level?
- Of these which stakeholders are likely to be key promoters of pro-poor change and important resources for the evaluation?

- Which stakeholders are likely to oppose pro-poor change and may need to be accommodated in other ways?

OTHER AFFECTED STAKEHOLDERS

- Who else is likely to be affected directly or indirectly?
- What should be their role in the evaluation?

IMPLEMENTING STAKEHOLDERS

- Who are the main policy makers? Who are the main implementers?
- Do they have a personal stake in the issues or are they independent stakeholders? How might this affect their role in the evaluation?

KNOWLEDGABLE STAKEHOLDERS

- Which of the vulnerable stakeholders are most likely to be able to give reliable information?
- Which of the implementing stakeholders are most likely to be able to give reliable information?
- Do any of the other stakeholders have key information?
- Are there any other independent stakeholders already collecting the information or who could/should be involved?

AT ALL STAGES

- On what basis have particular stakeholders been grouped together? What are the potential lines of difference and conflict of interest within these? How can these be accommodated and represented?
- What are the different common or conflicting interests between the stakeholder groups? How can or should these be accommodated in terms of numerical representation and influence?
- Have the perspectives of the poorest and most vulnerable been included in the stakeholder analysis? Is the outcome in terms of numerical representation and structures equitable? Who is excluded? Is this justified or does it merely constitute discrimination and prejudice?
- What about the other affected stakeholders? The powerful stakeholders? How far and in what ways can or should their interests be accommodated?
- Who is ultimately making these decisions? On what principles? In whose interests?

2.3: HOW SHOULD THEY PARTICIPATE? ACCESSIBLE TOOLS AND PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

Ensuring informed and meaningful representation of vulnerable stakeholders is as much a challenge for participatory methods as conventional quantitative and qualitative methods, and in some ways more so. It cannot be assumed that conducting a few participatory exercises in 'communities' will necessarily lead to equitable and meaningful representation of vulnerable stakeholders. Giving poor people a voice requires focused attention to ways in which participatory methods are used to ensure that:

- The right voices are actually present (presence)
- Those voices can speak (consultation)
- Those voices are heard (influence)
- Those voices are listened to (equity and control)

There are now many Manuals on participatory tools and methods giving detailed discussion of the practicalities of implementing participatory investigations in different contexts and for different purposes. Many of these explicitly discuss poverty and social inclusion issues. This material is not replicated here.²⁰ What follows in this Section is a discussion of some of those issues where participatory methods as they are often implemented might need to be extended in order to address continuing challenges and where further innovation is needed to meet the needs of participatory policy analysis.

Participatory methods are generally based on group discussions ranging in size from small focus groups to large participatory workshops and events like those in Box 2 above. The first challenge is ensuring people are actually present. Stakeholder analysis incorporating analysis of power relations is crucial to the initial design stage of any participatory evaluation. However, even if this analysis is thorough, precise sampling and targeting of the stakeholder groups identified is often difficult in many contexts using standard participatory methods. There are guidelines on timing, location and promotion which can be followed to ensure that the intended stakeholders have the opportunity to attend. Nevertheless it is difficult to predict who will actually turn up to meetings unless there are clear organizational structures being used eg micro-finance groups or community-based organizations or very clear geographical and status distinctions to ensure exclusion of non-targeted individuals.

Ensuring that vulnerable stakeholders not only attend meetings, but are able to speak is a second key challenge which has been discussed at length in a number of Manuals.²¹ It is possible to design the discussion process so that participants are in subgroup discussions of varying composition over the timeframe of the meeting to ensure that those who are more vulnerable or less articulate can contribute equally and also to make sure they are heard by other participants. Spaces can be assigned for individual reflection and recording which can then be aggregated as a 'secret ballot' and the findings then discussed. There will inevitably be tensions between flexibility to the flow of discussion and directed facilitation to encourage certain 'hidden' issues to emerge and give spaces for particular voices to be heard. Nevertheless, if tactfully facilitated, decisions can be based on agreed norms in relation to the underlying principles of participation, equity and rights outlined in Box 1 above.

Moreover participatory evaluations do not have to rely solely on focus groups and workshops. Participatory group methods have never been promoted as the sole methodology to be used in all circumstances for all issues. Information on particularly sensitive issues, from people difficult to reach or who are afraid to speak out publicly

²⁰ See for example the many excellent and critical discussions of different tools in PLA Notes which can be accessed through a web search for specific tools and topics on their website: www.iied.org/sarl/pla_notes/, the Manuals on the IDS Participation website www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/; Theis and Grady 1991; Pretty et al 1995 and Mayoux 2001, 2003;.

²¹ See references in Note 16. For discussion of participatory workshops and different types of participatory exercise see Chambers 2002 and Slocum 2003.

in participatory meetings can be collected at the individual level. Individual level information is a key component of a number of participatory learning systems using diagrams (as in PALS), diaries (as in ILS) or even standard interviews. Selection of participants can be based here on standard sampling methods²². The differences in using participatory methods are then the ethical principles underlying the design of the interviews and surveys²³ and the participatory analysis of the findings and policy implications at a later stage. Individual level investigation provides a means of publicising and explaining the participatory process and ensuring that everyone has time to reflect on the issues. It also provides a means of triangulating and cross-checking information from the participatory meetings.

Thirdly, equitable representation is not only a question of facilitating voices to speak, but also ensuring the voices are heard – both by each other and documented for others. One of the major contributions of participatory methods has been the development of diagram tools for collection of information and for planning. Diagrams enable communication between stakeholders of different levels of literacy and across ethnic and language divides. They are relevant not only to the needs of non-literate people, but are also valuable for complex and non-linear analysis at all levels. Many have been derived from Systems Analysis and statistics and are frequently found in University Study Skills courses, management Powerpoint presentations and so on. As such they potentially provide a universal language crosscutting status and education divides in a way which written reports cannot. Most diagram tools can graphically accommodate and represent quantitative as well as qualitative information, if conducted by facilitators with good basic numerical /statistical and/or qualitative research skills²⁴. Some Tools like ranking matrices and Road Journeys can be used to explicitly examine issues like attribution, potential strategies and policy preferences.

One of the key challenges with diagram tools is not so much the reliability of information, but how to filter and keep up with the wealth of interesting and reliable information thrown up during any participatory exercise. Again there is inevitably a balance to be struck between flexibility to the flow of discussion and the need to continually refocus on the specific issues concerned and reach conclusions in the time available. Although guidelines are available in detail for the different diagrams (See sources in Note 16), this still requires skill and experience on the part of the facilitator in using participatory methods and also some understanding of context and the issues concerned. It is also crucial if participants are to clearly benefit from the investigation process that explicit attention is given in each meeting to moving from collecting information to at least some sort of tentative closure in the way of concrete ways forward – however small and localised or even in the form of things people need to find out.

Considerable thought needs to be given to recording modes and documentation for outsiders. Many earlier participatory methods focused on ‘lines and beans in the dust’ in order to make participants feel at ease. However recording these very sophisticated and often beautiful diagrams is a challenge. In the author’s experience many participants, even non-literate ones, feel this is ‘dumbing down’ and makes the process less convincing for outsiders. For many non-literate people the participatory meetings using diagrams can be a very good forum in which to begin to develop their

²² For discussion of sampling and representation using different methods see Mayoux 2001c.

²³ See for example the author’s discussion of Empowering Enquiry and references therein Mayoux 2003a.

²⁴ For detailed discussion of statistical analysis of participatory diagrams see Burns 2002; Barahona and Levy 2002 and other papers on the University of Reading

pen drawing skills, particularly over a series of such meetings. In the authors' experience with PALS women who for a time were very shy and reluctant to hold a pen and had to be shown how to take the top off were within the space of two hours drawing detailed maps of their businesses with basic calculations of profits and savings. This also increased their confidence and instead of remaining silent in group discussions became impatient to get their turn to make their contribution to group diagrams. This means that participants then have a concrete output for themselves from the discussion which they can keep and revisit later and/or to show to outsiders²⁵. For the evaluation team digital photographs and/or videos can be taken and the key information entered on datasheets as in more conventional methods. Video and photography are often now used in participatory market research and participatory technology development. In participatory evaluation community photography and video could play a useful part if local people are taught the key skills and equipment can be made available.²⁶

Finally equitable representation of vulnerable groups needs to go further than collecting their views so they can be heard, to ensuring these views are listened to by policy makers and more powerful stakeholders. This means facilitating communication between stakeholders to progressively challenge prejudices and preconceptions which are also a cause of poverty. This dimension has not been widely discussed in the participatory literature. It has however recently received attention in the literature and practise of corporate social responsibility.²⁷ A recent development in some forward-thinking transnational enterprises, and also multilateral aid agencies like the World Bank, has been to send their senior managers for 'immersion' in poor communities. This increases their insight and understanding of the lives of very poor people as individuals, rather than as an undifferentiated 'stakeholder swarm', and increases respect for their views and initiative in coping with poverty. Key multi-stakeholder meetings could be located in or near poor communities rather than hotels in capital cities to enable participation by poor people and proper understanding of their perspectives by the other stakeholders. Facilitating this sort of communication for implementing and powerful stakeholders to 'think outside the box' is a potentially important part of a participatory evaluation if the goal is actual implementation of policy outcomes.

2.4: WHEN SHOULD THEY PARTICIPATE? FROM UNPAID DATA COLLECTORS TO ADVISORS FOR POLICY CHANGE

The outcomes of any participatory process will depend not on who actually participates, but also at which stages their participation takes particular forms. Generally, even in NGO participatory evaluations local stakeholders have been mainly involved in giving/collecting information through participatory exercises with focus groups. It is assumed that participation in collecting information is empowering through increasing awareness and pooling of knowledge (See quote from Robert Chambers at the beginning of this paper). This is certainly an advance on evaluations which fail to consult local people altogether. However, evaluation design and agenda are generally decided by outsiders. Beyond the analysis during the specific local participatory exercise itself, analysis of more general findings is generally done by outsiders. Evaluation budgets have often run out before dissemination of findings and

²⁵ In the REFLECT methodology, these initial drawings are then taken further to develop literacy and numeracy skills see www.reflect.org. This could also be a valuable way of increasing the community participation in ongoing evaluation processes.

²⁶ Experiences using community video are discussed in eg Braden and Huong 1998.

²⁷ See Prahalad 2005, Mayoux 2005 forthcoming and links on ethical enterprise on my website www.lindaswebs.info forthcoming mid April 2005

full consultation on recommendations can be done with those who participated at local level.

Participatory methods can be extremely effective in collecting certain types of quantitative and qualitative information more rapidly and more reliably than other methods. They have also been specifically adapted for participatory policy analysis and planning. However, participatory methods can be just as extractive as conventional methods and take significant blocks of peoples' time to travel to, as well as attend participatory meetings. As noted above, the most vulnerable stakeholders may or may not be the most knowledgeable informants to give reliable information on certain issues. It is crucial that their time is not wasted in token participatory exercises which cannot produce reliable information and from which they may therefore benefit little, either from the frustrating discussion or the policy outcomes. Participatory exercises should be focused on those areas where their input is most crucial to reliability of policy recommendations and/or where they demonstrably benefit from the investigation process.

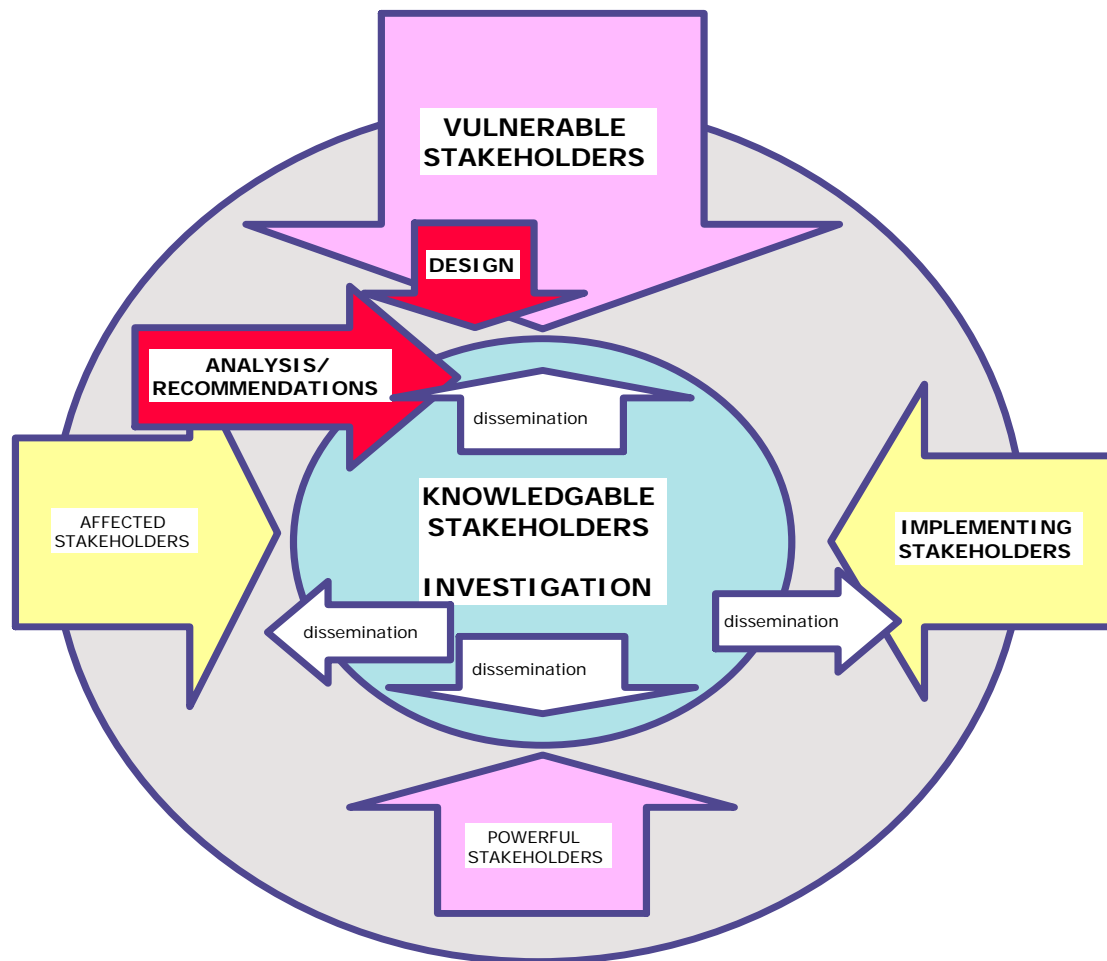


FIGURE 2: Who participates when?

If the aim is pro-poor development, participation of vulnerable stakeholders, may be more important at the design and analysis stages than collecting information itself²⁸. It is the priorities and issues affecting the most vulnerable stakeholders which should be a key focus of attention in policy research. Even if the investigation requires detailed technical information and/or analysis of policy processes to which they cannot contribute information, they should at least influence the agenda if not determine it. The reality check of the experience of very poor people is also needed in order to assess the reliability of analysis and feasibility of recommendations. The evaluation can then serve to increase understanding between implementing stakeholders and the very poor to overcome some of the misconceptions and prejudice which are underlying reinforcing causes of poverty.

| BOX 6: WHO PARTICIPATES WHEN? STAGES OF EVALUATION |
|---|
| DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose of the evaluation? Who should determine the agenda? • Have the interests of vulnerable stakeholders been addressed at this stage? • How far can or should the interests of powerful stakeholders be accommodated? • Have the concerns of implementing stakeholders been incorporated at this stage? • Who will facilitate and monitor the evaluation process? |
| INFORMATION COLLECTION |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the relevant secondary sources? Is anyone already collecting relevant information? Can and should they participate in the investigation? • Who are the best people to approach for which information? Vulnerable stakeholders? Powerful Stakeholders? Implementing Stakeholders? • How can stakeholders, particularly vulnerable stakeholders, benefit from giving/collecting information? |
| INFORMATION ANALYSIS FOR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who decides which information is 'relevant' or 'true'? • Who facilitates and filters the analysis and production of recommendations? • Who determines which recommendations are priorities for action? • Have vulnerable stakeholders been involved in analysis and recommendations? • Have the concerns of implementing stakeholders been incorporated at this stage? |
| DISSEMINATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do implementing stakeholders need to know? How is the information to be communicated to them? • Will information be accessible and comprehensible to vulnerable stakeholders? • Apart from the implementing and vulnerable stakeholders, who might use the information? What is the best means of disseminating to them? |

²⁸ For discussion of relationship between participation, transparency and accountability which begins to look at these issues in policy making in the health sector see Cornwall, Lucas and Pasteur eds 2000.

Dissemination strategies also require much more attention. It is likely that different dissemination mechanisms will be needed for different stakeholders. It is important not only that the findings and recommendations are circulated to policy makers and implementers, but also to vulnerable stakeholders. This presents certain challenges because of language barriers, illiteracy and lack of access to many forms of communication. However if dissemination methods are discussed from the beginning of the evaluation it is likely that a number of possible mechanisms can be identified – for example links with local papers, radio and NGOs.

PART 3: PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION FOR PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY

Participation cannot be seen as an easy or cheap means for addressing (or circumventing) power relations, inequalities and conflicts of interest inherent in pro-poor development itself. Given the pre-existence of power inequalities within households, communities, between development agencies and intended beneficiaries and within and between development agencies themselves 'participation' will inevitably always be contentious and for some 'imperfect'. Participatory processes do not substitute for institutional commitment to wider goals of pro-poor development and human rights which may or may not be key concerns of many participants. On the contrary, those conducting participatory evaluations will need to exercise 'constant vigilance' in regard to the rights of vulnerable stakeholders, whether it has led to the identification of relevant, effective and realisable pro-poor policies and whether or not the evaluation process itself is actually empowering (See Box 7)

| |
|---|
| <p>BOX 7: PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION: STAGES: CRITICAL QUESTIONS AND INHERENT TENSIONS</p> |
| <p>CRITICAL QUESTIONS FOR 'CONSTANT VIGILANCE'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights : have the interests of the most vulnerable stakeholders been incorporated and addressed? • Effectiveness : has the evaluation led to reliable identification of relevant, effective and realisable pro-poor policies? Have these been disseminated to those involved? How will they be implemented? • Process : has the participatory evaluation process built skills, information, capacities and networks of the most vulnerable stakeholders and improved communication between stakeholders? |
| <p>SOME INHERENT TENSIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade-offs for individuals • Consensus versus acknowledging difference and conflict of interest • Leadership versus flexibility to process • Confidentiality and sensitivity versus transparency and accountability • Local difference versus standardised aggregation |

There will always be inherent tensions in terms of trade-offs for individuals and the need to negotiate differences and conflicts of interest. It is simply not possible to

consult all vulnerable stakeholders in the way that it may be possible to invite all relevant policy makers, key powerful figures and/or knowledgeable experts. This is not, however a reason for not strategically including people whose experience and everyday realities are vital inputs to the decision-making process. The issue is to ensure that these voices are heard through a participatory process which responds to their priority issues and involves them in devising ways forward.

A key challenge is to build on the methodological innovations in participatory methods for a truly equitable and sustainable community learning process. For some issues and in some contexts there may be sufficient local skill and expertise for people to conduct their own research participatory methods. Funding may however be needed initially to build the skills and networks necessary for a reliable and truly participatory grassroots action learning process. The most cost-effective way of developing the evaluation skills of vulnerable stakeholders is to integrate participatory skills training and actual data collection into NGO training programmes and project/programme-level evaluations. Macro-level evaluations can then build on a much more solid basis of skills, information and networks, rather than assuming that NGO managers are necessarily able to represent the voices and interests of poor people.

At the same time, effectively addressing the simultaneous challenges of inclusion, accuracy and effectiveness requires facilitation skill and innovation in tools and processes. In many cases, even during those with substantial local input, there may be an ongoing need for external agencies to provide necessary information not easily accessible to participants. It may also be necessary for outside agencies to initiate discussions, ensure equitable processes and negotiate where possible with vested interests.

Finally pro-poor development policy cannot be effectively formulated on the basis of one-off extractive participatory exercises. Any one single evaluation cannot resolve all the tensions and trade-offs inherent in pro-poor development. If policy makers are really serious about pro-poor development then (following Brocklesby and Holland above) there needs to be a continuous process of dialogue and negotiation with poor, and very poor, women and men. Individual participatory evaluations, if so designed, can make a very valuable contribution to starting to build up capacities and structures for ongoing representation of poor women and men and facilitating direct interaction between powerful stakeholders and poor people in order to break down the barriers of complacency, misinformation and prejudice which are in themselves key causes of poverty. Over time the capacities, structures and processes being built up in Poverty Assessments, SWAPs and other multi-stakeholder processes, could not only progressively increase the cost-effectiveness of truly participatory evaluations but also significantly contribute to the effectiveness of the development interventions being evaluated. Achieving this longer term goal will however require a shift in the 'evaluation paradigm' to prioritise the aspirations, knowledge and analysis of the poorest and most vulnerable groups as an essential and inherent part of pro-poor development.

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION: DIFFERENT TERMS AND APPROACHES

| Approach | Date | Description | Key sources and websites |
|--|-------|--|---|
| Activist Participatory Research (APR) also known as Participatory Action Research (PAR) | 1970s | The basic ideology of PAR is that 'self-conscious people, those who are extremely poor and oppressed, will progressively transform their environment by their own praxis. In this process others may play a catalytic and supportive role but will not dominate' Fals Borda 1991 q UNDP. The main aim is not so much knowledge per se, but social change and empowerment of the marginalised and oppressed. Also known as Activist Participatory Research (APR). | Paolo Freire Pedagogy of the Oppressed Fals Borda Mohammad Anisur Rahman |
| Appreciative Inquiry (AI) | 1980s | Appreciative Enquiry ' is a methodology for organizational change. It was first formulated in an article by Cooperrider and Srivastava (1987) as a critique of what they termed a ' problem-centred approach ' to inquiry where the focus is on problems to be solved by a change agent whose main role is as problem finding, solution designer and prescription giver. Appreciative inquiry in contrast adopts an appreciative stance towards organisational change to lead to more innovative and long-lasting transformation. It consists of four main steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery: where bottom-up open interviews bring out stories of the 'peak moments of achievement' which the community or organization values most. • Dream: where the interview stories are combined to create a new dream for the future. • Dialogue: where all those involved openly share exciting discoveries and possibilities. Through this sharing of ideals social bonding and shared vision occurs. • Destiny: construction of the future through innovation and action. Because the ideals are grounded in past realities, there is confidence to make things happen. | Cooperrider, DL and Whitney, D 1999 Fry, R et al 2002 |
| Beneficiary Assessment (BA) | 1990s | Beneficiary Assessment is a qualitative research tool used in the World Bank to improve the impact of development operations by gaining the views of intended beneficiaries regarding a planned or ongoing reform. It seeks to provide reliable, qualitative, in-depth information on the socio-cultural conditions and perceptions of the target group(s), particularly the very poor. The approach relies primarily on conversational interviews, focus group discussions, and direct and participant observation. It is therefore low cost. Beneficiary Assessment provides the target population with the opportunity to voice their opinions, needs, and concerns regarding the development process. Furthermore, Beneficiary Assessment increases the participation of stakeholder groups, which leads to their ownership of the development operations and increased likelihood of its support and success (World Bank 2002). | Salmen, L 1992 World Bank 2002 |
| Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes (DIPs) | 1990s | These approaches were developed in a number of countries the 1990s in order to extend the notion of democracy to allow greater deliberation of policies and their practical implementation through the inclusion of a variety of social actors in consultation, planning and decision-making. Key features are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Focus on deliberation defined as careful consideration of the discussion of reasons for and against particular forms of action. 2) Inclusionary decision-making processes based on the active involvement of multiple social actors and usually emphasising the participation of previously excluded citizens. 3) Use of a range of procedures, techniques and methods including citizens' juries, committees, consensus conferences, scenario workshops, deliberative polling, focus groups, multi-criteria mapping, public meetings, rapid and participatory rural appraisal and visioning exercises. 4) Although the goal is usually to reach decisions, or at least | PLA Notes 40 February 2001 PLA Notes 44 June 2002 |

| | | | |
|---|-------|---|---|
| | | positions upon which decisions can be subsequently taken, an unhurried, reflective, informed and reasonably open-ended discussion is required. | |
| Democratic evaluation (DE) | 1970s | Advocates that all evaluators should ensure their work contributes to dialogue and preservation of democratic principles and particularly inclusion of the underprivileged. Deliberative Democratic Evaluation combines democratic evaluation with DIP principles above. | Barry MacDonald House, ER and Howe, KR 2000 Segone, M 1998 Floc'hlay, B and Plottu, E 1998 Critique: Lizanne DeStefano and Katherine Ryan eds 2004 |
| Empowerment Evaluation (EE) | 1990s | Use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination. Focusing on training people in evaluation techniques to conduct their own evaluation, it employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Although it can be applied to individuals, organizations, communities and societies or cultures, the focus is usually on programs. | Fetterman, Kaftarian and Wandersman 1995 |
| Fourth Generation Evaluation | 1989 | Identified as a new and emerging innovative form of evaluation by Guba and Lincoln. Its key emphasis is on evaluation as a process of negotiation, incorporating various stakeholders more centrally into the evaluation process. It is a development from, and reaction to, earlier fullness of evaluation which focused on measurement and description but later also came to involve judgements and evaluation itself. In developing these judgements fourth-generation evaluation takes into account stakeholders consensual and competing claims, concerns and issues. It recognises that peoples' diverse perspectives and interests are shaped in a major way by their particular value systems, which in turn are influenced by their specific physical, psychological, social and cultural contexts. Through negotiation, fourth-generation evaluation helps identify courses of action for stakeholders. The evaluator plays a role primarily as facilitator or 'orchestrator' in negotiation processes with stakeholders, who participate in the design, implementation and interpretation of the evaluation as full partners. | Guba and Lincoln 1989 |
| Participatory Action Learning System (PALS) | 2002 | Methodology currently being developed by Linda Mayoux with Kabarole Research and Resource Centre in Uganda, ANANDI in India, LEAP in Sudan and partners of Trickle-Up in US. Here people as individuals and as groups use diagram tools to collect information they need in order to improve their lives in ways they identify and record this in individual diaries and group minutes. This information is then supplemented by programmes through participatory and conventional quantitative and qualitative methods for programme evaluation and policy advocacy. The dynamism of the system is maintained through annual fairs which provide a focus for bringing group level information and ideas together to formulate strategies and policies. The use of participatory methods is complemented where necessary by use of qualitative and quantitative methods incorporating the principles of 'Empowering Inquiry' | www.lindaswebs.info |

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| Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) | 1990s | <p>The successor to PRA. The term Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is seen as more effectively incorporating the underlying human rights tradition through emphasising the importance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changing from appraisal to learning and hence moving away from the use of participatory methods as an extractive process by outsiders to a sustainable learning process involving different stakeholders as equal partners. • the importance of relating learning to action incorporating programme and policy improvement as an integral part of the learning process. <p>It focuses on what Chambers calls the 'four reversals' (1994c)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reversals of frames: a shift from the categories and values of outsiders to those of local people, enabling them to help define the frame of investigation • Reversals of modes: the greater use of group work rather than individual informants; the use of visual rather than verbal techniques; and using comparison as a means of finding out quantitative data rather than direct measurement; • Reversals of relations: establishing rapport and involvement with local people rather than reserve and distance from them; • Reversals of power: enabling local people to enhance their own capacities for finding out and using and improving their own knowledge, rather than investigators extracting information for use elsewhere. | Chambers 1994 a,b,c PLA Notes |
| Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) | 1980s | <p>Initially the term PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) was used to describe the bringing together of RRA and activist research. It was emphasized that the most important aspect were not the diagramming tools but their flexible application based on a number of underlying principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • embracing complexity and seeking to understand it rather than oversimplifying reality in accordance with predetermined categories and theories • recognition of multiple realities to be taken into account in analysis or action. • prioritising the realities of the poor and most disadvantaged as equal partners in knowledge creation and problem analysis. • grassroots empowerment: aiming not only to gather information about impact, but to make the assessment process itself a contribution to empowerment through linking grassroots learning and networking into policy-making. | Chambers 1992, 1994 a,b,c PLA Notes |
| Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) | 1970s | <p>Diagramming and visual techniques originating in a number of scientific disciplines for analysis of complex systems: biological science, ecology, agricultural economics and geography. From the 1980s applied anthropology added oral and other methods to gain a more sophisticated understanding of poverty, social processes and grassroots perspectives on development. By the end of the 1980s these diagramming and oral techniques had been brought together into a flexible methodology for working with rural people to develop more sophisticated models to explain their responses to development programmes.</p> | Chambers 1980, 1992, 1994a |

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