

FOOTSTEPS

No.29 DECEMBER 1996 PARTICIPATORY LEARNING & ACTION

Adult Education Who sets the agenda?

by Simon Batchelor

THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF DISCUSSION in academic circles about how adults learn. People working in development are becoming increasingly influenced by the writings of Brazilian adult education-
alist, Paulo Freire. He suggested that education is never neutral. When a teacher teaches, it either leads to people conforming to society, or to liberation. He went on to say that people learn more by critically thinking through their own situation than by soaking up the knowledge of 'experts'.

This can be applied to adult education, including literacy, by getting people to reflect on a problem and then take action. A cycle of reflection, action, reflection, action then begins (sometimes called *praxis*) which is said to be at the heart of learning.

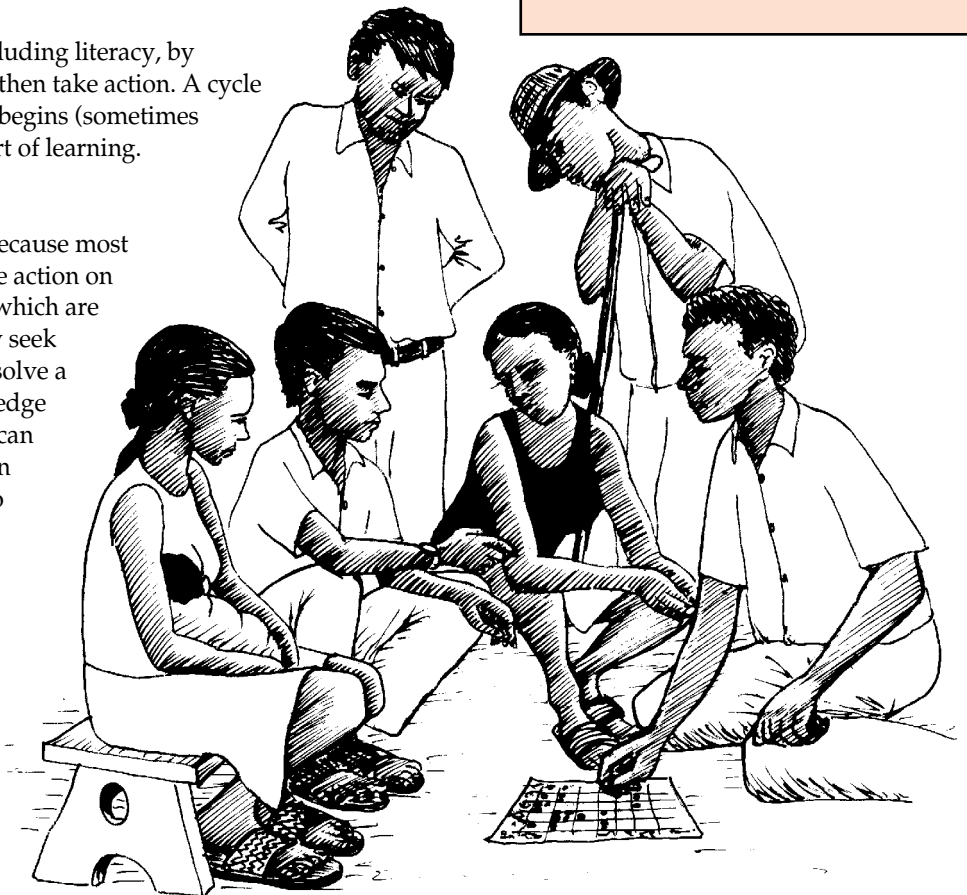
Problem solving

The reason this type of learning works is because most people (poor and rich) only reflect and take action on issues which they feel strongly about and which are important to them **now**. They may actively seek information and knowledge if it will help solve a problem. They may then apply this knowledge by learning new skills. Even their attitude can be affected. Reflection which leads to action for the poor often leads to an awakening to their own situation so that they can transform the quality of their own lives, their environment, their community and the whole of society.

Many people have taken these ideas and applied them in different ways. Agencies are now applying Freire's ideas to programmes and projects. Evangelicals are finding that people will learn more about the gospel of Christ in action/reflection cycles.

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FOOTSTEPS

ISSN 0962-2861

Footsteps is a quarterly paper, linking health and development workers worldwide. Tear Fund, publisher of *Footsteps*, hopes that it will provide the stimulus of new ideas and enthusiasm. It is a way of encouraging Christians of all nations as they work together towards creating wholeness in our communities.

Footsteps is free of charge to individuals working to promote health and development. It is available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Donations are welcomed.

Readers are invited to contribute views, articles, letters and photos.

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TEAR FUND 
CHRISTIAN CONCERN IN A WORLD OF NEED

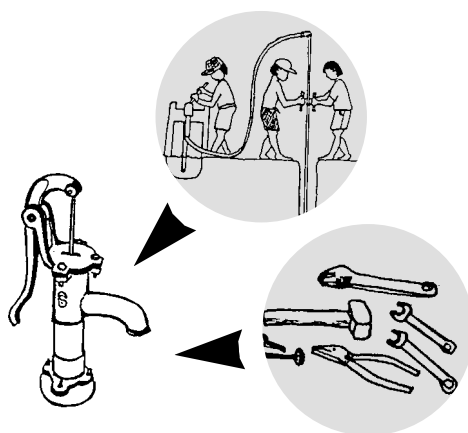
Further reading

A key resource book for applying the ideas mentioned on these pages is *Training for Transformation* by Hope and Timmel, Mambo Press, Box 779, Gweru, Zimbabwe. (See page 14 for details.)

As more and more agencies begin to use action and reflection cycles, so the word *participation* is becoming more widely used. However, participation can mean many things to many people – ranging from reluctant attendance at community meetings listening to outsiders telling people their plans – to active involvement by the community in developing their own plans. Effective participation involves people setting their own ‘agendas’.

Aid from the experts

Some development agencies plan projects from the outside. They talk to experts and decide they can help the poor. For example, a hand-pump may be ordered



1. The outside project

for a village. The managers of the project decide where a hand-pump is needed, and install one using their own team. After some months, the hand-pump breaks down and the villagers do not repair it. Why? The reasons might include that they feel no ownership of the pump, no responsibility. They may not have been trained to manage and maintain it. Maybe the pump is in the wrong place and is a source of friction in the village anyway, so the people are pleased to see it broken.

Consulting the villagers

Perhaps ten years ago, the idea of participation began to be widely accepted. With some influence from Freire and others like him, agencies started to say that participation was the key. They looked at the example of the broken hand-pump and said that what was

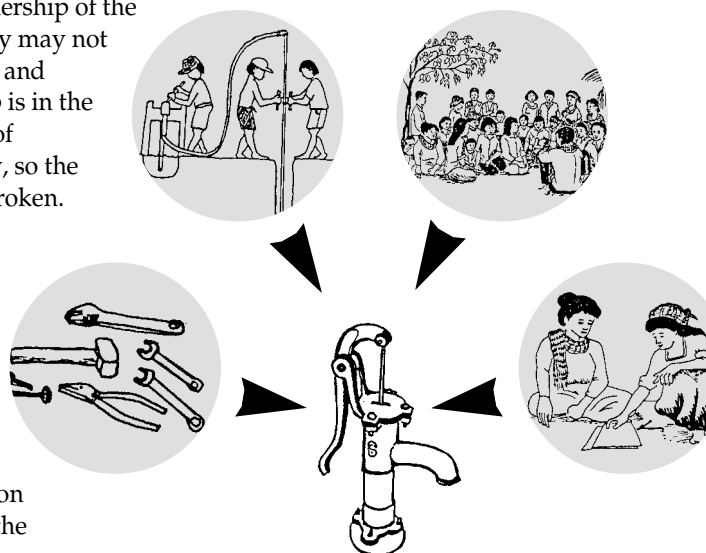
needed was participation from the people so that they ‘owned’ the hand-pump. A new method for planning arose. The agency would send people to the village at the early stages of the planning. They would discuss the situation with the villagers, they would gather information from the people themselves, and they would plan the hand-pump with the people. Village committees would be created to discuss the position of the hand-pump, and a maintenance committee might be formed to maintain and repair it.

The result has been that hand-pump projects have been more successful. Projects with more participation from the people last longer and are more ‘sustainable’.

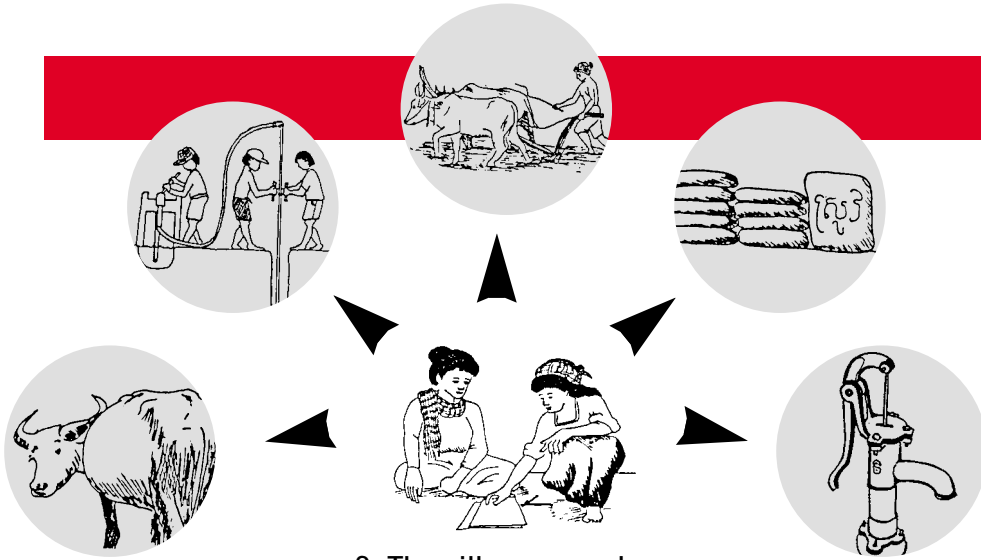
A local agenda

Although this type of participation is good, it should not be confused with the essence of Freire’s work. In our first example, the hand-pump was installed without discussion with the people in the planning phase. We can say that the hand-pump is the centre of the agency’s thinking, and that the agenda has been set by the external agency. In our second example, the hand-pump was installed with participation from the people. However, the hand-pump was still the **centre** of the agency’s thinking. It was still a hand-pump project. Participation in this case is like a tool to make the hand-pump work. The agenda is still set by the outside agency.

We have used the example of a hand-pump project because it is easy to



2. The project with participation



3. The village agenda

understand. The same is true for any programme, including adult literacy. We can see programmes where planning is done by external agencies without participation from the people. New programmes can still be found where the agenda is set by outside agencies and participation is used as a tool to help people own the programme.

But for real understanding, learning and transformation, it is the people who must be at the centre. Their agenda must be set by themselves. We said above that people act on issues they feel strongly about, ie: their own agenda. A hand-pump may then just be one of many items on the agenda – or indeed it may not even be included – people themselves decide which are their priorities.

Discovery

People learn more by thinking through their situation than by soaking up the knowledge of 'experts'. Discovery is a key word. An agency working in adult education should not be afraid to let the people explore their own agenda, at their own pace. The agency becomes the servant not the master. The agency's agenda is to help the people's journey of discovery.

Adult education then becomes a key to understanding problems and increasing choices. People can choose whether they want to try and obtain a hand-pump or improved seeds, or begin a literacy programme. Others should not make these decisions for them.

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FROM THE EDITOR

THE HEART OF THIS ISSUE concerns real participation – valuing the contribution of each individual and ensuring that each person has the opportunity to share their views. Too often, 'experts' from outside think they have the answers to development issues. Too often, local people (who may have been told for decades that their knowledge is inadequate) assume that only outside experts can solve their problems. Genuine sustainable development can only come from community action – begun and continued by the community itself. Lots of impressive things can be achieved with outside funding and experts, but – like the example of the hand-pump – will they last once the outside help finishes? Sadly the benefits may rapidly fade away unless the community owns them.

Providing the opportunity for every person to share their knowledge and understanding of their own situation can be encouraged by a range of methods known now as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA). In this issue we share information about some of the most commonly used methods. PLA exercises were originally used with farmers. Later their usefulness was realised for all kinds of other work with communities. The exercises are now used to help in planning health work, water programmes, community development projects – involving communities in full participation.

Joining in PLA exercises is usually very enjoyable. However they will only work if any outside 'experts' involved, genuinely believe local people have the answers to their own problems. The 'outsiders' need to make their preparations and arrangements well, to set the scene for the exercises. Once these have begun, the outsiders need to take a back seat and, as Maclean Sosono writes, have 'big

ears to listen, big eyes to see and a small mouth to speak'.

Over the years these exercises have been known by various terms – RRA: Rapid Rural Appraisal, PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal, etc. Ideally, participatory exercises should lead to action within the community and not simply be a means of gaining information that outsiders take away. Hence the more recent term – PLA – participation and learning that lead to action.

Copies of *Footsteps* are sent **free of charge** by Tear Fund. Please let us know if you are being charged for your copy.

We are looking at the possibility of making *Footsteps* available by email. Please let us know if you would be interested in this.

Issue 30 will contain an index of all *Footsteps* issues.

Isabel Carter

Participatory training in Tanzania

by Dr Thomas Kroeck

PARTICIPATORY LEARNING AND ACTION (PLA) METHODS can be very helpful as a way of collecting information for planning and setting up development projects. They have a number of advantages over formal surveys.

Some of these advantages are...

- Local people are encouraged to participate from the beginning when projects are planned.
- The costs of using PLA methods are usually much lower than for formal surveys.
- The information is immediately available to everyone, both in the community and those planning the project.

Because of this, PLA methods are very suitable for development organisations with a bottom-up approach and limited financial and personnel resources, such as churches and other NGOs.

In the Diocese of Mount Kilimanjaro this development approach is still new. Some PLA methods have been used in seminars but we are still learning how to use PLA for the planning and implementation of sustainable development projects.

In October 1992 we used PLA methods in Kiru Dick village in Babati District for the following reasons:

- to help village people understand their situation and to take action for their own development

- to help part-time church workers (evangelists) from the Babati area to play an active role in the development of their villages
- to get a deeper understanding of the situation in the rural areas in order to plan relevant development projects and training programmes.

Background to the area

Kiru Dick village is in Babati District in northern Tanzania. It is 12km north-west of Babati town, on the southern slopes of Kiru Valley which is part of the Rift Valley. Kiru Dick consists of four hamlets with a total population of about 1,700. For the PLA the hamlet Mbuni was chosen. It has an area of about 20km² and a population of about 640. At least one third of the area is cultivated by leasehold farms.

The PLA team

We used a team of 20 persons – some from the village and some from outside. The core team were responsible for the organisation. They included the diocesan development officer, two agriculturalists from a diocesan training centre, a Mothers' Union worker and local people appointed by the village government and the church, and church workers from the Babati area, who had received three months' training at the training centre. Thirteen team members were from the village and seven were outsiders. There were five women and fifteen men. The majority of team members had primary education and all were literate.

A group working on a seasonal chart.

Methods and tools

HISTORICAL PROFILE – overview of historical events in the village

VILLAGE MAP – map with main features of the village area drawn on blackboard, paper or on the ground

SEASONAL CHART – diagram showing the main activities, problems and opportunities throughout the year

GROUP DISCUSSIONS – discussion with groups about their views of the village situation or specific topics

SOCIAL OR WEALTH RANKING – households are ranked by a community member regarding their wealth and the differences in wealth explained

TRANSECT WALKS – comparing the main features, resources and problems of the different zones

PROBLEM FLOW-CHART – arranging problems in a diagram that shows causes and effects. Helps in finding out and explaining the main causes of problems.

A first visit was made one month before the seminar and the proposed PLA exercises discussed with village leaders and church elders. However, no definite programme was agreed at that time. When they arrived the team found that the village government had already announced their programme. As a result the programme prepared by the team was adjusted to some extent. Other changes were made during the course of the seminar. The following programme is the result of this process.

Programme

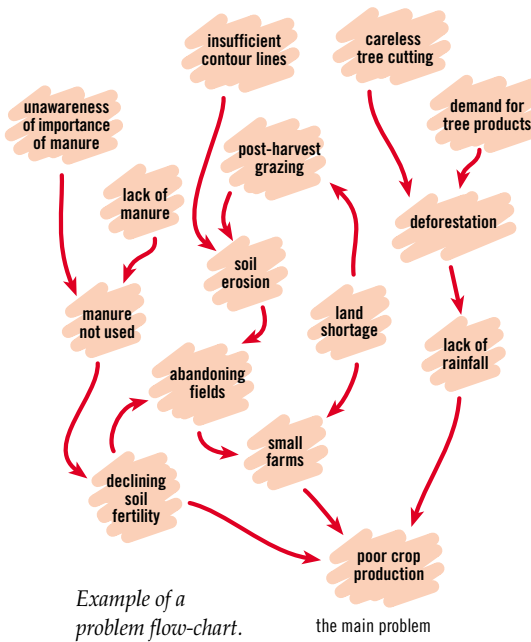
Day One On arrival, the team members met first with the village chairman and secretary and later with the village elders and discussed the history of the village, agriculture, livestock and health problems.

Day Two The team met to introduce the new members, explain the principles of PLA and learn about the use of mapping and seasonal charts. In the afternoon they began the exercises with the villagers. They began by mapping the Mbuni hamlet with them, moving on to developing a seasonal chart. (See pages 8–9.)

Day Three The team discussed gathering of information through informal interviews and group discussions. In the afternoon they divided and met with three groups – women, youth and community leaders (with whom they did ranking exercises). In the evening they were given an introduction to transect walks.



Photo: Isabel Carter



Example of a problem flow-chart.

Day Four The following day they again divided into three groups – two taking different transect walks and the third group visiting the dispensary to gather information about the health situation.

During the week the team met regularly to discuss and evaluate their activities – usually early in the morning and each evening.

Day Five On the last morning they met to discuss their findings and how to present them to the villagers. During the final

afternoon they presented the findings to the villagers and discussed what planning and activities should result.

Conclusions

As none of the team members, including the core team, had much experience in conducting PLA, this exercise was a good learning opportunity. Although there were some problems, the overall impression was that all team members enjoyed the seminar and learnt a lot.

Some of the problems we encountered were:

- misunderstandings about the programme due to our lack of detailed planning with the village people
- poor attendance and participation in the group discussions
- attitude of distinction between scientists and villagers
- poor time keeping
- difficulty in drawing a village map on a flip chart during the meeting (later the local team members drew a map on the ground).

On the other hand there were some very positive experiences, such as:

- good co-operation between insiders and outsiders in the team
- much information could be gathered during the social ranking.

Follow-up and results

One of the problems identified during the PLA was soil erosion. As a result of the information collected and the awareness of the problems, seminars and practical training on soil conservation were started. This work is still continuing and gaining more momentum as the positive results of contour strips become visible.

For future exercises some suggestions were made:

- to show slides or a film in the evening to attract more people to the seminar
- taking a football to the village for recreation with the village youth
- drawing a village map on the ground instead of on paper.



INSTEAD of people taking you to visit the 'best farms', the 'best clinics' and the 'best women's groups', plan a **transect walk** to provide a good picture of the area. Try

The Transect Walk

	Leasehold farms	Lower slope	Middle slope	Stream	Upper slope	Mountain
Soil fertility	★★★★	★★★	★★		★	
Erosion	none	• gully erosion on cattle paths	• mainly sheet erosion	• gullies	• sheet and rill • gullies	
Crops	• sugar cane • maize • beans	• sorghum • maize • pigeon peas • cassava • sweet potatoes	• sorghum • maize • pigeon peas	• bananas • trees	• sorghum • pigeon peas • maize	• trees
Land use	• farming	• farming • grazing	• farming • grazing	• grazing • cutting trees	• farming • grazing	• grazing • cutting trees
Farm size	large	small (2.5 acres)	medium (3.5 acres)		medium	
Water sources	• ditch • river	• ditch • river	• stream • spring		• spring	
Problems		• land shortage	• erosion • low soil fertility • no near water or firewood	• erosion	• erosion • low soil fertility	• deforestation
Opportunities		• paid labour on estates • tree nursery	• erosion control • use of manure • tree planting	• erosion control • bee keeping	• erosion control • use of manure • spring protection • tree nursery	

walking in a fairly straight line through the area. Make careful notes of the soils, agriculture, water sources and activities. In this way you can build up an accurate picture of the area.

Dr Thomas Kroeck works with the Diocese of Mount Kilimanjaro.

*His address is:
PO Box 1057
Arusha
Tanzania*

*Email:
dmk@marie.sasa.unep.no*



Erosion – a double disaster

SOIL EROSION is a huge environmental and economic burden to many developing nations. In the tropics, torrential rain can wash away tons of topsoil from each hectare in just a few hours. In drier areas, swirling winds and flash floods can be equally disastrous – huge amounts of valuable soil are being lost every day. This is typical in the Maroua and Bamenda areas of Cameroon. Even worse, the soil accumulates in rivers, reservoirs, harbours, estuaries and other waterways where it is unwelcome, destructive and costly to remove. Erosion is therefore a double disaster.

But God has provided an answer – he created vetiver grass to take care of soil erosion just as he sent Jesus to conserve our souls! Please just try to get hold of some vetiver grass and plant it. Contact the Vetiver Network, 15 Wirt Street NW, Leesburg, Virginia 22075, USA, or write to me.

Ngwainmbi Simon
MCWA
BP 382
Maroua
Cameroon

New intestinal parasite

ATTENTION PLEASE all medical personnel! Do you see people (aged between 5 and 30) coming to your clinic or hospital with a hard, palpable growth in the lower part of the abdomen – about 5cm in diameter? If so this may be caused by an intestinal worm – *Oesophadostomum bifurcum*, originally a parasite of monkeys. This worm has crossed the species barrier and now infects humans, transmitted from person to person. Research is being carried out in Togo and Ghana, where infection rates can be as high as 70%.

This may be a new infection that is spreading through Africa – or it may be that this infection has only recently been recognised. If you have seen such cases – or you would like information to help you watch out for this new disease, please write to:

Philip Storey
Baptist Medical Centre
Nalerigu
via Gambaga
Ghana

More about moringa

WE WOULD LIKE TO OFFER some further information about the use of *Moringa oleifera*. (Its use for water purification and oil production are given in Issues 20 and 28 of Footsteps.) Moringa is grown and eaten widely in the villages of Southern India. Here it is known by the name *drumstick*. The main product used is the immature fruit pods, brownish green in colour, which are about the diameter of a man's finger and 30–45cm long – like a stick. The outer fibre is removed and the pods are cut into pieces about 5cm long. These are boiled with spices like tamarind and pepper and eaten as a side dish. The pieces of drumstick are chewed to get out the juices and the fibrous stem is then spat out!

During the rest of the year the leaves and flowers are harvested and used for medicinal purposes and for curry. The high iron and vitamin A content is well known.

Farmers with little land plant moringa as a fence around their kitchen gardens. This not only reinforces the fence but increases production from the tiny area of land they have available by producing a second tier of crops.

Farmers either plant seedlings or take cuttings about a metre long from a mature branch. The open cut end is sealed with cow dung and the cutting



planted and watered regularly until a strong root system has developed.

Jeremy Groome and M U Joseph
Shree Ramana Maharishi Academy for the Blind
Karnataka
India

Family management

THE COUNSELLING ARTICLE in *Footsteps* 27 by Gladys Mwiti was most encouraging and appreciated and deserves comment. We also found the Bible Study on families touching. It helped me to settle disputes on matters concerning family management and was challenging to family lives. I hope this advice has helped many elsewhere in the world. We find *Footsteps* a constant source of new ideas which do not cost much to implement.

Can any reader help me with advice on simple methods of developing and printing photographs?

T J Ayub
International Aid Sweden
PO Box 43
Koboko
Uganda

Breed from the best!

IN *FOOTSTEPS* 25 on fish farming, nursery ponds for carp were mentioned but not for tilapia. However, these breeding ponds are very important. People here empty the ponds and keep only the smallest fish for breeding. After a few years they only have very small fish – permanently as a result of inbreeding!

When emptying the main pond keep the biggest female and male fish and place them in a separate breeding pond. Remove small fish when ready from the breeding pond and place in the main pond to grow. The parent fish will continue to produce young fish but should eventually be replaced.

This method of positive selection not only applies to fish but to all livestock and even plants. Don't sell the best and the biggest animal or vegetable – keep them to breed from.

Siegfried Gerber
PO Box 10
Limuru
Kenya

Birth control

MY STAFF find *Footsteps* very interesting and practical. However we were surprised and disappointed to read in Issue 27 that you encourage the use of IUDs in birth control. These devices interfere with the implantation of fertilised eggs and can therefore be seen as a form of abortion. The Christians we serve with are against abortion in any form, no matter how subtle. Please inform your readers because many may not have thought through this issue clearly.

Bert B Oubre
BP 382
Maroua
Cameroon

THANK YOU for your excellent publication *Paso a Paso* which we receive regularly and is shared with other organisations here in Nicaragua.

There have been several mentions of contraceptive vaccines in recent issues. I would like to express my concerns. The Women's Health Movement around the world has taken a strong position concerning research on contraceptive vaccines. We have spoken out and written extensively about the ethical, moral and scientific questions raised. I hope you will let your readers know that there are other points of view on this issue.

María Hamlin Zúniga
Director of CISAS
Apdo 3267
Managua
Nicaragua

EDITOR

Issues about contraception methods are always controversial among Christians. Within *Footsteps* we have tried very hard to provide information in a way which does not cause upset, and which allows people to decide for themselves. Basically, Christians differ on which methods are acceptable and which are not. Much of the controversy centres around whether life begins at fertilisation or at implantation. Some Christians believe that no artificial methods of birth control should be used, while others believe that family spacing is a vital part of stewardship. However, in many parts of the world, people have little choice over what methods are available. We therefore felt it important that all methods were mentioned together with information on how they work, leaving readers to make their own informed choices. This does not mean that Tear Fund necessarily encourages the use of any one method.

Save fuel – read *Footsteps*!

THANK YOU for the effort you put into making sure that *Paso a Paso* reaches so many parts of the world. I am able to put into practice the advice I read through your articles. In this area for example, there is no money to buy gas, kerosene or wood. Thanks to the information in *Paso a Paso* we have learned how to save fuel. We find a lot of practical information in your paper.

I feel I can count on your paper to gain experience and learn new things which I can then pass on to the people in the rural areas. With the knowledge we gain, people trust me more and I feel I am able to help them resolve more of their problems. Please keep sending us your paper which I consider to be the main tool in my work!

Leoncio Huamán Jiménez
Avenida: Piura #478 El Faique
Piura
Peru

Footsteps behind bars

ON A RECENT VISIT TO PERU, I discovered that *Footsteps* is being used as an educational and Bible study tool within the top security prisons of Lima. The group that are working with people in the prison find them very useful. We have now ordered extra copies to be left within the prisons.

Gordon Davies
Latin America Desk
Tear Fund

A voice for the poor

ECUADOR has tremendous social and economic problems – which affect the young in particular. The education system is out of date and more concerned with developing the memory than the person as a whole. We work with poor children in Santa Domingo trying to develop their independence and encourage their sense of responsibility towards themselves and their families. We believe in the quest for the Kingdom of God and his justice and in raising our voice for those who don't have one.

We have just discovered *Paso a Paso* and found it full of support, advice and new ideas for our work. Hoping that you will continue blessing and helping God's people and the world!

Edwin Sigcha Culqui
Correo Central
Santo Domingo de Los Colorados
Ecuador

Free advice

AN INDEPENDENT training bureau (BEATD) for associations working in development has started in Isangi, Upper Zaire. It is made up of individuals with specialist skills who want to provide free access to advice and assistance for development projects in the area. They are particularly interested in groups seeking advice about communication and animation. BEATD offers a welcome to everyone!

Benoît Boumo Antio'kondi Benito
BP 861
Kisangani
Upper Zaire

A portable office

RUPERT HAYDOCK in Burkina Faso spends much of his time, in his work with the Evangelical Church, visiting small organisations around the country. Many of these groups keep records and minutes of their meetings. In addition, letters are written on behalf of the group. However, many groups have problems in keeping their records in good order. Letters go missing and papers are damaged by insects or rain water. So they had the excellent idea of making 'portable offices' for all their group officials. The offices are designed to be strapped to the back of a bicycle. They contain spaces to store pens, paper clips, stamps and envelopes as well as papers. The top of the 'office' makes an ideal surface to write notes and letters. This is an excellent idea which many other groups may like to copy. The 'office' is a simple wooden box made of plywood measuring approximately 60cm by 40cm and 18cm deep. Groups even use them to store their *Pas a Pas* copies!



Group members in Djegourna, Burkina Faso.

PLA Practical Techniques

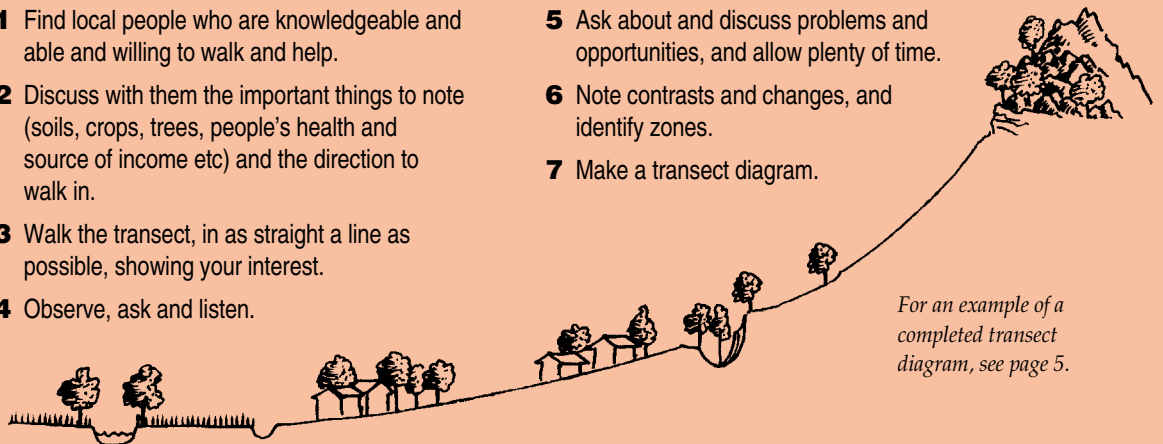
by James Mascarenhas

MYRADA in South India have done much work with rural people on participatory methods and provide training for other organisations in the use of these methods. They have produced a very helpful training video (see p15). Their address is...

MYRADA
2 Service Road
Domlur Layout
Bangalore 560 071
India

How to do a transect

- 1 Find local people who are knowledgeable and able and willing to walk and help.
- 2 Discuss with them the important things to note (soils, crops, trees, people's health and source of income etc) and the direction to walk in.
- 3 Walk the transect, in as straight a line as possible, showing your interest.
- 4 Observe, ask and listen.
- 5 Ask about and discuss problems and opportunities, and allow plenty of time.
- 6 Note contrasts and changes, and identify zones.
- 7 Make a transect diagram.

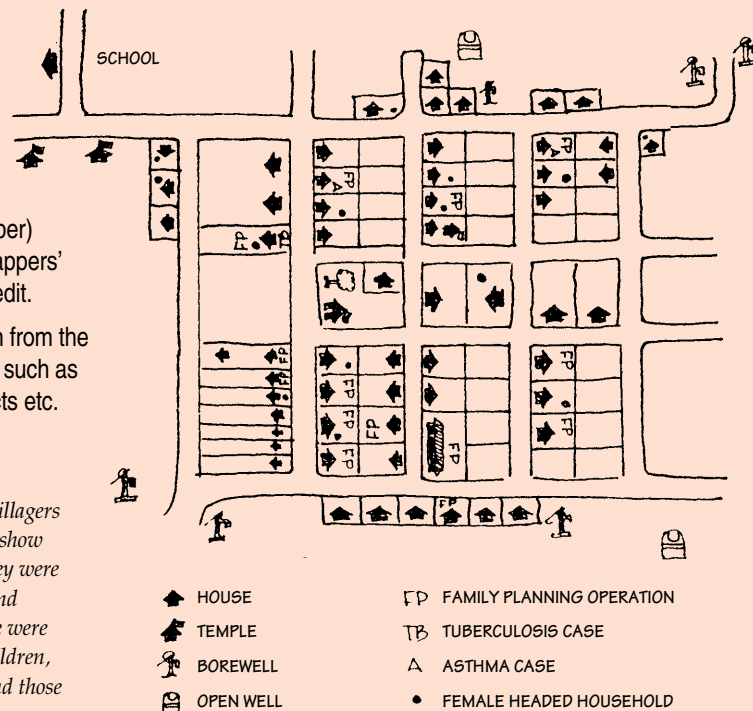


For an example of a completed transect diagram, see page 5.

How to do participatory mapping

- 1 Decide what sort of a map is needed...
SOCIAL – of the village houses
NATURAL RESOURCES – of the surrounding land.
- 2 Find local people with a good understanding of the area and who are willing to share their knowledge.
- 3 Choose a suitable place and materials that people will feel at ease with...
THE GROUND – using sticks, stones, leaves etc
THE FLOOR – using chalks, stones etc
PAPER – pens and pencils.
- 4 Help people get started by letting them do it. Be patient and don't interfere. It's their map.
- 5 Sit back and watch.
- 6 Encourage corrections and additions.
- 7 Keep a permanent (paper) record including the mappers' names to give them credit.
- 8 You may like to lead on from the map to other exercises such as wealth ranking, transects etc.











This map was drawn by villagers of Ramenahally village to show homes in their village. They were discussing health issues and showed homes where there were widows, malnourished children, cases of TB and asthma and those using family planning.



- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| ◆ HOUSE | FP FAMILY PLANNING OPERATION |
| ⬛ TEMPLE | TB TUBERCULOSIS CASE |
| ⚙ BOREWELL | △ ASTHMA CASE |
| ⊕ OPEN WELL | ● FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLD |

How to do ranking ('matrix ranking')

- 1 Decide what should be ranked or scored (trees, fodder trees, fruits, income sources etc).
- 2 Find some key informants who have local knowledge and are willing to discuss things with you.
- 3 With them decide which items to rank or score.
- 4 For each in turn, ask what is good about it. What else? Then find out what is bad. What else?
- 5 List the criteria that have been identified.
- 6 Ask informants to rank or score each item. High scores mean a positive preference – for example, 5 is the best, 4 the next best and so on. You can rank out of 5 or more – up to 10 (where a score of 10 means the best).
- 7 Ask other questions, such as which of these criteria is the most important. If you could only use one, which would it be?
- 8 Do follow up on points of interest.

	Mending shoes	Making tamarind paste	Making leaf plates	Selling custard apples	Brickmaking	Selling firewood
 Time taken	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★	★ ★
 Profits	★	★ ★	★ ★ ★	★	★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★
 Labour needed	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Loan needed	★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Hard work	★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★
						

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ = best
★ = worst

How to use seasonal charts

- 1 Decide who you hope will share their knowledge (women, children, men, landless etc) and explain what you would like to do.
- 2 Find a suitable place.
- 3 Ask when their year starts, the names of the months and seasons and choose which to use.
- 4 Mark the units on the ground or on paper.
- 5 Using stones or beans, ask participants to indicate the amount of whatever subject you are looking at (eg: rain, income, debt, food etc) for each month or season.
- 6 Encourage people to discuss and debate until they are in agreement.
- 7 Record their results on paper.
- 8 It may be helpful to use a definite number of stones or beans for each subject discussed. This will make it easier to compare with other groups' comments.

This seasonal chart was done by Bulamagi Women's Association in East Uganda.

The figures represent the number of beans placed for each month (out of a total of 48). For example, income is very low between February and April. In May there are early vegetables and maize to sell. The real income from harvest comes

	Ill-health	Income	Farmwork
Jan	6	5	4
Feb	2	1	6
Mar	3	1	9
Apr	3	1	8
May	7	3	1
Jun	8	4	1
Jul	3	5	3
Aug	2	8	7
Sep	2	3	4
Oct	2	2	3
Nov	3	5	1
Dec	7	9	1

in August. In November and December there is income from coffee and dried beans. After the rains begin in April there is much malaria.



Community survey for AIDS awareness

by Maclean Sosono

MANY PEOPLE continue to become HIV infected, despite all the work in HIV/AIDS education carried out by many organisations. (However, in Uganda the figures are no longer increasing, showing the effectiveness of AIDS education there.) It is clear that though people's understanding has increased, resulting changes in behaviour still follow a long way behind. PLA sessions were conducted in Lungwena area, Mangochi in Malawi to find out how much people know about AIDS. In the eight villages we visited, the key we used was 'big ears to listen, big eyes to see and a small mouth to speak'.

Notes on using PLA were made, to help group members in gathering information about:

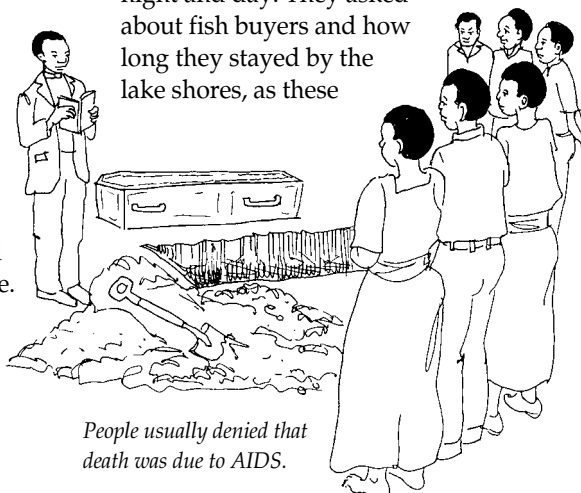
- village origins
- traditional healers – their availability and use
- past and present common diseases of the villages
- comparing past and present deaths
- possible causes of other new diseases
- problems faced by the community and help needed.

Social mapping

The villagers made a map of the village on the ground and identified houses where one or both parents were dead and noted the number of orphans living there. People considered the consequences of the high numbers of orphans and how to tackle the problem.

Social structure

Our members asked about marriage customs. They found out the age of marriage for men and women, number of sexual partners and customs used when a husband or wife dies. They asked about initiation, learning how often equipment used for circumcision was re-sterilised. They encouraged people to make a calendar of their activities during both the night and day. They asked about fish buyers and how long they stayed by the lake shores, as these



People usually denied that death was due to AIDS.

people are known to offer money for sexual favours.

The response

For at least 20% of the PLA exercises we were unable to get sufficient participation from women, younger children and, in some cases, men.

At first, villagers thought we were experts with modern information. They thought we were there to tell them what to do and would probably want them to adopt strange customs. In due course, our friendliness and sitting on the ground together helped them realise that we were there to learn and work together with them.

We found people avoided talking about sex and AIDS because they related sex to joy, fame, freedom and fertility. Although they realised sexual behaviour could be dangerous because of AIDS, they usually denied that death was mostly due to AIDS, instead blaming *chitega* (a disease believed to exist in this area, transmitted to adults through witchcraft and sex). This was despite the increase in number of sick people, deaths and orphans.

Other reasons given were women who were blamed for being 'weak' in their morals, the unavailability of condoms, and fish buyers. Some blamed the health centre for not providing enough practical care and support. They told us that due to poverty, people continue their immoral behaviour although they could identify the risks.

The results

Identifying orphaned houses brought problems because after our sessions people thought they would receive relief items (probably why in some cases we had inflated figures). Several wrong ideas were corrected and the most important points about AIDS shared amongst us. However the social integration of HIV-infected people and their families still remains very poor.

For our health centre the PLA sessions have been very useful because HIV/AIDS awareness activities for the public have resulted. Each village has now identified one resource person to be trained in HIV/AIDS counselling.

Maclean F M Sosono works at the Lungwena Health Centre, PO Box 230, Mangochi, Malawi.

REFLECT

A PLA APPROACH TO LITERACY

by Isabel Carter

PLA EXERCISES ARE OFTEN USED WITH FARMERS – but they can have many other uses too. Literacy training is one of the most recent. In 1993 Action Aid began a research project to study the REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) approach to adult literacy. The REFLECT approach uses no primers or textbooks (other than a guide for the literacy facilitators). Instead each literacy circle develops their own learning materials based on PLA exercises.

Getting started

Groups begin with exercises such as mapping. Maps of their villages are made using whatever materials are locally available (sticks, stones, beans, leaves etc) and then copied by the participants in

their exercise books. For many this may be their first use of a pencil. With each exercise there will be several words that are used over and over and some of these are chosen as key words for labelling the map. They might include houses, forests,

rivers etc. These words are then written on a blackboard and broken down into syllables. Members discover what other words they can make using the syllables – so they learn both the key words for that session and other new words.

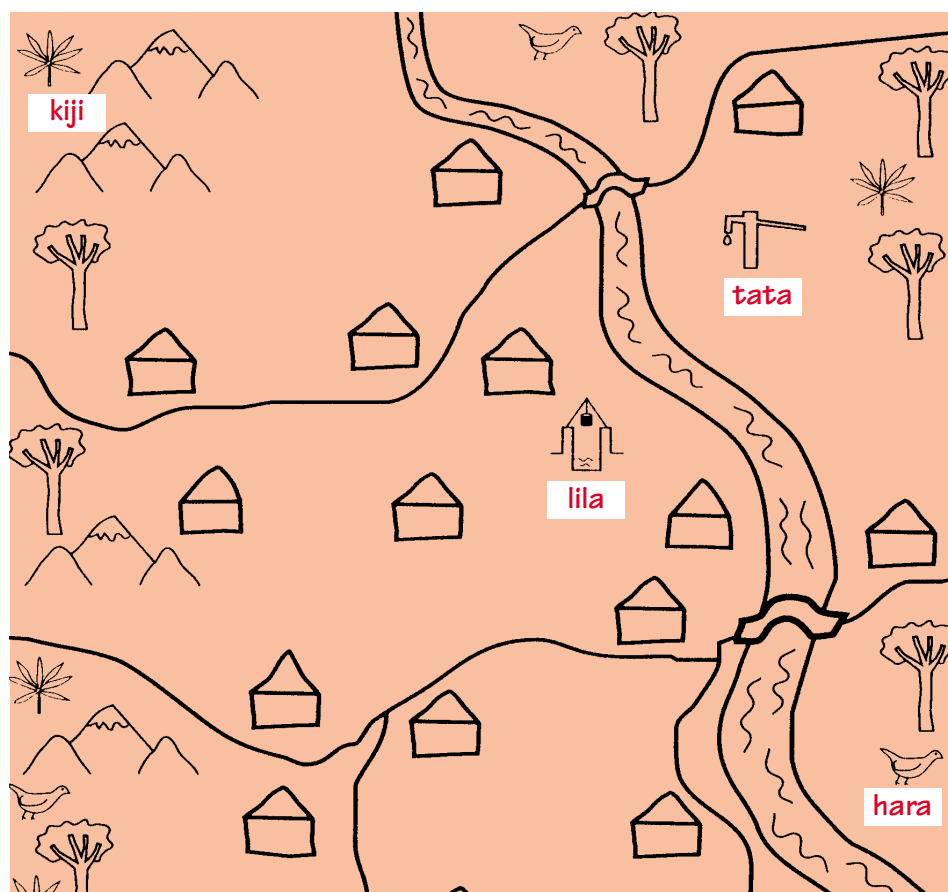
In later sessions they may use ranking exercises – looking at the crops they grow. They may be asked to compare how different crops grow – for example if there is too much rain, or a long dry season, or if soils are fertile or infertile. They may compare how much work is involved – in the planting, husbandry and harvesting of crops like coffee, maize, beans, bananas, rice etc. Here the key words might include the crop names, harvest, rain, soils etc.

Preparing seasonal charts to look at how health may vary throughout the year, or to study how farming work loads may vary is another kind of exercise. Group members may study different trees and their uses, or herbal medicines; they may plan their ‘ideal community’. These are just some of the many activities their trainers use with them.

Central issues

The literacy training centres around words and issues that are central to the members. In addition, as they discuss their health and their crops, and as they map their villages, all kinds of other issues may come up. For the first time they look with new eyes on their way of life and many other activities begin to develop alongside the literacy work. For example people may decide to build a tree nursery if they realise they lack good timber for building; they may see the need for a clinic after discussing health issues; they may decide to build a bridge after mapping their local area.

By the end of the literacy course, each circle will have produced 20–30 maps, calendars, charts and diagrams – and each participant will have a copy of these in their books, together with phrases they have written. These become a permanent record for communities, giving them a basis on which to plan their own development. In a REFLECT programme, ‘literacy’ does not come from outside but is based on people’s existing knowledge of their environment and community.



Trial programmes

Three trial programmes were set up in 1993. These were evaluated and compared with other groups using traditional literacy methods in each country in 1995. In Bundibugyo, Uganda, REFLECT was first used in a multi-lingual area where neither of the two main languages was previously written. In Bangladesh it was tried with women's saving and credit groups in a conservative Islamic area and in El Salvador it was used with a grassroots NGO, Comunidades Unidas de Usulután, led by ex-guerrillas converting to peaceful methods after ten years in arms.

Results

The REFLECT approach proved to be more effective at teaching literacy and more effective at linking literacy to wider development. Of the adults who initially enrolled in REFLECT circles, 64% achieved basic literacy over a one year period. This compared with 30% in the traditional groups. Participants in REFLECT circles remained well motivated and dropped out in much lower numbers than those in the traditional groups.

There were also various other benefits from participants in the REFLECT programme...

- Members spoke of better self esteem and self realisation. They had improved their ability to analyse and solve problems and express themselves.
- There was increased participation in community organisations. 61% of learners in El Salvador now held positions of responsibility in community organisations which they did not hold before the literacy programme.

- Discussion often led to improvements in local conditions as learners decided to take action as a result of their own analysis – they felt a local ownership of the problems and of the possible solutions. Improvements included building grain stores, water pipes, school repairs, tree nurseries, building latrines, clearing rubbish and digging a tubewell.

- There was an improvement in people's management of their resources within their homes. Women in Bangladesh found their experience with using calendars and charts helped them to plan better.

- The training circles had improved relationships between men and women – with men sharing more of the domestic work and women becoming more involved in key household and community decisions.

- Participants became more aware of health issues.

- Primary schools have reported an increase in enrolment (22% in Uganda) and parents in a third of the literacy circles have started their own literacy training for children.

- The REFLECT approach proved to be lower cost and more cost effective than the traditional literacy training.

Workshops have taken place in a number of countries and now this approach is being used in over 20 countries around the world. If you would like more information, write to...

REFLECT – Action Aid
Hamlyn House
Archway
London
N19 5PG
UK



Members of a REFLECT programme alongside their map of natural resources.

The Alayon Work Group System

farmers helping other farmers

by Maylaine P Tabasa

IN THE PHILIPPINES, it is very common to see neighbours helping a family repair their house or preparing food for the wedding of a son or daughter. Filipinos are ready to help one another in times of need, celebration or grief. This readiness to offer each other time and support is known as *alayon* (a voluntary work group) in the Philippines. The main purpose of forming an *alayon* is simply to help one another lighten a heavy task. People organise *alayons* to help with farm work, harvesting crops, constructing or repairing houses or to prepare food during weddings, feasts and burials.





Photo: Greenleaf

Mag-uugmad is an organisation which builds on the alayon work group system and uses it to carry out soil and water conservation programmes. Farmers learn new technologies and conservation techniques to help them develop a sustainable farming system while increasing farm production.

Farmers who are interested to learn about soil and water conservation form small groups and then discuss their plans with a farmer instructor. Normally, an alayon group meets twice a week to work on each others' farms. They use a rotation scheme to make sure each farmer's farm receives the same attention.

During alayon days, the farmer instructor shares knowledge with alayon members right on their farms. They learn how to build drainage canals, bench terraces, contour ditches, rock walls and many other ideas depending on the needs of each farm situation. Alayon members immediately apply what they learn. Each alayon member is also encouraged to train and assist new members in learning the technologies. At the end of an alayon day, members review and reflect on their activities during the day.

The ideal number for membership of an alayon is between five and eight. With over eight members in the alayon, the rotation process is very slow.



Groups of neighbours, relatives, women or young people can form their own alayon group. The most important considerations are their interest to learn the technology and willingness to work. Establishing new soil and water conservation technologies can be hard work so there's no room for lazy people!

Advantages of the system

There are many advantages for Mag-uugmad in using the alayon groups:

- This approach reduces the burden and work involved – more people help each farmer finish the farm tasks.
- This system allows for the sharing of draft animals, planting materials and other resources which makes farm activities and land cultivation a lot easier.
- There is the opportunity for building friendships and teamwork – people share ideas, experiences and problems.
- The alayon group can also perform activities outside the farms, such as constructing feeder roads and digging water catchments. The health programme has women alayon groups for backyard gardening and community sanitation activities.

Problems encountered

Just like any community group, Alayons are not free from problems. In the early days of the programme, many can occur.

- The most common problem is the practice of preparing meals during the working days. An alayon member started the practice of serving lunch for the group who worked on his farm. After a while, other members did the same thing. Before everyone realised it, the practice created competition among alayon members. It became a contest of who could afford to serve lunch for five or more! People became less active and eventually left the group.
- A second problem was lateness among members. Some members would always arrive late to meetings.
- Substitution was a third problem. Members of the alayon would sometimes send their children as substitutes. Children were not capable of performing the heavy farm labour. The result was slower progress of the alayon work and reduced enthusiasm of members for hard work.

Solutions

Problems of the alayon were solved by the farmers themselves with the help of the farmer instructor. Alayon groups have regular monthly meetings. The farmer instructor never mentions the problem at the start of the meeting but instead uses the self-evaluation approach, asking the farmers what problems they have encountered in the alayon. Then farmers start sharing their problems and discussing them one by one.

In the discussion, the farmer instructor is very careful not to offend members who are concerned – for instance those who are always late and absent from alayon work. When all the problems are listed on the board, the farmers work out their own solutions by asking questions like 'What do you think is the best thing to do to avoid absenteeism among members?' instead of saying, 'This is what you should do.'

For example, solutions to some of the problems mentioned above are as follows:

- Farmers agreed that all, including the farmer instructor, should bring their own food when attending alayon work.
- Alayon groups imposed a fine to discourage late-comers.
- Alayon members stopped sending their children as substitutes. Instead, they sent somebody older who was capable of doing the farm tasks.
- Farmers agreed to be honest and dedicated in their alayon tasks.

Maylaine P Tabasa works with the Mag-uugmad Foundation as a media production officer. Their address is PO Box 286, 6000 Cebu City, Philippines.



Photo: Greenleaf

Alayon members immediately try out what they learn.

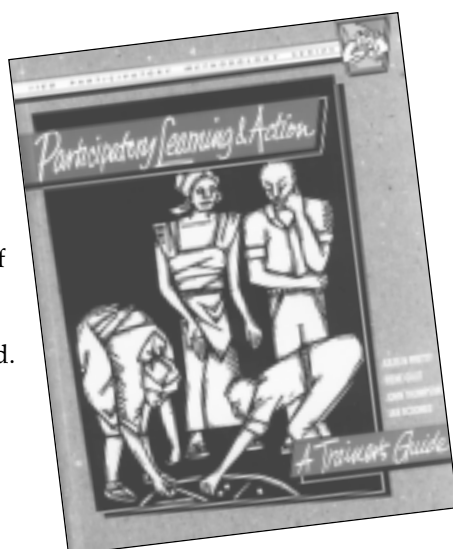
Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide

by Pretty, Guijt, Thompson and Scoones

This is an excellent and comprehensive guide to the whole subject of PLA. It is well designed and easy to read and use with 267 pages. It covers a wide range of topics, from warm-up exercises with newly formed groups, to adult learning and the challenges of training in the field. Full details are given for 101 exercises, including their uses, time involved, materials needed and how to use them. This would be an excellent resource for trainers.

It costs £18 including surface postage from:

IT Bookshop
103-105 Southampton Row
London
WC1B 4HH
UK



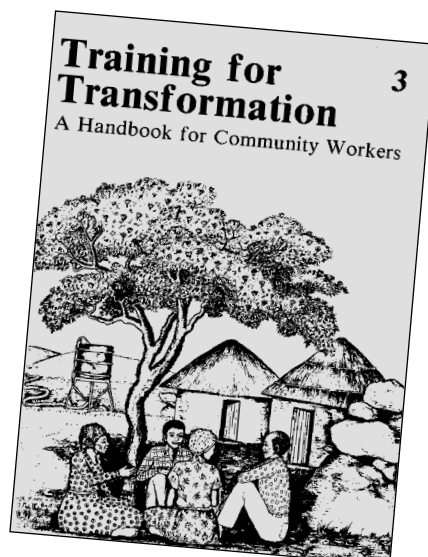
Training for Transformation

by Hope and Timmel

There are three manuals (approx 180 pages each) in the series. First printed in 1984, they provide an excellent introduction to participatory development and are full of practical ideas, suggestions, case studies and exercises. They have been widely used by many organisations. Though expensive, they would be a valuable investment as a group resource for any organisation. The total cost of sending all three copies by surface mail is US \$ 68. Discounts are available for large orders.

Available from:

Mambo Press
Box 779
Gweru
Zimbabwe



Participatory Rural Appraisal: Practical Experiences

by Nabasa, Rutwara, Walker and Were
Natural Resource Institute, UK

This booklet provides a very straightforward introduction to the use of participatory exercises. It costs £7.50. However single copies are available, free of charge to educational groups, research institutions and non-profit-making organisations in countries receiving British aid. Write, using your official title (not name), to:

NRI
Central Avenue
Chatham Maritime
Kent
ME4 4TB
UK

A Participatory Systematization Workbook

by Daniel Selener with Gabriela Zapata and Christopher Purdy

This manual is aimed at any group involved with development projects, whether large NGOs or small grass-roots organisations. Systematization is a continuous process of participatory reflection about projects involving both staff and participants. It looks first at how to analyse projects, then how to draw lessons from this analysis which can help to improve the project as it continues.

The manual is very clearly laid out, with key ideas presented so that they can be understood easily. Many examples are given of how to analyse options and possible solutions. Much of the text is laid out in boxes and tables, for copying and using more widely. Permission is given for any page to be copied, reproduced and adapted to local needs.

This would be very helpful for any group involved in planning projects. It costs US \$20 including postage and is available in Spanish and English (about to be printed) from the following address:

IIRR
Oficina Regional para América Latina
Ap Do 17-08-8494
Quito
Ecuador
Fax (593-2) 443 763
Email: daniel@iirr.ecx.ec

PLA contacts

Many groups produce useful resources for PLA work. Here are some addresses to write to for further information...

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

They produce a number of books, booklets, research papers and a very good series – *PLA Notes* (free for many southern groups).

International Institute for Environment and Development, Endsleigh Street, London, WC1 0DD, UK
E-mail: iiedagri@gn.apc.org.

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Center for International Development and Environment, 1709 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20006, USA

MYRADA

This group in South India produce a number of useful resources about the use of PLA – known as PALM to them. These include a very helpful training video – *A Participant's Diary of a PRA Exercise in Karnataka, India*.

MYRADA, 2 Service Road, Domlur Layout, Bangalore, 560 071, India

Setting up Community Health Programmes

by Dr Ted Lankester

This practical manual covers all aspects of setting up and running community health projects. Particular emphasis is given to the need to consult the local community long before the programme begins. Chapters deal with working with partners in the community, decision making, monitoring and evaluation, immunisation, TB, AIDS, maternity, family planning and malnutrition programmes. Plenty of practical tips are included. The book is written in simple English and well illustrated. Recommended to anyone concerned with community health care.

A second edition is soon to be published. As an active member of the *Footsteps* Committee, Dr Lankester is offering a limited number of free copies of the first edition to *Footsteps* readers working in community health care. If you would like a free copy please write, giving brief details of your work, to:

Tear Fund Resources Dept
100 Church Road
Teddington
Middlesex
TW11 8QE
UK

An Indian edition of this book is available for 95 rupees which is highly recommended for anyone in the Indian subcontinent. Available from:

CMAI
Plot 2 A-3 Local Shopping Centre
Janakpuri
New Delhi 110 05
India

Maintaining Fish Quality: An Illustrated Guide

by S E Johnson and I J Lucas

Natural Resource Institute, UK

Readers who found the *Footsteps* issue on fish farming an encouragement and prepared their own fish ponds will find this book very helpful and well timed. Written in simple English with plenty of useful diagrams and illustrations, it is full of advice on how to look after fish once they have been harvested – processing methods, preserving techniques, transport and packaging. Ideal for fish farmers who live a long way from markets, it gives full details on salting, drying and smoking

fish. Maintaining fish quality from catching to eating should be every fish farmer's aim.

This practical book (94 pages) costs £7.50. Educational groups, research institutions and non-profit-making organisations in countries receiving British aid can apply for a free copy of this book. Write, using your official title (not name), to:

NRI
Central Avenue
Chatham Maritime
Kent
ME4 4TB
UK

The Tropical Agriculturalist Series

Four new books have recently been published in this useful series. They are

Goats, Avocado, Animal Health Vol 1 (Vol 2 was published earlier) and *Livestock Production Systems*. Each costs £6.75. They are practical and detailed resources for agricultural officers and trainers. They are available from:

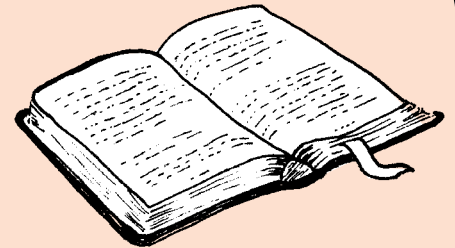
CTA
PO Box 380
6700 AJ Wageningen
The Netherlands



BIBLE STUDY

Each of us is special to God

by Isabel Carter



MANY PEOPLE feel they are failures. They may have failed to progress with their education; they may struggle to maintain their families; they may lack confidence because they lack outside knowledge. When others ask for their opinions, they may feel they have nothing to share. This lack of confidence in people is something which goes against biblical teaching.

Read Matthew 10:29-30 and Psalm 139:13-16. Here we see just how much value God gives to each one of us. None of us are worthless in God's sight. To him we are all special and valued.

Read Luke 15:1-2. Jesus was willing to mix with all kinds of people – no matter what others thought of them. This shows God's willingness to accept all people and our equal status before God. Jesus only condemned people if they claimed to be better than their neighbours (Luke 18:9-14).

In our work with people and communities we need to work **with** the poor and oppressed – not **for** them. We need to value each person and help them to feel more positively about themselves. We need to develop skills in listening and under-

standing. PLA exercises provide a useful tool to help people share their knowledge – but they will only work well when people believe that their experience and knowledge will be valued by those introducing the exercises.

Discussion questions

- How good are you at listening to other people's concerns? Do you really listen and encourage people to share their concerns and help them work out what they should do? Or are you just waiting for a pause in the conversation to give your advice?
- What would you like to be different in your life? What are you willing to do to bring about change? Do you need help and support from others? Or from God?
- How do you think of yourself? Do you regard your knowledge and training as something you have achieved through effort and hard work? Or do you regard your skills as a gift from God – to be shared freely with others?
- Consider how you treat the people you work with. Are they people with potential – or people with huge problems? How does God regard them?

Parkinsonia aculeata

by Julia Ambrose

THIS MULTIPURPOSE TREE comes from the Americas, but has been introduced throughout the tropics because of its many uses. It grows well in drier areas and will cope with poor or salty soils, occasional frost, low rainfall and long dry seasons. It is also known as Jerusalem thorn, Mexican palo verde or simply Parkinsonia.

It is an attractive tree to look at, with a green trunk, unusual leaves and bright yellow flowers. Parkinsonia is often grown as an ornamental tree but it has other important uses. It is short, thorny and fast growing and can quickly provide a barrier to keep livestock out (or in) or act as a windbreak. It can stabilise loose soils and protect them from erosion. It can add nitrogen to the soils and improve the soil's fertility.

The leaves and seeds can be fed to sheep and goats, especially during the dry season. It also has some human food uses. The fruit pulp and flowers are sweet and enjoyed by children. A refreshing drink can be made from fermented fruits. Other uses include herbal medicine for digestive and other problems, fibre for paper making and fuelwood and timber.

The seeds remain viable for long periods and germinate easily after soaking in

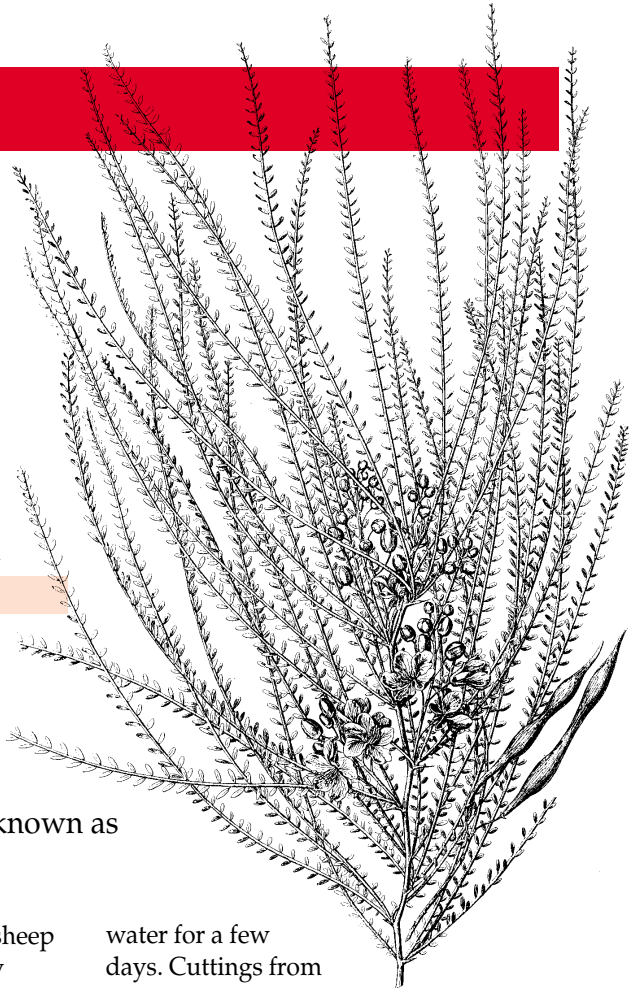
water for a few days. Cuttings from roots or shoots can also be taken. In fact it is so easy to grow that it can become a weed. Seeds are available from many sources. Here are a few:

*Institut Senegalais de Recherches Agricoles
Centre National de Recherches
Laboratoire de Graines
Parc Forestier de Hann
BP 2312
Dakar
Senegal*

*Forestry Research Institute of Malawi
PO Box 270
Zomba
Malawi*

*Latin American Forest Tree Seed Bank
CATIE
Turrialba
Costa Rica*

*India Nursery and Seeds Sales Corporation
PO Box 4314
36/962 DDA Flats, Kalkaji
New Delhi 19
India*



SEPASAL (Survey of Economic Plants for Arid and Semi-Arid Lands)

This brief information about *Parkinsonia aculeata* is an example of the information held on about 6000 species in SEPASAL, a database of useful plants of dry areas. It doesn't include the main food crops. SEPASAL was developed in 1981 with funding from Oxfam and is maintained at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Recent funding from the Clothworkers' Foundation has helped it to expand its activities.

There are two ways SEPASAL might be useful to you. Perhaps you know of a species that you would like more information about. Or you may be trying to discover if there is a plant that might grow well in your local environment and would provide you with products, such as fibre or fruit, or provide shade or help prevent soil erosion.

Contact us and we will search our database for you. Please give as much information as possible about the types of plants you are interested in. For example:

- Are they trees, shrubs or herbs? ■ What kind of environment? ■ What uses do you require?

This service is free to non-commercial users. In return we ask for feedback about the value (or otherwise!) of the service and ideas from you about how to improve it. We are also interested in developing stronger links with individuals or projects who could make wider use of our database if it could be adapted to their needs. We look forward to hearing from you! Please note that we ourselves cannot provide seeds or funding – simply information.

SEPASAL Tel +44 (0)181 332 5772 Fax +44 (0)181 332 5768 email sepasal@rbgkew.org.uk
Centre for Economic Botany, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 3AE, UK

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CHRISTIAN CONCERN IN A WORLD OF NEED

100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, UK

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