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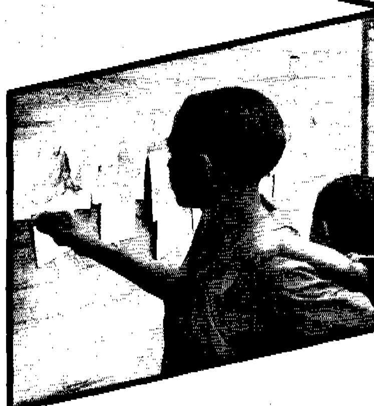
# Options for Educators



## A Monograph for Decision Makers on Alternative Participatory Strategies

Lyra Srinivasan

PACT/CDS

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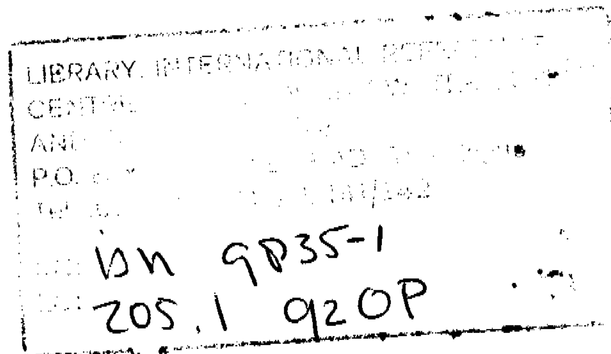
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## TO THE READER

Today, all of us concerned with eradicating poverty feel the urgency to push for accelerated and expanded action.

However, the meaningful contributions of the poor as decision makers must remain central to any ambitious blueprint for change. If it is not, we risk the past once again becoming prologue to the future.

Effecting widespread transformation requires that we first be intimate with sound, proven principles for engaging people at the local level. We can then make such principles an organic part of all training, strategic program design, and advocacy.

This monograph first compares three major approaches to reaching and involving people. It then concretely suggests ways to build participatory methods into the training of staff, volunteers, and other animators and technical specialists — and discusses wider strategic concerns.

This work is presented in the hope that you, the reader and strategist, can use it as a foundation for keeping people at the heart of your own emerging plans for reversing the forces of poverty and disenfranchisement — regardless of the discipline(s) in which you work.

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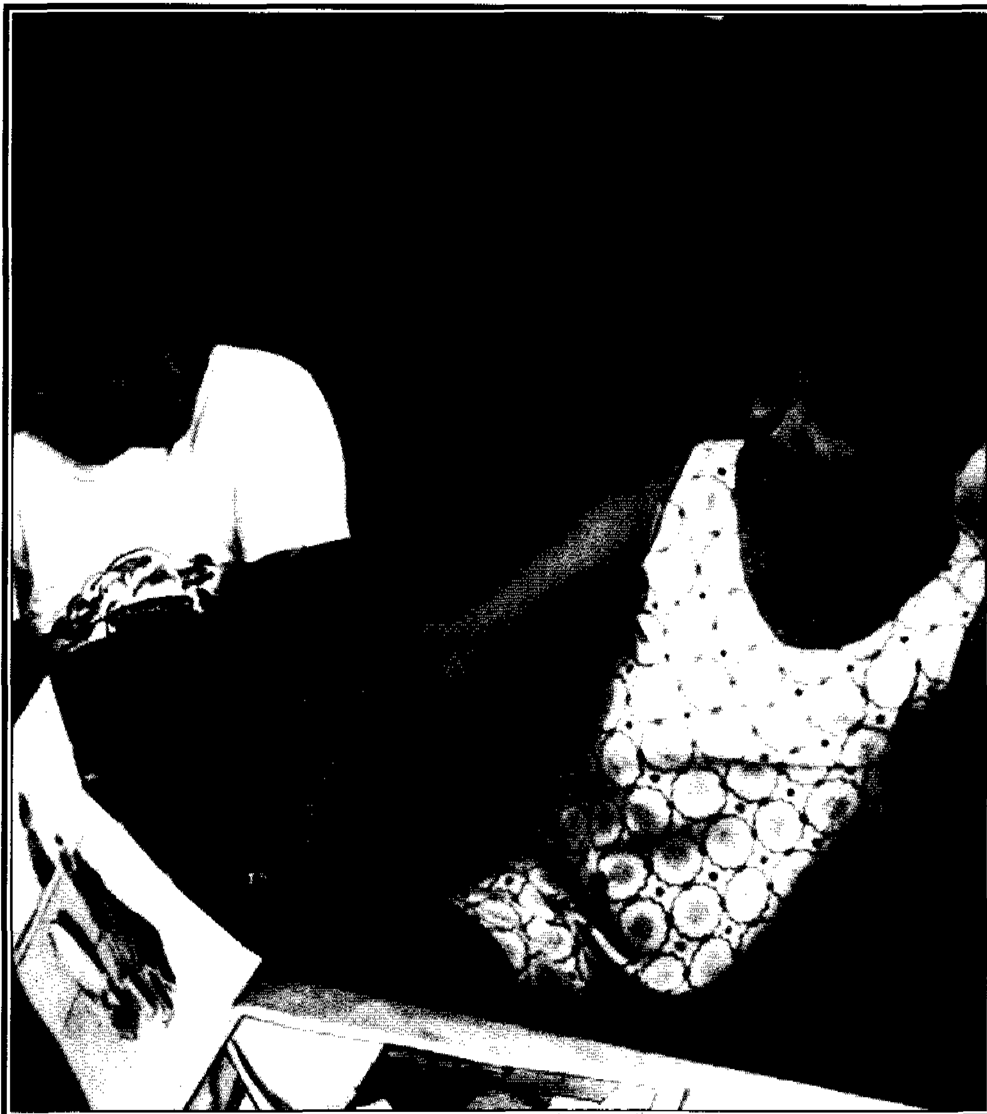

Chris Srini Vasan

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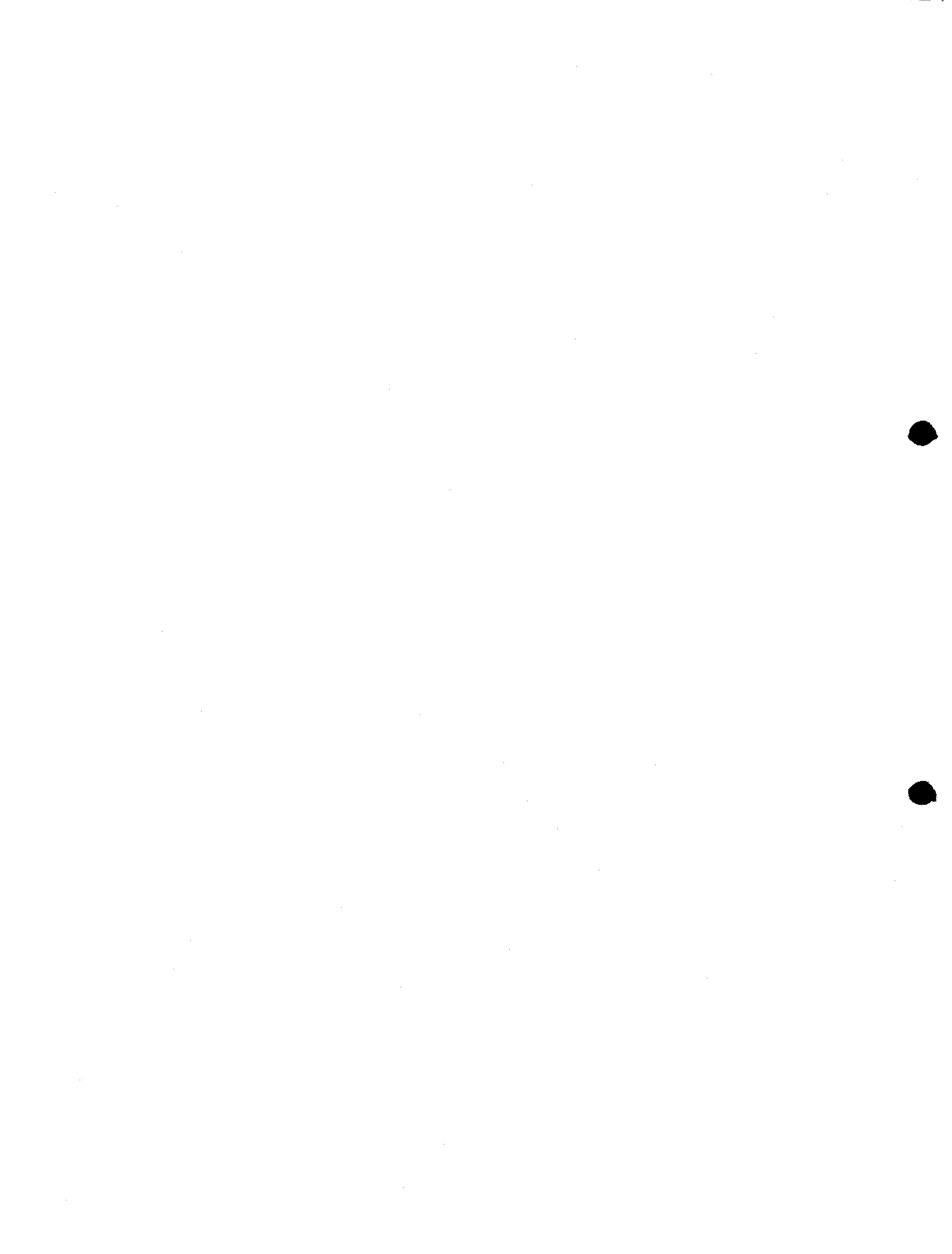

# Acknowledgments

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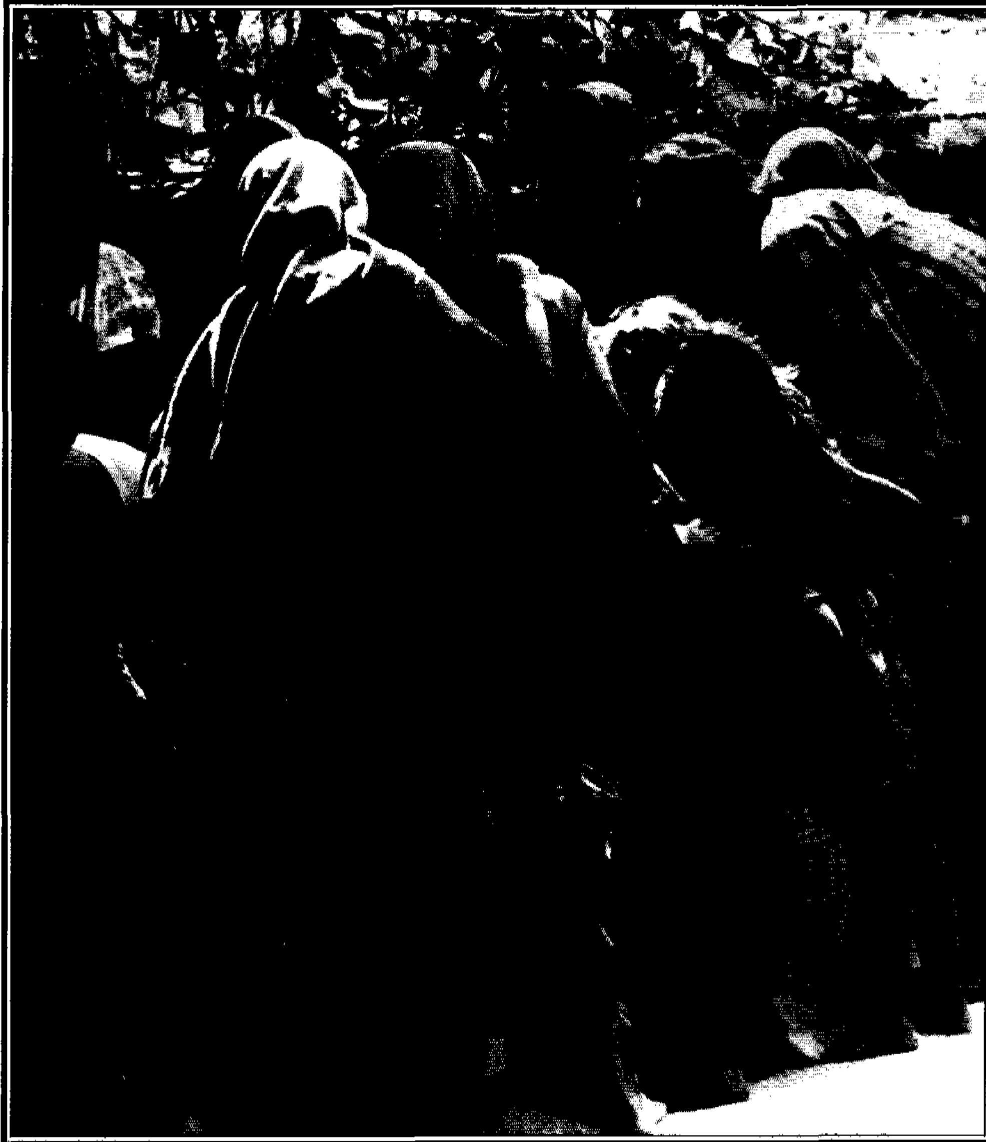


Village Education Resource Center, Bangladesh

# PREFACE

The present monograph is a sequel to my earlier monograph, *Perspectives on Nonformal Adult Learning*, and complements *Tools for Community Participation*, both written with trainers and adult educators in mind. *Perspectives* focused on broad philosophical issues and their influence on field programs, while *Tools* illustrated specific participatory techniques and aids based on SARAR principles.[1]

In this monograph my principal aim is to further reflect on the growth-centered approach of which SARAR is an example. This is accomplished by first showing its relationship to two other educational strategies — didactic teaching and conscientization — and then examining its application in practice, such as in the training of trainers. I begin by reviewing the relevance of these alternative educational strategies to a problem that concerns us all: combatting poverty. If our goal is to eradicate poverty, in what way can such educational strategies help? What is the rationale of each option? And what fundamental differences or complementarities can we detect in the methods and principles they utilize?

Part I focuses on these questions and issues, acknowledging that the choices are not easy. In fact these optional approaches have for decades been the subject of heated controversies among educators from different schools of thought. These debates are not empty polemics but profound and impassioned challenges. They are prompted by the common concern to find the best ways to reach, engage and even help ennoble the human mind, thereby enhancing the quality of people's self-reliant participation in development. This issue becomes more acute in today's world when we acknowledge that combatting poverty is a lost cause without the community's intelligent, self-directed effort.

[1] An explanation of the acronym SARAR is given in Annex A.

Part I of this monograph analyzes the basis for these profound controversies in the education field by examining the methods they each utilize with the people. From this comparative analysis we should be able to determine whether their differences are, for our purposes, irreconcilable, or whether their strengths could in some way be combined into a single powerful strategy at the service of development.

Whichever option we choose, one major need we must face is how to train staff in techniques of involving people. While most trainers would readily agree on the importance of the participatory approach, the question is how to apply it in an actual training situation. This applies in particular to the growth-centered approach, a concept which to many still seems nebulous and elusive. Trainers have asked, for example, that the underlying principles of the SARAR method be made more explicit in order to help them train facilitators.

Part II of this monograph is devoted to the practical application of growth principles with special attention to training facilitators. Here I attempt to clarify the principles that have worked for me and many of my colleagues over the years in conducting participatory workshops based on the SARAR methodology. I do so with a concern that they not be mistaken for maxims to be accepted on faith. The very essence of the participatory approach is inquiry: it thrives on investigation and challenge, on probing for new insights, on searching and uncovering. My hope is that the present monograph will propel us along that inquiry route and dare us to achieve new levels of understanding through our own reflectiveness and analysis as educators.

I use the term "educators" here in its broadest sense, since a process as complex as human development must necessarily be the product of many inputs. Educators, to my mind, are not only those who directly teach, train, instruct or facilitate. The term, in fact, can legitimately apply to all who form part of the development intervention system. We each in our own way carry responsibility for the ultimate quality and impact of the educational effort. We do so, for example, through the way we define and apply program policies and operational guidelines; through the opportunities we choose to fund and the resources we regulate; through the targets we set and the performance incentives we provide. Even the way an engineer, a doctor or field investigator interacts with villagers constitutes an important element in the people's capacity-building process. Program managers in particular must be able to envisage clearly the educational implications of their own leadership role and that of various decision making cadre of personnel within the program.

In a more specific way, of course, the term educator applies to those directly responsible for planning and conducting training activities, of whatever kind and at whatever level, so as to contribute to and support community-based

educational activities. For this reason, a substantial portion of Part II is addressed specifically to trainers. They are the ones who help connect the nerve endings which facilitate the flow of participatory impulses throughout the system.

Because of the importance of this role, they need to master the skills of facilitation and apply them with confidence, ingenuity and discernment. They will then be in a position to adapt participatory techniques and tools, and indeed to invent new ones appropriate to the roles and levels of responsibility of the different staff categories constituting the intervention system. A few examples of SARAR tools adaptable to management level are given in Part III.

I shall be pleased if this monograph serves to stimulate fresh thinking on current options in education, but even more so if it encourages further creative initiatives tempered by reflective analysis of the specific purposes and principles they serve. The field for innovation is wide open. We have only to get going.

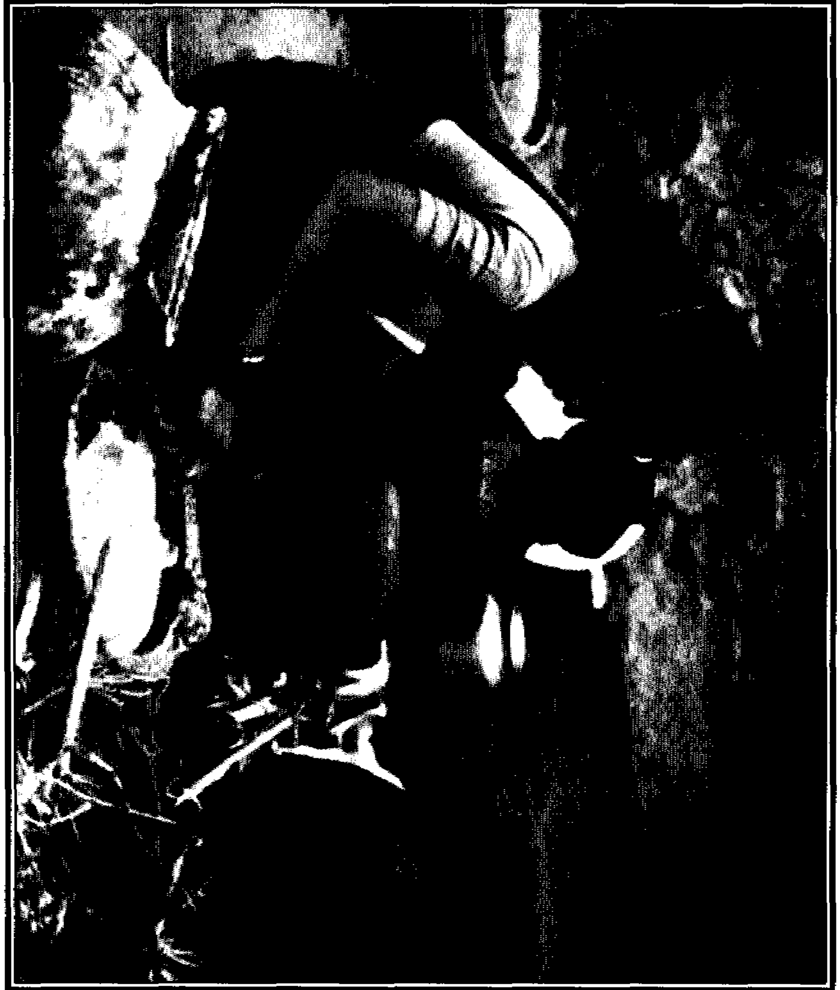
Lyra Srinivasan

Part I:

# The Concepts Behind Participatory Strategies

Chris Srini Vasan

Chris Srini Vasan



# CHAPTER 1

# Education in the Poverty Context

## The Goal and the Context

Recent events around the world have given all nations unexpected insights into the pervasive nature of poverty and how its presence threatens the future of all humankind.

But while combatting poverty has finally become a goal to which the global community can relate, the complexity of the problem has never been clearer. Attempts to resolve it cannot be piecemeal as before; they have to result from an integrated and comprehensive effort, a simultaneous push at both macro and micro levels, through the combined thrust of a powerful battery of strategies.

Education has a role of immeasurable importance in this total effort. Since its primary concern is human development, it can mobilize the people's energies for constructive action. Changing a mind-set can mean changing a destiny.

Clearly poverty has many causes, but I am among those who believe its strongest roots are in the human mind. Just as wars are said to begin in the minds of men, so also does poverty. It often begins in the minds of the powerful, the exploitive and the corrupt, and makes devastating inroads into the minds of the dispossessed. Once the idea of poverty as an *inescapable* fact takes hold of the mind, it diminishes the person and enslaves the will.

There are instances, although still few, where men and women of great daring have refused to accept poverty as their fate and have searched and found

resources within themselves to take them to the top. Repeated defeats and oppressive forces in the environment cannot hold back such people; they emerge stronger through their process of self-discovery, and are inwardly driven by a sense of purpose and an unshakable faith in their power to overcome. This is the kind of power we need for development; but how can it be induced, cultivated or aroused?

Our villagers and urban slum dwellers have been conditioned through decades of neglect, hardship and subjugation to doubt that the system can be changed, and to mistrust their own capacity to change it. Their aspirations are bounded by a low self-concept and feelings of dependency and vulnerability. In the absence of a strong and representative social organization through which to articulate their needs, they tend to stay voiceless and submissive to the limits of human endurance. Many, as in the case of rural women, may never have had a chance to discover what they can do and how well they can do it under conditions of equity and encouragement.

Something very profound clearly has to happen to stir up the mind, brace the spirit, and release people's latent energies if they are to respond with vigor and maturity to the many demands on their cooperation made by development programs. Our strategies for educating the adult poor must therefore be of the highest possible caliber.

## The Need to Review Options

The whole issue of how to enable adults to take control of their lives has concerned educators over many decades. Influences from many distinct branches of the social sciences have converged on the education scene, opening up new vistas into adult learning and encouraging experimentation with alternative techniques to motivate and engage the learner. The overall aim is a shared one but the objectives and the means designed to achieve it have varied widely. Conceptual differences among strategies also reflect, in each case, a different diagnosis of the causes of underdevelopment and the changes considered essential for achieving a higher quality of life.

At this critical time when program decision makers must make some hard choices among strategies, I believe it is important that they be fully aware of these conceptual differences and how they affect operational activities.

In an earlier monograph, I ventured to identify some of these major influences on current educational thinking in order to highlight the trends which they have set in motion. A wide review of that kind is not necessary for purposes of our discussion here. However, it is useful for us to look, in closer detail, at

selected educational approaches, each of which represents a different school of thought. By examining the methods and tools they each have used in working with disadvantaged communities, we can clarify how they differ or overlap, and from there explore ways in which they may enrich and complement one another.

## Underlying Behavioral Concerns

This review will be more purposeful if it is guided by the concerns of program managers in planning their community development activities. Basically, their concerns seem to focus on three types of needs:

### The Need to Help People Develop Coping Skills

This concern applies to a wide range of behaviors; for example, not drinking polluted water; using the right kind and amount of fertilizer; giving infants the proper weaning foods; constructing latrines; doing simple accounts; repairing a pump; managing a small business; inoculating cattle; building a smokeless fireplace; filling out bank forms for loans.

The strategy adopted to induce such behavioral change is often based on two assumptions: that there is a knowledge gap which prevents people from adopting new behaviors; and that one person or group of persons *owns* that knowledge and is therefore in a position to transmit or impart it to another. The role of the instructor, accordingly, carries the overtones of a social obligation by the more privileged to help the less fortunate to survive. Here the central aim of education is to promote *coping behavior*.

### The Need to Promote Assertive or Militant Behavior Among the Oppressed

Here the concern is based on the conviction that poverty cannot be overcome without addressing the societal factors that perpetuate it. The focus is on equalizing opportunities, eliminating inequities, and where necessary, reforming society itself. The educational aims include helping the poor become aware that they are being exploited; helping them reassess their own capabilities as a group; and preparing them for collective action to secure their rights. The problems addressed may range from exploitation by money lenders and middlemen, to domination by the landowning class, to management by corruption. Thus to attack such problems, what is deemed essential is not coping but *transforming behavior*.

### The Need to Help People Develop Optimal Capacity for Self-Reliance

This concern often follows from the fact that development agencies have limited resources and they need the collaboration of local communities to achieve mutually agreed upon goals. The key words commonly used in this regard are "effective use," "sustainability" and "replicability" of improvements. All three require a strong component of self-reliance by the people as partners in development. In practical terms, this implies enabling people to optimally develop and utilize their capacity to plan, take initiatives, self-organize and shoulder maintenance responsibilities. But the problem addressed is larger than that in scope. It concerns the development by people of the capacity to transcend their limitations through constructive and creative action based on a new perception of themselves and a new vision of their future. The need then, is to find strategies that will help to cultivate attitudes, attributes and capabilities which characterize *transcending behavior.*

These three types of behavioral concerns and the programs which reflect them at field level are discussed in greater detail in Chapters Two through Four.

## Relationship of Behavioral Concerns to Educational Strategies

The three behavioral concerns — coping, transforming and transcending — correspond to three distinct (though not mutually exclusive) educational strategies that are currently in use at the micro level:

- ◆ **Didactic** — the most commonly used strategy, also known as content-centered, directive, traditional, or formal instructional style. Its variants include Communications as a goal-oriented, message-focused strategy, and Social Marketing as a means of delivering educative messages.
- ◆ **Conscientization or Consciousness-Raising** — an approach which places primary emphasis on mobilizing the poor to initiate a revolutionary process of social change to liberate them from oppression.
- ◆ **The Growth-Centered approach** — also known as learner-oriented, nondirective or participatory strategy, which aims at enabling people to discover and exert the power which is already in them for autonomous constructive action. It takes many forms because of its openness and flexibility. A variant described in this monograph is the SARAR approach.

## Relationship to People-Centered Development

In order to place these primarily micro level strategies within the framework of wider current efforts to accelerate development, we should briefly

review the emergence of what is known as the people-centered development strategy.

The term "people-centered development," as applied in the 1989 Manila Inter-regional Consultation on Environmental Sustainable Development, reflected a loss of faith in the prevailing model of development controlled by State-dominated policies and foreign-assisted institutions. This model was faulted for imposing external agendas on the poor, for weakening government accountability to its own citizens, for escalating the national debt burden, for depriving the poor of access to productive assets essential to their livelihood, and for divesting people of their sense of community and control over their own lives. Transformation of this system to one authentically centered on people was thus seen as a priority concern. Such a change would restore control over resources to the people and their communities to use in meeting their own needs; would broaden political participation and official accountability through stronger people's organizations and participatory local governments; would safeguard freedom of association and open access to information as a civic right; and would assess the success of the development efforts in relation to people's enhanced capacity to determine their own future.

## Links to Reforms

At least two other international commissions have recently stressed similar values and issues as being of global concern for sustainable development. In 1990 the South Commission, chaired by Julius Nyerere, former President of Tanzania, strongly advocated a people-centered strategy interlinked with economic and political reform that included improving domestic economic management, and curbing authoritarianism, corruption and militarization. Also in 1990, the Stockholm Commission reiterated the need to create an environment "which enables people to expand and use their capabilities to the fullest extent possible — the essence of self-reliant development."[2] An enabling environment for this purpose, in the Commission's view, would require conducive macro-level economic and social policies and political backing for real change.

## The Search for Strategies

These and similar high level pronouncements on a people-centered approach to development give welcome indication of a growing sense of global responsibility to combat poverty with whatever it takes. The problem is how to translate these vital propositions and sentiments into practical strategies of direct benefit to the poor. For example, few would dispute the democratic value of the principle that "people have a right to a voice in making the decisions that influence their lives and decision making should be as close to the

[2]The Stockholm Commission, *Common Responsibility in the 1990's, the Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance* (Stockholm: Prime Minister's Office, 1991), 20.

level of the individual, family and community as possible."[3] But in practical terms, what factors would stand in the way of the poorest of the poor fulfilling such a role? When would the required macro level measures become operative to free people to make such decisions? And assuming that such reforms on a national or even global scale have been initiated, who then would facilitate (and how) the first steps in decision making by communities or segments of communities (e.g., women) which for generations have been deprived of opportunities to be involved in significant decision making?

Thus while the evolution of development thinking in recent years has brought about a much clearer and more daring global commitment to large scale institutional reforms — without which people's participation cannot flourish — let us not forget that we still have much to learn about strategies for meaningfully involving local community residents. Thus our efforts at critically examining the strategy choices available at the micro level must continue unabated. In doing so, we need to take stock of the impediments we are likely to face in institutionalizing a participatory approach in our own settings which, over time, can move with deliberacy from micro to macro.

## Constraints to Implementing Participatory Programs

It is now commonly agreed that the main constraints to participation all hinge on issues of power. But what exactly this means in terms of an enabling process is not always easy to grasp.

Sensitivity to this issue is particularly important in training trainers to be facilitators. Let me illustrate this point with a simple example from a set of training materials we use when sensitizing trainers to the difference between authoritarian, directive approaches, and participatory, nondirective approaches. Rarely do trainees have any difficulty recognizing photograph **A** on page 13 as authoritarian and photograph **B** as nondirective, since each is clearly demonstrated by the individual's body language. But photograph **C** generally evokes controversy. Most trainees tend to categorize it as highly participatory, given the number of hands eagerly raised for a chance to respond, while a few point out that it is directive because the teacher is in control: "She obviously decided what question to ask," "She is waiting to decide which student she will select to respond," or "She has a right answer in mind and can reject or reward what the students say" are some of the sound reasons advanced for questioning the authenticity of the participation taking place. In one workshop we changed the instructions for the task and asked the groups to choose which photographs they liked (or disliked) the most from the viewpoint of the educational transaction taking place. The results were surprising. One group, for example, chose picture **A** as its best for the following reasons: "The children are all quiet and



[3] David C. Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century* (Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1990), 69.

disciplined," "The teacher has control. If he cannot control he cannot teach," "He is a serious teacher."

A

UN/Photo

In giving this simple example from field practice I wish to emphasize the fact that the concepts and values of the extension worker (and by implication the concepts and values of their trainers, supervisors and program managers) will undoubtedly determine how facilitative or directive the interface experience is likely to be for the adults involved. Our first task then is to enable staff at all levels to become aware, through their own critical reflection and peer sharing of experience, of how the maldistribution of power affects participation and how important it is for facilitators to stretch their own capacity to decentralize power.

B.

Ron Sawyer

As I see it, there are three sets of power-related constraints that stand in the way of the participatory process.

C.

UN/Photo

The first is the control exercised by those in positions of privilege or authority who stand to gain by the submissiveness of others, whether in terms of reinforcing their own status, fulfilling their own agenda, or siphoning profits into their own coffers. This is a recurrent issue that will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Three of this Part.

The second set of constraints are the attitudinal factors within the local communities themselves, which are largely caused by the erosion of people's

power over many decades. These attitudinal constraints provide the context for Chapter Four in particular.

The third set of constraints arises from ambivalence within the support system itself. There is interest in utilizing participatory strategies, but concern over the possible consequences of loss of power and control. To a large extent this is a training and awareness-building issue which is the theme of Parts II and III of this monograph.

Since the first set of constraints is by now widely acknowledged and often requires macro level solutions, I will limit the discussion below to the second and third set of obstacles as the context for this review of educational options.

## Attitudinal Constraints Within Local Communities

The best intentions of field staff will get them nowhere if they are unprepared to understand how community members feel about themselves and their situation.

Community values and expectations of roles and relationships, built over decades, can run directly counter to our hope for self-reliance. Hierarchical structures and exploitive systems have helped ingrain attitudes of fatalism and dependency. In many communities, field workers who try to engage community members in problem solving often find responses which throw the responsibility for solutions back to them. "You are the ones who have education. You know about these things. You tell us," or "We are poor. What can we do? It is for the Government to take care of us," are typical villager's responses. Rural women, in particular, may feel that they have nothing to contribute because they are illiterate and inexperienced in community affairs.

Thus any good strategy, I believe, must aim at understanding and helping to overcome people's negative attitudes toward themselves and their situations; disengage them from the shackles of dependency and intimidation; and enable people to discover, in a new freedom, their capacity to change and direct their lives.

Here are some examples of profound and pervasive attitudinal constraints that need to be addressed:

- Feelings of powerlessness, of being excluded from resources and decisions.
- Low self-esteem; feeling that one's opinion does not count.
- Self-deprecation.
- Lack of confidence in expressing one's own ideas; reluctance to do so in open meetings.

- Overwhelming sense of deference to the privileged class, particularly those in authority.
- Fear of appearing to step out of line; fear of ridicule or social censure.
- Fear of taking risks in new ventures, or of adopting innovations involving economic costs.
- Lack of confidence in one's capacity for analytic thinking and critical reflection to solve problems.
- Reluctance to be creative. Lack of assurance that creativity will be approved, enjoyed and appreciated.
- Lack of a sense of belonging to a group with sufficient "clout."
- Lack of trust in effective group functioning and institutional support.
- Absence of a sense of control and direction due to lack of planning skills.

It should be self-evident that a warm and supportive relationship in working with the adult poor, based on genuine respect for their human worth and combined with opportunities for them to experience success, should go a long way toward restoring self-esteem and confidence.

## Ambivalence Within the Support System

Development planning in the past has rarely given the human factor the importance it deserves. Budgets for adult education software are generally meager, if they exist at all. Capital investments and substantial infrastructural and service inputs have been put at risk by our failure to insure them with investments in human beings. Underestimating the task and misdiagnosing the problem all too often have produced false starts and costly disappointments.

Admittedly the solution is not easy. Listed below are some specific impediments.

### *Unfamiliar methodology*

One constraint is simply a question of **methodology**. For example, some engineers, agronomists, health inspectors and other technical personnel, though supportive in principle, may not have confidence in applying participatory techniques if their training has not prepared them to do so. If they see their job as primarily technical — building bridges, drilling tube-wells, installing sanitation systems, or advising on fertilizers — they may consider that "all this people-building software stuff," as one engineer put it, is beyond them. Viewing this as a purely educational issue they, as well as managers of all types, may prefer to leave it to those who are designated "educators," "trainers" or "social development" personnel. We need to build a special

bridge between administrative, technical and software personnel so that they can achieve a common vision of people-centered change and team up in mutually supportive roles.

### *Loss of control*

For some managers, the idea of **sharing decision-making power** with villagers seems unrealistic. They foresee many pitfalls to decentralization. One community development project, for example, reports that program administrators and practitioners disagreed among themselves about the influence that villagers and village leadership should have. At the start of the project, debate focused on the need for the management to remain in control of the planning process. Some felt strongly that such planning was beyond the knowledge, skills, commitment and energy levels of local villagers. It took time and practical experience to convince them otherwise, but it happened.

### *Complexity*

Some agency personnel are baffled by the **implied complexity** of aligning national priorities with the "felt needs" of rural communities. National plans are solidly based on targets, manpower and scheduled inputs/outputs. Their aims and content, often segmented by discipline or sector, have been predetermined, presumably by the best minds in the country. Officials whose managerial style depends on predictability can feel threatened and confused by the requirement to be responsive to local felt needs, which are kaleidoscopic in their variety and mutability.[4]

In such instances decision makers could benefit greatly from training experiences that help them see how managerial participatory techniques can be applied in varied contexts. Such orientation is needed early in the project planning stage.

### *Large scale issues*

Some feel stymied by the **problem of scale.** In one West African project, for instance, although field staff had been trained in participatory approaches, the geographic area they were expected to cover was so large, and the pace of work so pressured, that they could not effectively apply, evaluate and improve their facilitative techniques. They needed help to work their way out of this problem. Discrepancies of this type often arise when training decisions and operational decisions have not been properly aligned.

### *Pressure of targets*

Some believe that the slower **pace of people's participation** will prevent them from achieving set targets on schedules established with donor agencies.



[4]cf. Deepa Narayan Parker, *Goals and Indicators* (New York: PROWWESS/UNDP, 1990).

They fear this might result in loss of future donor funding. They may therefore feel compelled to take shortcuts to show results, with or without people's actual participation. In a nutrition project I visited, the staff were busy digging kitchen gardens for the people in order to complete the expected target quota before submitting their six-month report to the funding agency. Project leadership and donor agencies need to agree on flexibility in meeting targets to accommodate the pace of local readiness for change.

All these impediments to participation, both real and subjective, deserve the serious attention of top program decision makers. Only then can we hope to avoid ad hoc and piecemeal solutions. It is at that level that we must shed the jargon, make commitments and be prepared to restructure institutional arrangements, if necessary, to allow a genuine enabling process to take place and to expand.

We have already noted that creating an enabling environment in its fullest sense involves changes of many kinds at many levels. There is however, a clear task for the educator at the micro level. It is within the intimacy of group problem solving and community interaction that people realize and apply their own talents as decision makers. Sustainability is, in the final analysis, a micro decision.

## A Closer Look at Strategies

The three options reviewed in the chapters to follow are essentially oriented to local communities. The tools and techniques used by each option to engage the learner are very different. "Different" does not, of course, mean better or worse. That judgement must be made in relation to the objective(s) they are expected to serve. For that reason I have included some case examples.

The differences in the degree of directiveness or openness within these options are not difficult to spot. Undoubtedly, there is also a difference in the way some field staff apply a strategy and the way it was intended to be applied. Since these considerations apply to all strategies, we should not be overly judgmental in our assessments of any one of them.

Because this review may touch on some controversial issues, I want to preface it with a few sage words by John Dewey when he addressed similarly embattled theorists of his time:

> All social movements involve conflicts which are reflected intellectually in controversies. It would not be a sign of health of such an important social interest if education were not also an arena of struggles, practical and theoretical... It is the business of an intelligent theory of education to ascertain the causes for the conflicts that exist and then, instead of taking one side or the

> other, to indicate a plan of operations proceeding from a level deeper and more inclusive than is represented by the practices and ideas of the contending parties.[5]

I also realize that in attempting to present different options analytically in the present chapter, I may not be able to do justice to them in the same way and with the same enthusiasm as would be done by their own proponents. In the second section of this monograph in particular, my own bias for the growth-centered approach is very likely to show and the reader is duly warned.

But in the final analysis, we must be guided by what in practice is the most plausible, feasible and effective way to enable the poor to resolve their problems. If an educational process is what is needed, and I believe it is, then let us opt for the best educational strategy or combination of strategies that can do the job.

It is hard to resist quoting John Dewey again in this respect. At the height of controversy on his own stand on education Dewey said:

> I wish to record my firm belief that the fundamental issue is not new versus old education nor of progressive versus traditional education, but a question of what anything, whatever, must be to be worthy of the name education. The basic question concerns the nature of education with no qualifying adjectives pre-fixed. What we want and need is education pure and simple, and we shall make surer and faster progress when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education may be a reality and not a name or a slogan.[6]



[5]John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Collier Books, 1977), 5.
[6]Ibid., 90.

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# CHAPTER 2

# The Didactic Mode

## Content-Based Education, From Two Perspectives

A recurrent theme in the selection of options is that of content-based vs learner-centered education. This *either/or dilemma*, as Dewey calls it, has appeared at different times under different names: traditional vs progressive education; didactic vs participatory; directive vs nondirective. The simplest explanation of why this debate persists may be the one offered by William James: "There is an everlasting struggle in every mind between the tendency to keep unchanged and the tendency to renovate its ideas."

To help lay this controversy to rest we need to examine, as impartially as possible, the rationale for the traditional, didactic, directive or content-focused system — and what are conceived to be its strengths and advantages — before exposing it to its opponents' critical darts.

## Didactic Teaching

The traditional content-focused or didactic instructional style has for years been a most-favored vehicle for delivering accumulated knowledge and

imparting technical skills which, in the opinion of sponsoring institutions, are needed by the people.

## Perceived Advantages

The two greatest advantages it offers its sponsors are content focus, and ease and control of operations:

- The sponsoring agency can on its own authority select the content to be delivered. It can organize and package the content well ahead of time in the form of a curriculum.
- Texts, manuals, visual aids and other supporting materials can be kept ready in advance for use as and when needed.
- The agency can closely monitor the conduct of teaching units or the delivery of preselected messages through an established and mandatory calendar of activities.
- By entrusting the selection of content to specialists, the agency can count on its being accurate and comprehensive.
- The instructor's job is simplified; the kind and amount of information or the format of messages appropriate to any given learning group has already been prescribed by skilled professionals. An instructor can, for example, with the help of a flip chart, cover the precise content prescribed in the curriculum with ease, because each page of the flip chart already comes with the written text of the message to be taught, and the pages are organized in the precise order in which messages should be delivered.
- Evaluation is a simple matter of administering tests or asking questions to determine if content has been assimilated as taught and can be correctly recalled.

## Assumptions About Learners

Village-level instruction in the didactic or directive style follows this pattern closely. It starts out by assuming that the greatest obstacle to development is ignorance, the people's lack of whatever knowledge and skills they are presumed to need to solve their daily life problems. Through baseline studies, specialists determine the extent of the gap between what the people "know" and what they "need to know," i.e., the required coping skills.

They then select and organize the appropriate content to be taught or the messages to be delivered in specific sectoral fields, e.g., the correct use of fertilizers and pesticides, the right procedures for the prevention and treatment of dehydration, the importance of breast feeding, how diseases are transmitted, how to conduct a committee meeting, or how to repair a pump.

The intention here is to equip people as quickly as possible with the knowledge and coping skills they are believed to lack. People's ability to recall the right answers is taken as a reliable indicator that the message has been properly received.

Careful monitoring of the extension worker's performance in terms of number of presentations made or demonstrations conducted gives assurance that the content delivery system is functioning as originally designed.

## Criticisms and Trends

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Criticisms of the directive teaching mode have focused, first of all, on its structure of control by outside expertise and the fact that the learners have little or no say in this entire process. To accommodate this criticism to some degree, educators have attempted several modifications of didactic teaching. These variants use terminology like "two-way communications," "mastery learning" or "social marketing" in place of "formal teaching" or "instruction."

Because of the new labels, it is sometimes difficult to trace the genetic connection between these variants and the didactic model, and to pinpoint what features they have inherited from their parent body. To establish just how they are connected, we should closely examine two such variants here; Communications as a goal-directed content delivery system, and Social Marketing.

## 18 Steps to Maximize the Effect of Development Communications

**Step 1.** Study your subject (e.g., agriculture, health, nutrition). Talk to experts. Observe the real situation yourself.

**Step 2.** Get to know your audience. Learn about them, live with them, talk to them.

**Step 3.** Define precisely the goals of development planners in terms of desired changes in knowledge, attitudes and behavior.

**Step 4.** Gather baseline data or entry-level information on knowledge/ attitudes/behavior of target audience.

**Step 5.** Define the gaps between the planner's goals (Step 3) and entry-level status of audience (Step 4).

**Step 6.** Rank these gaps in order of their importance to national planning.

**Step 7.** Select only those gaps which are amenable, in some way, to solution through communication inputs (interpersonal and mass media).

**Step 8.** Spell out the implications of selected gaps in terms of precise, expected, measurable changes in knowledge/attitudes/behavior expected as a result of exposure to communication.

**Step 9.** Fine-tune your strategy in terms of resources available, appropriate media mix, message appeal, etc.

**Step 10.** Prepare clear specifications for each message to guide artists and writers.

**Step 11.** Produce sample messages in low-cost draft form.

**Step 12.** Pretest the draft messages and materials on small groups of the target population.

**Step 13.** Check content of sample messages with context experts.

**Step 14.** Modify message strategy based on findings of Steps 12 and 13.

**Step 15.** Proceed with final mass production of materials.

**Step 16.** Organize message distribution in detail.

**Step 17.** Arrange for message utilization at the point where messages are received (group discussions, availability of infrastructure, input, and opportunities for).

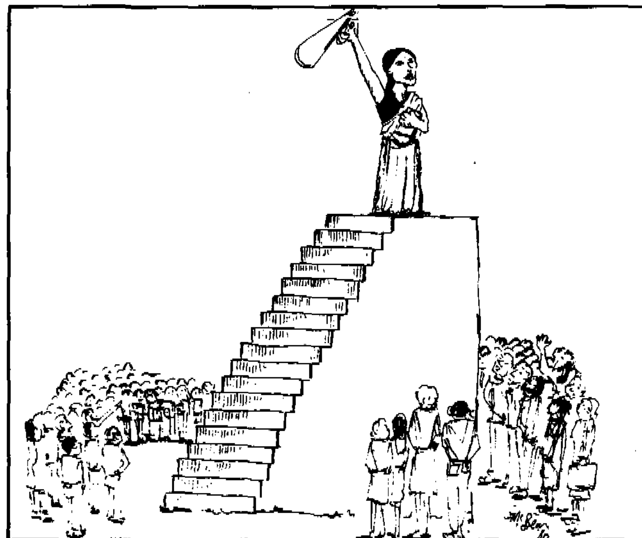
**Step 18.** Plan feedback on message effects and utilization to message designers.

## "Communications" as a Goal-Directed Message Delivery System

The term "communications" admittedly has many different applications; some more, some less structured than others. The analysis of one model, on the more structured side, may help reveal the biases often found behind such approaches.

A proponent of this communications approach lists eighteen steps required to maximize the effects of communications in the development context (see opposite page).[7] Of these eighteen steps, three (numbers 2, 12 and 17) make a genuine effort to investigate the perceptions of the adult learners before, during and after the setting of goals and delivery of messages. This concern for relevance of content to the target audience is a clear departure from the traditional curriculum. The remaining fifteen steps are, however, slanted the other way; they place curriculum decisions squarely in the hands of experts, project managers and message designers as persons most qualified to know what the learners should learn and how.

In terms of this approach's ultimate effects, here is an artist's rendering which suggests the supremacy of the message deliverer at the end of the eighteenth step, while the audience generally remains in the static posture of message recipients.



This conclusion may have been far from what the strategy proponent meant. But the fact that it was interpreted this way is indicative of the commonly held *traditional* perceptions of "who should be in control" of the educational process, its content and delivery.

The purpose of these observations is not evaluative but analytic. It is important, as planners and decision makers, that we look analytically at the internal structure of the options available to us; that we take these structures apart, see how the components fit together, and identify the category to which each most closely corresponds along a continuum of directive to nondirective approaches.



[7] Both the 18 steps and artist's illustration are from an article in UNICEF, *Project Support Communications Newsletters*, 4 no. 1 (April 1980): 2-3.

The value of doing this will become clearer when we observe, at close range, the many similarities as well as striking differences between the above model and the next one, i.e., social marketing, which is geared essentially for mass media.

## Social Marketing as an Alternative Strategy

Continuing with our classification of different strategies as didactic or participatory, social marketing would fall mainly in the didactic category, although like communications it departs a bit from the "top-down" approach by conducting preliminary marketing research on target group attitudes, perceptions and behavioral characteristics.

In order to assess how social marketing differs from learner-centered approaches at the continuum's other end, we need to look more closely at its structural design by asking ourselves questions like these:

- Who chooses the content area on which the social marketing strategy needs to focus?
- Who investigates the topic to determine what the target audience knows, feels, believes, does about it?
- Who decides what kind of behavioral changes must be promoted to assure that improved practices will be adopted?
- Who decides on the precise messages to be delivered after they are tested and refined?
- Who decides on the priority order in which those messages are to be taught?
- Who chooses the media to be used and schedules the frequency of message delivery?
- Who decides on evaluative criteria and measures to assess the effectiveness of the marketing strategy?

If the answers to such questions point to the specialist or the instructor as having the major decision making role, and if the choice of content is based on its technical soundness rather than on what the learning group is most interested in learning, then we must admit to an element of prescriptiveness in social marketing, an attempt to mold learner behavior to fit the outsider's perception of what is desirable, good, healthy, safe, fitting or profitable for learners to do, think or be.

Some will contend that social marketing does not entirely fit into the didactic mode since — as mentioned earlier — it tries very hard to learn more about the habits, perceptions and tastes of the target audience before designing specific messages for its consumption. To settle this issue in our minds, we can use a different measure: not "who" is behind the action, but "why."

## Why do Social Marketing?

The very term "social marketing" suggests that there is a product, idea or message already identified for dissemination to a target audience. The social marketer's job is to do whatever is possible to make that product more easily understood, internalized and otherwise "bought" by the audience for which it is intended.

To ensure that it is appropriate and acceptable, the marketer does consumer research, often testing out the product or message on a "focus group," i.e., one similar to the target group in age, educational level, cultural or socioeconomic background.

The focus group provides feedback to the message designer and social marketer on possible audience reaction to the message and its proposed behavioral changes. For example, it helps to clarify whether the recommended practice is in keeping with the local culture. Are the language and style of the message and the pictures which illustrate it appropriate to the group? Do any objections or constraints to the message come up during the discussion?

Such feedback is noted and used by the message designer in revising and refining the material, not with the intention of increasing its potency as a tool for critical reflection, but rather as a means of defusing objections before they arise in future sessions.

Social marketing's objective, says Richard Manoff, "is to *revise,* to *overturn* a preconceived idea or notion and to persuade people to view it from a new perspective, and thus to *be receptive* to a new accommodation (italics mine)."[8]

## Education vs. Persuasion

Few would deny that behavioral change is of critical importance when it comes to the adoption of practices essential to reduce infant mortality, to combat the use of harmful drugs, or to prevent environmental pollution. But the question is,

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[8]Richard Manoff, *Social Marketing, New Imperatives for Public Health* (New York: Praeger, 1985), 200.

how is this change best achieved? Through education or persuasion? By involving adults in the critical analysis of options or by making choices for them?

Depending on which educational objective and course of action we choose, our tools are likely to be very different. The effect that these tools have on the thinking processes of the learners will also be different. If we define education as a process of cognitive and affective development, then the learners must be deeply involved in unravelling problems, confronting and reconciling opposing viewpoints, and arriving at insights and conclusions on their own, based on personal and group exploration.

Social marketing, on the other hand, aims at persuading people to adopt a position, a conclusion or an idea already selected for them. Internal dialogue — of the kind essential for education — is inconvenient for social marketing, which in fact makes a "determined attempt to prevent internal dialogue" or the airing of conflicting viewpoints because they may weaken the credibility and the authority of the message.

For this reason the message designer tries to establish ahead of time, e.g., through focus group discussions, the potential resistances to the message. These potential objections are then cleverly woven into the dialogue so that while the resistances are presented empathetically, they are immediately refuted. By defusing counter-arguments before they enter the minds of message recipients, designers expect the learner to be more disposed to accept and assimilate the message (and eventually act on it) just as directed.

In the radio spot (on the opposite page) from the Philippines (translated from the local language), Richard Manoff gives a very interesting and clear example of the skillful use of social marketing techniques to neutralize internal dialogue.[9] It is a minidrama between a young mother, Lita, and her own mother. Lita raises doubts which her mother refutes, quoting reliable authorities.

The skill of the message designer lies in the natural, believable ways in which Lita's (and presumably the listener's) doubts, fears and resistances are expressed and the mother's reassuring answers are given. The mother, in addition to being a respected authority figure herself, justifies her own adoption of the message by quoting the doctor, another authority figure, and the radio, an authority symbol.



[9]Manoff, 204-205.

| | |
|---|---|
| LITA: | Mama, what are you putting in my baby's lugaw? |
| MOTHER: | A drop of oil, some chopped green vegetables and fish. |
| LITA: | Where did you get this strange idea? |
| MOTHER: | From the doctor on the radio. Listen! |
| DOCTOR: | (filter) After six months a baby needs lugaw as well as breast milk, but lugaw must be mixed with fish that gives protein for muscles and brain. Green vegetables for vitamins. Oil for more weight on his body. |
| LITA: | But, mama, a six-month old baby can't digest such foods. |
| MOTHER: | Sh-h. Listen to the doctor on the radio. |
| DOCTOR: | (filter) A six-month old can digest these foods. Just wash the salt from the dried fish, chop the vegetables and cook them well, add a little oil, and mash with the lugaw. |
| LITA: | But, mama, you didn't feed me like that. |
| MOTHER: | How could I know? I didn't even own a radio. Times change. You live and learn. |
| LITA: | Mama, you must be sad that all the old ways are changing. |
| MOTHER: | Not all the old ways are changing. But only a fool remains with an old way when there is a new, better way. |
| DOCTOR: | (filter) For help with your baby, see the home management technicians or community worker or the local doctor. |

## Importance of Knowing Our Tools

I believe that this type of structural analysis of the tools at our disposal is as important for us as it is for a surgeon to know the capability and proper use of each surgical tool available in the tray at the operating table. To know our tools is to make good choices. Here is an example of a not-so-good choice and its consequences.

A voluntary agency in Gujarat, India was deeply concerned about the high cost of vegetables at the consumer end, while the farmers themselves were poorly remunerated as producers. After a detailed investigation of the problem, the agency attempted to develop a system by which the farmers could market the vegetables directly to urban consumers at the retail level. The main goal was to ensure that the system would be managed from start to finish entirely by the producers themselves. Analysis of earlier transactions showed that the decisions taken by villagers were dictated by social concerns and had disastrous economic consequences. The communication strategy selected by the voluntary agency was therefore to give direct and systematic economic advice to farmers as to what they should do and how they should do it.

The marketing expertise provided by the agency proved sound but the project failed. It was abandoned "because it became apparent that increasingly the villagers were becoming dependent on us for total decision making, if economic viability was to be maintained." The more the agency plied them with suggestions and directives, the more the process continued eroding the farmers' decision making abilities "till we found that economic viability was clearly established at the cost of decision making being transferred to us." Communication had missed its mark.

## Critique of the Didactic Mode

Critics of the didactic content-focused approach have attacked it from widely different philosophical perspectives. To start with, the emphasis on *closing the knowledge gap* as the primary goal of education is itself disputed.

Take for example how education is defined by Andrew Carnegie, a man who pulled himself out of poverty to become an industrial magnate and a noted philanthropist. According to him,

> There has been a general misconception of the meaning of the word education. The dictionaries have not aided in the elimination of the misunderstanding because they have defined the word 'educate' as an act of imparting knowledge. There is a big difference between having an abundance of knowledge and

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> being educated. The word education has its Latin root which means to develop **from within;** to educe; to draw out; to grow through the law of use. It does not mean to acquire and store knowledge.

Although Andrew Carnegie did not claim to be an educator, his concept of education has many supporters among leaders in the field. Let us therefore examine which aspects of the traditional approach have been singled out for criticism by its opponents, and what line of counter-arguments they have advanced in favor of the learner-centered alternative. Here the views expressed by John Dewey and Paulo Freire provide interesting similarities and contrasts.

Both Dewey and Freire characterize traditional education as top-down. Dewey describes it as being in essence an imposition from above and outside, which in its very style forbids much participation. The content, being based on book knowledge or the "stored wisdom of specialists," is alien to the life experiences and realities of those who are being taught (as when villagers today are lectured to on the "germ theory" to which they often have great difficulty in relating). Dewey describes such content as "remote and dead, abstract and bookish." The teacher uses this body of prescribed knowledge in conducting learning sessions and "proceeds to ladle it out in small doses." In this system it is assumed that through exposure to certain content and by learning certain skills, the learners will be better equipped to cope with future needs. But, Dewey observes, the minds of individuals cannot thrive "on a diet of predigested materials."

In addition to prescribing what should be learned, by whom and how, the teacher imposes standards of conduct on the learners to conform with established traditions and institutional requirements. It is assumed that certain

behaviors, such as maintaining silence and paying respectful attention, are intrinsically desirable and should be enforced. This reduces the learner to a posture of docility, receptivity and obedience. "The required beliefs cannot be hammered in; the needed attitudes cannot be plastered on."

The trouble with traditional educators, Dewey claims, is that they hold all the powers of decision making themselves, without taking into account the motive powers and the latent capabilities of those taught. In fact "there is no greater defect in traditional education than its failure to secure the active cooperation of the learners in the construction of the purposes of the curriculum." As a result, he finds that the top-down approach reinforces feelings of inadequacy and dependency on outside sources to do the thinking, to teach, and to spoon-feed them with the right answers.[10]

## The Banking Concept

Decades after Dewey, we find Freire similarly criticizing content-focused instruction as prescriptive, a type of "banking" system, the main purpose of which is to withdraw information from the teacher's head and deposit it in the learner's head. The teacher/learner relationship is thus fundamentally prescriptive in character. The learners record, memorize and repeat mechanically the prescribed content; theirs is an uncreative role of receiving, filing and storing the deposits. All the trappings of this system, according to Freire — the verbalistic lessons, the reading requirements, the testing methods and criteria for measuring success — seem designed to prevent independent thinking by the learners.

Since teachers choose what is to be taught and enforce their choices on the learners, Freire claims the topics turn out to be "completely alien to the existential experience of the students." The teacher assumes the role of one who knows everything, while the students are assumed to know nothing. This dominance/dependency status, says Freire, is demeaning to the learners, reducing them to an inferior role. Freire is far more caustic than Dewey in this censure of traditional teaching as a system of domestication and oppression. Teachers are portrayed by him as "oppressors" who exact passive acceptance and meekness from the learners as the oppressed.

Thus from Freire's strong sociopolitical perspective, the traditional didactic system is a means of perpetuating imbalances within an unjust society, where one set of people with prestige and power on their side control and manipulate others into positions of dependency and inferiority.[11]

Although Dewey and Freire were decades apart and launched their attack on traditional teaching from very different perches, it is easy to see these common elements in the specific criticisms they level at the didactic mode of instruction:



[10] John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 17-19, 43-48.

[11] Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 57-68.

- Lack of relevance of content to the learners.
- Rigidity of curriculum, schedules and teaching methods.
- Reliance on written texts prepared by outside specialists.
- Vertical relationships of teacher and taught.
- Passive acceptance by learners of the content prescribed for them to learn.
- Emphasis on correct recall of content as the main indicator of success.
- Submissiveness of the learner.

## The Inevitable System

It is interesting that the views of the noted psychologist, Carl Rogers, coincide with the above analysis, although his humanistically-oriented approach to the learning process grew out of his experience from a very different field, psychotherapy. Carl Rogers points out that traditional education and person-centered education may be thought of as two poles of a continuum, and that every educational effort and every institution could locate itself at some appropriate point on that scale. After noting the defects of the traditional system — which he says is based on the "jug and mug" theory of education, where the teacher (the jug) pours knowledge into the passive student (the mug) — he claims that the fundamental issue underlying the entire range of strategies is that of power, the process of gaining, using, sharing or relinquishing the power of decision making. Who has the power in the traditional system? The teacher and those who make curriculum decisions at the top. But in the Rogerian person-centered approach it is the learners who make critical decisions as to what they want to learn and how they wish to learn it.

Rogers admits, however, that the traditional system is hard to do away with since it is practiced almost everywhere. "It is not often openly defended as the best system. It is simply accepted as the inevitable system."[12]

## New Options Emerge

These and other criticisms, however, have led to many important changes in adult educational strategies in recent years. The differences will be clearer from the descriptions of two other approaches — the Conscientization and the Growth-oriented strategies.

The above discussion does not imply that didactic teaching should have no place in the curriculum. Different people do learn in different ways. For some people, and in some content areas such as technical training, didactic instruction may be quite acceptable under certain circumstances.

For that reason I believe an important aim in training development staff should be to increase their ability to discern when to use or not use the traditional content-focused approach.

[12]Howard Kirschenbaum and Valerie Land Henderson, *The Carl Rogers Reader* (Boston: Houghton Mifflen Company, 1989), 323-330.

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# CHAPTER 3

# Education for Societal Change

A question arising among educators is whether education should concentrate on individual development, or aim at societal reform to remove major socioeconomic constraints to development.

On first sight this may seem like a nonissue. Are the two interests not compatible? Are they not, in fact, interdependent — is human development not a powerful means of influencing the direction of social change, and is social change not an imperative where individuals are denied fair opportunities for personal growth?

But the mutuality or interdependence of individuals and society is not the real question. The question is what role can and should education play in addressing either of these needs as its primary, compelling and legitimate aim.

For planning purposes, one must take fully and analytically into account the justifications advanced by proponents of each of these positions — their philosophy or rationale, the context to which each is responding, their common ground, and the contrasts in methodology with which they each pursue their chosen objectives. This chapter and the next will explore these issues.

## Arousing the Oppressed

In the strategy aimed at societal change, education is a means of arousing and mobilizing the oppressed members of society to root out oppression. Educative group sessions assist them to confront, assess, analyze and critique their reality and organize themselves to radically change it. This is the essence of "transforming" behavior.

This radical posture has been provoked by what Einstein described as the "crisis of our times," that is, the polarization of society:

> The essence of the crisis of our times concerns the relationship of the individual to society. The individual has become more conscious than ever of his dependence on society — not as a protective force, but rather as a threat to his natural rights or even to his economic existence.[13]

The enormity of the problem addressed is reflected in the escalating figures of the landless laborers and marginal farmers who are riddled with indebtedness at usurious rates, or must pledge their families as bonded labor to repay debts. Thus they have no control over capital, land or even their own labor. This makes them increasingly vulnerable to exploitation by the dominant landowning classes and those with economic, social or political power.

Through this social polarization, the gap between the affluent and the poor has widened to such an extent that, in the view of some educators, notably Paulo Freire, the only way out is through an activist strategy; that is, by equipping the poor themselves for direct, collective confrontation with vested interests. Thus while the problem has long existed, seldom before has it been seen as assailable to any degree through education.

## Radical Ferment

The activist strategy or "conscientization" is aimed at creating what one might call a "radical ferment" in the minds of the poor, an awakening to what is happening to them and why, a sense of what they might have vaguely felt over a long time but could never

Chris Srini Vasan



[13]Albert Einstein, *Out of My Later Years* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 127.

really articulate. Accordingly, the focus is on changing the mind-set of the underprivileged and oppressed masses, their sense of powerlessness, their passive resignation and subservience.

Henry David Thoreau summed up the problem in one short memorable sentence almost two centuries ago. "The mass of men," he said, "lead lives of quiet desperation." This "quiet desperation" is described by Freire as the culture of silence.

Freire's predecessor in the United States, the outspoken social critic Saul Alinsky, used stronger terms to describe the situation of the poor in the black urban ghetto when, in the mid 1960s, the silence barrier was shattered and active rioting broke out. Alinsky asserted that the problem was a result of both economic and political poverty:

> When you are living in that kind of misery, when you see your children denied any kind of hope for the future and when you are caged in by color as though you were animals... it seems to me the big question is 'How come it took so long before the thing blew?'... When poverty and lack of power bar you from equal protection, equal equity in the courts, and equal participation in the economic and social life of your society, then you are poor. Therefore an anti-poverty program must recognize that its program has to do something about not only economic poverty but political poverty.[14]

Given his strong belief in citizen participation as a critical measure of democratic vitality, Alinsky felt that the organizer's first responsibility was to act as an abrasive agent, stirring up the dissatisfactions of the poor to the point that they would take action to disrupt the systems and structures which stifle their will to participate.

Today's conscientizers are inclined to take much more of an educational approach. They seek to create critical consciousness among the poor through a process which starts from analysis of the causes of poverty, develops critical insights into the structure of power, builds confidence in the capacity of the poor to organize themselves, and culminates in action to restructure and control their environment.

## Collective Analysis and Action

How is this done? Often the process begins with peer group sessions or cultural circles. There is no preplanned syllabus because such a syllabus, prepared by an outsider, would not authentically reflect the perceptions and concerns of the group. However, through prior observation and informal contacts with villagers, the animator discovers themes and key words that are meaningful to the people and useful in triggering discussions.



[14]Sanford D. Horwitz, *Let Them Call Me Rebel, Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 470-76, 483.

The sessions are conducted to help individuals gain a new sense of identity as members of an oppressed class. They share problems and common interests and find strength in unity.

Since the topics of discussion are drawn from participants' own reality and are identified by them, motivation is easily maintained. Every discussion session attempts to help those taking part to stand back from their situation until finally they can see it more clearly and critically. Thus the educational process of a joint situational analysis creates the desire to organize well for collective initiatives in a class struggle.

## The Need for Unity

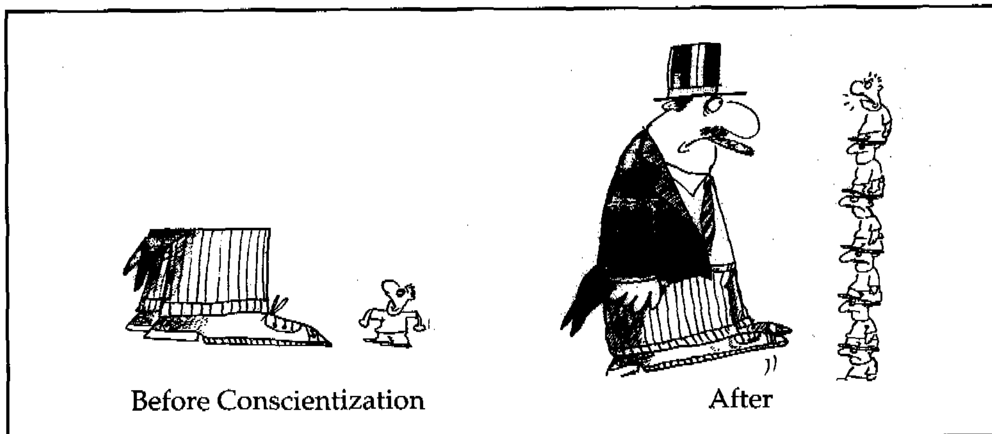
The need for collective action rather than individual initiative is clearly seen in the following case illustration given by a Government of India official in his Valedictory Address to a UNDP Regional Workshop in Hyderabad, India.

> I give you an example of how the "Rule-of-Law" approach sometimes backfires when dealing with the poor and the underprivileged: In a certain state, the land reform law provided that the share cropper cannot be evicted from the land he cultivates. This legal right was widely publicized by Government. One share cropper — more assertive than others — took up his case of eviction before the magistrate. A notice was duly issued to the landlord. He failed to turn up — again, the court issued a summons — which the landlord successfully evaded. On successive dates of hearing, the share cropper trudged miles to attend the court, at much expense and sacrifice. But there was no sign of the influential landlord. Each time the court obliged by adjourning the matter. One day, the share cropper fell ill and failed to appear. The magistrate promptly dismissed the application for willful absence. Several days afterwards, the landlord's hirelings murdered the share cropper in cold blood — for having dared challenge the supremacy of the system. I need not dilate on the moral of the story. You be the judge![15]

Developing a sense of solidarity among the poor and forming an organization to fight for their common cause is thus considered to be critically important in combatting poverty. In the absence of organization, individuals might never achieve the confidence levels to take risks and commit to collective actions to confront the dominant power structures that control the basic necessities of life such as land, water, housing and income. Organization-building is viewed as the primary means by which people actively take decisions and fight for the rights that are being denied them. The animator, however, tries not to take any leadership role, but leaves that initiative to the peer group as a whole. The illustration on the next page, from Brazil, is one example of the tools used to promote discussion on the power of people's organization.



[15] Saran Singh, Valedictory address at a UNDP/SWADCAP Workshop on Participatory Techniques for Combatting Poverty, 1976, Hyderabad, India.



Before Conscientization After

## Specific Techniques Used in "Conscientization"

At this point we need to look very closely at the educational methodology adopted to secure participant involvement in decision making. In particular, we might look at the techniques used at the stage of critical awareness-building which seems to be the high point of this educational process.

### The Animator Role

The role of the activist or animator is to enable, not to teach. The animator does not transmit knowledge. The experience and perceptions of group members suffice to stimulate their critical reflection on priority problems of their life. But the animator does play a role in channeling the thinking of the group in the direction of social equity issues. This is sometimes done through the use of pictures or slides which contain contradictions (e.g., in the life of the rich and the poor) or which provoke thinking around the dignity of man. These pictorial stimuli are produced after extensive dialogue with the people by a multidisciplinary team. The team members challenge each other's perceptions before they codify and present them again for critical reflection by the people. The stimuli thus become powerfully evocative. Freire, however, points out that the dependence of rural adults upon the authority of the teacher is such that at times, a peasant may respond to the situation with traditional deference. He may, for example, say to the educator, "Why don't you explain the pictures to us? It would save time and we won't get a headache."[16] Through a process of dialogue and joint reflection, however, they begin to realize that their ideas are of value, that they too "know" things and are the creators of culture.

### A Chain of Questions

Another technique frequently used is a strategy of **well-ordered questioning**. The purpose of this questioning strategy, it seems, is to help group members attack their problem(s) in a systematic way. For example, in some projects in



[16] Freire, 49.

India, the session begins with problem sharing or even a role play on issues such as land tenure. The animator may follow up by posing a series of questions like these: Why is it that a few have so much (land) while the majority have nothing? Who is the biggest landlord in the area? Why does he have the land? How did he get it? Who is reaping the benefits? etc. At the end, the animator summarizes the different views expressed by the people and jointly with them draws certain conclusions concerning the causes of their poverty.[17]

An example from Latin America also illustrates the use of suggestive questioning to draw out from the people the desired conclusion.

What is this? (A bote/water jug)

Where did you get it? (From the shop)

How much did you pay for it? (Too much)

Where does X get it? (From ____)

Why can't you get it from the same source?

(Here begins the analysis of social inequity)

What do you use the bote for? (To get water)

Where do you get the water from? (Far away)

Why do you have to get it from there? Why not from ____?
(They won't let us)

Who are they? (Analysis of power structure)

How is it that the hotel gardener has water and you don't? etc.

## Possible Drawbacks to Confrontation

There can, of course, be negative consequences to such a strategy, since the process does not always end without physical violence. In some instances confrontation has resulted in fatalities, with two opposing groups pitted against each other.

Questions of methodological principles also arise about the use of the well-ordered questioning technique to focus the group's thinking on social equity issues. Could it be that in the hands of an untrained and over-eager animator this technique might become manipulative? Does the animator already have a prediagnosed assessment of the problem and a set of conclusions to which the questioning strategy is expected to lead? Does the human development goal get short-changed in the process? Or does the strategy allow enough freedom for creative and independent thinking by the group to move in directions other than what the animator has in mind? And just when does the group no longer



[17]Walter Fernandes, ed., *People's Participation in Development* (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1981), 74-75.

need the prop of "well-ordered questioning strategy" coming from the animator? Freire himself is conscious of this danger when he says, "The leaders cannot treat the oppressed as mere activists to be denied the opportunity of reflection and allowed merely the illusion of acting whereas in fact they would continue to be manipulated — and in this case by the presumed foes of manipulation."[18]

### Asking Questions Closer to Home

On the same methodological issue, if the use of leading questions is not manipulative, is it being used to create awareness of other instances of oppression closer to home — such as in the oppression of village women from whom the family and the community exact inhuman labor and suffering?

Does this issue not arise in the generative themes identified through preliminary dialogue with village adults? If it does, then more examples of how conscientization addresses this need, (and with what results) would be welcome.

If the issue does not arise, or if male villagers and elders are not concerned with it, or if they are not as committed to confronting it as they are to confronting their oppression by the elite, then perhaps the whole concept of social justice as a humanistic value has not been as thoroughly examined and internalized as it should be in an authentic educational (rather than merely political) sense.

## Dealing with Cultural Bias

Following is an example from the experience of a team in Peru which had been helping the Aymara Indians with their cattle raising and marketing problems. The Aymaras had just begun to realize the extent of their economic losses in the cattle fattening and marketing process. At first they were devastated by this analysis but decided to continue with the learning sessions. However, when similar opportunities for women were proposed, here is what happened:

> It was not of our choosing that almost all of the team's work had been with Aymara men. Informally, and during the study sessions, we tried to explore the possibilities of bringing women into joint or parallel programs. Every time the subject was brought up, we were rebuffed by the men who said that women do not and cannot get involved in such matters. Their reaction was explained in part by the fact that the women were the unifying force in the Aymara family and culture. The men frequently had to go away to work, the women were left behind to raise the family, cultivate the fields, and pasture the cattle until the men returned. The women came to represent a refuge from the outside world, a return to their culture and their real selves. While the men were forced to learn Spanish, the women maintained the purity of the Aymara language. Anything that changed this system was considered a real threat to the man's way of life.



[18]Freire, 120.

> Though well aware of this situation, several women members of the team decided to promote the organization of a woman's group. When the suggestion was presented formally at a community gathering, the males reacted with their usual protective answers. After long debate — during which only the men's point of view was expressed — there was agreement that a few initial experiences would be held, but only if the men would accompany their wives. They also said that their wives would have to leave the meetings with some tangible results, having learned something new or being able to do something better than before.
>
> On the day of the first women's meeting about fifteen women arrived — escorted by their husbands. Difficulties arose even before the session started. The men wanted to enter the meeting room rather than waiting outside, and only after long insistence on the part of the women team members did the husbands finally agree to stay outside. The women's meeting was held in a dark room without windows or a closable door. When a point was discussed with which the men did not agree, they interjected their comments and tried to impose their views from outside the open door. When the women began to discuss together or to draw the important themes in their lives, the men laughed. Several frustrating sessions took place, always monitored by a few husbands of the women attending the meeting. Then the program was abandoned.[19]

The attitude of men toward women's right to education in this case is not surprising. It is consistent with prevailing attitudes in most developing countries. The question is not whether or why such an attitude exists, but whether the conscientization approach is concerned with it, more or less than with economic concerns such as of marketing cattle. I hope this challenge will result in a flood of responses explaining what is being done about removing inequities on the home front.

## A Case of Internal Conflict

Another issue that needs attention is the possible provocation of internal conflict within the community itself if all do not agree with the conscientizing approach. The Seva Mandir Women's project in India, for example, tells of an illiterate girl, who in defiance of her father's objections, joined a consciousness-raising adult education program. She became critically aware of corruption among supervisors of unskilled laborers in a local government construction program and organized her peers to protest. Despite threats and layoffs, the team agitated until the problem was resolved through high level official intervention. The gains to the labor force and in the confidence level of the protesting group are clear. The process, however, also produced several negative social consequences:



[19]David Reed, "An Experience in Peru," *New Internationalist*, 16 November 1974, 11.

- The parents of the young animator were anguished and angered by her abrasive image after joining the class, "Did you join the center to study or to fight with other people?" they asked.
- The villagers were also angered by her behavior (antagonizing their main employer and pressuring official leadership).
- Her only weapons were assertiveness, activism and (in her own words) "arguing power" — qualities that were not prized in a young woman in her village community.
- Her approach caused a rift in the sentiments of her family and villagers.[20]

This example is cited only to give pause for reflection. What are some basic conditions that must be met for the conscientizing approach to work? How might it serve as a unifying rather than divisive force in community development, as well as a tool in a class struggle? Are there conscientizing techniques by which it can enable the village elders to see eye-to-eye with young activists?

Undoubtedly, there is sufficient positive experience at field level to respond to all of the above issues. It is my continued hope that this discussion will provoke sharing of such experience.

Raising such issues should in no way diminish the importance of the conscientization approach in situations where the odds are heavily against the poor, and particularly where the social structure is blatantly unjust and oppressive. In such contexts, if the only weapons (or the most potent weapons) to effect change are ones such as those described above, then they serve the purpose. In times of war one relies on weapons of war.

## A Broader Quest for Liberation

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At the same time, we need to keep in mind that confrontation is not always the only viable option, and even where it is, there is a real need for a broader capacity-building process to take place side-by-side. Dominant social forces and oppressive governments may change. But if the individual is not prepared to think independently on his or her own, then true liberation may not occur.



[20] "Women's Development in Chhani Village," *Seva Mandir Newsletter* (December 1981): 7-8.

For example, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) movement, which has spread to several developing countries, is concerned not only with the polarization of control over the means of livelihood, but also over the means of knowledge production. In situations characterized by economic exploitation and oppression, some degree of class confrontation usually occurs, but PAR combines it with knowledge development and collective socioeconomic initiatives to meet people's short-term livelihood needs. In situations where class exploitation is not so sharp (e.g., in many African countries) people's action is directed more to socioeconomic initiatives. As a result, PAR identifies four levels of self-reliant actions:

- **Defensive actions** — aimed at protecting existing sources and means of livelihood against erosion or encroachment by other more powerful interest groups.
- **Assertive actions** — to claim rights (e.g., minimum wages, legal rights, access to assistance) to which they are entitled but which they do not automatically receive.
- **Constructive actions** — i.e., self-help projects organized by groups to satisfy their own group needs, e.g., infrastructural work, consumer food stores, improved water supply, etc.
- **Innovative or alternative actions** — representing initiatives of organized groups to experiment with and undertake development improvements as alternatives to some mainstream processes (e.g., biogas projects, innovative health care services, cultural initiatives).[21]

## Widening the Process

One proponent of the conscientizing approach, the Mott program in Central India, while using the questioning strategy initially, advocates a wider process of positive problem solving experiences to build self-confidence and overcome apathy step-by-step. Success in simple group activities to resolve problems in the immediate social environment contribute, in the Mott experience, to instilling courage to take up more difficult tasks. Helped by the animators, the people learn to analyze concrete issues and to form judgements about what is possible at a given moment. People then begin to give their lives a new direction.

Thus, "instead of being induced to put all the blame for their poverty on the oppressors only, they also come to realize the need within themselves of becoming new persons and a new community."[22] Both the Mott program, and PAR's conscientization strategy provide a bridge between the knowledge-focused approach and the growth-centered strategy described in the next chapter.

[21] Orlando Fals-Borda and Mohammad Anisur Rahman, *Action and Knowledge, Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Research* (New York: The Apex Press, 1991), 140-142.

[22] Henry Volken, Ajoy Kumar, and Sara Kaithathara, *Learning from the Rural Poor* (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1982), 11.

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# CHAPTER 4

# Education for Growth

> It is quite clear that no social reform, no beautiful constitution or beautiful programs or laws will be of any consequence unless people are healthy enough, evolved enough, strong enough, good enough to understand them and to want to put them into practice in the right way.
>
> —Abraham Maslow

> If education is to be effective it must aim at developing (in learners) such characteristics as versatility, adaptiveness, inquisitiveness, creativity and high motivation. In turn this should create a self-renewing society.
>
> —John W. Gardner

## The Issue of Individual Growth vs. Societal Change

When we speak of education as a growth strategy, we must inevitably revert to the issue of individual growth versus societal change, and try to sort out the reasons why such an issue is raised at all.

The growth-oriented strategy is people-centered rather than issue-focused. It is concerned with the development of *individual* capacities through the group learning process. Its aim is to help people discover their potential and use it.

This is essentially what I would call "transcending" behavior. For example, SARAR[23] sees growth as a process by which individuals and groups become aware of their uniqueness and their personal capacities to diagnose, analyze, create, innovate, decide, plan and act, and thereby contribute to achieving a common goal. This does not, however, happen in a vacuum. Practical strategies, activities and tools are all modeled on the premise that the growth of both the individual and the group are complementary, mutually reinforcing processes. The medium in which the individual grows is the interactive process of the group, which itself functions in the context of the community and society. Thus there is social continuity between individual and group aspirations for a good life, and the attainment of an enabling environment within a good society.

## Inward Revolution

In this regard I am impressed with what Krishnamurti, a noted Indian scholar, has to say with characteristic directness and simplicity about the precedence of individual transformation over societal change. He acknowledged that "most of us want to see a radical transformation in the social structure. That is the whole battle that is going on in the world today — to bring about a social revolution." But as to a social revolution, i.e., an action in regard to the outer structure of man, he claims:

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> no matter how radical that social revolution may be, its very nature is static if there is no inward revolution of the individual... no psychological transformation... In order to transform the world about us, with its misery, wars, unemployment, starvation, class division and utter confusion, there must be a transformation in ourselves... Before we set out on a journey to find reality... before we can act, before we can have any relationship with another, which is society, it is essential that we begin to understand ourselves first.[24]

[23]The acronym SARAR stands for five attributes—Self-Esteem, Associative Strength, Resourcefulness, Action planning and Responsibility for follow-through. Annex A explains the acronym in further detail.

[24]Mary Lutyens, ed., *The Penguin Krishnamurti Reader* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 18-27.

## Concerns About Egoism

On the other hand, individual development, as seen by some advocates of societal change, has a very different connotation. It is interpreted as individualism, egoism, self-centeredness, or personal ambition to get ahead of others.

"One of the methods of manipulation," says Freire "is to inoculate individuals with the bourgeois appetite for personal success."[25] He believes that the pursuit of full humanity cannot be carried out in individualism but only in fellowship and solidarity in pursuing shared goals. "No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so. Attempting to be more human, *individualistically,* leads to having more *egoistically.*"[26]

This criticism of individualism has been raised by other educators. Dewey, for example, clearly points out the danger that increased personal independence will decrease the individual's social capacity unless the learning experience provides the necessary safeguards:

> In making him more self-sufficient it may lead to aloofness and indifference. It often makes an individual so insensitive in his relations to others as to develop an illusion of being really able to stand and act alone — an unnamed form of insanity which is responsible for a large part of the remedial suffering of the world.[27]

Educators today are generally well aware of this danger. They ensure against it through the socializing experience of interactive group work and through activities designed to draw out the best in people for the common good. At the same time, they must guard against using the educational process simply as a means of mobilizing mass support for a particular cause, however worthy it may be. The good society is a goal of education, but social activism cannot be its sole thrust.

## Basic Principles of the Growth-Centered Approach

Although there are many variants to the growth-focused approach, I believe they share a common belief: that the individual has a potential for self-reliance that can be developed to an extraordinary degree through a genuinely participatory approach. It is assumed that if learners are helped to discover and develop their inner resources through an environment providing opportunities to use their abilities, they will demonstrate an increased capacity to manage their lives.

The key to unlocking this potential is not a body of useful knowledge, nor a message to be delivered, nor a social issue to be pursued. It is the creation of a learning climate and establishment of a relationship by which people can exercise



[25]Freire, 147.

[26]Ibid., 73-74.

[27]John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 44.

the capacity to choose the knowledge, to express the ideas, and to identify the issues that have priority in their lives. Education thus becomes a capacity-building process anchored in trust:

- Trust in the potential that already exists in people, whether or not they are aware of it;
- Trust that given the right enabling environment people's potential will become manifest; and
- Trust in oneself as facilitator to provide the kind of environment and experience which permits that potential to unfold.

My own allegiance to this line of thinking is evident throughout the SARAR growth-centered methodology which, being the one I know best among participatory approaches, is described in Parts II and III, and in Annex A.

## Attributes of Growth

Education as a process of internal capacity-building and growth has taken on many connotations according to the attributes and abilities considered important by different educators for individual self-realization and for the health and development of society. With Dewey, we may describe growth as the capacity to become something different, to discover oneself, to experience power, to recognize an ability, to develop. Abraham Maslow expands on this concept by asserting that while change can occur through the acquisition of habits and associations, one-by-one, growth is much more a transformation of the total person, i.e., a new person rather than the same person with some habits or skills added like new external possessions.[28] He sees inner growth as an expansion of self including the release of inner tendencies for good; a steady increase in self-acceptance and understanding of others; the use and enjoyment of talents; an increase in autonomy; and proceeding from all of the above, a greater power to alter and shape the environment.[29]

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[28]Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 2d ed (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1968), 39.

[29]Ibid., 101, 155-161.

Other leaders in the field have emphasized specific attributes and abilities that, when cultivated, lead to a stronger will to act and a better quality of action.

Julius Nyerere, for example, in defining *Education for Self-Reliance*, puts "an inquiring mind" at the top of the list of attributes that education must encourage each individual to develop. Gaston Berger, the French philosopher and scholar, describes this attribute as "a certain ability to engage the mind freely such that it can take on virtually any problem and derive adequate satisfaction from the work per se."

## Creativity as a Goal

Piaget likewise believes that one of the goals of education is to "form minds which can be critical, can verify and not accept everything they are offered." However, for Piaget "the principal goal of education is to create people who are capable of doing new things... people who are creative, inventive and discoverers."

Creativity and inventiveness are key words to other leading educators such as Edward de Bono, author of *Lateral Thinking* and Gordon Prince, cofounder and President of Synectics, a problem-centered method. De Bono advocates a deliberate and provocative alteration of learning methods and tools so that the experience leads to restructuring thinking on more creative lines. Creativity, he points out, is more and more valued as the essential ingredient in change and in progress. Synectics uses deliberate techniques to encourage imaginative speculation as a means of developing the capacity to generate new solutions. Only when creativity has had full scope, disciplined ways of narrowing down the most useful solutions are employed.

> "To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advances in science."
>
> —Albert Einstein

> "In a stable world, reason is the only master. We must deduce, specify and verify. In a changing world full of novelty, we must constantly invent. Once again, the most pressing duty of modern man is clear. He must invent."
>
> —Gaston Berger

## The Self-Renewing Society

These are examples of deliberate attempts to facilitate the creative process which is so much needed to regenerate society. They are aimed at developing

the learner's sense of self as a creator of ideas and initiator of action. As an antidote to what Jerome Bruner calls the crippling effect of a deprived environment, an educational process that promotes creative and analytic capacities can bring about profound changes in the self-images of adult learners; provide them leverage in problem solving; and equip them for functional leadership roles in their communities.

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## Translating Values into Practice

The growth approach implies high expectations. What kind of educational program will facilitate their achievement? Under what conditions can such growth take place? What are the principles, methods and tools we can apply for this purpose?

To simplify the task, let me start by listing a few specific abilities, attitudes and dispositions that should result from the growth-oriented learning experience. They can later serve as reference points in examining field examples which illustrate the process. Not all growth-oriented programs will achieve all of the elements on the list, but the tendency in most cases is in that general direction.

It is expected that a growth-oriented learning program will enable adults to:

- develop an increased sense of self-worth, human dignity and awareness of talents and capabilities, resulting in a greater inclination to self-directed behavior and to participation in community affairs;
- be more resourceful, inventive and creative, more open to trying new things, more capable of generating new solutions;
- have grown in judgement, including ability to critically examine their own beliefs and practices and make sound decisions on future courses of action;
- be better able to solve problems based on fuller exploration of their causes and alternative solutions;
- acquire planning skills relevant to their situation, including setting goals and selecting the means to attain them;

- seek knowledge and other resources as needed;
- be able to function effectively in a peer group so as to increase its dynamic power as an instrument of change;
- have an increased sense of social responsibility, including willingness to assume new roles and a commitment to maintain improvements;
- be able to dream a little, have a vision of a better future.

In essence, the aim is to enable adults to generate their own power and fulfill their potential as increasingly motivated, able and responsible citizens.

## Implications for Activities and Tools

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Group work is fundamental to achieving these aims. The interactive group process allows individuals optimal scope to express themselves, be heard, be appreciated, make a difference, and contribute tangibly to fulfilling group tasks. This is the beginning of a wider developmental role.

Obviously, for optimal development to take place, group activities must be sensitively facilitated; they must provide stimulating opportunities to discover and exercise powers and talents available within the group. Guidelines for the design of such activities will be discussed later, but here are just two complementary working principles that are commonly observed.

◆ **Decentralized Decision Making**

Activities are designed to place the power of decision making directly in the hands of group members, whether it is in identifying the content relevant to the task, how they wish to proceed, or what products they wish to come up with.

◆ **Low-Key Role of the Facilitator**

The facilitator strictly avoids taking on an instructional or guidance role. This includes avoiding giving suggestions on how to organize for the task, and even more importantly, avoiding the use of leading questions to steer the group in the direction of any preconceived conclusion or "right answer."

An example from a field situation illustrates the use of very simple techniques to stimulate a village-based decision making and planning process:

As part of a village-based educational program in Thailand, project staff wished to engage villagers in assessing their needs and developing a plan of action. They began with a simple technique known as the "problem bag." Participants were given bags and asked to look around the village and find objects that symbolized village problems from their point of view. Some decided to look for these objects alone, others in pairs or in small groups, and later they all reassembled to present their choices. One villager brought back a twig shaped in the letter Y and said:

> This part of the twig (pointing to its base) represents how we used to be in this village, together on things and helping each other. And here where it branches off (pointing to the expanding gap between two branches) is where we began growing apart. We're getting farther apart all the time, and that to me is the big problem in this village.

Sharing this and other such insightful comments provoked lively discussion. Villagers felt ownership of the ideas they were sharing; there had been no need for prompting by the facilitator. By comparing their insights with the results of a survey that had been previously conducted, they were able to rank their problems and select one to work on as top priority. The group developed a plan using some seed money available as revolving credit. They decided on what they would do, how they would apply the seed money, who would benefit and what other resources they could mobilize to tackle the problem. After discussion they agreed that the poorer families of the village who had no cattle should have priority assistance. In the words of the headman of Khothongsom village:

> The cattle thing made us think about the really poor families here. The ones without any cattle and no way to get one. Anyway, the committee decided these folks would get first use

of the money if they wanted to join the group. All 16 families without cattle did. Eleven have already got a heifer now and they're paying the money back, 100 baht a month.[30]

## Underlying Assumptions and Principles

The above illustrates a principle of self-directed learning that has been advocated by many leading educators in recent times.

> "There is, I think, no point in the philosophy of progressive education which is sounder than its emphasis on the importance of the participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his activities in the learning process."
>
> —John Dewey

To be a facilitator of self-directed learning is not easy, as can be seen from the experience of two leading U.S. educators discussed below.

### Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles, author of the theory of "andragogy," or the art and science of helping adults to learn, is a strong advocate of the facilitative approach which recognizes that adults have a substantial reservoir of experience and are capable of self-directed inquiry. Knowles defines self-directed learning as a process in which individuals assume responsibility for diagnosing their learning needs, setting their learning goals, choosing the way in which they wish to learn, and assessing their own progress. For adult learners to take on such a proactive role, he finds, teachers must suppress their compulsion to teach and assume the role of facilitators.

Knowles readily admits that this radical change in teaching/learning style is not easy either for the teacher or for the learners. In making this transition himself, Knowles says he found the change to be

> fundamental and terribly difficult... I had to divest myself of the protective shield of an authority figure and expose myself as me — an authentic human being... It required that I extricate myself from the compulsion to pose as an expert who had mastered any given body of content, and instead join my students honestly as a continuing colearner.[31]

Initially, the learners also found it difficult to adjust to a structureless learning situation in which they themselves were expected to take the lead role. They needed help to see that while there is no predetermined content structure, the process itself constitutes the structure within which they exercise initiative. The facilitator manages the process and decides on procedures in a way that is most supportive of their self-directed learning plan.

[30]Lou Setti and others, STEP: The Southern Thailand Experimental Project, final evaluation by the Southern Regional Center for Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education and World Education, Inc., 1986.



[31]Malcolm Knowles, *Self-directed Learning, A Guide for Learners and Teachers* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 33-34, 37.

## The Person-Centered Approach of Carl Rogers

The underlying assumption of andragogy corresponds closely to the experience of Carl Rogers in applying what he calls the "person-centered" approach in both therapy and education. The person-centered approach, according to Rogers, is based on the premise that the human being is basically a trustworthy organism, capable of evaluating the outer and inner situation, understanding his/herself in that context, making constructive choices as to the next steps to take, and acting on those steps.[32]

The educator, says Rogers, must first of all be able to communicate trust to the learning group by creating a climate of open acceptance which encourages and nurtures the learner's capacity for self-directed inquiry, creative expression and fulfillment.

The Rogerian style of facilitating a learning activity is considerably less structured than that of Knowles; the degree of structure and content introduced into a session, according to Rogers, reflects the degree of trust that the facilitator has in the group. He explains it this way:

> If I distrust a human being then I must cram her with information of my own choosing lest she go her own mistaken way. But if I trust the capacity of the individual for developing her own potentialities, then I can provide her many opportunities and permit her to choose her own way and her own direction in learning.[33]

The lack of preplanned and prescribed structure, the vacuum of leadership, the long and awkward silences while learners figure out what to do and in which direction to move, and the facilitator's adamant stand on leaving decisions up to the group often cause confusion and frustration among the learners; but it forces them to take directional responsibility, to find resources within themselves to save the situation, and to use their wits to turn a seeming disaster into a vital learning experience. Despite the initial frustrations, the result, according to Rogers, is a far richer growth process in terms of self-insights and self-reliance than is possible through more structured didactic methods. The unusual freedom also helps individuals to understand the dynamics within the group and the conditions needed to make it function effectively.

While the methodology applied by Rogers may not in itself be suited to some other contexts, there is no doubt that his thinking has widely influenced what has come to be known as the learner-centered or growth-focused approach. Both Knowles and Rogers have struck on one element of "power" which has great significance for the motivation and drive for learning — the learner's ego. Challenging the learner to take responsibility, and providing the

[32]Carl Rogers, *On Personal Power* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1978), 15.

[33]Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 313.

opportunity to do so with minimal if any interference by the facilitator, kicks off the maturing process.

## Thinking for Themselves

This notion may not seem so far-fetched when one considers that the great teachers throughout history, including Buddha and Christ, used parables, analogies and aphorisms to get their disciples to think for themselves and to "figure it out." Lao-Tzu's aphorisms and metaphors on noninvolvement, for example, if interpreted in our present context, might read somewhat like this:

| Lao-Tzu's metaphor | Facilitator's interpretation |
| --- | --- |
| • Rulers should not interfere with the natural development of their people but practice nonacting, nonmeddling, noninterference so that the people shall scarcely know that they have rulers. | • Teachers should not block the upward maturing process of adult learners but practice being nondirective. Learners will then be better able to run their lives irrespective of outside help. |
| • When one desires to take in hand the empire and make it, I see him not succeed. One who makes it, mars it. | • When one sets out to control the minds of the learners, one fails. One who tries to force growth mars it. |
| • The empire is a divine vessel which cannot be made. | • Inner growth is a delicate process which cannot be forced. It has to be nurtured. |
| • I comprehend of nonassertion the advantage and of silence the lesson. | • I see that by divesting myself of the lecturer role, and by listening more, everyone stands to gain. |
| • There are few in the world who obtain the advantage of non-assertion. | • There are as yet few who have completely mastered the facilitative style. |
| • Abandon your saintliness, put away your prudence, and the people will gain a hundred fold. | • Give up being an authority, stop being a guru. Put away your own "right answers" and you will find the people will learn a hundred times better. |

World Vision International

# CHAPTER 5

# Practical Considerations in Applying the Growth Approach in Developing Countries

## The Need for a Process

Since villagers often tend to function in the context of authority/dependency relationships, we need to promote activities that give people freedom from authority so that they will discover the power to be creative, spontaneous and effective in their own right.

An extremely permissive and structureless model, however, may be neither appropriate nor feasible in the poverty context of developing countries. Much as I admire those who can carry if off, my personal and purely subjective feeling is that this methodology requires a frustration tolerance level that would in itself be intolerable if there are other quicker ways of achieving the same or similar learning goals. But the underlying principles of *learner-centered* education remain valid, as can be seen from the variety of participatory initiatives that have sprung up, each using its own set of techniques to involve the poor as

the main actors in development. The focus on the learner seems to be the common element unifying those diverse efforts. But how does one proceed from that point on? We need to share more insights from a variety of field experiences and examine what we are doing and why, in order to contribute to the formulation of a workable theory of growth-focused learning applicable in developing countries.

## Insights from SARAR

My colleagues and I who have worked with the SARAR approach over the years have several insights and assumptions to share with other educators. For example, we have learned the following:

- A high degree of participation by adult learners, even the poorest of the poor, is possible if field staff themselves are trained in a participatory way and are committed to the participatory approach; if they are supported and encouraged in using participatory techniques; and if they are provided learning tools to get the process started in the right way. The examples given later in this chapter from field experience in Asia and Africa should help to clarify this point.
- If we want to quicken the pace of growth without losing its quality, then we must be vigilant about what is actually taking place in the course of interaction between the facilitator and the people at the participants' level, in terms of attitudes, values, decisions and learning behaviors. We have found that for growth of the total person, the concept of praxis (reflection/action/reflection), though very useful, is not enough; other more creative and expansive processes of human development must also be explored. We must therefore introduce activities that evoke a wide range of attributes, capacities and dispositions including creativity, observation, investigation, projection, problem analysis, problem solving, planning and evaluation. To the extent that activities are meticulously designed to serve these purposes, we have found that learners emerge from the experience with increased capacity for self-direction.
- There is nothing "instant" about this process. It has to be built cumulatively, brick by brick. But it is not an inordinately lengthy one either. The facilitator who is able to establish a relationship of trust and confidence, who can function on a peer basis with villagers, and who is skilled in using some simple participatory tools, will find that the creative energies released by the process greatly expedite the achievement of goals, and sometimes surpass them.
- We have found that enjoyment of the learning process is an essential condition for its success. To be enjoyable, the learning experiences have to be relevant, purposeful, vital, interactive, challenging, exciting, evocative, and preferably multisensory, hands-on; in short, capable of engaging the learners in every possible way. As Maslow put it, inner growth encourages exploring, experiencing, choosing, enjoying, transforming and doing. Sometimes

all it takes is one simple, well designed participatory experience to get this kind of involvement started. Then it takes on a life and a momentum of its own. An enjoyable experience is, however, not necessarily a "joyful" experience. It may require hard work, sacrifice and pain, but what makes it memorable is the investment of self, the excitement of discovery and the closeness of the group in meeting the challenge.

- Activities, however, must be more than immediately enjoyable. They have to serve purposes that take people out of dead-ends, create the desire to continue the effort to make further progress, and sustain what has been achieved. To ensure that this happens, activities that build planning skills are of critical importance. We therefore make a very deliberate attempt to introduce basic planning concepts and skills into the learning process, not theoretically, but as working tools applied to real life needs identified by the group. Through many experiences of planning from an actual reality base, the learners are enabled to perceive themselves in a new way as individuals who can project, act and achieve results, rather than live from day-to-day at the mercy of circumstances.

- Not enough is being done in adult education of the poor to deliberately promote the creative capacities of the people — in particular the power of imaging. Yet the power of imaging can be cultivated to an extraordinary degree for development, and is vitally important for planning. To the extent that the people can conceive of a different reality in their minds, they will strive for it. If education is to be fully developmental, it must enable a learner to change the way he uses himself, not only from passive to active, from timid to confident, from silent to vocal, and from fearful to assertive, but also from routine to resourceful, from unaware to insightful, and from blindly conforming to innovative and imaginative. I believe this should be a fundamental growth objective since resourcefulness and inventiveness are great assets in overcoming poverty.

- A related goal is to systematically build critical thinking and problem solving capacities and skills, preferably using materials that can be manipulated, organized, rearranged, analyzed, interpreted and critiqued by the learners themselves to uncover new meanings, solve problems and take on new challenges. As people gain confidence in the exploration of alternative solutions and in problem solving, they do not have to depend on solutions being brought to them by outsiders, in fact, outsiders can learn much from them.

## A Change in Training Roles

In training staff, the above considerations imply engaging group members in a learning style very different from the customary passive listening role of traditional teaching. In doing so, participants bring into play a variety of growth-inducive behaviors. As a result of intense and creative interaction, trainees themselves begin to observe changes in their own thinking and their social relationships. Competitiveness gives way to collaboration. Those who

were initially dominant learn to listen. Those who at first were shy begin to take on more visible roles such as speaking up at community meetings. Participants learn firsthand what it takes to set group goals and to achieve them collectively.

As in the village setting, the facilitator/trainer plays a minimal role, apart from designing and presenting opportunities for the exercise of participant talents. The facilitator, however, learns a great deal about (and from) the group, and is able to put that knowledge to good use in planning further activities. The process thus becomes a cumulative one.

## Some Case Examples

Chris Srini Vasan

The following examples from Asia and Africa may help to show the simple ways in which such a strategy has worked in actual field settings. These were selected because they give close-up illustrations of some of the techniques used and the reasons for using them.

### Case 1: Jabra Village, Bangladesh

*Starting from a felt need*

In Bangladesh the population of the village of Jabra had severe economic problems, with 40% landless and the rest marginal farmers. As members of the "moochi" caste, one of the lowest in the social hierarchy, they were also limited to the occupation of cobblers; it required the tanning of leather which others were loathe to do, and it barely earned them a starvation wage. However, they did have skills in producing drums ("tablas") which were potentially marketable in nearby towns.

*Creating a congenial climate*

The method used by Save the Children (U.S.) to enable these cobblers to improve their lot was simple and low-key. To establish a congenial atmosphere the facilitator expressed an interest in tape recording their music. This gave them an opportunity to show with pride the quality and tone of the drums they produced.

*Focusing on high relevance issues*

The discussion that followed focused on how they could increase their productivity and find markets.

An artist on the project team made sketches during the discussion and later developed them into larger posters illustrating key steps in manufacturing and marketing which the group had discussed.

At each subsequent session, facilitators used the posters to remind the cobblers of the ideas they had shared and create awareness of the planning process that emerged.

*Institution building*

The cobblers formed a cooperative to produce drums. The cooperative started with a membership of three families whose increased productivity doubled their income within a period of three months. Within the next three months, membership increased to nine families, and within six months, to twenty-five. A factory was also built through self-help efforts.

*Using materials as planning stimuli*

The posters enabled the group to recognize what they were able to achieve in each of the three-month segments. Since they were mostly illiterate, "play money" (to represent taka notes) was used to help them calculate and record increases in income at each stage.

The posters, which were displayed on the exterior mud wall of a villager's house, attracted attention of other villagers and created much excited discussion. Using the same play money, they were then able to plan what they would achieve in the next three months. Besides increased productivity and higher earnings, their expanded plan included improvements in nutrition, housing, water supply and education.

## Case 2: Nueva Ecija, the Philippines

*Starting from the learner's expressed needs*

A rural women's project in Nieves, Nueva Ecija, in the Philippines also used large posters and other visual aids to promote dialogue at the barrio level. The issue addressed here as in Jabra was economic, since the women had identified "lack of income" as their priority problem.

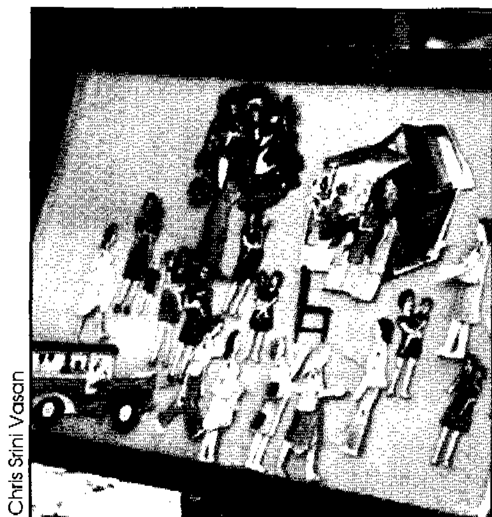
The Nieves barrio, however, though in less dire economic circumstances than Jabra, had experienced problems in previous dealings with the local voluntary agency. The facilitator team was therefore aware that they might run into feelings of hostility among members of the barrio group.

*Creating a congenial climate*

Chris Srini Vasan

The first session's climate had to be particularly cordial. To break the ice the facilitator invited the women to sing and to record their songs on tape. The women enjoyed hearing their own songs played back. It was then possible to record the discussions without their feeling intimidated. This served as an informal, preliminary needs assessment.

*The path to learner decision making*


Chris Srini Vasan

Chris Srini Vasan

The next step was to help the women identify and choose among alternative ways of increasing their income. They would first need to make personal judgements and then reach group consensus on economic activities of their choice.

*Using materials*

Chris Srini Vasan

At the very next session, the facilitator arranged flexiflans (see Annex B) on a large board to illustrate the different income-generating options they had spoken about at the previous meeting. To reassure the women that these in fact were their own ideas, relevant portions of the previous session's tapes were played back and reinforced through discussion. The alternative economic activities illustrated on the board included pig raising, poultry keeping, farming, vegetable gardening, bamboo-craft, and tailoring.

*Learners as decision makers*

The women used small colored pieces of paper as ballots to indicate their personal preferences among these alternatives. Upon further discussion, they agreed on pig raising as an activity that might be both profitable and feasible for all. But they needed more information on it. Accordingly, they asked if the facilitators could return two days later at a different time when it would be convenient for them to meet.

*Keeping learners in charge*

At this point, the facilitators could have simply called in the livestock technician to lecture to the women on the do's and don'ts of pig raising. But that would be reverting to the top-down approach. Instead, they invited the technician to be present at the next session, but to stay in the background until needed.

*Using materials to facilitate discussion*

Chris Srini Vasan

Chris Srini Vasan

Facilitators then distributed a set of large posters, each of which illustrated one or more symptoms of hog diseases. They also passed out separate cards, smaller in size, each of which conveyed by either picture or word an alternative way of treating hog diseases. The task for the group was to match these "treatment" cards with the "disease" posters.

### *Group interaction*

As can be expected, the activity provoked excited debate and laughter. The barrio women challenged each other, defended their positions, worked out compromises and identified several additional things they wanted to know about pig raising, one of which was "how to avoid the spread of diseases to piglets."

### *Timing of technical input*

At this stage, the facilitator asked if they would like to hear from the veterinary technician, to which they readily agreed. The technician, who had been listening throughout, was able to offer positive comment on many of the ideas for "cures" and "preventive treatment" that had been exchanged during the discussion. This greatly boosted the group's confidence. The technician also added suggestions of his own, giving their technical reasons. The number of questions that the women asked of him, and their reluctance to leave at the end of the session, are indicators of the high motivation aroused.

### *Building concepts step-by-step*

Subsequent sessions focused on cooperation, planning and mobilizing resources. In each case the use of participatory exercises, group tasks, games and open-ended stimuli helped women rely on their own wits as much as possible to arrive at practical conclusions.

### *Institution building*

By this time they were ready for a change of status: from an informal ad-hoc women's gathering to a more tightly knit group, bound by common needs and purposes. An evaluator reported as follows about this stage of their growth:

> As a result of these sessions, the Nieves group decided that the best way to proceed would be to organize themselves so that they would be eligible for the neighborhood dispersal program; they earlier had rejected the idea of trying to get a bank loan because of interest rates and bad experiences of others. To prove that they were indeed serious about pursuing the project, they elected a leader and asked the photographer present to take a polaroid picture of everyone in the group as a membership record. They agreed to hold a follow-up meeting to discuss how to proceed.[34]



[34]Catherine Crone, *Research on Innovative Nonformal Education for Rural Women, Phase I* (New York: World Education, 1976), 17.

### Common Principles

Chris Srini Vasan

The Jabra and Nieves experience were both guided by principles derived from the SARAR method. It is worth noting that they both share several common features; they:

- Started out from a need (economic) that was acutely felt by the participants.
- Began by putting people at ease and establishing a supportive, open atmosphere.
- Made use of materials and techniques that are enabling, not directive.
- Held the group responsible for setting its own goals and defining its action plans.
- Helped the group use creative planning techniques and cooperative guidelines to address their priority problems.
- Encouraged informal groups to establish themselves on an institutional basis.

## Spin-Off to Another Region

### Case 3: The Tototo-Kilemba Project, Kenya*

The Nieves experience had repercussions in a totally different context, by serving as an example for similar initiatives by rural women in Kenya, under the Tototo-Kilemba Project of the National Christian Council, Kenya. The link between the Philippines and the Kenya project was provided by World Education, a US-based development assistance agency.

The Tototo-Kilemba project, which reached some 130 poor women in six villages, aimed to build the capacity of individuals and groups to exercise initiative on their own behalf, and to increase competence in planning and executing collaborative activities.

These women's groups had tried unsuccessfully to work together effectively in the past. Their projects had either suffered financial losses or brought meager returns. They lacked organizational skills and confidence in themselves as entrepreneurs. But they were eager for help. The immediate need



*Data drawn largely from World Education reports and from Noreen Clark and Nyaga Gakuru, "The Effects on Health and Self Confidence of Collaborative Learning Projects Hygiene," *International Journal of Health Education* 1 (1982): 47-56, and Noreen Clark, *Education for Development and the Rural Woman* (New York: World Education, 1979).

was for each group to become aware of the resources it already possessed which, combined with good planning, teamwork and training, could turn the tide for its members.

An educational principle consistently applied in Tototo-Kilemba from the start was to provide the groups with the maximum opportunity to direct their own learning. The program was "specifically designed to increase feelings of competence, develop adult skills through collaborative effort, and relate appropriate health, nutrition and other development concerns" in ways that increased their chances of success.

To ensure that this process could in fact take place, field staff were trained through a participatory workshop which accomplished three things:

- It created awareness of the value and feasibility of the learner-centered approach.
- It developed skills in working with others along participatory lines.
- It provided practical experience in participant observation and feedback systems, including detailed process-recording on "logs."

In line with a need expressed by all six women's groups, economic activities became the focal point of learning. However, on the principle of freedom of choice, each group independently decided which economic project it would undertake and how it proposed to go about it. The groups examined their needs and priorities, selected goals, drew up plans, assigned specific tasks, mobilized resources, maintained logs, and assessed progress.

Group meetings were the main venue for learning. At each meeting the women decided what they needed to learn or do next. The coordinator helped connect them with outside technical assistance as needed. Not all of the groups, however, were able to generate and maintain this pace of growth consistently. The logs kept by facilitators and members were very useful tools to understand the groups' internal dynamics and provide timely assistance.

The achievements of the groups soon went beyond economic gains. Group members adopted in their own lives many health practices (such as immunizations, latrine construction, use of safe water) which had proved useful for their businesses.

An evaluation of the project, both at mid-point and at project-end two years later, showed significant impact on health and nutrition, family income, and community involvement. Practical improvements included the following:

- Income levels rose significantly as a result of group economic activities (their earnings grew from 11 to 34 percent of the national per capita income).

- Women opened bank accounts and learned to manage their own funds.
- Five out of the six groups were able to raise and invest significant amounts of capital in their projects.
- Participants gained skills in evaluating options, making considered judgements, formulating plans, and acting on them.
- By project-end, participants held more village offices (e.g., in community councils, committees or organizations) and contributed more time, money or labor to community projects than did nonparticipants.

Recent reports indicate that Tototo-Kilemba is now able to provide technical assistance to rural women's groups in other East African countries, notably in Malawi and Swaziland, Mali and Mozambique. The spin-off effect in Africa is widening.

## Critique of the Growth-Centered Approach

The growth-centered approach has its share of critics, as do the two other strategies reviewed. One criticism, the pros and cons of which have already been considered earlier in this chapter, is that the strategy focuses on individual growth rather than on societal change. This is a two-part criticism, both parts of which have some validity.

### The Foundation for Enduring Social Change

Jacob Pfohl

The growth-centered approach does stress the development of individual capacities. One of those capacities is to work effectively within a peer group to critically examine and deal with impediments, including those prevalent in an inequitous society. But while the approach aims to build a good society from good citizens, it does not set out to serve the specific aim of social reform through a confrontational and revolutionary process.

All thinking individuals, in their process of growth, must inevitably become aware of and act upon the injustices and oppressive forces of society. But they may not immediately organize themselves with the same speed and commitment to collective action that characterizes a revolutionary movement. The growth-centered approach is no substitute for the conscientizing approach in situations where radical change is imperative. But it does lay a foundation for group commitment and self-motivation which emanates from within, arguably the essential prerequisite for enduring social change.

In the course of maturing, people are bound to become conscious of social inequities and exploitation, and will want to take action. They will also have duly considered the possible outcomes and consequences of alternative action strategies. On this basis, they are the ones who decide what kind of action should be taken, when and by whom. Although the facilitator does not play a direct role here as a "consciousness raiser" on the specific issue of social injustice, he/she has a responsibility to be available to the group as a sounding board or resource person when the group requires support in arriving at decisions.

## The Learning and Action Curve

Another criticism, although less well founded, is that the growth strategy takes a long time to achieve improvements in the life of local communities, particularly in improving the community's physical environment, such as a potable water supply and sanitary installations, and in adopting health-related behaviors.

Field experience, however, suggests that the reverse may be true. While initially the enabling process requires time, once the concept of self-directed change takes root, community demand may soar and soon outstrip supply. This has been the experience, for example, of PROWWESS/UNDP assisted initiatives in Lesotho, Indonesia and India. In fact, the curve of rapidly accelerating demand is a potential problem where program managers are not fully prepared, well in advance, to cope with it.

## Lack of Trainers

Finally, some critics point out, another shortcoming of the growth-centered approach is that its principles and techniques are not explicit enough, and so there is a lack of trainers who have mastered the approach well enough to train others. This comment is directed in particular to the SARAR methodology. It is hoped that to a large extent the manual on *Tools for Community Participation* will have helped to correct this situation, since it focuses on the use of specific SARAR techniques and materials and on the purposes they serve. However, their philosophic base and underlying principles may still need further clarification. I shall attempt to provide this in Part II and III of this monograph.

UN/Photo
UN/Photo
Chris Srini Vasan

# CONCLUSION

# Weighing the Choices

Now that we have looked at alternative courses and have some idea of where they might take us, the time has come for the "so what?" reaction. And indeed, so what? Where does this leave us? I think it still leaves us with some hard issues to consider and some questions to push out of the way before we can arrive at clear decisions.

## Emphasis vs. Exclusiveness

First, the labels. They suggest what each strategy can do best. Are they mutually exclusive? Does content-focused strategy mean that none of the others can lead to knowledge and to the mastery of content? Or growth-centered — are the other strategies not able to stimulate growth? Or is conscientization the only way to make people aware of their duty and their power to combat oppression? I think it should be clear that these are not claims of exclusiveness but of emphasis.

The claim of exclusiveness, when such is made, is sometimes prompted by enthusiasm for one's cause and competitiveness for funding. The demands on funding sources are great and the means available are small. The claim of uniqueness as a justification for fund-worthiness can fuel a drive to beat off all

competition with whatever weapons of criticism we have, instead of seeing a "payoff" in cooperation.

The situation reminds me of an old Russian fable about a woman who pleaded year after year to be taken to heaven because of the virtuous life she had led. It seems that out of compassion God finally offered to pull her up if she could hold on to the sprouted end of a huge onion. The woman gladly did this. However, as she was being hoisted up, a number of (in her estimation) unworthy people clung to her feet in the hopes of gaining entry to heaven as well. This angered the woman so much that she kicked vigorously to free herself from them; after all, she was the chosen saint and they were, at best, only pseudo-saints. The unfortunate result of her struggle was that the onion stalk broke and she fell back to her previous miserable condition on earth. But here ends the analogy to educational strategies that claim singular merit for themselves over others — they do get funded.

## Working in Concert

I believe that teamwork, rather than competitiveness, is where our salvation lies; making the strengths in each approach work in concert where possible.

For example, while the thrust of the social marketing approach is very different from the other two described above, it has an undeniable role to play in these days of ascendancy of mass media — though perhaps not an isolated role. Social marketing has perfected its techniques to a science. Our world is exploding with messages of all kinds. Why not put those techniques to work for development and make helpful messages quickly accessible to, and understandable by, communities at large? But should we not also build, concurrently, a different capacity in people to weigh options for themselves, and not to accept too quickly the arguments that have been convincingly laid out for them by message-focused communication media of various kinds?

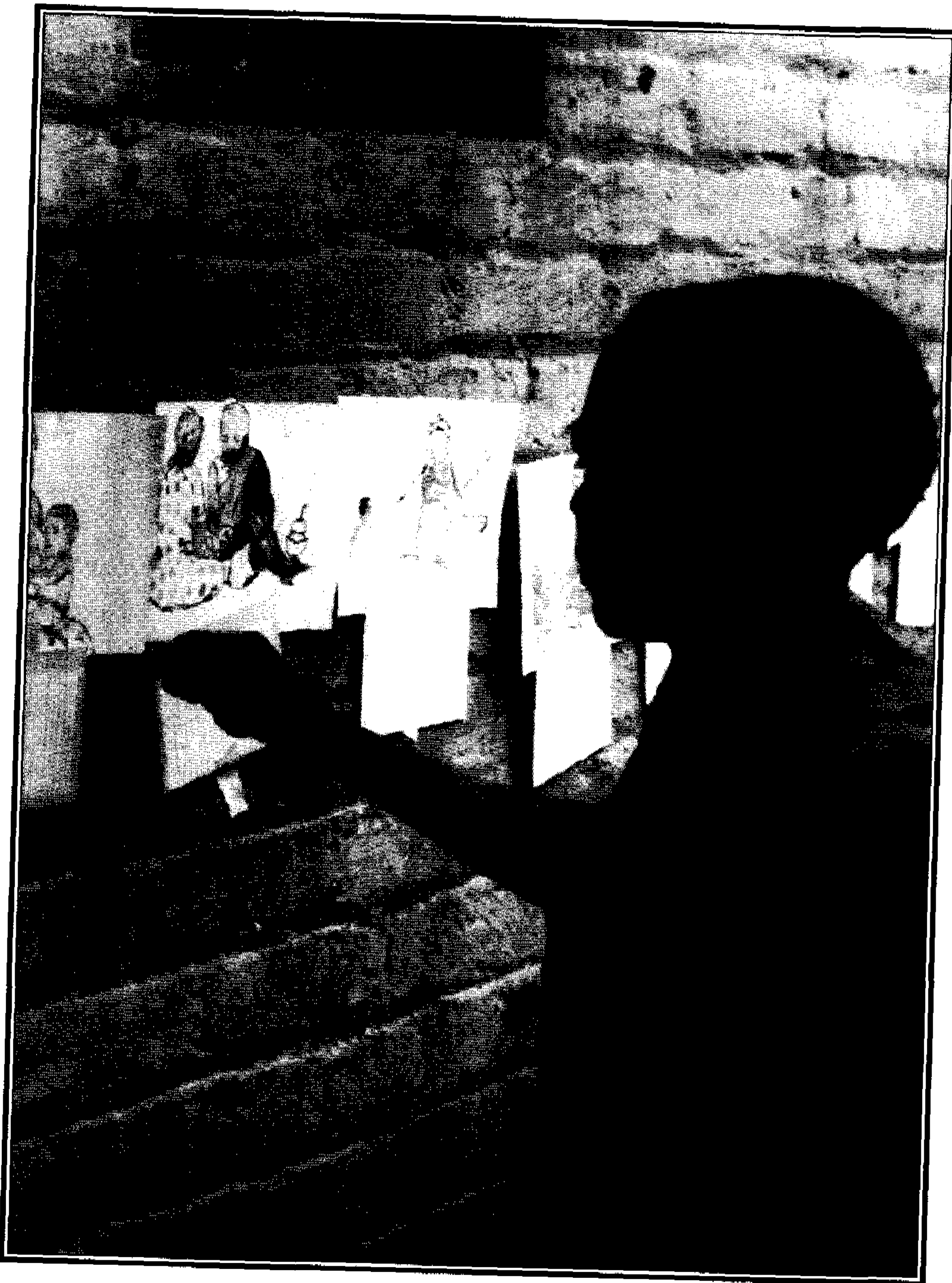
Similarly, conscientization can also be viewed as driven by a message, since one of its principal aims is to arouse consciousness of a specific issue, social reform. It does use a radically different thinking process to arrive at collective decisions, one that provides participants with direct opportunities to reflect in a group, to bring out their fears and objections in the open, and to externalize the internal dialogue which the poor themselves might otherwise tend to suppress out of fear or fatalism. But is that enough to ensure popular choice and commitment over time?

The concept of education as growth addresses a longer term need and is therefore a strong complement to these and other approaches. It can help to build in people the kind of sales-resistance so necessary to counteract any

inroads of the marketing approach into our autonomy of thinking. It can also strengthen the democratic base of community planning by helping people to actively explore alternative constructive solutions and generate their own creative plans. Further examples of this type of community thinking process appear in Part II.

Part III

# Translating the Growth Approach into Practice



Ron Sawyer

# CHAPTER 1

# Planning to Succeed

The lessons learned by different development agencies at the field level corroborate the view that promoting community participation is a complex task requiring continuous alertness, sensitivity and flexibility on the part of the intervening agency. The larger the scale of the project, the greater may be the difficulty of meeting this requirement.

Complexity, however, should not deter us from taking action right away on some aspects of the problem. There are several things we can do immediately to prepare ourselves for the task. Specifically, we can:

- Make a commitment to help develop people's own capacity for self-directed change by improving our competency in participatory methodology.
- Make serious efforts to help build the capacity of local institutions to manage and sustain development.
- Launch a dynamic program of participatory training adaptable to different needs and levels of responsibility.
- Initiate steps to bring about system-wide consistency in applying participatory principles.

# Facilitating People's Capacity for Self-Directed Change

Chris Srini Vasan

It is now generally acknowledged that villagers are more likely to put their full weight behind a development effort that embodies their own priorities and decisions. Self-reliance is a concept that everyone applauds. It sounds good. But how is it translated into practice? Since it implies decentralized authority for decision making, how much authority are we prepared to give up, for what kinds of decisions, and who will make them?

## Need for Task Analysis

One simple way to deal with this issue is to do an analysis of tasks expected of community members in their role as full partners in development (A formidable list of tasks from a review of field reports can be found in Part III, Activity Two). It is obvious that mere competency-based training can never prepare villagers for such a wide range of responsibilities, particularly if they start out from attitudes of dependency, insecurity or self-depreciation. We must give careful thought to the attributes, dispositions and capabilities required for community members to fulfill a complete management role.

## Need for Field-Level Training

Since the nurturing and supporting of people's growth in this sense is a sensitive task, all program staff who work directly at the village level should receive facilitative training. Such training is indispensable to avoid confusing this methodology with other (and sometimes conflicting) multidisciplinary approaches and to create a common vision of where we are heading.[35]

[35]Some would describe this process as "empowerment." I feel the term "empowerment" does not do justice to the process that takes place. "Empowerment" suggests that something is being done by an outside agent to transfer or infuse power into a recipient. The term empowerment literally is defined as "giving power to; delegating authority; conferring power on; investing with authority; appointing; entrusting; allowing; licensing; authorizing," all of which suggest that the power from one source is transferred to another. By contrast, the term "growth" indicates a process that starts from the inner self, generated by a power that already exists within the person, although often undiscovered. The growth strategy therefore does not confer or bestow power but simply summons it forth, helps it to become manifest, causes it to rise as in a leavening process, helps to germinate and brings to fruition what is already there in a latent or dormant state.

## Need for Flexibility from Above

Field staff need **time** to foster growth within local communities; the process cannot be hurried. Attempts to encourage genuine participation can be frustrated by the imposition of rigid time frames **to achieve targets**. Since often these schedules are set to satisfy funding agency requirements, donors may need to rethink what results they are really after.

Another difficulty arising out of the participatory approach is that the sequence of field events cannot be neatly planned ahead to match in strict order a project management's preferred schedule of inputs. Field reports show that pressure to perform according to a plan prepared many miles away often frustrate and retard efforts to involve the people meaningfully. As one field report puts it, the potential for conflict runs high where, at any given moment, the goals and needs of the local group differ from those of provider agencies. Project leadership must be prepared to at least allow for compromises in situations like these.

## Need for Support Services

Sensitivity to the process of community involvement should remind project management that there are no ready-made formulas for motivating people to action; field personnel therefore need guidance and support in trying out new ways of promoting community interest and commitment. This is not possible where the staff is already overburdened with administrative or technical chores. In addition to reviewing staff workloads, program managers must seek creative solutions to this problem, including training local "frontline" volunteers to extend the outreach of services.

Simple participatory training tools can be produced for use by volunteers in the role of facilitators of small village groups; many tools require little or no literacy skills. Kits of open-ended visual and discussion materials can greatly ease the task of securing participant involvement, whether at the community level or within agency training contexts.

## Need for Sensitivity

We have to remind ourselves that the participatory approach will in all likelihood be new to the villagers. It may lack credibility with them initially. They may feel more respected if the facilitator lectures to them. Some villagers may consider group discussion a waste of time if the materials and procedures have not been carefully thought out. They may then feel that "nothing is happening other than talk." In some communities people may not wish to raise questions or challenge opinions if such probing is not considered respectful in their culture.

Although the process cannot be hurried, eventually they see the point, and the pace of learning and actions quickens. As one field practitioner put it, "Toward the end people do develop the habit of questioning 'why this, why that'."

> For the seed to germinate and to sprout, water and heat are not enough. A certain amount of time is also necessary. The gardener who looks at a green apple will not say that it lacks sugar but that it needs days to ripen. It is not enough to cultivate and irrigate. One must also know how to wait. When all the work is done, it is still necessary that the seed underneath pursue its own destiny.
>
> —Gaston Berger

### Need for an Adequate Budget

All of the above implies that budget lines must be relaxed to allow for qualitative improvements. Unless there is commitment to ensure such support to front line staff, we are likely to end up with a very weak presence at the field level. We need to ensure that adequate funds are available for participatory training and reinforcement on a systematic basis, as well as for educational tools, research, documentation and evaluation.

## Building Grassroots Institutional Capacity to Manage and Sustain Change

Chris Srini Vasan

### Starting Small

Institution-building at the grassroots level may have to begin in many instances with informal group experiences as discussed above, where average villagers have opportunities for collective decision making. Often these turn out to be their first opportunities to participate in community decisions.

This applies in particular to rural women. Because they have been traditionally isolated from the mainstream, rural women need to be brought together in

small groups constituted around their priority interests. Here in a climate of confidence, mutual help, and enjoyment, they can discover a new group identity. This is the first step toward building the institutional base from which they can be heard and exert influence.

Most methodologies utilize group structures in some way, but the size and function of groups vary from special interest committees (e.g., women's enterprises) to community-wide organizations.

Many of the management tasks required to sustain community-level improvements can be performed by existing local bodies given proper training. In some instances, new committees or formal institutions may have to be created, as often happens in the water and sanitation sector.

## Ensuring the Democratic Process

In some countries, traditional local institutions may have come under the domination of vested interests and therefore no longer serve the needs of the poor. In setting up new management bodies such as water committees, a common mistake is to set them up too quickly, without sufficient thought as to their capability or accountability. Token committees hastily set up at the bidding of a local leader, or to satisfy the project's contractual requirements, tend to fall apart as they lose constituent support for their functions.

There is often doubt as to whether the new leadership of these groups is truly representative of the people, particularly of the poor. It is easy to confuse the voice of the forceful leader with the will of the silent majority. Local committees themselves can easily become a controlling power unless their accountability to the people is properly safeguarded, and broad participation has been encouraged in appropriate ways from the beginning.

## Providing Training Support

Helping the community to select, strengthen and renovate its existing institutions or set up new ones is a task requiring special attention by program management. Here, too, training plays a pivotal role, since it must supply both leadership training in managerial capacities, and group training to form or support organizational structures. Properly trained and guided, these institutions should then assure continuity to community initiatives and to shouldering maintenance responsibilities.

# Planning and Launching a Comprehensive Participatory Training Effort

Pierre Guiton

Training for field and other program staff is obviously one of the most important (and cost-effective) means to achieve both the vision and the commitment to practical action.

## Building Trainer Capacity from the Ground Up

Investment in participatory training can be modest at the start; it may initially be a series of short experiential workshops interspersed with trainee field work. This should help to identify a cadre of national trainers who, with proper support, can carry the ball from that point on and bring a growing number of trainees up to speed.

Using the instructional base of an existing training center for this purpose has several obvious advantages: a richer background of experience; a greater assurance of continuity of staff; possibilities of gaining access to training resources as needed; and the spread effect to other development agencies that also use the center's resources.

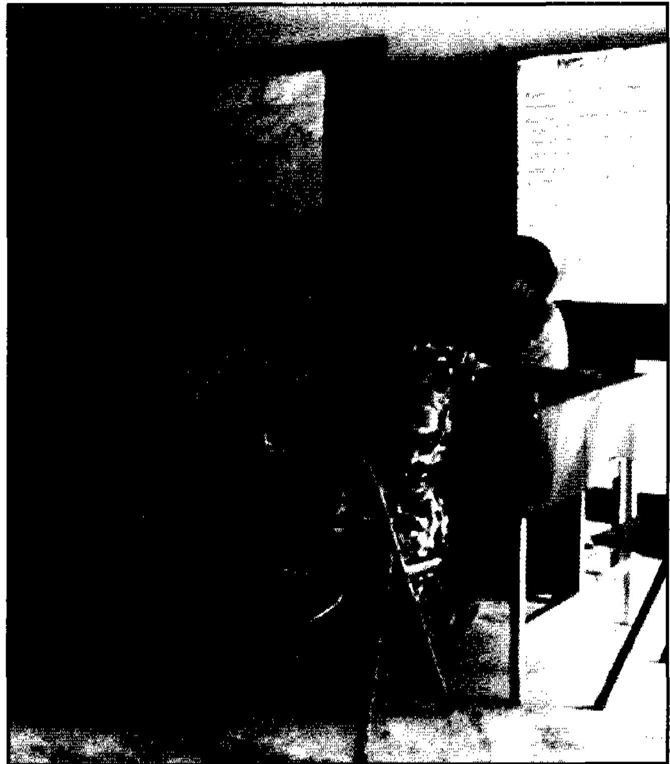
From a modest beginning, training activities will have to pick up momentum while the energy generated by the experience is still strong. Some managers are under the mistaken impression that one trainer workshop is all that is needed for their experienced trainers to become facilitators. Unfortunately this is not true. One or two workshops, no matter how exciting or even euphoric they may be, can never develop the comfort level and the skills needed to be a good trainer cum facilitator. One has to keep working at it until concepts and skills are internalized.

Participatory training should therefore be planned as a long-term series with a cumulative effect. This applies not only to trainers, but to field staff and their supervisors and managers as well. Some important reasons for this follow.

## Impediments to Application

### *The inertia factor*

**Trainers** trained in traditional methods may have difficulty in abandoning their directive instructional style. If their prior training has emphasized content coverage along with rigid schedules, examinations and certificates, they are likely to carry that pattern into their own training style with others. It is not easy to change from an instructional to a facilitative mode after only one exposure to experiential learning.



Pierre Guiton

### *The authority/dependency syndrome*

Similarly, many development workers — the **trainees** in this context — are convinced that local communities expect to be "taught" and that they would be confused by an approach based on egalitarian principles. Because they are in an authority position and are accustomed to a directive role, they feel almost duty-bound to "teach" and "direct" rather than facilitate. This often happens where staff function in an autocratic environment. Their behavior tends to reflect that environment. Trainers must be sensitive to this as they first begin to work with field staff.

### *Management directives*

Middle level and field staff may feel compelled to continue using the traditional instructional style because their supervisors expect them to meet prescribed deadlines and achieve set targets. They believe that imparting messages and using persuasion, pressure tactics, or external incentives is more likely to produce the results they need, quickly.

*The credibility factor among staff*

Because the participatory approach is relatively new and it stresses informality, peer relations and enjoyment of learning, some staff look upon it as primarily "fun and games" or "kindergarten stuff." They are unwilling to risk introducing an approach which they feel lacks credibility among both learners and peers. The fear is that villagers, in particular the village elders, will be puzzled or even turned off by a participatory approach which is new to them. This becomes a rationalization for employing the didactic approach.

*Feedback/reporting requirements*

Quantitative results are also easier to report when using a didactic style of extension work (e.g., number of wells dug, number of talks given, number of messages delivered, number of people who can give the correct answer on how to prepare the ORT solution). It is harder to report on "soft" data or on the qualitative changes resulting from a more open, participatory approach.

*Lack of familiarity with participatory principles*

Without knowing the underlying principles of participatory activities, field staff may simply use facilitative tools and techniques as a "bag of tricks." This defeats the purpose. They then feel discouraged and give up.

## Coping with Constraints

The participatory training programs, at whatever level, must start with full knowledge of these above constraints and an experiential way of coping with them, such as organizing evaluative refresher courses. These may begin with peers sharing experiences of successes and shortfalls, followed by facilitative techniques that address their causes.

An obvious precept to this approach is that people tend to teach in the manner in which they were taught. Therefore, training programs for trainers, supervisors, technical personnel and field staff must be grounded in the same principles which underlie community education. Internalizing those underlying principles is essential for building both skill and confidence in using innovative approaches.

# Ensuring System-Wide Consistency in Applying Participatory Principles

Pierre Guiton

## Need for Comprehensive Review

An enabling strategy must decentralize authority for designing and carrying out activities. If this policy is genuinely pursued then the whole management system, including performance incentives, reporting requirements, control of resources, planning, training, implementation, and evaluative feedback will be carefully reviewed in ways consistent with participatory objectives.

This is probably the hardest task of all, given the number of decision levels and functional categories involved. However, few would dispute the need for consistency between top managerial and field operations policies, regardless of how remote that field situation may be.

## Need for Soul Searching Toward Institutional Consistency

Commitment means taking the time and making the effort to examine how the system as a whole functions, what opportunities for participation it offers, to whom and in what form, and the extent to which it encourages and rewards a facilitative style of management.

This is a soul-searching task, which itself can be structured as a participatory organizational exercise. The aim of such an activity is to get the system as a whole tuned in and working toward policy, managerial and technical styles that reinforce — and are fully consistent with — the participatory grassroots approach.

## Need for a New Management Vision

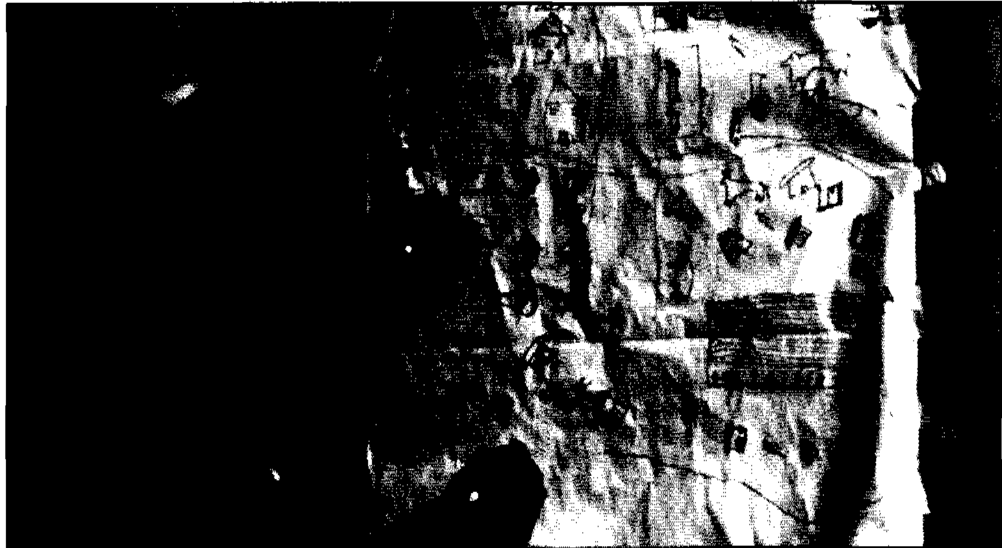
Participatory approaches, like any innovation, involve taking risks. Therefore, to ensure an ongoing system-wide plan for continued growth in the direction of decentralization and participatory management, we need a new vision and a new style of leadership at the helm. Educators and trainers have

focused mainly on the training needs of other levels of trainers, and of supervisors and field staff. Only recently have they expressed the need to orient policymakers and management-level personnel so that ownership of the approach begins at the top.

Accordingly, we need resources and techniques not only for multilevel and multisectoral use, but specifically for orienting top leadership. They need to be fully apprised of the implications of the participatory approach in practice, what it means, what it does and achieves, what problems it encounters, and what support it requires. This is a sensitive task to which educators need to give considerable thought.

> There are one-story intellects, two-story intellects and three-story intellects with skylights. All fact-collectors who have no aim beyond their facts are one-story men. Two-story men compare, reason, generalize, using the labor of the fact-collectors as their own. Three-story men idealize, imagine, predict — their best illumination comes from above, through the skylight.
>
> —Oliver Wendel Holmes

The best policymakers and managers will be these people who, as Oliver Wendel Holmes might say, have skylights in their heads. They will need to find creative ways to change the old system of hierarchical directives and rigid controls into one where decisions benefit from the thinking of all concerned. They will also need to promote a shared vision of the process among other agencies operating in their geographic area so that cooperative action along participatory lines becomes a reality.


Pierre Gurton

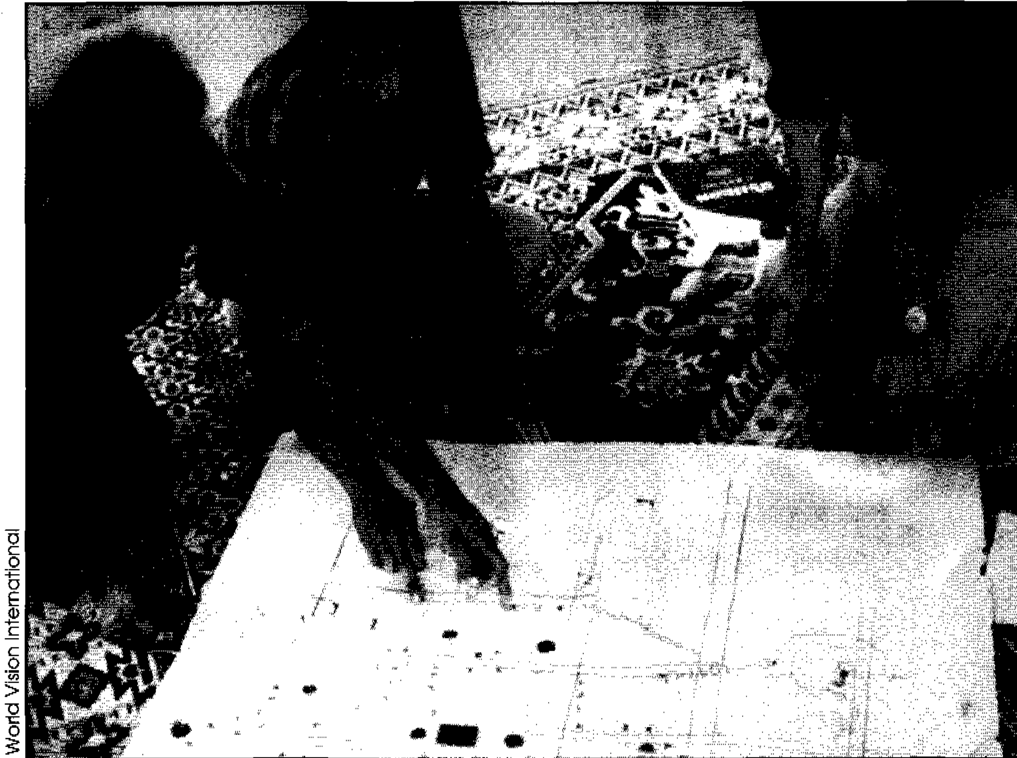
# CHAPTER 2

# Using Participatory Tools to Promote the Growth Process

Of all the SARAR techniques and tools described in my earlier manual, the ones are most often used by grassroots agencies are the Community Map, Flexiflans, the Pocket Chart and the Story with a Gap. (For a partial list of SARAR tools, see Annex B).

In applying them with villagers, voluntary agencies have made some exciting adaptations and introduced innovations of their own, combining them with other methods which serve similar aims. Thus our understanding of the process is being continuously enriched and expanded.

In Part I, I cited case studies from the experience of two international US-based agencies — Save the Children and World Education. Those cases illustrate how the process takes place, over time, with the help of a variety of simple tools and activities to stimulate reflection, analysis and planning. To understand the process at closer range, we might consider how a **single** technique or tool in itself can serve to ignite the spark of confidence, in order to promote community actions that are spring-loaded from the inside, where motivation surges from the inner person without dependence on external incentives, pressures or persuasion. In each of the following instances, the focus is on helping the poor discover latent powers to think and act in new ways.



World Vision International

# The Power to Create: The Community Map

**The Community Map technique** provides many excellent examples of the process in which community members envision a new reality by creating a village map.

## A Levelling Agent

The advantage of starting with a community map is that we are dealing with something that villagers already know well and can teach us about their community. As their living space, they know its history and its reality, but they may never have thought of pulling it all together in a visual form. The very idea that an outsider would be interested in seeing the community through their eyes, and that confidence has been placed in them to express symbolically, in a map, what they have lived and shared and borne over generations, is a stirring experience. All can take part in creating the map — young and old, men and women, literate and illiterate. It is a levelling agent. While some are working directly on the map, others can be collecting data; for example, on distances to water points, location of roads, and settlement patterns.

Building a community map is a low-cost, high-return project. All it takes is large sheets of paper and some colored markers, perhaps colored pieces of paper or fabric for details, scissors and paste if necessary, plus unlimited creativity on the part of the community. Sometimes a community member will

start planning the map on the ground itself, using a stick to draw lines and stones or leaves to mark places and things of importance to the village. As everybody then pitches in, ideas are quickly transferred to paper and it turns out to be one of the community's most exciting events.

In a project in Vietnam, a team of facilitators working with farmers to help correlate their farming enterprises describe how they proceeded:

> We gave farmers paper and pens and suggested they start by drawing a profile of the fields and dykes, ditches and puddles. On the profile, they sketched a cartoon of each enterprise. Then they connected the enterprises with arrows to show that material flows between them. Some farmers, especially illiterate ones, shy away from pen and paper. Marking the ground with a sharp stick or tracing arrows with wood ash is often popular. Very creative farmers gather seeds, cereal brans and fruit to represent their various enterprises.[36]

"What is important" says the Vietnam team, "is the process of building the picture and not the final drawing itself."

## Awakening the Imagination

Creativity cannot be a one-time effort. Because village communities so often find their security in traditional ways of thinking and behaving, creativity is not generally encouraged, and in some instances, may be actively discouraged. Yet creativity is indispensable for change. It is our hope that for the generation of new solutions to chronic and pernicious problems of poverty and disadvantage, there will be a quickening of the mind, and an awakening of imaginative faculties that permit people to conceive a future which is radically different from the past. As we will see, the use of role playing and tools such as unserialized posters are among the many other ways in which creativity can be encouraged and sustained.

## Experiencing New Roles

A map activity provides individuals with opportunities to fulfill many different roles (to make houses, collect objects, draw, color, check out data), but the group as a whole is involved in decisions on layout and symbolism. A great deal of thought goes into how best to represent the "facts" of the village, e.g., population size, composition, social structure, resources and problem areas. It thus becomes a powerful tool for stimulating not only creative expression but teamwork and analytic behavior.

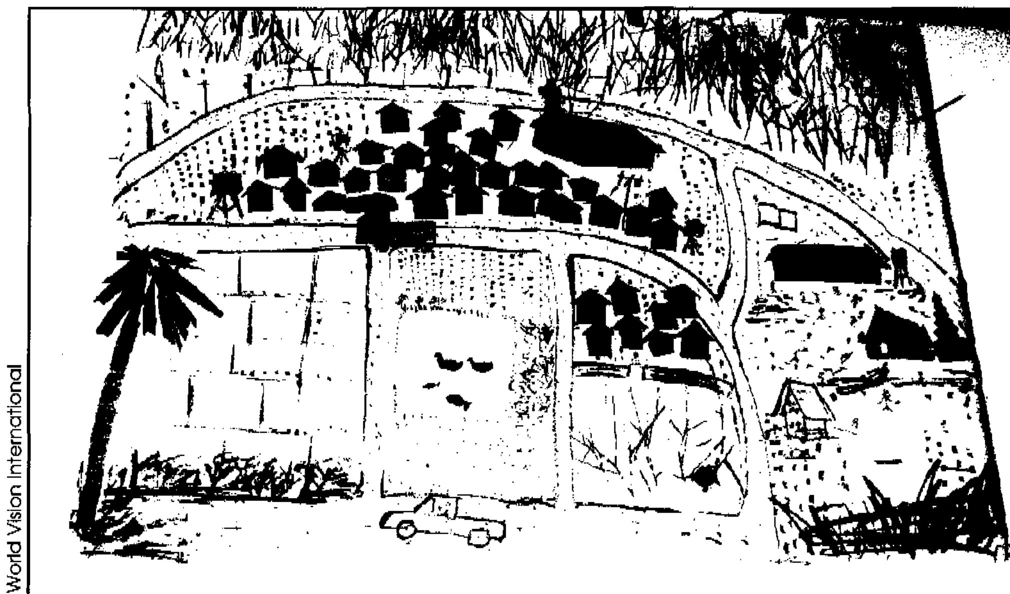
[36]Clive Lightfoot and Nguy an Ahn Tuan, "Report from International Center for Living Aquatic Resource Management," *ILEA Newsletter* (October 1990): 18-19.

## The Emotional Factor

The act of recreating their reality in visual form touches very deep feelings as well. There is usually pride in their creation, a boost to self-esteem. But further reflection on the reality they have reconstructed can bring the pain of seeing so clearly from the map the starkness of their present situation.

The facilitator's role at this point is to help villagers lift up their sights and reevaluate whatever resources they have, including the resources of their intelligence, their group strength, and their collective will.

## Conceiving a New Future



World Vision International

The community map activity does not end with making the map. Since the picture represents things as they are here and now, the natural question is how would this same village look, say five years from now, if everyone got together to improve it? This is a direct invitation to villagers to use their power of imaging, to create a vision of a different future, and to see themselves playing a direct role in it.

In case this sounds utopian, let us take a look at two case studies from the India program of World Vision International. Although in both cases the starting point is a community map, the approach in each is significantly different. I quote them almost verbatim here to lose nothing of the original flavor of the report.

## Case A: Begunia Village, Balipatna

### *The power of map-drawing*

One of the most empowering techniques used with the village people was the practice of map-making. One village in Begunia, Balipatna, is inhabited by 17 families of one of the so-called low-caste tribes, which is near the bottom in the caste system. They are agricultural laborers who do not own any land, and typically have very poor self-images.

But one of our Village Development Workers (VDWs) went to work with them as their friend. They just couldn't imagine that an educated young man would come and be with them, sit with them, and talk to them as if they were his equals. And they liked him. He is a friendly, outgoing person, with a ready smile, and quite highly motivated.

First the VDW encouraged these families to get together and describe themselves and their village as they were at that time, by drawing a map. Initially they were skeptical about this, but eventually the young people came together and said they could do it.

So they drew a map, then explained it to the VDW. Then the VDW asked if they were happy about their present situation, or if there was something they were hoping to see changed. So they drew another map, showing their "ideal village." This helped them realize that they really wanted a road.

The VDW asked them why they didn't have a road. Upon making inquiries, the people found that the government had actually set aside some land to make a road into their village, but the land was surrounded by property belonging to well-to-do people of a higher caste. So there was no road.

### *Taking responsibility*

Again the villagers gathered together, and the VDW said, 'Since you have a legal right to a road to your village, what are you going to do about it?' That motivated them to contact the government's regional development officer, even though the average village person is normally scared of even the lowest government official. But the people got together, and with the help of the VDW, they registered a protest, and finally the land was restored and they built a road.

Then the villagers agreed that all the families would keep their backyards clean. Previously all the backyards had been like jungles, with plants growing wild. But having made the decision, all worked together to clean up their backyards.

> Next all the families agreed to take responsibility for keeping the portion of the road in front of their houses clean, because previously that was where they dumped their garbage. Now they cleaned up the roadside and began to properly dispose of their garbage.
>
> They also realized a need for cash reserves to be available whenever they needed money in an emergency — such as when someone fell ill, or a relative suddenly dropped in for a few days, or for weddings or funerals, or if they had to buy a bullock, or if someone needed to buy a cycle. But most of these people never had even 20 rupees at a time.
>
> So, by saving very small amounts — five rupees, 10 rupees a month, these 17 families formed a credit association. In only two years time they had a loan capital of 4,000 rupees. And now they are issuing loans to association members out of that capital.[37]

The second case from India shows an interesting departure from the first approach. It begins with a focus on the village's history because an earlier activity had given the people great appreciation for their history. Here the facilitator helped the villagers see that a dream of the future becomes more real when they connect it with the past and the present in a village map.

## Case B: A Village in Orissa State

> One of the first parts of our work in a village would be asking them to draw a map of where they were in the past. Generally the elders in the community would be good at that. So they would say this is where we were and normally it's in terms of a child. We would ask: 'When this child was born or before this child was born, how was your community at that time or the time of the last floods? How was your community when you had this?' And they would draw a picture map of that.
>
> Then they would draw a picture map of the present. And we would say, 'Now compare your first map with this second map.' We would point out the changes that we would see or had seen, and those areas that had remained unchanged, and then we would ask them, 'Okay, now tell us what caused the changes that have occurred?' Invariably, it would be because of their own actions, and not out of any kind of external assistance. This obviously affirmed the people's power.
>
> Next we would say something like this: 'Now when this child is 10, how would you like your community to look?' Then they would begin drawing this new picture map. When they were finished we asked, 'Now what are the differences between your present and your future in the areas of desired change?' We encouraged them to ask themselves, 'Which of all our past strengths can we use to change the future?' The power that



[37]Report by Siddharta Sahu from a condensed telephone interview by Key Payton, *TOGETHER*, January-March, 1992.

comes out of dreaming. So the affirmation that they received was being able to change their history, and the power to dream.

The people in a community in Orissa state had gone through this exercise and had drawn a map of their future. We had left the maps with them so they could display their maps in whatever way they thought was appropriate.

Later on I was visiting them and found that the map was now in a very small dark room in the house of the village elder. He called me inside saying, 'Come, come.' And he showed me the map. I could hardly see it, but he said, 'You see, that is where we were and this is where we are and that's where we want to go. And we have done this and this and this and this on the map. This evening we are having a meeting to discuss about the hand pump, which is the next area of change that we want to do.' The power that came out of their dreams was amazing.[38]

## An Alternative Creative Technique: Use of Flexiflans

There are other creative ways in which we can assist community members to take stock of their situation and do something constructive about it. One way is to use flexiflans to recreate their present reality.

Chris Srini Vasan

Every technique or tool has its own advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages of flexiflans is that we need a lot of them. Besides quantity, variety is important. Let us not forget that in building a map, community people can take any objects they find and give their own symbolism to them. As long as there are stones, twigs, clay, cotton wool, shells, beans or other common objects around, there is nothing that can stop their imagination from brainstorming these objects into whatever components they need for their map. But with flexiflans we are not dealing with symbolic objects. We are using paper figures to represent real people. There has to be an ample variety of flexis just as in life there is a variety of people. If the choices are limited, the creative process of representing human interaction and human problems and resources will be abortive. But increase the quantity and variety of flexis and you have a tool that outstrips the value of the map in terms of capacity to focus on the power of human resources to effect change.



[38]Christian Jayakumar, *TOGETHER*, January-March 1992.

## Finding Solutions

Here is an example of how this happens. In Bamako, Mali, the Graduates Cooperative agency has been entrusted by the government with an education program in environmental sanitation for a peri-urban neighborhood. The community has a high incidence of malaria and gastrointestinal diseases due to unsanitary conditions: clogged drains; stagnant water; uncollected garbage heaps in front of compound walls; etc. There is some awareness among residents that sanitation is a problem but nobody feels responsible for it. The facilitator, having discussed the situation with individual residents, codifies their views on a large flannel board using appropriate flexiflan "people" and objects. She then presents this codification to the compound residents and invites comments and suggestions for additions and/or changes. A lively discussion follows. The men who managed to get the front seats are very vocal as to the causes of the problem. They blame the Government for some things and the women for others. The women, who were initially quiet, especially those in the farthest back rows, now get very actively involved in the discussion. They disagree with the men on some points, suggest compromises on others. Ideas and concrete solutions are exchanged, they are accepted or rejected, changes are made accordingly in the flexiflan codification. All good-natured and lively. What makes this kind of constructive interaction happen?

## Establishing Distance

David Walker

Flexis **establish distance** from personal situations and yet are recognizable as real and relevant. It is like seeing some part of ourselves in a movie but feeling safe to criticize the actions of the characters because they are **out there** while we are **here**. We cannot get quite the same effect in a map unless we put people in it and the drama then becomes more intensely a drama of people rather than a drama of the environment.

## The Ripple Effect

In using creative materials such as flexis, the ideas generated by a group of poor villagers can astound the group members themselves. A villager from a remote hill project in Nepal, while being trained as a facilitator, compared the effect of a flexiflan to that of throwing a pebble into a still lake: "It starts ripples and one never knows how wide they will spread." A somewhat similar effect is possible by substituting other materials for flexis such as common objects from the environment like leaves, stones, beans, etc., used symbolically.

## The Power to Assess: Investigative Tools

In conducting baseline studies for development programs, it is generally the professional investigators who come with pencil and paper to collect information for their questionnaire. The people are thus placed in the role of mere respondents. Yet what is being investigated is **their** reality and they should have a meaningful role in the assessment process. Beyond mapping, several techniques are now available to help people themselves investigate their problems in some depth.

Chris Srini Vasan

One technique, using matchsticks, comes from the experience of a slum community in Parque Iracema in Brazil. The people of this community were concerned about the education of their children between four and seven years of age. However, they had no clear idea of how many children were actually enrolled in school. Here is how they addressed the problem:

> One person from the community suggested that they use matchboxes to represent houses in the community. Matchsticks were then used to represent the people living in each house. A matchstick of a particular length was used to represent each person — long matches to represent adults and short matches to represent children. Mothers volunteered to survey their own neighborhoods.

When every member of every family had been represented by matchsticks, the mothers of the community found they could easily count every person in the community. This accounted for all of the children between four and seven years of age, who were represented by matchsticks of a particular length. The people found that they had not achieved their goal of having every child in school. Following this investigation by the community, they were able to get all the children into school.

The information they had gathered also led them to address other community problems, such as nutrition.[39]

Ron Sawyer

A very different technique, but serving the same purpose, is the SARAR Pocket Chart. It is designed to take the mystery out of research tasks normally performed by outside specialists. The tool is simple enough so that all villagers, regardless of literacy skills, can use it to collect, tabulate and interpret their own data, and draw conclusions from it for their action plans. This procedure helps them to define problems with more precision and to act more knowledgeably in setting their goals.

## Sense of Ownership

The Pocket Chart is a tool that enables people to identify with the assessment process and feel responsibility for the decisions taken. One of its most important features is that it offers individuals the opportunity to express their personal views, preferences or priorities before group decisions are taken. They exercise this privilege by using a system of confidential voting.

The different options on which voting is to take place are identified in the form of pictures arranged in a horizontal row; each picture has an envelope or a pocket attached to it, to receive votes. Instead of paper pockets, sometimes small earthen pots are used if they are more appropriate in the local context. By covering the mouth of the clay pot with paper and making a slit in it as in a "piggy bank," it serves to receive votes just as well as a regular pocket chart. The main idea is to make people feel comfortable in using the tool.



[39]John Kenya and Bill Warnock, "When a Community Defines its Situation, World Vision International," *TOGETHER* (March 1984): 23-24.

Ensuring confidentiality is, however, a more difficult matter. Several different ways have been tried: keeping the pocket chart at a distance; turning the chart around so that it is not facing the audience; or using a screen (a large cloth or even a human screen of several people standing in a row) to obstruct the view when voting takes place.

The topics on which to vote are chosen by villagers themselves. In the Mali case above, they used the pocket chart to decide who should be responsible for which task in sanitation maintenance. This required a more complicated form of pocket chart with several rows of pockets; in essence a matrix. Five different tasks were identified by a top horizontal row of pictures. On the left side of the chart, four pictures placed in a vertical row indicated options as to who might be held responsible for performing the task: the local government; the sanitation service; the head of each family; or the women of the household. Men and women voters were given voting discs of different colors to differentiate gender preferences when results were tabulated.

## The Power to Analyze: Projective and Critical Thinking Tools

Ron Sawyer

In solving problems, people need to use analytic abilities to a great extent, particularly to establish cause-effect relationships, to compare costs and benefits, and to evaluate options. There has to be a steady movement of growth in this direction if people are to feel confident in taking control of their lives. Among the analytic tools that have met with good response at the village level, the open-ended problem drama stands out. It involves people in analysis while at the same time providing an enjoyable opportunity to air opposing viewpoints. The open-ended problem drama is an innovation introduced some twenty years ago by World Education in its assistance to the adult education program in Turkey. As the equivalent of the modern soap opera, its popularity at the village level is easy to understand. SARAR has added maxiflans to the drama to strengthen analytic skills by identifying the sources of conflicting positions more clearly.

Other analytic tools, very different in format, are also proving effective. For example, the Three Pile Sorting Cards (see Annex B) involve people in an evaluative process of comparing different situations and assigning positive, negative or intermediate values to them. Contamination Routes is another such tool, but here the focus is on causes and effects. Both help to prepare the way for a sorting out activity in which the optimal roles of extension services and of the community are analyzed by the people themselves.

Repeated practice with such materials creates habits of questioning, inquiry and critical reflection which are of such basic importance to self-directed behavior.

## The Power to Achieve Results: Planning Tools

PROWWESS/UNDP

The entire process, beginning with creativity and leading through investigation to analysis of problems, has to culminate in action — if not, the community will lose faith in itself and in the facilitator. To ensure that good results follow, the people need to develop their planning skills. This is also done in an enjoyable way, initially in story form, but with an increasingly serious purpose.

The tool that has proved most helpful in my experience at the community level is the "Story with a Gap." Sometimes the technique is changed into a story with two gaps or even three gaps to stimulate villagers to think of a range of intervening steps that might have influenced a given ending to the story.

Pierre Guiton

Essentially the Story with a Gap is a simplified and dramatized version of the well-known technique of Force Field Analysis: positive and negative forces which respectively promote or hinder change are identified and the steps to reach a desired goal are defined on that basis. By translating this theoretical framework into story form and using pictures, villagers can begin to identify resources and constraints, and to define steps to achieve a goal. Usually two contrasting pictures are used. One shows a community with a problem (or a variety of problems) requiring urgent solutions; the story must create a sense of crisis in order to get the listeners most deeply involved. When they have analyzed the problem situation they are shown a second picture, a clear contrast, where the problem has already been resolved. The participants study the two contrasting pictures carefully to observe what has changed, and in what specific ways the situation has improved. The task then is to try to visualize the steps which the community might have taken to move from the problem situation to the improved one.

Pierre Guiton

These and other SARAR techniques are all aimed at increasing the people's ability to do their own thinking and to recognize that they have the power to create, investigate, analyze and plan to get results. This whole process leaves the facilitator with an exciting feeling, as of being able to say with Carl Rogers,

> I want very much to have influence and impact — by influence and impact I mean behavior on my part which makes a difference in the behavior of others, but not through imposing my views on them, or exercising control over them.

By refusing to coerce or direct, I think I have stimulated learning, creativity, and self-direction. These are some of the products in which I am most interested.

I have found my greatest reward in being able to say 'I made it possible for this person to be and achieve something he could not have been or achieved before.' In short, I gain a great deal of satisfaction in being a facilitator of becoming.[40]



[40]Carl Rogers, *On Personal Power*, 92.

Ron Sawyer

# CHAPTER 3

# Guidelines for Designing a Participatory Workshop

A question that frequently comes up in discussions with trainers and program decision makers is about guidelines for participatory training. Are there guidelines for staff who are new to the participatory approach or who have had only one short exposure to it in a participatory workshop?

Undoubtedly there are. But whether one set of guidelines would fit all situations is questionable. Each time I conduct a participatory workshop I learn something new. The whole dynamic of participation forces one to constantly rethink what once seemed to be tried and true ways of doing things. Our trainees are our best teachers.

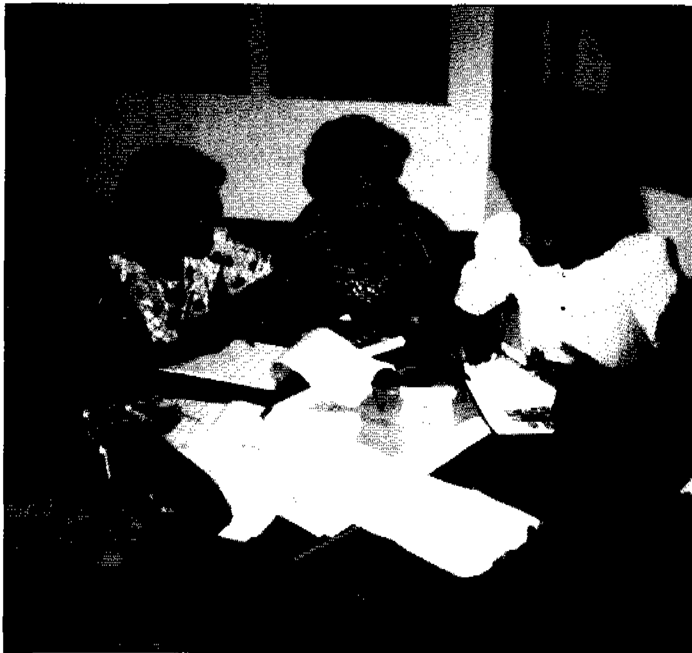
Assuming that this point is well taken, let's stake out a few road signs for people who are relatively new to what must seem an unstructured field.

There are a few principles that have worked for me over the years in my own process of learning to be a trainer. I share them with the understanding that they are intentionally open to both challenge and change.

These personal "guidelines," if you will, correspond to three categories:

- **The enabling environment of a workshop** — how to create and maintain it.
- **The learning process** — how to ensure that it meets the conditions for growth.
- **The workshop format** — how to reconcile the needs for flexibility and structure.

## The Enabling Environment of a Workshop


Pierre Guiton

Many elements go into creating an enabling environment. Rather than list them all, I present a few which relate to things we need to do at different stages of the workshop from start to finish. Each contributes in a different way to the supportive setup and the easy working style necessary to promote and maintain the participatory process.

### "Facilitating" the Facilitator's Role

The enabling function at a workshop is not an easy task. It is best entrusted to a team of **two** facilitators rather than one. Due to low budgets, project managers often try to get by with just one facilitator. I find that this is false economy. Unlike a lecture session where participants are largely passive, the high intensity and sensitivity of an interactive group process can be overwhelming for a lone trainer, even one highly experienced.

To be good facilitators, the trainers must be relaxed, confident and well prepared for any emergency. A second pair of hands, eyes and ears helps. Cofacilitators can be mutually supportive under pressure, can take turns at conducting activities, can add variety to the style of presentations, can bounce ideas off each other and provide constructive and timely mutual feedback. I like to think of them as functioning much like the two halves of one brain.

But to be able to do so, certain basic conditions of teamwork have to be met. The facilitators must:

- know and respect each other;
- reach agreement on their respective roles;
- function in a noncompetitive way.

Unfortunately, this does not always happen. Due to recruitment delays, one trainer may join the workshop later than the other. There may have been no time for joint preplanning. The decisions already taken unilaterally may be unacceptable to the latecomer.

In addition, given the high level of excitement and energy generated by participatory activities, it is tempting for each facilitator to want to be center-stage and take credit for some of the glow. The result is a sense of rivalry rather than of mutual support.

Nothing can be more detrimental to the enabling process than two facilitators who mistrust each other, are competitive, and pull in different directions. Project management should be fully aware that such situations can arise and must take appropriate steps to avoid them.

Ideally, the cofacilitators should have at least four working days ahead of the workshop to iron out differences, to plan together and to create bonds. Their ability to establish a congenial and productive team relationship is so vital to the workshop's success that it should be a priority for its planning and administration.

## Building Relevance and Confidence Through Preplanning

A preplanning session is one way to ensure that the workshop program will be relevant to the participants and that it will run smoothly, with all materials kept ready for use. Three to five days ahead of the workshop should be sufficient.

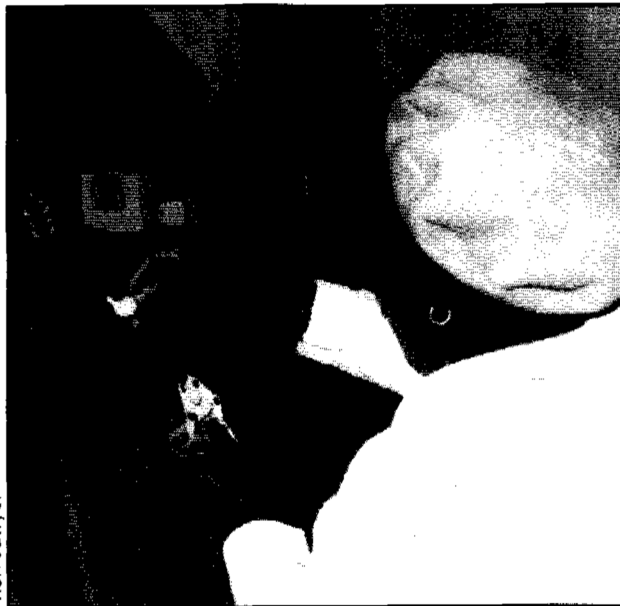
PROWWESS/UNDP

This stage of the process is a good opportunity to train local counterpart trainers to take over. The number should not exceed three or four. A larger number turns into a mini-workshop and no longer serves as a preplanning session.

At this stage, we need to familiarize them with a wide assortment of activities with potential for achieving workshop objectives. The local trainers critique them from the viewpoint of their cultural appropriateness and relevance to trainees. They also help decide which activities to retain and who should be responsible for facilitating them.

Since the program has to be responsive to the trainees' interests and needs as they arise, we can use a simple tool for flexible planning. It ensures that the sequence of activities can be changed at will. The name of each proposed activity is written on a separate card and the cards are taped to a large makeshift calendar. This makes it easy to move the cards around, change their sequence, or substitute any of them depending on the flow of learning that is taking place. Flexibility is one of the first principles a trainer must master.

## Preparing Facilitative Techniques and Tools


Ron Sawyer

SARAR workshops always use a variety of tools and techniques, from simple to sophisticated, as discussion stimuli. An enabling environment is essentially a stimulative environment. "Man's use of mind," says Jerome Bruner, "is dependent upon his ability to develop and use 'tools' or instruments or technologies that make it possible for him to express and amplify his powers."

An important enabling principle is that the tools should provide maximum leeway for participants to interpret them from their personal perspective. Participants must be able to select, manipulate, reorder, add to, or modify the tools in order to articulate independent ideas based on their own reflectiveness and interaction.

In developing such materials, artists, though not indispensable, are an important resource. If recruited, they will need well-lighted work space, art

materials and guidance. They should start work from the first day of preplanning (if not earlier) so that all tools will be ready well ahead of the workshop. However, they will also need to work throughout the sessions to produce new tools which meet new needs, especially as participants prepare for village level field work, which itself requires a range of materials in sufficient quantities.

Artists can also reproduce prototype materials for wider dissemination once the training session is over.

## Ensuring the Right Climate for the Workshop

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Since creating and maintaining a relaxed, open atmosphere is essential to trainees' full involvement, we need to carefully remove any trace of "formal teaching" which might inhibit participation.[41]

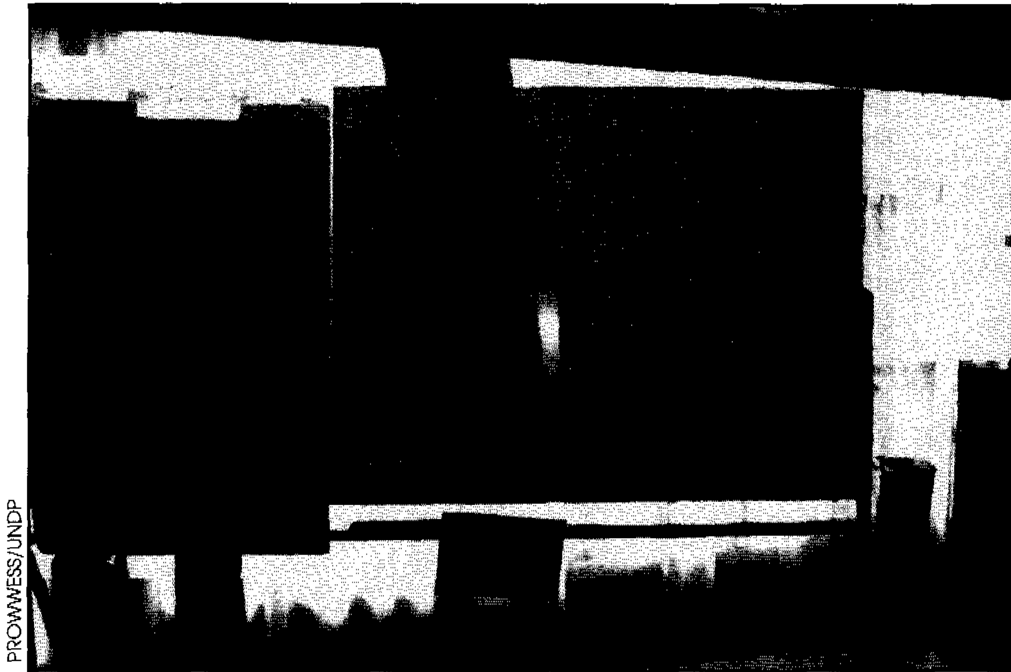
Often we must start by changing the physical setup in the room, by removing symbols of authority such as the podium and the head table, and by rearranging the chairs from linear and rigid to circular and flexible. Participants will then be facing one another and can interact more directly than if they were all facing the head table as the locus of control.

An enabling environment will also make participants feel free to get off their seats and move around; to constitute groups of different sizes at will; to work at tables or on the floor if the task so demands; to move temporarily to another room or to the garden and return in time to present their reports.

In such an environment we try to encourage good natured challenges and laughter. Laughter is invigorating, it enriches and liberates, and indicates that formal barriers are being overcome. We can initiate this process by conducting introductions in an informal amusing way. It is also preferable to dispense with a formal opening ceremony if at all possible, without offending local cultural sensitivities.

By eliminating the solemnity which so often characterizes the first day of a workshop, participants realize that the sessions are likely to be very different from the usual lecture-style, and they look forward to the experience with anticipation.

[41] It is only fair to forewarn the reader that occasionally one might find people who feel perturbed by the informality of a participatory workshop. They may come expecting to be lectured to or "taught" and may feel that the workshop is not serious enough for their level. This attitude is understandable and must be handled empathetically. A personal discussion, on the side, often helps to reassure them. If they can survive the first day's shock, they are quite likely to turn around.



PROWWESS/UNDP

## Building Wider Support for Staff Trained in Participatory Strategies

One way to do this is to "showcase" the experience of the workshop to others on closing day. This is a good occasion for building broader understanding of and support for the participation process since such support is very much part of the larger enabling environment. A formal closing ceremony with invited guests is especially appropriate if the invitees include key decision makers who control policies and resources vital to the success of community-based programs. Participants share with the audience their assessment of the workshop process, its outcomes, and the relevance of the insights and skills they gained to their agencies' work. Workshop materials should be exhibited in the same room as the closing ceremony so that participants can refer to them in briefing the guests individually or in small groups.

Funds permitting, we videotape the training sessions and edit the tape down to not more than 15 minutes. It serves to orient guests and/or policymakers who are unable to attend the closing ceremony.

Photographs of activities can illustrate the final report of the workshop, or can be folded into a manual which describes the training strategy. The visual medium reminds trainees how to conduct the activities once they return to their jobs; it also helps create better understanding among their coworkers.

These measures are so important for building the credibility of the participatory strategy that they must be planned with care; last minute arrangements are unlikely to produce the desired results.

Ron Sawyer

## The Learning Process

To ensure that the workshop learning experience results in individual growth and group cohesiveness we have found the following principles useful:

- **Keeping the group size manageable for interaction purposes** by limiting the number of participants to around 24 to 27, so that they can work closely in three subgroups of not more than eight or nine participants each. It is better to have three subgroups than an even number of two or four; in an even number, the discussion tends to get confrontational, while a third group helps to deflect some of the heat.

- **Encouraging participants to make their own decisions**, e.g., forming the subgroups on a self-selection basis. Because participants are in one of the three subgroups by choice, not by obligation, they feel more responsible for its success. This is the first step in giving participants power of autonomous decision making. In traditional workshops, the organizers often plan the composition of subgroups and hand out lists of preselected names with which the participants must comply. In a SARAR workshop participants have the freedom to make those choices themselves within the framework of minimal guidelines given by the facilitator to ensure balanced groups, e.g., by group size, gender, agency affiliation, and/or professional specializations.

- **Rotating group membership from time to time.** In SARAR workshops, we retain the three-group arrangement for most key activities, but change the size and makeup of subgroups for other tasks. This gives participants a chance to mix more freely with a larger number of persons attending the workshop. It also helps to break up patterns of dominance that might show up in the original subgroups. Exposure to others in new groupings can be a chastening experience for the more domineering, and a liberating experience for the more reticent.

UN/Photo

## Establishing Egalitarian Relationships

To promote growth, a key requirement is the **establishment of a genuine peer relationship between facilitator and trainees** right from the start. This relationship is based both on a warm regard for trainees as persons, and on a firm belief in their innate capacity for self-direction. It is up to the facilitator to draw out their talents and experience so that they become more aware of their own stature. This will not be possible if the facilitator assumes an authoritarian posture of someone holding all the right answers.

Similarly, during field visits technical staff or specialists who are accustomed to high respect because of their expertise may have difficulty in placing themselves on a par with villagers. But there is much wisdom they can gain from village people if they are willing to listen and have the humility to learn.

Sometimes in playing a facilitative role, we need to watch even our body language. The tendency to stand while participants are seated, the tendency to sit always in the same place in the circle (which becomes the defacto "head table"), the tendency to use the blackboard frequently, and the tendency to talk a lot can all give the impression that the facilitator holds the reins of control. This makes for a vertical rather than a horizontal relationship with trainees.

## Involving Participants as Coauthors of Program Content

David Walker

Trainees are likely to be more motivated to participate when their self-identified concerns are the focus of the workshop agenda. They should have an important role to play in determining the content and direction of training and not be simply participants in it.

We can initiate them into such a role by inviting them to first individually write down, and then discuss as a group, what they expect from or are unsure about the workshop, i.e., their expectations or "hopes and fears," and specifically what they wish to learn. This should be done before introducing the agenda proposed by the organizers. Having defined their own priorities and concerns, they can then share in finalizing the objectives of the workshop by reconciling their own hopes with those of the organizers. As coauthors, participants are then more committed to making the workshop experience a success.

## Starting with Activities that Help Clarify the Participants' Own Perspectives

We often choose a theme or topic from their "hopes" list and plan an activity to determine what they already know about the subject. What are their own current perceptions of the problems to be addressed? For example, if the main interest is to improve their techniques for motivating and involving local communities, we need to assess their baseline position from two angles:

- how individual trainees define community participation from their own personal standpoint; and
- what conceptual similarities and differences there are on the matter among members of a group.

## Encouraging Group Expression

There are several ways to do this. Opting for a highly **directive** style, we could ply them with a whole series of questions: "In your experience, what kind of community participation is realistic? What personal qualities/attributes/ competencies/skills do you believe are needed in order for people to participate fully and responsibly? What techniques have you found useful for purposes of community capacity-building?" But using such an approach keeps the power of "questioning" in our hands. It would suggest, at least to some participants, that the facilitator has "right answers" in mind. Their energy might then be diverted from searching within and from looking critically at their own experience, to guessing at the answers which they think are expected of them.

Alternative ways can be more growth-conducive. For example, instead of holding the questioning end of the stick to control and direct participants' responses, we can decentralize control by replacing "questioning" strategies with "tasks." The difference should be fairly obvious. The question and answer technique has a **ping-pong** effect; once started it keeps going back and forth between facilitator and trainers. By contrast, assigning a task can be short and crisp. We explain the task and we let go. The responsibility is then entirely in the hands of the group. The group must pull together its best thinking, based on the personal experience and viewpoints of its members, to convey where they actually stand on the given issue or topic at the time.

The facilitator does not critique their response with either approval or disapproval, but rather encourages them to share it with others in some creative way. The critique then results from interaction among the participants themselves.

An example of such a task is the "Mural on Community Participation." Here individual members express their viewpoints in the form of drawings which are then consolidated into group collages, and later into a mural representing the views of participants as a whole. By recording their initial concepts in this graphic way, they have on hand a yardstick by which to measure changes in perceptions taking place in the course of the workshop.

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Chris Srini Vasan

## Using the Photo Parade

A similar purpose can be served by using prepared materials that are open to interpretation and can be flexibly rearranged. An example is the Photo Parade (see Annex B). Assuming that one objective of the workshop, as jointly planned, is to differentiate clearly between directive and nondirective styles of education, the Photo Parade activity can help the facilitator gauge how clear this concept is to participants at the outset. This is done easily by inviting them to sort out, in subgroups, a given set of photographs into three categories representing different degrees of directiveness.

A great deal of negotiation goes on within the subgroups before they are ready to report. By comparing the way participants in the three groups have categorized the photos, they themselves can see what similarities and differences there are, at that point, in their concept(s) of what is a directive or nondirective style of communication.

There is a larger benefit from this activity beyond a simple baseline assessment. The discussion, which often can get quite heated, brings to the surface a number of other issues vital for participants. These issues can guide the facilitator in selecting activities for follow-up and deciding in which order they should be sequenced.

## Creating Awareness of the Expertise Already Available in the Group

PROWWESS/UNDP

**A mapping exercise** (see Part II, page 82) is an excellent tool for achieving this aim. It can be introduced early in the workshop program to great advantage, even on the morning of day one. Being a creative and highly participatory group exercise, participants tend to get thoroughly immersed in it. They bring their own talents, ideas and experience of concrete, real-life problems to bear in planning and executing the map. Accordingly they are, and feel themselves to be, the best experts to present and interpret their map to others in great detail. Here they clearly have pride of authorship. In the process of creating the map, which requires a multitude of different things to do, even those who are diffident find useful roles and discover talents of which they were unaware.

When trainees are engaged in a reflective process, they become their own major resource. The facilitator's role in this entire process is simply to set the task, observe, listen and encourage participation. The facilitator provides the vehicle for which the participants must provide the propellant.

## Helping Participants Develop Self-Confidence and Self-Respect

Involve participants in new roles and responsibilities of different degrees of complexity. This often includes the responsibility for conducting some sessions and for evaluation and reporting. We need to highlight the range and importance of the roles they have assumed, the contributions they have made, and the talents they have discovered in themselves. Yet we must do this in an objective, factual way which does not create dependency on praise and approbation.

PROWWESS/UNDP

I find that one way to boost participants' confidence enormously and objectively is to have them use an evaluative tool such as The Five Squares (See Annex B) to compare their own inputs with those of the facilitator. Alternatively, we ask them to use percentages to describe the extent of their role compared to the role of the facilitator in a given activity. If done immediately upon completing the activity, the evidence of their contribution can be compelling.

If all participants are not benefiting fully from group process because some members dominate, the facilitator can introduce an activity that focuses on the conditions essential for good group process. Participants brainstorm and list the rules for effective group work themselves. They are then more likely to observe them.[42]

## Encouraging Creativity and Risk-Taking

The two go together. Creative individuals are risk-takers; this includes the risk of failure and of social disapproval. The facilitator must set the example by taking risks in making program changes and in designing new activities at short notice in response to the group's emerging needs. The facilitator should be open about this being an untested activity; it may or may not work out but is



[42]This idea comes from Vaughn R. O'Halloran of the Institute of Cultural Affairs.

worth a try. If it fails, the group should feel free to give the facilitator their critique constructively, as peers.

## Increasing the Quality of Trainee Involvement by Making the Program Itself Highly Experiential and Lively

Because the sources of growth are within ourselves, the methodology has to reach deeper into our capacities for reflection and creativity than usually happens in a lecture or other formal instructional set-up. Also to the extent possible, we need to involve all the senses, the whole person, at both the thinking and the feeling levels.

We can do this by:

- Using innovative hands-on materials that participants themselves can manipulate, reorder, analyze and interpret, and which they can speak from. The Three Pile Sorting cards are an example (see Annex B).
- Designing tasks which require multiple skills such as drawing, writing, acting and constructing models, to give all members a chance to contribute in some meaningful way. At some point, participants themselves may ask for information. A minilecture is admissible at this point, but the facilitator should acknowledge that s/he is intentionally using a didactic approach.
- Tapping the feeling level; making good use of emotions, projections, identification, empathy, e.g., through role play, open-ended problem dramas, games and simulation which encourage the analysis of feelings and values.

## Reinforcing Workshop Activities and Theoretical Learning with Field Visits and Practical Work in Real Life Situations

PROWWESS/UNDP

This is usually the high point of the workshop. Here participants are on their own. They have to assume full responsibility for planning and conducting participatory sessions among village groups. From their workshop experience they should be able to draw out principles and ideas to guide their work. Relevance, creativity and decentralization of power

are three principles to which they will need to give special attention in planning their field activities.

To insure relevance, trainees must get to know this village and the villagers through at least one or two previous visits. They require creativity to design tools and activities specially suited to the situation at the village level. To be participatory, they will have to maximize the ways in which village people can direct activities and minimize the directing role of the trainer.

## The Workshop Format and Tools

The above discussion has placed heavy emphasis on the process aspects of training. This can raise many questions in the minds of trainers who are not accustomed to the nondirective style. Does nondirective mean totally unstructured? Is it a free-wheeling, free-flowing, totally unpredictable process?

These questions are not too far-fetched. There are participatory training strategies that do lean toward total autonomy of decisions by participants but this is not quite true of SARAR. The principle underlying SARAR is "minimum structure and maximum flexibility." It aims at striking a balance between format and openness. Some structure provides security; too much is oppression.

### Providing a Structure

Flexibility is vital to growth because it allows participants the freedom to make choices, to interject ideas, and to solve problems on their own. But they also need a frame of reference and a focus to see that they are making progress and to avoid spinning their wheels uselessly. Thus SARAR is not totally permissive. The facilitators are responsible for providing some structure or conceptual framework.

How do they do this? First of all, as we have seen above, the SARAR process results from individual and group involvement in a number of concrete tasks, many of which include use of hands-on materials. The task, with the materials, constitutes the "structure" or framework within which individual reflection and group interaction takes place.

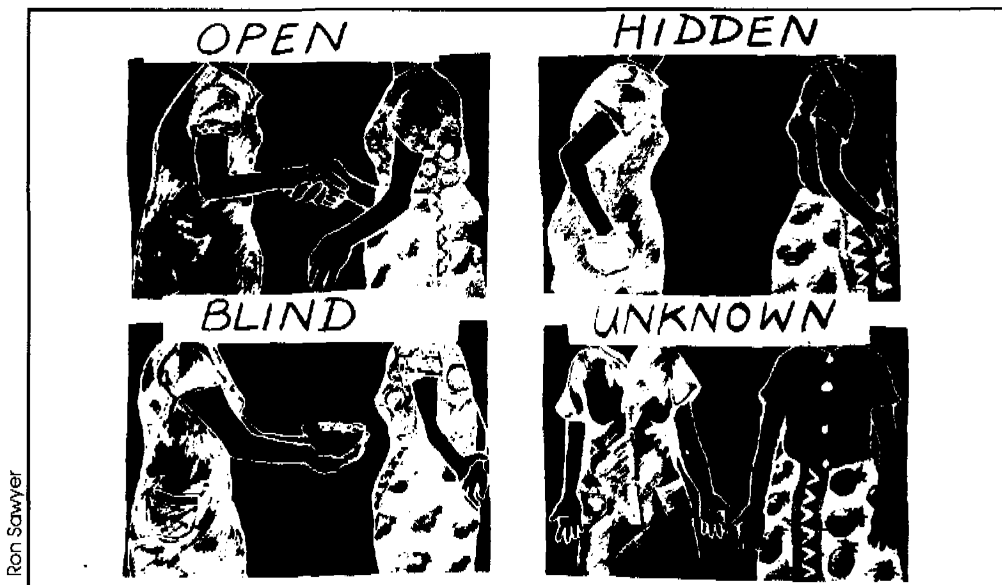
PROWWESS/UNDP

## Assuring Flexibility

There are two ways in which flexibility is assured:

- The design of the task itself allows scope for interpretation, establishing priorities, making choices or rearranging components to arrive at independent conclusions. For example, in the Unserialized Posters activity, participants receive a large set of pictures (10 to 15, occasionally more, up to 25) from which they select any four to make up a story. There is no way that the facilitator can predict which four posters will be chosen or what kind of story will be produced; these decisions are left to the group. Participants also have the freedom to present the story in any way they like. Some may elect an individual to narrate it on behalf of the group; in other instances group members may take turns narrating parts of it; or they may decide to role-play the story in a humorous or dramatic way. All groups receive the same instructions and the same materials to fulfill the task (structure), but what they come out with will be different because they have exercised their freedom to be original.
- Flexibility is also assured by there being no preestablished order in which the activities or tasks must be introduced. The sequence depends entirely on the learning needs of the group at any given point and can change radically as their interests expand and shift. These decisions are taken within the framework of a general plan which is governed by the workshop objectives (jointly worked out with the participants) and which charts the overall direction in which the process should move.

## Assuring a Progression of Learning




It is the facilitator's job to make sure that participants get this sense of direction by frequent and appropriate use of evaluative tools, and with the help of a grid or other monitoring tool to clarify how the activities are interrelated.

The facilitator should also help them see how the experience of doing any one task provides insights or gives rise to issues which influence the choice of the activity(ies) to follow. Without periodically taking a step back to analyze the progression, simply going from task to task can be confusing. Participants need to become aware of a steady movement and a progression with its own internal logic.

We should also keep in mind that participatory training cannot be linear in the sense of dealing with an issue and then leaving it behind to move on to a different issue. We may need to come back to the same issue many times at different stages of the workshop, each time using different approaches or media. This is essential when we need to review and reinforce concepts which were weak and/or not sufficiently clarified the first time around.

## Experiential vs. Informational

UN/Photo

Do all or most of the components of a participatory workshop have to be experiential? We have found that this depends on the group. Experiential activities predominate in a SARAR workshop regardless of the category, technical orientation or administrative level of the individuals concerned. But since different people learn differently, the facilitator may have to mix different methods. I find it useful to look on the workshop program as a "mix," the exact nature of the mix being dependent on the nature of the group.

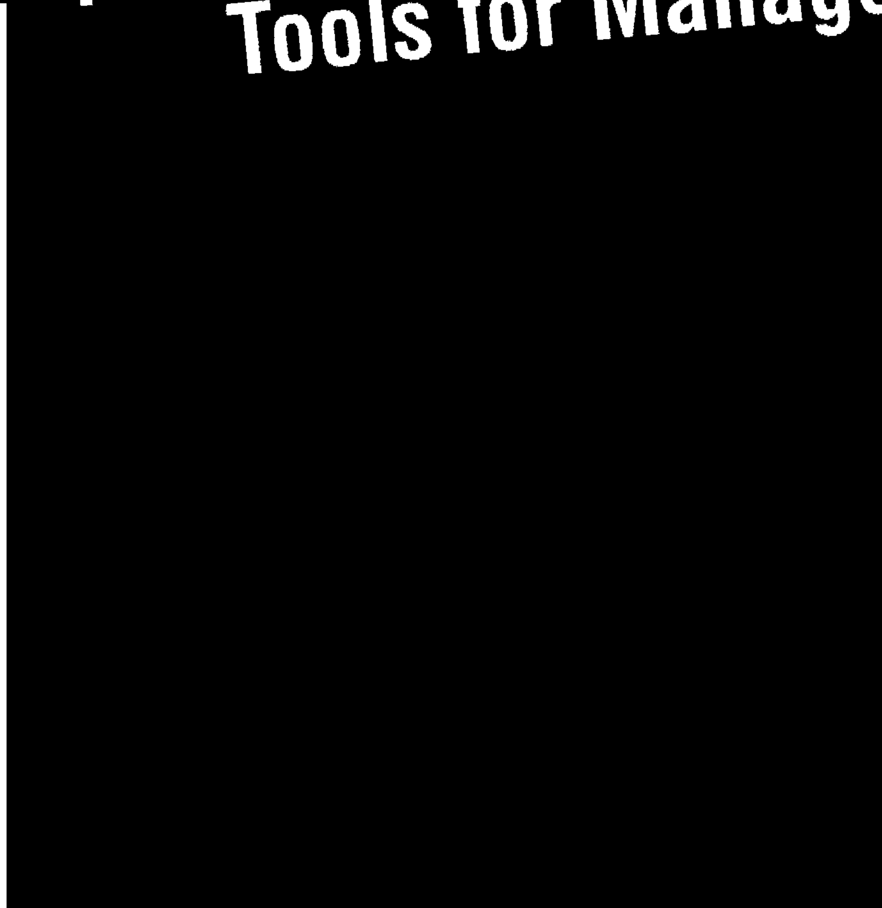
However, one precaution is necessary; in introducing activities that focus on a theory or on a piece of useful information, we must avoid falling back into the didactic mode — or if we do, it is safest to advise the group that we are doing so for a few minutes. A sudden unexplained change of style from facilitation to lecturing can throw people off. Even a topic that seems appropriate for a minilecture can be converted into an activity that gives participants the power of discovery. An example is the Infant's Growth Chart or Age/Weight activity which, though loaded with information, still engages participants in thinking for themselves because of the way the activity is structured (see *Tools for Community Participation*).

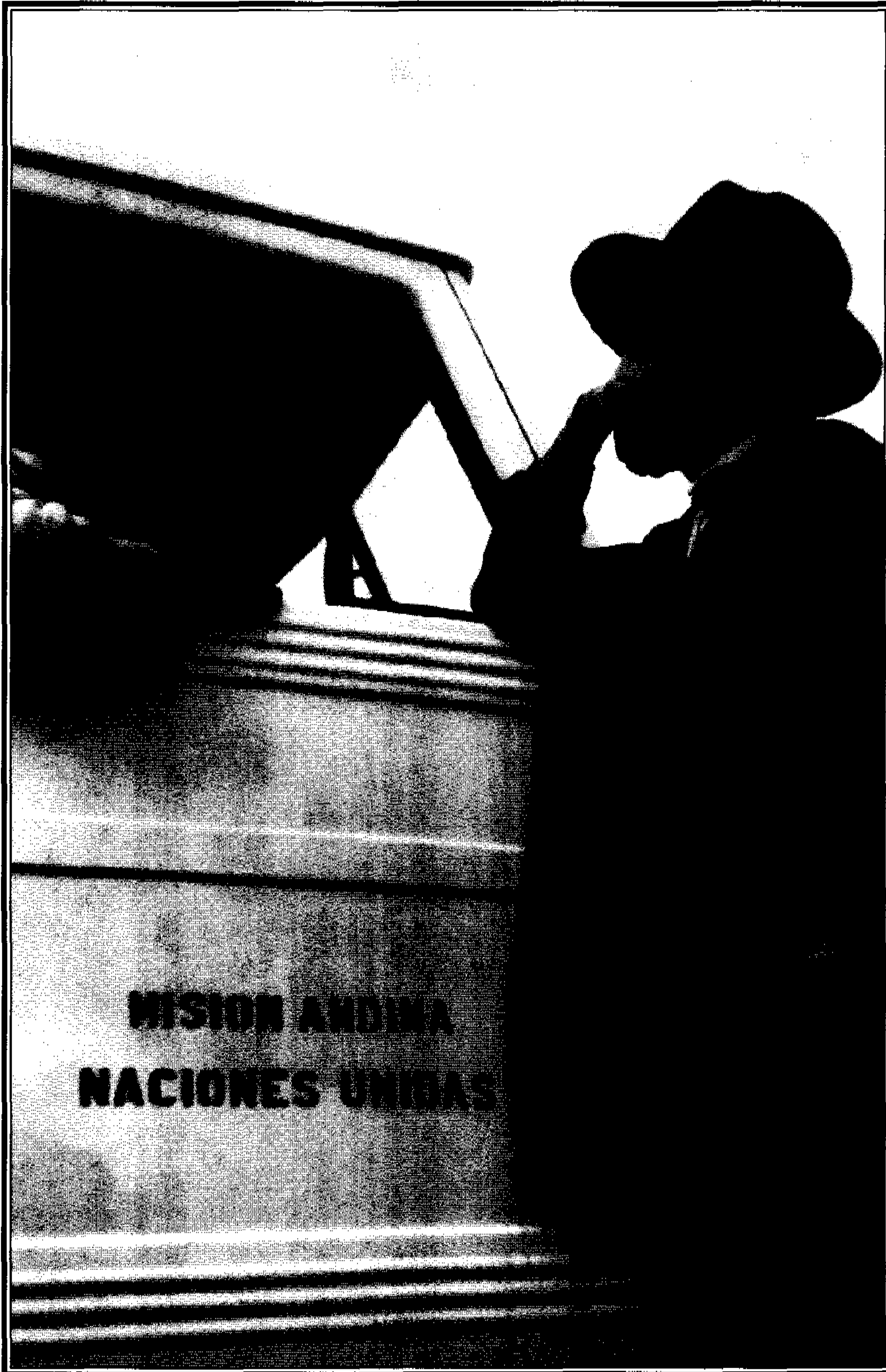
## ıe Basics

Following are a few of the ground rules we observe in SARAR workshops, which together illustrate the care needed to balance structure and flexibility:

- We select a theme or topic of relevance to the work of participants (e.g., indebtedness) and break it up into its components (e.g., sources of loans — money lenders, relatives, neighbors, banks; and what purposes the loans may serve — to improve agriculture, or for health services, or for social events such as weddings, etc.). By representing each component on a separate card or using a different object or symbol, it becomes a hands-on tool which participants can manipulate at will to formulate their own conclusions, e.g., from which source do villagers generally borrow and why, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each option.
- It is useful to have sufficient newsprint or large brown sheets of paper to record conclusions of group discussions, brainstorming and planning sessions. If working with three groups, we give each group a felt pen of a different color in order to recognize their outputs by color-code. Participants do their own writing on newsprint. The less the facilitator does of what participants can do for themselves, the better.
- We plan how to introduce the activity to participants, exactly what the facilitator will say in as few words as possible, avoiding complicated instructions which require a long speech. There should be no need to go over and over the instructions. Having set the task, it is important to let go and let the participants manage on their own.
- If participants are to create tools of their own, they need to gain insights into the structure of the tools introduced by the facilitator. We have them compare flexiflans and unserialized posters, for example. What do they have in common? Which one is more open-ended? What makes it so? Then they compare materials that are totally different in structure but serve similar purposes, e.g., flexis and pebbles used in the demographic game. Flexis are in the form of human figures, animals, objects, etc., while pebbles are used symbolically. What are the advantages and disadvantages — and possible uses — of each?
- At an activity's end, participants reflect not only on the outcomes of the activity but also on what they did, how they did it, and why. As mentioned earlier, we try to involve them in this type of reflection without asking them a series of questions. We thus avoid getting into the "question/answer" ping-pong trap. We also try to involve them in the analysis of group process, i.e., their own live experience of growing as a group; of encouraging and valuing the contributions of all group members; of resolving conflicts and maintaining a climate of mutual respect and support; of motivating individual members to pull their full weight in fulfilling group tasks; of ensuring the conditions that stimulate creativity and analytic behavior; of setting group goals and building the team spirit needed to achieve them. These insights will be useful when participants in turn train and/or work with extension staff to stimulate similar group processes at the community level.

# Adaptation of Participatory Tools for Managers



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# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Part III is to share ideas on how certain SARAR tools can be adapted for use in sensitizing or orienting senior staff. Often senior officials feel that they have neither the time nor the inclination to be "playing games" as some would describe it. I recall how in one consultancy to a US-based voluntary agency, whenever I conducted a participatory session for its program officers, the President would drop by to watch but never stay. If invited to join the group, he would say jokingly, "I only came by to see you folks make fools of yourselves." Perhaps behind the humor there was a genuine concern; a fear of failing in an unaccustomed role where the usual rules of deference to authority and power are set aside. To function on a peer basis with less experienced staff, to have one's views questioned, or to lose the sense of control over decisions can be threatening to one whose leadership hinges on a hierarchical structure.

Regardless, we must find ways to demonstrate to top leadership the value of the participatory process, by whatever means available. Our method can be direct, indirect or a combination of both. Indirect can include showing a video of an activity or an experience that has taken place elsewhere, arranging an exhibit of photographs of villagers and extension staff engaged in practical participatory activities, or having someone give a talk describing how the approach works in practice. As mentioned earlier, attending the closing ceremony of a Participatory Training Workshop and hearing the participants describe their experiences and tools also helps to shed light on the process.

However, just hearing about participation is not very participatory. We must find ways to provide senior officials with direct immersion in the process without threat to their status, and with the awareness that they may have limited time and patience.

In the following pages you will find several sample activities to help trigger your own ideas of how to service this very important need. Most of these activities will either be found in the *Tools for Community Participation* manual or are adaptations thereof. One of them (the Demographic Pebble Activity) is intended primarily for use at village level, but is short enough to serve as a quick experiential demonstration of a participatory process.

You will need to make further adaptations to suit your own situation. For example, the map exercise described earlier can be used at every level, from community to program officer. For higher management personnel, it takes too long unless used at a retreat. For a shorter version of this activity, you may consider using flexiflans as suggested in Part II. One advantage is that it combines a mapping or codifying experience with exposure to new creative material; if managers like it they will be better disposed to include funds for innovative materials development in the program budget.

PROWWESS/UNDP

# ACTIVITY 1

# Pressure Planning

### Rationale:

Program managers are often under great pressure to demonstrate concrete results at the field level, either to justify their own investment of personnel and other program resources, or to satisfy a donor agency. They may not be fully aware of how this top-down pressure affects the field worker's efforts to involve local communities.

### Purpose:

To sensitize program managers to the extreme frustrations which a top-down, high pressure approach can cause at the field level.

### History:

This activity was inspired by a management game introduced at a UN staff training workshop at headquarters in the early 1960s. The game, which was to be played in complete silence, required dividing participants into pairs, each

pair consisting of a Supervisor (S) and a Junior Professional (JP). The Ss were to pass written instructions to the JPs to hand over UN member flags of a certain color or design, but without explaining why. If the flags handed over by JPs did not fit into the scheme the Ss had in mind, they were rejected and fresh directives were issued. Most of the JPs felt extremely frustrated at not being able to ask questions and not having any clue as to the purpose which the flags were to serve. The game ended with a question from the Supervisor, "Do you wish to continue this task?" Nobody did.

I wondered if the same type of frustration and tension could be created to drive home a different point: The importance of sensitivity to the villager's need to be meaningfully involved in planning. It seemed worth a try.

## Design:

Like the flag game, Pressure Planning must be played in strict silence; only written messages are allowed. But instead of working in pairs of "Ss" and "JPs," participants can opt for any one of the following roles:

A **Program Director**

A **Researcher**

Two **Extension Agents** (one for village X and the other for village Y)

An **Autocratic Leader** — for each of the two villages

A **Democratic Leader** — for each of the two villages

**Other roles** which participants choose for themselves as other villagers. They make up their own identities and explain who they are before the game starts. In one workshop, I gave them a further choice — to be either "persons" or "nonpersons." An illiterate and overworked village woman, for example, might be a nonperson since she is generally bypassed in community decision making.

Giving participants the option to choose different roles enhances their expectation of enjoyment and increases their tension when they find themselves unable to participate. It is best if those who in real life have managerial responsibilities play the role of villagers so that they experience "where the shoe pinches." You may have to maneuver this a little by inviting two relatively junior participants to play the roles of Director and Researcher. These are the only two roles in which the facilitator exerts some influence. The other roles are freely chosen.

## Materials and Equipment:

- Two copies of a list of messages or directives which the Director hands down to the Extension Agents.
- Two copies of a different list of messages or data requests which the Researcher in turn passes on to the Extension Agents. Each list of messages is to be cut three-quarters of the way horizontally from right to left so that each message can be easily torn off and handed over to the Agents, one at a time. (The content of the messages can be adapted to any context.)
- Name plates for the Director and the Researcher who are to sit at the head table representing the central office.
- Handouts describing the roles of the autocratic and democratic leaders of the two villages.
- Large signs, Village X and Village Y. (These are optional. Verbal instructions may suffice.)
- Scrap paper and pencils to be kept discretely handy in case anyone feels the urge to communicate by writing or drawing. The facilitator does not draw their attention to this resource.

## Procedure:

Explain to the participants that you are going to introduce a game that deals with planning. Tell them it is a type of satire or parody that may puzzle them at first, but should make sense in the end. (NOTE: You must not give out the name "Pressure Planning" since that would give participants a clue as to what to expect. The difference between their expectations (e.g., of an enjoyable role play) and what actually happens (a tense, frustrating and confounding experience) is what produces the dramatic effect of the role play, causing an explosion of feelings about top-down management at the end of the exercise.

Give some reason why this activity will be in the form of a role play, e.g., "Since there isn't time for all of us to go to a real village this afternoon..." or "Since we did a lot of heavy brain work yesterday, you may want to try a light role play as a change of pace today." This will make the activity seem more casual.

Explain that the role play setup requires a program head office with two chairs, and two villages where the program is to be implemented, Village X and Village Y. Ask that participants consider the left side of the room to be Village X and the right side Village Y.

Explain what roles will be needed and hand out the descriptions of roles. Invite participants to choose the roles they wish to play. For example, say "For the Head Office we will need two volunteers — one for the Director's role and the other for the Researcher's role. It is best if these roles are played by those of you who do not hold similar positions in real life." Ask the two volunteers to take their places at the head table.

Encourage the other participants to choose roles as quickly as possible, starting with the two extension agents, then the autocratic and democratic leaders, and finally the other villagers. Explain that the extension agents will serve as liaison between the Head Office and the two villages. Keep a chair ready for them on either side of the head table. To keep the process going quickly, your instructions may go something like this:

> I need two extension agents, one for each village. They must be persons who are really committed to village work. Who would like to be Extension Agent for Village X? And now the Extension Agent for Village Y? Please come and take your seats.
>
> Now we need two leaders for each village. Who would like to be the autocratic leader for Village X? And the democratic leader for Village X? Next, Village Y. Any volunteers for the autocratic leader's role? And for the democratic leader...?
>
> All those who have not volunteered so far may now choose identities for yourselves as members of the community. You can be anyone you like from the village — a landless laborer, a money lender, an unemployed youth or anyone else you please. Create your own identity and write who you are on a paper to use as your name tag. Then tell everyone who you are.

While the other participants are busy deciding on their roles, give instructions to the Director and Researcher on the side:

> I will be standing here at this table between the two of you. Your role is simple. I have a set of messages which you are each to tear off and give to the extension agents. There are two copies of each message. All you have to do is when I give you the signal by tapping on the table, tear off two copies of the first message and give one copy each to the two extension agents. They should know what to do with it. As soon as I give you the second signal, tear off and hand out the second set of messages. If the extension agents are busy in the field, find some way of calling their attention without leaving your seats. I will help you call them if you wish. The Researcher must not start handing out messages until the Director has sent out at least two messages. I will give you the go-ahead.

Now tell everyone the rules of the game:

1. It must be played in complete silence. No questions, only sighs and grunts are allowed! Sign language, writing and drawing are permitted.
2. Players may move around if they wish.
3. When the facilitator says "cut", the game ends.
4. At the end of the game, participants should feel free to say what they did, what happened and how they felt.

If the rules are clear, start the game by giving a signal to the Director to hand over the first message to the extension agent. Allow a minute or so for the agents to establish contacts at the village level; then give the second signal, also to the Director. While the agents are working on the second message, give a signal to the Researcher to send out his/her first message. Signal alternately to the Director and the Researcher, *reducing the time between messages as the game progresses*, to increase pressure on the extension agents. Pressure is the key.

If the Head Office players are not able to get the attention of the extension agents, you can help by going to where they are and signalling that the Head Office wants them back.

As the last message is handed out by the Researcher, give only a few seconds for it to be read by the agents and then stop the game by saying "cut."

Let participants settle down, then ask for feedback. Sometimes just saying, "How did you feel about this game?" is enough for people to "explode." There need not be any order in which people give feedback, but be sure that none of the key players are left out. Feedback usually starts with the Extension Agents, then the village people (the autocratic leaders usually get a good laugh) and finally the Researcher and the Director.

Conclude this activity by reminding the group that it is a satire on what happens in some development programs, but there is a grain of truth in it. With that in mind, ask the participants to return to their three groups (if subgroups have already been formed earlier) or to form new subgroups of not more than one-third of the participants in each. Their task is to reflect on their experience in the Pressure Planning activity as an example of how development should not be conducted, and then draw up guidelines on how development should be conducted.

## How Has This Activity Worked Out in Practice?

To do it well, you have to have a lot of confidence in the process of reflection which this activity generates. Armed with confidence that it will work,

and having everything well planned and in good order, you can get excellent results. I have used it many times and have had only two negative experiences with it: in one workshop in the USA, while the majority of some forty participants were enthusiastic, one said it took too much time for what she got out of it. In another similar workshop, some participants felt that the design of the activity was "not fair; we should have been allowed to speak." To avoid such a reaction, the function of *silence* as a way of producing a "force-fit" needs to be discussed.

In contrast, in several developing country workshops "Pressure Planning" has worked very well. For example, at a regional seminar in Costa Rica with over 115 participants, the activity got top rating as a means of taking the lid off participants' own frustrations in their normal work settings.

To ensure good results, the facilitator needs to:

1) Be well prepared, poised, confident and enthusiastic.

2) Make sure that the group represents a good mix of field-oriented and managerial level personnel, to allow for some creative tensions in connecting the role play to reality.

3) Forewarn the participants that the activity has some elements of a parody or satire.

4) Follow it up with a small group exercise to draw positive inferences and insights for improved planning.

## Pressure Planning Roles

### Director

You have the reputation of being efficient and results-oriented. Your objective is to have a model program which satisfies the Donor that funds have been well spent for the purposes intended. You put pressure on your field staff because you are conscious of targets and deadlines.

### Researchers

You have recently attended a workshop on participatory research and evaluation. You are interested in putting some ideas to the test. Since you are bogged down with paperwork at the office (including a paper you want to write for a research journal), you direct all your questions to the extension agents.

## Extension Agents

You have recently attended a participatory training workshop. You are excited about your job and would like to involve the people as fully as possible. You also hope that your work will be appreciated by the Director since your job depends on the Director being satisfied.

## Village Leader A (Autocratic)

You are a powerful leader with a lot of land and important connections. You know how to use all opportunities to your personal advantage. The village people hold you in awe and dare not express views contrary to yours.

## Village Leader D (Democratic)

You were born in this village and know all the villagers as friends. You are concerned about the community's development. Although you don't want to antagonize Village Leader A, you try to find discrete ways to encourage and support the participation of average community leaders.

## Persons:

You can choose your own identity or designation as a member of the village community. Decide who you are, what your occupation is, what assets you have, etc. In particular, think of what might be some priority needs for improving village living conditions from your point of view. Write your designation on a card marked PERSON and place it in front of you (e.g., PERSON: A middle income farmer; or PERSON: High School student).

## Nonpersons:

As a nonperson you don't count. You exist, have needs, feelings, capacities but no one recognizes them. You may be told about community meetings but you are not expected to have anything to say. You have more or less accepted your marginal role although you do have some ideas on how conditions in the village could be improved. Think about them. Write who you are on a card marked NONPERSON and place it in front of you.

# Pressure Planning Activity

## List of Messages *(Two copies each)*

### From the Director to Extension Agents X & Y

1. What are the people willing to contribute to our program? How much labor can you mobilize?
2. We have to make sure of sustainability of our projects. Have you set up a local committee yet?
3. I need a report from you on cost-recovery possibilities. How much money can the people raise?
4. There is new money available for women's development and ecology projects. What can you do about that?
5. Two representatives of our donor agency will be paying you a surprise visit. What concrete results of people's participation can you show them?

### From the Researchers to Extension Agents X & Y

1. Can you tell me what the people consider to be their priority problems?
2. Have you had any problems in getting the village women involved?
3. What is your experience in working with the poorest of the poor?
4. What would you say are some good indicators of people's participation?
5. How do you feel about this activity? Do you want to go on with it?

David Walker

# ACTIVITY 2

# Matching Attributes with Community Roles in Development

**Rationale:**

There is a tendency in development planning to oversimplify the capacities which the community will need to strengthen or develop in order to take on a higher level of responsibility in managing improvements. The issue is not one of simply filling a knowledge gap, but of promoting qualities and dispositions that enable villagers to act as responsible and effective partners. Program planning should, in fact, start from sensitivity to this need.

**Purpose:**

To help program leadership become aware of the importance of promoting new or enhanced positive attitudes, dispositions and capabilities at the community level which enable the people to fulfill an expanded role more effectively.

## History:

Over the years, this SARAR activity has gone through many transformations. It is simple, requires few materials, and has worked well in our experience. The version included in this monograph is different from the one in *Tools for Community Participation* in that a list of roles has been included as the context in which to discuss attributes. Some of the attributes have been changed as well. You can use either version.

## Materials:

A list of Community Roles

A list of Possible Attributes

Envelopes containing cut up Attributes list

## Procedure:

Have participants work in pairs first, within their subgroups. They must then compare notes and reach consensus (to the extent possible) within their subgroups to report to a plenary session.

First, they should quickly look at the attached list of community roles as the given context. (They can add to their roles or eliminate/modify any that they consider inapplicable or nonessential in their experience.)

In that context, they should reflect on the list of possible attributes (also attached) and choose only five which they consider critical if the community is to fulfill its partnership role most effectively. There is no right or wrong answer, but they should have strong justification for their choices.

After the groups have reported in the plenary session, invite participants to reflect on what type of educational intervention(s) could help to promote the desired attributes, dispositions and capabilities.

NOTE: Instead of using the list of Community Roles as "context," you can start with the activity called "Developing a Mural on Community Participation" in the *Tools* Manual, and lead in to the attributes activity.

## Community Roles Implicit in the Partnership Concept

*(A partial list)*

1. Attend community/group meetings.
2. Actively participate in meetings.
3. Participate in group work.
4. Share experiences.
5. Participate in baseline studies.
6. Gather data.
7. Interpret findings.
8. Assess and prioritize social needs.
9. Identify root causes of problems.
10. Generate solutions.
11. Access technical information.
12. Negotiate contracts.
13. Canvas public opinion.
14. Reach compromises and consensus.
15. Settle conflicts.
16. Evaluate options.
17. Make decisions.
18. Set goals.
19. Identify resources/constraints.
20. Plan course of action.
21. Elect persons for training.
22. Schedule activities.
23. Perform task analysis.
24. Define roles/responsibilities.
25. Organize labor.
26. Take on new responsibilities.
27. Participate in training.
28. Develop appropriate skills.
29. Raise funds.
30. Keep accounts.
31. Keep records.
32. Fill forms.
33. Undertake bank transactions.
34. Make investments.
35. Carry out financial transactions.
36. Share costs of improvements.
37. Collect and manage communal funds.
38. Mobilize support.
39. Promote women's/minority roles.
40. Utilize technical resources.
41. Negotiate with authorities.
42. Secure official clearances.
43. Confront vested interests.
44. Constitute committees.
45. Perform committee roles.
46. Identify problems.
47. Contribute to problem solving.
48. Manage resources.
49. Develop new resources.
50. Develop leadership.
51. Monitor maintenance of improvements.
52. Estimate profits.
53. Analyze costs and benefits.
54. Review outputs.
55. Evaluate progress.
56. Share results.

## List of Possible Attributes

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| obedience | confidence in articulating ideas | land ownership | initiative |
| willingness to deviate from tradition | planning skills | ability to work well on a committee | sense of humor |
| patience | optimism | humility | savings habit |
| technical know-how | managerial skills | willingness to give free labor | willingness to take risks |
| analytic ability | enthusiasm | leadership | confidence in dealing with authorities |
| political connection | appreciation of women's roles and potential | ability to work well in groups | resourcefulness |
| willingness to share in costs of improvements | creative capacity | sense of responsibility | skill in problem solving |

# ACTIVITY 3

# The Road to OPAL

### Rationale:

Participatory training efforts have tended to concentrate at the level of trainers, supervisors and field staff. Now there is a growing recognition that the sensitization and orientation of other categories of personnel, in particular managers and high level policymakers, is equally important.

### Purpose:

To help a multisectoral and multilevel group of development personnel examine how participatory approaches can be institutionalized system-wide through a process of orientation and training, with particular attention to top decision making levels.

### History:

Participants at a PROWWESS/UNDP Master Trainers' Workshop held in Pakistan in November 1991 expressed a strong need to explore possibilities of a system-wide participatory training effort that includes top decision makers in particular. The **Road to OPAL** activity was designed as a spur-of-the-moment response to that expressed need. It is presented here in a format very different from the one used at the Pakistan workshop. The reasons for this change will be explained shortly.

## Materials:

A handout of instructions for the group task, newsprint, markers and other art supplies if needed by the subgroups for presenting their ideas.

## Procedure:

Remind participants of current interest in involving all levels and categories of development personnel in participatory orientation and training. Tell them that the activity they are about to do is an exciting journey via the **Road to OPAL**. Explain that OPAL stands for Optimum Participation at All Levels.

Hand out the task to three subgroups. Suggest one and a half hours to complete the task and prepare the report. Let subgroups negotiate more or less time needed if they wish to do so after reading the task instructions.

When the task has been completed, have all three groups share their reports in a plenary session.

## The Road to OPAL *(Instruction Sheet for Participants)*

### Context

We are all aware that if the participatory approach to local communities is to be fully effective, it must count on the backing of managerial personnel and policy decision makers up the line; this in turn may require special efforts to sensitize, orient and enable top leadership itself to play a more enabling role. Only then will adequate budgets and other essential resources become available.

### Task

In this light, please look at the situation as it now exists in your experience. To what extent are participatory concepts understood and put into practice at different operational and managerial levels within your organization? Compare your experience with that of other members of your subgroup. Then jointly define the situation as it is **NOW**; what you see in common as being the potentials and the pitfalls within the institutions or organizations with which you are currently associated, and without naming names, highlight aspects that require either strengthening or change. Look in particular at the **NOW** situation in terms of roles and functions of top decision makers.

Your **NOW** situation is your starting point on the road to your final destination — **OPAL** (Optimum Participation at All Levels). Having completed

your analysis of **NOW**, do a similar analysis of its opposite, your goal, the kind of situation you would like to meet after traveling a long and perhaps circuitous road to **OPAL**.

- In what way will the situation at **OPAL** be different from **NOW**?
- What specifically do you hope to see changed?
- At what levels do you expect to bring about a clearer concept of the participatory process, what it is capable of achieving, what support it needs, and what its value is to development?
- Also, how strong a commitment will there be to put it into effect?
- And how will these changes affect the specific functions of different categories of development personnel which you identified in the **NOW** situation.

With your final destination, **OPAL**, clearly in view, draw what you consider to be the road that connects your starting point, **NOW**, to your final destination, **OPAL**. Think some more about any roadblocks you are likely to meet along the way, whether in terms of physical, material, financial or administrative impediments; or of attitudinal and conceptual barriers, e.g., skepticism, indifference, misconceptions, dissent, proprietary claims, lack of cooperation, competitiveness, arrogance, or inflexibility. Think of these in concrete terms as hurdles blocking your progress, which you must directly overcome or circumvent by a detour. Also identify the resources you anticipate along the way, or perhaps even those to which you can only gain access through a subsidiary road. Make your map an exciting and colorful visual of your journey to success.

Next, pick one specific change which, as a group, you think is most needed at a high decision making level to eliminate a number of the roadblocks you have identified and to help you go full speed ahead. What is this one change? What can be done to bring it about? Who will do it? What can **you** do at **your** level? And in what way can the experience of the extension worker and of local communities be channeled or adapted so as to help bring about this change?

Define as concretely as possible the actions you feel need to be taken.

## What Actually Happened at the First Trial of This Activity

As originally planned, the activity proved to be far more complex than intended due to several factors:

- The Master Trainers attending the workshop came from widely different backgrounds; some were from headquarters of international agencies, others were consultants at field level deeply involved in the analysis of their particular field situation. Some were trainers, others were program

managers, researchers, engineers. These differences resulted in each pulling in the direction of their own priorities. They felt that smaller groups would have coped better with conflicting viewpoints. Some thought that a case study would have been easier than an open-ended task, as a common frame of reference for the discussions.

- The task itself had not been stated clearly enough. It was clear in my mind but not in theirs because I had made certain assumptions which proved to be incorrect. I had assumed that participants would easily see the similarities between the Road to OPAL activity and two other techniques frequently used in SARAR workshops: The Story with a Gap and Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis. However, several participants who had not had previous exposure to SARAR did not make this connection. Also, with the large groups and the short time, they were unable to explore such similarities through discussion among members.

Here is the task as originally given to the group. It was accompanied by a verbal explanation and was meant to be just a reminder of salient points. However, a hand-out on a task should be able to stand on its own and this one obviously did not. Study it carefully and compare it with the revised instruction sheet.

## Original Task Hand-Out for the Road to OPAL

**Purpose:** Adaptation of the participatory approach to different levels (of responsibilities in development programs)

Draw a road map starting from "NOW".

Your destination is OPAL (Optimum Participation at All Levels).

Identify some institutions along the way.

Define their functions;

The decisions they take;

Who is affected by their decisions;

What resources they control;

What roadblocks they present;

Identify specific situations at each level/institution that you would like to see changed.

Give as much detail as possible for **guidance** — materials/tools development, training, project design, etc.

The following is a partial listing of the institutions identified by the groups as the principal actors on the scene, and another list of the constraints they discussed. Obviously, both lists are too long and too wide in range to be handled within a couple of hours. With the revised format of the activity proposed here, this problem could possibly have been eliminated.

**Partial List of Institutions**

- Traditional authorities
- Local development committees
- NGOs
- Political parties
- Private sector
- Training institutions
- Research institutions
- Intermediate finance authorities
- Public works
- Local government and rural development
- Big Multilateral agencies
- Central policy level bodies
- Legislative bodies

**Partial List of Constraints**

- Overemphasis on technical (e.g., engineering) and contractual obligations
- Target orientation
- Bureaucratic rules-driven style of operation
- Political vested interests, e.g., affecting allocation of resources
- Power structures
- Corruption
- Lack of personnel with sufficient capacity to guide the process
- Inappropriate training
- Lack of information/communications
- Culture and tradition
- Marginalization of women

It is quite possible that a good case study, one with sufficient and relevant detail, would have helped to narrow the discussions to manageable proportions. But the effects of a case study are, to my mind, different. It takes less of an investment of personal experience than an open-ended task because in a case study we are locked into the facts as given. In an open-ended task, we create our own scenario by pooling our group experience. An open-ended group task, if it is clear enough, can act as a powerful binding force to unify the insights brought by participants from a wide range of experiential backgrounds. But it will not work if it is not clear.

You may, therefore, wish to compare the new and old instruction sheets and try to improve on them. The older version perhaps needs trimming down without losing its specificity. Or perhaps the first version can be made more expansive without adding much to it. You may want to try yet another version of your own. After all, this is where the challenge lies.

UN/Photo

Chris Srini Vasan

UN/Photo

# ACTIVITY 4

# Sorting out the Complexities of Rural Women's Existence

## Rationale:

Development strategies for women which focus on their traditional nurturing roles and which are limited to the delivery of messages or services related to these roles cannot be expected to have a major effect on rural women's situation.

In designing programs for women, the problem often is not lack of good will, but lack of vision. It is difficult for planners to design relevant programs addressed to rural women's needs, if they have not been deeply involved themselves in analyzing and reconstructing the complex factions that cause rural women generally to be left out of the mainstream. Yet few planners, unfortunately, may have the time or the patience to engage in such an anaylsis unless it can be presented as an intellectually challenging activity.

## Purpose:

To involve management level decision makers in examining and reconstructing for themselves the complex factors that impinge on rural women's lives and the consequences thereof, both in terms of women's advancement, and the advancement of the community as a whole.

## Materials:

Three sets of cards in the shape of circles (approximately $1^{1}/_{2}$ inches in diameter) with the text inscribed in each as per examples on page 138. Additional blank cards for the participants to add their own ideas. Large sheets of newsprint or brown paper on which to paste the cards. Construction paper or other paper of different color, scissors and tape.

## Procedure:

Invite participants to form three groups of equal or near equal size and balanced composition. (If such groups have already been formed, retain them for this activity.)

Give each group a set of the cards with text as well as five to ten blank cards for them to add their own ideas.

Explain the main task: Each group should examine and reflect on the statements given on its set of cards, and select any one statement that seems, from the group's perspective, to be of central importance in perpetuating (or even aggravating) women's repressed and exploited situation.

Having chosen any one statement as the pivotal point of their inquiry, group members should then establish its cause/effect linkages with the other statements in their set, so as to provide a unified and coherent picture of the problem.

The three groups are free to codify or arrange the cards in any way they choose and they may also discard or modify any statements with which they do not agree. However, when they have completed their codification or collage or whatever end products they create using the cards, they must be prepared to explain and justify it to the other groups in a plenary session. Allow the groups around forty-five minutes to an hour to complete the task. Reporting (at the rate of ten minutes per group) and plenary discussions (another fifteen minutes in total) should add up to another hour. To ensure that the valuable ideas on rural women's condition which result from this activity are not lost, have the

groups prepare a brief list of their main points on newsprint and post these points at the time of presenting their reports.

## How This Works Out In Practice

This activity is simple to introduce but requires a great deal of critical thinking by participants to arrive at a meaningful end-product for their group. In a sense this is a different way of achieving the kind of analytic thinking of the Balloon exercise described in *Tools for Community Participation,* but I find it is a more powerful tool for engaging personnel at the planning or managerial level. Reducing the number of cards with text and increasing the number of blank cards would make it more open-ended, but it can be more threatening to those who are not well informed of the realities of rural women's daily existence. Grappling with the text and figuring out relationships is, on the other hand, a stimulating mental exercise which in the process helps to create a deeper level of awareness of the problem from many angles.

Suggested texts for this activity are given in mixed up order on the next page.

## Suggested Texts for Activity #4

Women are valued for the children they bear

Girls' education is usually not a high priority in traditional societies

Rural women may be unaware of costs of borrowing at usurious rates

Rural women often lack land or other collateral of their own

Women's daily chores leave little time for self-improvement or social activities

Rural women tend to have limited experience of group work and institution building

Women's activities are seen as being of marginal economic value

Women tend to conform to socially prescribed roles and values

Women's health may be affected by frequent child-bearing

Women may be seen as representing a high credit risk

Rural women often have no control over their income from productive activity

There is no real financial incentive to educate daughters

Rural women's self-esteem may be much lower than that of men in their community

Rural women are usually not involved in community decision making

Extension services tend to cater to men in the village

Rural women have few opportunities to discover their own talents and abilities

Rural women generally have limited mobility within this village

Women are considered vulnerable and in need of protection

Women provide free labor to the family

Families fear that schooling will affect their daughter's health, safety or morals

Women's drudgery is considered normal and inevitable

Rural women generally lack skills in community problem posing and planning

Rural women often feel powerless to change their situation

There is a tendency to attach little value to women's ideas or inputs

Women's hardships take a toll on their health

Banks and other businesses lack confidence in women's ability to repay

Rural women may represent an economic liability for the family

Illiteracy rates among rural women are high

# ACTIVITY 5

# Integration of Technical and Community Roles in the Water Sector

## Rationale:

Technical personnel often have difficulty reconciling their own specialized roles with those which the community can and should play if it is to maintain improvements, out of a sense of ownership of the facilities and of responsibility for their effective use and functioning.

## Purpose:

To help participants visualize more clearly the kind of role that local communities can play, vis-a-vis technical services in a given project, and to sensitize them to the importance of involving the people early in the sequence of its planning and implementation steps.

## History:

The idea for this activity resulted from an unexpected request from the Water Resource Ministry of a host government in East Africa in 1989, in connection with a PROWWESS/UNDP assisted workshop on the SARAR method of training trainers. The government requested that eleven of its senior engineers, hydrologists and geologists be allowed to attend the workshop in the capacity

of observers. Since it would be practically impossible for anyone to remain a passive observer during ten days of intensive interaction among the participants, it was decided to incorporate the ten technical people as full participants. Having done so, we had to face the question of relevance: How can a workshop that deals with "soft" process aspects of development be made relevant to specialists from the technical and hardware side?

## Hardware Meets Software

One solution seemed to be to create a new exercise. It required compiling two separate lists of the action components of water resource development programs; its technical or hardware aspects and its human development or software aspects. The two lists were written in two different colors (black for hardware and red for software) on large sheets of newsprint so that each step could be cut apart into an inch-wide strip. These strips from each list were then mixed up and handed over to the hardware and software groups respectively for them to sequence in the most logical order possible from their point of view. After sequencing the steps separately, they were then to integrate the two lists into one consolidated hardware/software action plan.

This activity, which we have since introduced at many workshops in a variety of ways, turned out to be one of the most exciting and engrossing events right from the start, because it gave so much decision making and negotiating power to participants from "both sides." However, I found from experience that it needed improvement in at least two respects. First, it needed to bring out more clearly in the software list the specific actions that community members (as opposed to extension workers) can plan and execute on their own, since this component tends to be the least easily understood by technically-oriented personnel. Accordingly, we added to the software list actions such as "Report pump breakdowns and secure prompt assistance," "Protect the pump against vandalism or misuse" and "Ensure that the improved water benefits are equitably shared," while omitting actions from the original list which suggested functions more appropriate for the extension worker, e.g., "Make informal contacts between the project staff and community members" or "Meet with local leaders" (the old software list also had a mixture of extension worker functions and community functions which was appropriate for a general "software" category).[43] The list given here is an improvement, but can be improved even further.

Secondly, we needed to find ways to improve the use of the activity's **end product** in order to increase sensitivity to the importance of the community's role. I have suggested one way to do this in the graph on page 143.

## Materials:

1) Two separate lists of actions related to community-based programs written in two different colors: One, a list of technical functions; and the other a list



[43]Lyra Srinivasan, *Tools for Community Participation* (New York: UNDP/PROWWESS, 1990), 145.

of software actions *with emphasis on what local communities themselves can do.* Each list is to be cut up in one-inch strips starting from the right but leaving a left margin uncut so that the strips can be torn off and used later by the participants themselves. In writing the lists on newsprint, the items should be in mixed up order, not suggesting any desired sequence. It helps to also have typed lists of the same actions for participants to consult while working with the newsprint strips.

If you are working with more than two groups, naturally you would increase the number of list sets.

2) Small circular adhesive stickers, if available, in four different colors, e.g., blue, green, red and black or yellow. If not available, have markers of the same colors available for use by the subgroups.

## Procedure:

Follow the same procedure as described above, but ask them to attach adhesive stickers to the end of each strip, on the right side, to indicate by a color code **who** should be involved in each activity. I have used the following color code in several workshops.

- Yellow or Black for technical personnel
- Blue for the Extension Worker (software aspects)
- Green for the community generally
- Red for the women in the community

The products of all groups should be posted side-by-side on the wall or blackboard to facilitate comparison. The same day, if possible, depending on time availability and the energy level of the participants, have them compare just one or two items from the following points of view:

◆ Is there a marked difference in the number and color of the stickers attached to the same item by different groups? For example, to number three on the list below, one group may attach only a blue sticker to represent the extension worker's inputs, while others may attach both blue and green, while a third group may use three or even all four colors. It is better to take one or two items and analyze them thoroughly in this way, including the justification given by each group for its code choices, rather than try to compare the whole list line by line. The facilitator must have a keen eye to quickly see which strips are worth calling up for discussion.

◆ Another way to analyze the end product and use it as a discussion stimulus is to use a string to connect actions that receive very different priority ratings in the sequences in which the groups have arranged their strips. Again, instead of comparing **all** items on the list, which would be very time-consuming, it suffices to pick just one or two items and use them to discuss differences in priority perspectives. In the example given in the chart below, for ease of comparison, I have numbered the sequence of one group from 1 to 28 and used the same numbering to identify the order in

which two other groups sequenced the same action steps. This is only because there is not enough space to show all three lists on a single page. But in an actual workshop, where you have all three lists posted side-by-side for all to see, it is more dramatic to have participants use a colored string to connect one or two action steps which show marked variations in priority, as can be seen from the example below.

## STEPS IN THE ORDER LISTED BY GROUP A

1. Plan, organize and conduct baseline assessment.
2. Organize a community meeting; project goals, tasks, needs, etc.
3. Plan ways and means to mobilize community-level resources.
4. Plan to carry out activities designed to enhance and support women's roles in the project.
5. Assess community willingness to share the costs.
6. Establish a water committee.
7. Organize hygiene education activities.
8. Conduct pump trials.
9. Plan use of area around pump.
10. Establish drillings.
11. Attend to maintenance tasks and minor repairs.
12. Report pump breakdowns and secure prompt assistance.
13. Protect the pump against vandalism or misuse.
14. Monitor and evaluate the functioning and usage of improved water supply facilities.
15. Map the selected village, including topography, water resources, population distribution, etc.
16. Conduct a geological survey.
17. Evaluate technical options and decide which are best for the area.
18. Ensure that the improved water benefits are equitably shared.
19. Draw up a contract specifying community/agency roles, responsibilities.
20. Plan and conduct training activities for project staff/community.
21. Plan, organize and manage a sound cost recovery system.
22. Select site for the pump.
23. Provide physical labor for construction of headworks.
24. Ensure availability of spares and tools, such as spanners, cement, etc.
25. Set up a backup system to ensure timely pump repairs.
26. Utilize technical expertise in solving water facility problems.
27. Monitor the water quality.
28. Evaluate project impact.

# COMPARISON OF THE ORDER OF LISTING STEPS BY THREE GROUPS

**Contents of Action Step**

3. Ways to mobilize community resources.
5. Community willingness to share costs.
7. Hygiene education.
20. Training activities.

| A | B | C |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 6 | 4 |
| 4 | 7 | 6 |
| 5 | 15 | 21 |
| 6 | 4 | 16 |
| 7 | 9 | 26 |
| 8 | 24 | 22 |
| 9 | 10 | 24 |
| 10 | 27 | 10 |
| 11 | 21 | 27 |
| 12 | 25 | 13 |
| 13 | 12 | 12 |
| 14 | 14 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 5 |
| 16 | 5 | 3 |
| 17 | 17 | 18 |
| 18 | 19 | 19 |
| 19 | 3 | 7 |
| 20 | 20 | 15 |
| 21 | 22 | 17 |
| 22 | 23 | 9 |
| 23 | 8 | 23 |
| 24 | 18 | 8 |
| 25 | 26 | 20 |
| 26 | 11 | 25 |
| 27 | 13 | 11 |
| 28 | 28 | 28 |

# ACTIVITY 6

# The Demographic Pebble Activity

## Rationale:

Baseline assessments are usually done by trained investigators and researchers who ask questions, take notes and take away the information to be tabulated and analyzed elsewhere. The people often do not understand why the questions are asked or what use is made of their answers. There are, however, simple ways to involve people in assessing their own needs. If we do not have a Pocket Chart or other tools prepared by an artist, we can use common objects from the environment, and with a little imagination, convert them into effective tools for people to use in critical assessment of their reality.

## Purpose:

To involve villagers in reflecting on the special needs of different demographic groups within the community and to use that data as a basis for planning an action program to serve the priority needs identified.

This can be used as a demonstration activity for managers.

## Materials:

A large number of pebbles of different sizes painted in different colors to represent the following demographic groupings:

Elders

Youth (female)

Men

Boys

| Women | Girls |
|---|---|
| Youth (male) | Children under five years |

Containers and picture labels for each of the categories.
(NOTE: Instead of pebbles you can use different seeds or other small objects).

## Procedures:

Put the color-coded pebbles in the containers and keep the picture labels prominently next to each category.

Invite approximately ten volunteers from the community meeting to participate in the activity. Ask them to select pebbles from each category to represent the composition of their family. (NOTE: They can either role play or represent their own families.)

When all the volunteers have completed the task, remove the remaining pebbles, but leave the empty containers and their labels where they were. Leave a sample pebble next to the label of each container.

Now ask the volunteers to put back their pebbles into the containers where they belong according to the category symbolized.

When this second part of the task is completed, the group as a whole is invited to reflect on the finished product:

"Which of these categories has the largest number of people?"

"Which one presents the most problems requiring urgent attention?"

"What can we do about these problems?"

If our program has a special focus, e.g., improved quality of water, we can ask: "Which of these groups is most affected by the lack of good drinking water? In what way?"

## How This Was Received in the Field

This generally works out well at the village level because of its simplicity and the use of local materials. In some cultures, however, village people may not like the idea of being counted. This point was made by a Master Trainers' Workshop participant from Africa. We need to know how people feel about a census before introducing this activity. I have had no problems with it in Asia.

The activity can be used, as a demonstration of process, in the orientation of program personnel at all levels including the highest, since it takes little time and illustrates the participatory process very clearly.

# ACTIVITY 7

# The Impertinent Pert Chart (IPC)

## Rationale:

At the end of every workshop we devote at least half a day, preferably a full day, for follow-up planning; participants are regrouped according to their agencies and are asked to make a plan of how they will apply what they have learned to their normal settings. To help them in this planning process, we introduce them to the Impertinent Pert Chart technique.

## History:

In the early 1970's when the term PERT — Program Evaluation and Research Technique — was fashionable, it seemed too complicated a technique for the average person, given its maze of arrows, decision boxes, connecting lines, time values and sequential relationships. I felt that a simple model could help more people do systematic planning and enjoy it. The Impertinent Pert Chart was a response to this need. The small handout by that name, published by World Education, had some delightful cartoons drawn by G. Werner. This added a touch of humor which certainly helped to make the planning process more user-friendly, and less abstract and technical. Since then, many trainers have made adaptations of the IPC for their own use. The experience of one of them, while still a novice at consulting, is quoted at the end of this Activity description.

## Purpose:

One objective of the impertinent PERT experience is to involve everyone — from administrators to fieldworkers — in planning. The IPC offers a simplified and informal way to plan an action program, keeping in mind the essential components of a good plan: its objective(s); its time-frame; the resources available; the options open; the sequencing of steps; the costs; and the indicators of success.

## Materials:

Normally all you need are large sheets of newsprint or other paper, markers, pencils and tape; it also helps to have on hand some smaller cards or paper on which to write action steps, and perhaps a number of pockets or envelopes if you prefer to arrange the cards in a more flexible way, rather than by posting them directly on newsprint with masking tape.

Sometimes participants need a little more stimulation to get started; the idea of planning a whole program from start to finish in a couple of hours can seem too difficult for some, and may actually stifle their production of new ideas. To overcome this initial mental block, you can use a set of cards, such as the ones in the chart on page 150. When actions such as those on that chart are written on larger cards which the participants themselves can manipulate, sort out, categorize and sequence, the very process of doing so releases an abundance of fresh ideas. I will refer to these brain joggers below as "action cards." You should have many blank cards available to capture the new ideas.

NOTE: Some facilitators use cards of different colors. These are useful only if left blank by the facilitator. The group can then color-code their action choices themselves.

## Procedure:

Distribute sets of the action cards to small groups of participants, preferably organized according to their agencies. Ask them to sort the action cards into different categories (e.g., Training, Field Operations, Materials Development), and to keep them aside. If blank colored cards are being used, participants should cut and paste actions from a photocopy of the attached chart. In this way, they themselves can color code the different categories of actions.

Next, they should think of a specific problem their agency might wish to address, e.g., infant diarrhea or unsanitary conditions of the environment. They must first explore the dimensions of the problem by asking themselves several questions.

What are the causes of the problem?

Who is most affected by it?

What solutions have been tried in the past and with what results?

What makes the problem persist?

Specifically, what obstacles stand in the way of its solution?

And what resources does the agency have to help the community resolve the problem?

Through this type of analysis, the group should be able to *set a clear objective* for their agency's program to address the selected problem. They should also *define the time-frame* within which they expect the solution to be effective, and what *indicators of change*, both tangible and intangible, will show that the objective has been achieved.

After having clarified the problem, its causes, the resources available to solve it, the impediments in the way, the program objectives, and the indicators of success, the participants are now ready to start formulating an action plan using the action cards. To do this they take a very large paper (possibly two or three newsprint sheets taped together) and attach as many horizontal rows of pockets as they have categories of action cards (NOTE: A blank pocket chart can be prepared in advance by the facilitator to be filled in by the group. If no pocket charts or envelopes are available, the cards can simply be attached to the newsprint with masking tape at the back). Write the name of each category on the far left side of a horizontal row of pockets. If color-coded action cards are used, the name of the category should be similarly color-coded to match the cards.

## Insights from Field Experience

At each SARAR workshop we may use the technique differently. Sometimes we give the categories to be sorted out by different subgroups, to be later integrated and compared. This can produce a more detailed plan. Here is an experience by a trainer who, as a novice consultant at the time, lacked confidence in her ability to carry off the Impertinent Pert Chart activity, until she tried it. In her words:

Monday, September 28. Although I was nervous I thought that since most of the participants (15 out of 18) were connected directly with one organization, YKGI, the odds were good for a relevant, worthwhile learning experience. I started the session with a game I learned from a colleague. Then we followed step one of the PERT instructions and all went well. Finished at 7:30. I retired to my room to read the rest of the instructions again and again.

Tuesday, September 29. Session began at 8:00 and the first activity was to construct the PERT chart made from lots of big paper and plastic pockets. This done, the group discussed the four headings/themes needed for the four categories — We chose (1) Assessing/Needs, (2) Planning, (3) Implementation and (4) Evaluation. Then we broke into four groups and each worked on one category the rest of the morning, choosing activities necessary for the accomplishment of that category. Broke at 1:00 for lunch and a rest and resumed at 4:00. Each small group presented their ideas to the full group and these ideas were discussed and revised/added to. Then back to small groups and they worked on writing action sentences from all their notes — one action sentence per 3x5 card, one color per group. Then each group took turns inserting the cards, in sequence, in the PERT chart. Much discussion and argument went along with this. Went overtime and finally decided to sleep on it and resume searching for the perfect positioning the next morning.

Wednesday, September 30. When I arrived in the clinic for breakfast at 7:00, there was already a group of about eight enthusiastically working over the cards. Blue ones were in the red category, green ones in the black, red ones thrown on the floor — the chart had obviously not been at rest through the night. We spent the whole morning refining the action sentences, deciding sequence and timetable, establishing interrelationships of categories. In the end, we had a complete detailed 18-month plan for the health education efforts of YKGI, created cooperatively by the entire staff. Sister Kien was delighted — her board has recently requested just such a plan and there it was. I was delighted, because she and they were, and relieved because the workshop had worked in spite of an ill-prepared, scared facilitator.

## Some Ideas for IPC "Action Cards"

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Organize refresher training for field personnel. | Field test participatory techniques. | Buy art materials. |
| Identify insights from field work for use in training. | Train field personnel. | Prepare progress reports. |
| Initiate steps to transfer management responsibility to local communities. | Conduct briefing for top management. | Recruit a materials specialist. |
| Produce a training manual. | Organize interagency workshops to achieve common vision. | Identify and select field staff. |
| Design an overall strategy to promote community involvement. | Evaluate use of participatory techniques at field level. | Set up materials production unit. |
| Train the field coordinator. | Brief donors on progress. | Plan ways to promote local institution objectives. |
| Review management policies system wide for consistency with participatory objectives. | Collect training material from different sources. | Prepare a proposal for a field project using participatory techniques. |
| Produce participatory materials for use at community level. | Train trainees. | Ensure availability of funds. |
| Set up a process feedback system. | Recruit artists. | Design an overall training plan. |

# ANNEX A

# SARAR: A Growth-Oriented Strategy

A fundamental belief on which SARAR is based is that people, no matter how poor, have unlimited capacities for self-direction and self-fulfillment which need to be tapped. The use of growth-promoting strategies to draw out these powers usually produces a much higher quality of outcomes than do traditional methods of instruction.

The acronym SARAR stands for five attributes, dispositions or abilities which can have direct bearing on the quality of participation.

**Self-esteem.** The first letter of the SARAR acronym stands for self-esteem, a factor in development, the enormous importance of which is only gradually being recognized: the self-concept of individuals, the way they see themselves in relation to their environment and the degree to which they believe they have decision-making power. The limits to initiative and change set by a person's self-concept are invisible but real.

It is common knowledge, for example, that in many societies rural women, who are condemned by culture and tradition to a life of drudgery, seclusion and dependency, have little or no say in community-level decisions and are generally reluctant to voice their opinions in the presence of husbands and elders. A combination of low self-esteem, a feeling of powerlessness, and fear of social disapproval blocks their participation. Underprivilege and subjugation can have devastating effects on the confidence levels and self-concepts of both men and women, but more so in the case of women who have fewer opportunities for group support.

Accordingly, SARAR activities are designed to help adult learners experience a new and more positive estimation of themselves in several ways: through the contribution they are able to make to group process and problem solving; through the satisfaction of seeing some of their ideas and inputs at work; through positive feedback from peers; and through the new roles and responsibilities in which they are involved and which they dare to take on perhaps for the first time in their lives.

**Associative strength.** The need for group reinforcement of the individual's confidence level and aspirations is indicated in the SARAR acronym by the second letter, A, which stands for Associative Strength. The methodology gives a central place to group work as a means of helping each group member discover personal strengths and utilize them to enrich the group effort. The group interaction is an invigorating and exciting experience, providing a climate in which ideas can be expressed freely — including doubts and disagreements — in the process of reaching collective decisions on needs and priorities. Experience shows for example that bringing village women together in small groups enables them to be transformed in a climate of confidence and enjoyment very different from their routine lives. With the encouragement and support which the group provides, it becomes acceptable for them to take on new roles and to express their views at community meetings. As the group's associative strength increases, it paves the way for a more permanent organizational base.

**Resourcefulness.** The third letter of the acronym stands for Resourcefulness, an essential creative function in solving problems. The importance of creativity to achieve the purposes of development is generally underestimated. Implicit in development is the need for adaptation, flexibility, innovation, a more open and exploratory frame of mind, a greater willingness to try out (and in fact to generate) new ideas. Traditional societies, on the other hand, offer the security of an established order where custom controls decisions and regulates behavior.

A growth-oriented strategy that gently but progressively encourages the cultivation of creativity and resourcefulness can contribute much toward loosening rigid ways of thinking. Individuals and groups are then more likely to look at their environment from a fresh viewpoint, actively seeking to uncover resources where they previously saw only constraints, and offering new ideas for solutions with confidence that they will be appreciatively heard. For this reason, SARAR activities are designed to encourage free-wheeling, make new connections, and use creative imagination and inventiveness in ways that can carry over into other activities.

**Action planning.** The second A in the acronym stands for Action Planning. Since a primary objective of SARAR is building the people's decision making capacity, SARAR places emphasis on learning experiences which provide varied

and cumulative practice in needs assessment, problem analysis and action planning. This is the high point of the process. Participants learn to plan through experiential exercises, not theoretically. The problems they work on are directly drawn from their reality. Facilitators design activities in a way that affords learners frequent opportunities to exercise planning skills. Groups work on tasks which require autonomous decision making on what needs to be done, who can do it, with what resources, in what sequence of steps, and with what provisions for monitoring evaluation and followup.

**Responsibility for follow through and maintenance of improvements.** The final letter R stands for Responsibility to maintain improvements in good order, to fulfill roles, and to manage programs so as to derive their maximum benefit for all. The planning and problem solving process promotes a greater sense of ownership of the decisions and thereby a commitment to follow through on projects to their completion.

The SARAR methodology thus represents a fundamental shift from the conventional didactic approach, a deliberate and provocative change of style. It aims not to prescriptively change behaviors within local communities, but rather to stimulate fresh thinking processes and to enable people to transform themselves, consciously and fundamentally, into more capable managers of their lives.

Education now ceases to be a task of information transmittal or technology transfer and takes on an enabling and catalytic role, which is its true function, to help people realize and fulfill their potential, to think for themselves, to make judicious choices, to plan creatively, and to act and be responsible for their actions. It is not the subject matter or the message or the social issue in itself that dictates the strategy; rather it is the growth of the people as people which is at the heart of the process.

This requires an overhauling of the *teaching mode*, from one where mastery of prescriptions selected by specialists is the principal objective, to a *learning mode* which pivots on the needs and experiences of the learners.

To achieve these aims SARAR uses five methods:

- **Creative** — to promote fresh viewpoints, new ideas/solutions
- **Investigative** — to demystify research; involve learners in data gathering and processing
- **Analytic** — to engage learners in problem solving
- **Planning** — to develop skills in systematic action planning
- **Informative** — to access information in an enjoyable way

Monitoring and evaluating progress form an integral part of all five.

**Creativity** is given top billing in SARAR because it is one of the most effective ways to break out of the mold of stereotypes and sterile thinking. Even simple materials such as flexiflans and unserialized posters (see Annex B) open up possibilities for villagers to explore their own creativity and generate new ideas.

**Investigative tools** such as the Pocket Chart help to demystify the process used by researchers to collect, process and interpret data. Instead of the researcher asking the questions, villagers gather data themselves. They then tabulate and interpret it using pictures, symbols and voting discs as tools.

**Analytic** methods are used as a preparation for problem solving. They encourage inquiry and critical thinking vital to helping villagers challenge outmoded beliefs and practices.

Problem analysis provides a direct lead into **planning**, which is the high point of the process. The whole interactive process will come to nothing if it does not inspire concrete action. Planning and action are inseparable from the other components and are the key to sustaining the will of the people. Without planned action, they will not get results; without results, they will lose faith. It is therefore essential that this whole learning chain not be weakened by removing some elements such as the investigative tools, and using them independently for research purposes or other ends distinct from the action plans of the people.

**Informative** materials are kept for the last, not to say they are less important, but because information, preferably, should be brought in on demand when the need for it arises and the learner is ready to actively seek it.

The growth concept applies to the methodology itself. It is not a closed method. It is continuously growing and adapting in response to new needs and creative ideas, while adhering firmly to the principle of optimal learner involvement.

# ANNEX B
# Selected SARAR Tools

**Community Maps, Community Pictures:** Drawing village maps (or building village models) in order to engage trainees (or community members) in a creative, self-directed experience. Both the process and the product can be used for analysis, information, or other purposes. It establishes in the minds of learners that a participatory approach generates a high level of energy, enjoyment, and ideation; it also provides a concrete take-off point for subsequent activities.

**Pocket Charts:** A participatory method of investigation by which trainees or community members can gather and analyze information. "Pockets" are made of paper or cardboard and are attached by transparent tape or glue to a large, poster-size piece of paper and arranged in a matrix. Drawings act as captions for vertical columns. Participants "vote" by placing tokens in the appropriate pocket along horizontal rows. They can then tabulate and analyze the results.

**Resistance to Change Continuum:** A graphic representation to help analyze people's reactions to the possibility of change, along a continuum from (1), not recognizing the existence of a problem or any need for change to (8), a willingness not only to act and to share experience with others, but to be an advocate for change.

**The Impertinent PERT Chart:** A simplified version of PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) that makes it possible to broaden the base of participation in the program planning process.

**Flexiflans:** Figures cut out of light cardboard with moveable joints that can be manipulated on a flannelboard to tell a story, identify a problem, analyze possible solutions, etc. The more figures (people, animals, household or farming instruments, water sources) the better.

**Maxiflans:** Large-size drawings of people with changeable facial expressions to be used on a flannelboard rather than as puppets on a stick.

**Unserialized Posters:** A set of up to 20 posters or photographs to encourage creative thinking. A wide selection of dramatic pictures is desirable and those used should be as open-ended as possible, leaving room for interpretation, and should focus on human interaction rather than on activities that can easily be interpreted as "messages".

**Story with a Gap:** A story illustrated by two contrasting pictures of "before" and "after" situations. Participants brainstorm the steps needed to move from the "before" to the "after" picture. A set of illustrations of possible steps (in mixed-up order) may be given out but participants should preferably be encouraged to invent their own.

**Photo Parade:** A collection of photographs representing different communication styles or forms of participation, to be analyzed and categorized by trainees working in subgroups, then compared and discussed in a plenary session.

**Three Pile Sorting Exercise:** An investigative and awareness exercise in which trainees or community members are asked to sort out sets of picture cards in three piles; e.g., those that show situations that are clearly beneficial to health, those that are clearly harmful, and those that are ambiguous (where there might be both positive and negative aspects); or those representing tasks that the community can do on its own, those that they consider to be primarily a government responsibility, and those that require joint action.

**Johari's Window** (adapted): A graphic representation that highlights the importance of giving due consideration to the community's views and perceptions in program planning.

**Cup Exercise:** Another evaluative tool to help trainees analyze directive and nondirective approaches: drawings of a cup are displayed; each is labeled with a direction (e.g., "fill the cup to the brim with hot coffee," "put something in the cup," "what can you do with a cup?") Trainees are asked to order them from most to least directive.

**Open-Ended Stories:** Dramatic episodes in which the main character receives conflicting advice and is undecided as to which of several optional courses of action to take. The audience is invited to discuss and suggest the best solution (adapted from World Education, using maxiflans).

**Five Squares Evaluation Tool:** A set of five squares coded in black and white to indicate five different ratios of trainer/trainee dominance.

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## About the Author

Lyra Srinivasan received both her Master's and Doctor's degrees in Education from Harvard University. She has over twenty years of experience in participatory training for development and community education within the United Nations system and as an independent consultant to UNICEF, FAO, the WORLD BANK and U.S.-based international PVO's. From 1984 through 1988, she served as Training Director of PROWWESS/UNDP. Today she is an independent writer and educational consultant.

With the overriding interest of combatting poverty, Dr. Srinivasan has chosen as her main vehicle the improvement of training as a learner-centered process of growth and action. She is the initiator of the SARAR approach, and has designed a variety of educational activities and materials aimed at involving the learner in inquiry, creative problem solving, and follow up action. Among her publications, *Perspectives on Non-Formal Adult Learning* (Boston: World Education, 1977) and *Tools for Community Participation* (New York: PROWWESS/UNDP,1990) have been translated into many languages.

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