

Evaluation and
Impact Research
For
Rights-based Development

Issues and Challenges

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RIGHTS- BASED EVALUATION: KEY CHALLENGES

The rights-based approach to development is the central tenet of Oxfam International's strategy¹. This approach has a long history. It has well-established antecedents in peoples' movements and liberation struggles in many countries of the South. It has also been increasingly embraced in differing ways by many multilateral development agencies in the North as well as INGOs.

The rights-based definition of development in article 1 of the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development sees it as a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process. Its object is 'the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the resulting benefits'. Development is therefore people-centred, participatory and environmentally sound. It involves not just economic growth, but equitable distribution, enhancement of people's capabilities and widening of their choices. It gives top priority to poverty elimination, integration of women into the development process, self-reliance and self-determination of people and Governments, and protection of the rights of indigenous people².

In order to achieve these objectives effective learning and information systems are crucial, but also present critical challenges to established ways of doing things. These challenges are outlined in Oxfam America's 'ROPE: Rights Oriented Programming for Effectiveness'— a framework for strategic programming.³

- The shift from Service Delivery mode to Rights Based Approaches means assessing contribution not just to the "lives of the poor", but on power relations and the structural and persistent causes of poverty and injustice.
- The focus on rights implies a shift from viewing people as "beneficiaries" to working with them as primary change agents.
- This implies also a shift from donor-defined "objective" change to people-centered, participatory, inter-subjective constructions.

¹The Rights-based Approach has been at the core of OI strategy since 2001. In the third Strategic Plan 'Demanding justice' 2007-2012 Oxfam aims to help people living in poverty to exercise five main rights: Right to a sustainable livelihood, Right to basic social services, Right to Life and security, Right to be heard, Right to an identity. With focus on four areas: Economic justice, Essential services, Rights in crisis, Gender justice.

² The [ILO](http://www.ilo.org) has operated within a rights framework that predates the United Nations itself. [UNICEF](http://www.unicef.org) has been developing such approaches for several years. [UNDP](http://www.undp.org) has long pioneered people-centred approaches. For overview and links see UNHCHR website <http://www.unhchr.ch/development/approaches-02.html>. For Oxfam-International see http://www.oxfam.org/en/about/accountability/strategic_plan. The UN [Declaration on the Right to Development](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/74.htm) can be found at <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/74.htm>. Even in the World Bank the influence of the Rights-based approach is evident in the World Development reports 'Attacking Poverty' 2000 and 2006 Equity and Development.

³ This summarises main points from Jagabundhu Acharya's Powerpoint presentation: Paradigm shift in Program Evaluation – an NGO perspective presented at the 'New Directions in Program Evaluation' Conference November 10, 2006.

BOX 1: CHALLENGES FOR 'THE HOLY GRAIL'**WHAT IS HAPPENING?**

From simple measurement of pre-determined categories to capturing complex change in ways which can be aggregated and compared for widespread, significant macro-level change:

- What are the key priorities for change of poor people themselves? How do these relate to priorities of other stakeholders? How can any differences be negotiated?
- How can broad priorities be translated into specific indicators which can then be meaningfully assessed or even measured?
- How can different local indicators be compared and aggregated across interest groups and geographical areas?
- How can power structures and underlying processes of change be assessed?

TO WHOM?

From simple counting and aggregation to equitable representation for pro-poor accountability and multi-stakeholder engagement:

- What are the differences in impacts between poor and/or marginalised people?
- What is the role of the powerful? How should they be included in the learning process?
- What are the most significant lines of difference?
- What are the main potential conflicts of interest? How can these be managed?

WHY?

From before-after or sample-control comparisons of linear processes and global programme 'impact attribution' to understanding "co-contribution to multi-causal change" and complex interactions between:

- individual strategies of primary change agents
- contextual opportunities and constraints, including attitudes and actions of powerful stakeholders
- programme interventions of different types, qualities and interlinkage

WHAT TO DO?

From external derivation of recommendations to linking participatory learning of past with multi-stakeholder negotiation of change for future:

- What do people want to do? How does one evaluate trade-offs between different priorities eg increased income versus decreased leisure/stress/time with family?
- How can 'wini-win' outcomes be identified as the basis for negotiation?
- How can differences and conflicts of interest be negotiated to the advantage of very poor and/or marginalised people?
- What are the lessons of past experience, ongoing opportunities and challenges for the future?

HOW? PROCESS

From single one-off production of reports to ongoing and accessible dissemination to different stakeholders at different levels so that they can make decisions and act?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participatory learning • networking • feedback • integration into decision-making
ETHICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • equitable inclusion and representation • respondent benefit /capacity-building from learning process • confidentiality and respect.

- The scale of change needed implies a move from “projects” to “program” orientation for interlinked, reinforcing significant change on a wide scale.
- Central to these is a shift in accountability imperatives and priorities from a donor-driven upward accountability towards a framework of mutual accountability (top, bottom, external, internal)

The Rights-based Approach therefore implies a significant shift in thinking about monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment from conventional quantitative approaches. It implies:

- new questions to include qualitative as well as quantitative changes based on the priorities of very poor and/or marginalised people,
- look in detail at differences between the experience of specific groups of poor/marginalised people
- going from questions about what is happening to whom, to questions of causality and attribution and particularly
- the implications for future change.

Moreover the Rights-based Approach requires not only new questions, but new processes and methods because poor/marginalised people themselves are now central actors at all stages of the assessment process.

At the same time it also presents challenges for established participatory methodologies in that it requires:

- effective quantification of major changes in ways which will convince policy-makers.
- treat people not only as ‘participants’ and unpaid data-collectors in participatory assessments, but as active partners in action learning in ways determined by them, not just the priorities of programmes and donors.
- development of rigorous and equitable methodologies for analysing change processes.
- development of equitable methodologies for negotiating between stakeholders not only at the local, but also national and international levels.

This paper gives an overview of the evolution of approaches to monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment. It then discusses the contributions and challenges for two apparently opposing ‘paradigms’ of assessment – so-called ‘scientific’ approaches which draw more on statistical and economic disciplines and participatory approaches which draw more on social science/anthropology and community activist practice. The final section then outlines a framework which can begin to bring the different approaches together for strategic learning as a contribution to rights-based development. It is argued that this requires reversing the current paradigm which privileges the ‘scientific’ approach, to one where participation forms the core of the strategy to enable much more rigorous and cost-effective focusing of other quantitative and qualitative methods. The Appendix gives details of key innovations in participatory methods which provide a background to possible areas of future innovation.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT: EVOLUTION OF APPROACHES

Impact assessment as we know it began in the 1950s as a predictive methodology where external experts were asked to assess the likely environmental, social and economic consequences of development projects in order to approve, or reject them. Approaches included environmental impact assessment (EIA), social impact assessment (SIA), cost benefit analysis (CBA), and social cost benefit analysis (SCBA) (Howes, M. 1992). These assessments would nowadays be termed 'appraisal'. More rarely post-project impact analyses were conducted a number of years after the end of the project.

Then in the 1980s and 1990s decreasing Northern aid budgets, public scepticism and apathy about development and the increasing number of NGOs in the South, there was increasing competition for ever scarcer funds. This led to increasing pressure for donor agencies and NGOs to prove they were having an impact on poverty. Donors increasingly required organisations they funded to produce and adhere to some variant of logical framework analysis which sets out a clear hierarchy of inputs, activities and objectives and put these in the context of assumptions about external contextual risks and opportunities.(Howes, M. 1992). Progress in achieving these goals was now expected to be monitored, often also with impact assessments at the end of the specific project period with specific budget allocated for this purpose. With the increase in number of development research Institutes and departments, academic impact studies became more common. Many of these were extremely critical of the limited impact of many development interventions, further increasing the pressure for projects, programmes and organisations to demonstrate effectiveness of their interventions. Given the cost of academic research, from the late 1990s donor agencies themselves initiated debates about less costly impact assessment methodologies. This was particularly true for micro-finance - for example USAID's AIMS project and the Ford Foundation's ImpAct programme⁴. and DFID's Enterprise Development Impact Assessment Information Service (EDIAIS) and a number of INGOs, including Oxfam also conducted work on different types of impact assessment (Roche, C. 1999).

All of these operated with some definition of impact assessment like the following:

'Impact assessment is the systematic analysis of the lasting or significant changes – positive or negative, intended or not – in people's lives brought about by a given action or series of actions'(Roche, C. 1999)
p21

A distinction is made between the types of information needed at different stages in the project cycle:

- **Monitoring** is routine ongoing tracking of specific indicators
- **Reviews** were conducted mid-term on the basis of monitoring data and rapid appraisal
- **Evaluation** is conducted at the end of the project, again mainly on monitoring and rapid appraisal
- **Impact Assessments** were more in-depth studies either at the end of a project or some time afterwards.

Related to these distinctions were distinctions between the types of data:

- **Outputs** are the direct proof that activities have taken place eg numbers of trainees, wells built, loans disbursed etc which can be disaggregated by category eg poverty status, gender etc
- **Outcomes** as the immediate results of these outputs eg better understanding of training content

⁴ EDIAIS papers can be found at <http://www.enterprise-impact.org.uk> and for ImpAct see <http://www.ids.ac.uk/impact/>

- **Impacts** as the longer term more direct positive and negative consequences of the outputs and outcomes for the target community eg application of training content for improved livelihoods and greater capacity for learning generally.
- **Effects** as the wider social, economic and/or political direct and indirect consequences for society as a whole, including those who are not part of the target community eg existence of skills in a community which are then passed on to others, improvements in availability of food in the community because of increased production.

These distinctions and ways of thinking of impact assessment were reinforced in the rise of Results-Based evaluation which attempted to get development agencies to focus on outcomes and impacts rather than just outputs in their logical frameworks⁵.

Alongside this logframe-based approach, sometimes complementary to it but often highly critical of it, were developments in participatory methods – participatory monitoring and evaluation and participatory assessment. Participatory evaluation has its roots in organizational, research and planning methodologies developed in the 1970s as part of the increasing emphasis on popular participation in development (See details and references in Appendix 1). These methodologies include particularly:

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

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

In the 1990s innovation in participatory methodologies accelerated at all levels: in peoples’ movements, NGOs, research institutes and donor agencies. The focus on community-based participatory planning, including evaluation of existing policies, was taken further in Appreciative Inquiry and ‘DIPs’ (Deliberative and Inclusionary processes). NGOs experimented and innovated with systems of internal participatory monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.⁶ The World Bank began to emphasise the need for participatory consultations in the form of Beneficiary Assessment and use of participatory methods generally. These developments were paralleled in most other multilateral and bilateral aid agencies, many of whom published

⁵ For an overview of Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation see for example Kusek, J.Z. and Rist, R.C. (2004) .

⁶ For history and general overviews of issues in participatory monitoring and evaluation see Chambers 1994a,b,c and Estrella et al eds 1998. For particular examples see Action Aid’s Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS Action Aid 2000) and the Internal Learning System being developed in Micro-finance Institutions in India and Bangladesh (Noponen 2005).

Manuals on participation and participatory methods⁷. Some of these approaches proposed new ways of tracking change as a challenge to conventional linear change theories. 'Most Significant Change' and 'positive deviance' for example look not at the ordinary or the average, but for degrees of diversity in people's stories and experience of change, using these as indicators of empowerment and the exceptions as pointers to potential for change. Other methodologies, for example Empowerment Evaluation and Participatory Action Learning System, looked at ways of facilitating people to conduct their own evaluations as individuals as well as groups.

In recent years it is developments of the logframe and quantitative approaches which have received most funding and seen as the most 'rigorous methodology'. There have been further developments in the logframe approach drawing on business models of 'total quality management' and performance assessment which require systematic checking of key indicators of performance. These are particularly salient in the context of the 'new philanthropy'. There is currently an increasing linkage between this business approach with statistical approaches to impact assessment based on a natural science model. For example 'randomised evaluation' which attempts to use natural scientific method with random sampling and regression analysis integrated into programme design. Similar to control studies in health studies using controls and placebos, programme implementation itself is randomised in order to enable sophisticated statistical manipulation of the data to try and 'prove' impact. The Gates Foundation has recently given a grant to IRIS in Maryland to conduct a \$6 million research project into the impact of innovation grants in financial services. This will collect large-scale panel data and attempt to conduct rigorous econometric analysis. This follows from IRIS' multi-million dollar work on poverty tools which have attempted to identify generalisable poverty indicators which could be used to rigorously assess poverty reach in microfinance programmes in order to comply with USAID's poverty mandate.

These assessments often also include some use of qualitative and/or participatory methodologies. For example the Gates/IRIS collaboration will also involve what it terms 'qualitative methodologies' (though these are actually quantitative) like financial diaries, use studies, exit interviews and participatory methodologies like financial landscape analysis. These are however seen as largely secondary to the main task of statistical quantification, to provide illustrative examples and some attempt to ground analysis in field reality, but little rigour is applied in the use of these other methods. It is argued here that this prioritisation of statistical analysis is both much less 'scientific' and 'rigorous' than is claimed, and also diverts resources and attention from the underlying purpose of evaluation and assessment ie improvement in practice – not only in the sense of identifying appropriate strategies but also engaging sufficient people and ensuring accountability in their implementation.

⁷ For example FAO's Participatory Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation (PAME) of the early 1990s (D'Arcy Case 1990); World Bank 1995; UNDP 1996; 1997; USAID 1996. See also GTZ's Participatory Impact Monitoring (PIM) www.GTZ.org.

WHAT IS A 'RIGOROUS' APPROACH? A RIGHTS-BASED CRITIQUE

Currently accepted orthodoxy on what does and does not constitute 'rigour' is based on statistical analysis in the natural sciences combined with applications in institutional economics. It has a number of characteristics, based on a number of key assumptions, as outlined in Box 1.

BOX 2: SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

CHARACTERISTICS

WHAT Indicators: externally derived hypothesis/donor goals reduced to 'SMART' indicators – measurable and quantifiable 'hard' data

WHO Sampling: total population and/or random sampling with control

WHY Attribution Analysis:

- (After – before) for clients compared with (After – before) for control = impact
- Regression analysis

WHAT TO DO: Recommendations:

- Positive impact = continue or increase funding
- Negative impact = stop or decrease funding

HOW Process:

- 'Expert' external 'objective' independent evaluation.
- Baseline, during and after as discrete events.
- 'Respondents' as objects of investigation.
- Accountability to donors and organisation.

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

- SMART indicators can be identified, rigorously investigated, meaningfully generalised and aggregated
- Random sampling and controls are possible
- After minus before observed change = 'impact'
- Proving impact = policy recommendation
- People as passive 'respondents' give reliable answers time after time
- All that is then needed is to feed data into organisational information system to lead to better services.

Design is based on externally derived hypotheses or donor goals which are then used to identify 'SMART' indicators which are measurable and can give 'hard' quantitative data to input into a database. Sampling either covers the total population (eg for some dimensions of TQM) or is random in order to reduce sampling bias and enable statistical manipulation according to statistical requirements. It takes a particular view of impact which assumes that it is possible to simply measure a 'baseline' situation according to the set indicators for the identified sample, then remeasure at a later date and attribute any change to the intervention concerned.

Generally a control sample is used in order to try to exclude other contextual effects. In some cases multivariate analysis and sophisticated statistical are used to improve statistical inference and/or distinguish between the impacts of different types of intervention eg training versus credit. The main recommendations which come from the data are that positive impact would indicate desirability of continuing or increasing funding, negative impacts decreasing or stopping funding. Any further recommendations have to be derived by other methods.

The rigour claimed, the underlying assumptions and hence the usefulness of this approach need to be seriously challenged on a number of counts. It ignores the long and well-established critique of concepts of rigour when unthinkingly transferred from the natural to the social sciences.⁸ In many cases it is also an oversimplification of current practice in natural science.

Firstly, identification of easily measurable indicators is inherently problematic, even in relation to 'hard' economic measures like increases in incomes, expenditure and consumption. Detailed debates about measurement and indicator problems are often conveniently forgotten in analysis and apparent precision of 'proof' of impact⁹. This is particularly problematic in looking at poverty because poor people's income is often in kind, they are subject to different price mechanisms, and highly subject to seasonal variations in both incomes and prices.. Equally importantly they often do not even know what their incomes were in the past week even in cash terms, as many of them are combining many different sources of livelihood in order to make ends meet. The sorts of accurate measures required in order to measure small increases in income over time requires at best very detailed questioning or intrusive tracking¹⁰, and is at worst meaningless and arbitrary in terms of what is actually recorded.

Secondly, random sampling may not be either practically possible, or the best means of attaining 'unbiased objectivity'. In some cases it is possible to have information on the total population – for example numbers of loans of particular sizes and these can then be disaggregated eg by sex and statistically manipulated to give a rigorous measure of extent of gender inequality in loan disbursal as a basis for subsequent investigation. However information for the whole population is generally limited, and some form of sampling will be needed for subsequent investigation. Random sampling requires an accurate and unbiased list of the total population from which a random sample can be chosen. However registration on such lists is often biased, and in ways which are not random, thus biasing the initial population – generally away from the /most marginalised, illiterate and women Moreover inpractice sample size is often determined more by available resources than statistical requirements¹¹, then some further accommodation is made to randomness to make it feasible within a given budget. Moreover time and resource constraints frequently mean that samples are not random, with

⁸ Many of the points here draw on Hulme, D. (2000) , Mayoux, L. and Chambers, R. (2005) , Roche, C. (1999) and Kirkpatrick, C. , Hulme, D. , Mayoux, L. , Pinder, C. , Gavin, T. and George, C. (2001) which give fuller discussion of these points. Gender dimensions of poverty measurement are discussed in Mayoux, L. (2004) .

⁹ See for example Cohen, M. and Daniels, L. (1999) , Cohen, M. and Daniels, L. (1999) , Little, P.D. (1997) .

¹⁰ The World Bank Livelihood Measurement Tool LSMS for example takes about 3 hours and still fails to adequately capture the complexities.

¹¹ In programme-level impact assessments of micro finance for example 200-300 is often advocated as a blueprint 'practicable sample size' without any reference to either stakeholder analysis or the questions being asked.

Importantly also, the types of information required may not be known by all respondents in the random sample and/or there may be insufficient incentive for random and disinterested respondents to spend time to give reliable information. These information errors may be non-random, introducing significant and often unacknowledged or unknown biases into the statistical analysis. Particular groups of people may systematically underestimate eg women's work and employment and/or be systematically excluded because of discrimination in the ways in which the lists from which random samples are selected (eg exclusion of marginalised populations from voter lists) or because they are difficult to locate (eg women who get married, migrants). These sources of error affect macro-level statistical surveys as much as programme-level surveys.

Equally seriously, the usefulness of random sampling in the context of limited resources, there is an inevitable trade off between numbers of people and depth of information. The attempt to cover very large and statistically reliable samples, decreases the time which can be spent on eliciting and following up on interesting information, and reduces most of the exercise to mechanical box ticking rather than responsive investigation. It is often more important to understand the detailed differences in experience between different groups of poor /marginalised people, than get averages for a random sample. For many purposes more useful and reliable information can be collected through carefully designed purposive samples and key informants. This is essential for detailed coverage of different groups of very poor people, minority groups and/or tracing processes, impacts on value chains and so on where there is in any case no easily accessible list or register from which a random sample can be reliably selected.

Thirdly, given the sampling problems, attribution of any change to the effects of an intervention is problematic even statistically. 'Before and after' measurement using random sampling and control groups faces well-recognised problems. There may be 'missing factors' that are not considered in identification of control samples, as for example assertions that micro-finance has increased peoples' incomes when it was people who were already better-off who received preferential treatment in access to loans and/or when there have been self-selecting factors in the treatment group not allowed for in the control such as entrepreneurial spirit, contacts, non-economic resources and so on¹². These issues are not addressed in randomised evaluation, which assumes that the relevant criteria for control selection are both known and can be ascertained prior to the programme. Some of these shortcomings could feasibly be addressed by adding further questions to a survey design and/or (if sample sizes are large enough) better statistical analysis. Less tractable are the many issues where it is essential to untangle very complex 'webs of causation' – generally the case in macro-level assessments as well as rigorous programme-level (Hulme 2000; Kirkpatrick et al 2001).

Fourthly, merely measuring what is happening, or even understanding to whom and why it is happening, is often far from sufficient for drawing conclusions about what can or should be done. Moving from 'measuring impacts' to 'improving practice' requires not only looking at 'what is' or even 'why it is as it is', but the less

¹² A key example of problems of relying on quantitative surveys with a pre-determined design is the Chen and Snodgrass 1999 and 2001 Baseline and follow-up study of SEWA Bank. This found no impact of SEWA's savings and credit programme based on comparison of borrowers with a control sample. The authors were very puzzled by this finding which they could only explain by the fact that SEWA as an organization has had an impact from a range of activities, of which savings and credit is only one, on a much wider population than its immediate borrowers.

clear areas of 'what could be'. Whatever the robustness of the findings of an assessment about the types of impacts occurring, practical conclusions are often based at best on insights derived outside the quantitative survey study. At worst they are based mostly on the preconceptions of investigators who made a priori decisions about the indicators and how the various statistical correlations should be interpreted in terms of causal relations and their practical implications. Rarely are questions about peoples' recommendations systematically included in questionnaires as an integral part of the study.

Importantly these 'scientific' exercises are extremely costly, in some cases 10% of a program budget or millions of dollars as in the above Bill Gates initiative. An investigation by DFID into the effects of all it is policy research indicated that assessments were only effective if they confirmed what policymakers thought and wanted to do already. Impact assessments if they are negative are often quietly forgotten. If they are positive they may just reinforce the status quo, rather than stimulating the search for improvements and innovation.

This reliance on 'scientific' evaluation not only has serious shortcomings in terms of methodology, it is also dangerous in terms of development practice:

- Donors only fund interventions where impacts can be (apparently but highly imperfectly using very dubious proxies) measured eg micro-finance
- Donors only fund large organisations with the capacity to 'professionally' measure and report in English/French/Spanish statistics
- Programmes have to spend so much on evaluation there are no resources left for action
- Programmes cannot adapt to 'emergent opportunities' or innovate because not in the plan 5 years back in their Baseline
- Fear of the 'donor police' limits learning throughout the system

Importantly all these assessments take up considerable time from people from poor/marginalised communities, trying to make a living without giving them any say in the outcomes, or even informing them of the results. This has serious implications for the reliability of the information going in as people try to get through the questionnaire as quickly as possible in order to be able to get on with their lives¹³. Treating respondents as passive givers of information rather than active participants in learning, neglects an important opportunity for local engagement. This means that there is no accountability in use and analysis of the information to those who are likely to be key in both implementing and monitoring any recommendations. This reinforces the view of poor /marginalised people as passive recipients of aid, rather than partners in an inclusive development process.

¹³ One World Bank LSMS 'rigorous' livelihood questionnaire takes 3 hours to do properly, and still does not cover major dimensions even of economic poverty.

PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES: THE COUNTER-CRITIQUE

Some of these shortcomings are partly addressed by innovations in participatory methods. The term participatory evaluation is currently applied to a wide range of different approaches and processes, details of which can be found in the Appendix. Box 3 summarises the underlying rationale, characteristics and assumptions and the elements of the counter-critique and challenges.

What characterises participatory approaches and methods¹⁴ as understood here are:

- *Empowerment goal*: a central aim is that the participants should be key beneficiaries from the investigation process, in terms of increased understanding of their situation, improved understanding between different groups in communities and society, equitable participation in the analysis and conclusions reached, better networks for future investigations.
- *Participatory process*: investigations take the form of group discussions, generally but not necessarily, facilitated by outside facilitators: NGO staff, consultants or researchers. Numbers involved vary from small groups of 3 or 4 to large participatory workshops. People can do individual diagram exercises interspersed with collective discussion as part of a participatory workshop. Local people, including non-literate people, have been involved in community-led research without significant external facilitation beyond initial training.
- *Accessible tools*: tools are used which enable respondents, including people who are not literate, to participate fully in these discussions and understand the conclusions and outputs. These are commonly diagrams, but may also be oral tools. Many of these have origins in applied anthropology, farming systems research, agro-ecosystem analysis, and participatory action research and activism¹⁵.

There are numerous cases where participatory methods have been able to rapidly and reliably collect quantitative information, in some cases much more reliably than through conventional methods¹⁶. A key advantage of participatory methods is their cost effectiveness in rapidly bringing together information and knowledge from many participants. There have now been many situations where information from group exercises has been aggregated over a whole area to count the numbers of people utilising services or affected by changes and policies. Participatory methods have also been used to investigate very sensitive issues like political and sexual violence (Moser, C. and Holland, J. 1998) (Mayoux, L. and ANANDI 2005). Where people have been facilitated to keep individual diaries these have been valued opportunities to bring about changes in their lives and for other forms of lobbying outside the programme itself (Nojonen, H. 2001). Participatory methods have been used not only for small project-level assessments, but also large scale policy assessments - the best documented and widely known being the Participatory Poverty Assessments by the World Bank at the

¹⁴ In this chapter the term 'approach' is used to refer to underlying philosophies, goals and disciplines, the term 'tools' to the practical ways in which information is obtained eg diagrams, and 'processes' to relational or institutional dimensions eg how individuals, groups and organizations are brought together and facilitated. The term 'method' is used as a generic term encompassing all three. The term 'paradigm' is used to focus on the distinctive logic and interconnectedness between approaches, tools and processes which differentiates the scientific, qualitative and participatory paradigms and broadly follows the paradigm distinctions made in Hulme 2000.

¹⁵ For history see Chambers Chambers, R. (1994) , Chambers, R. (1994) , Chambers, R. (1994)

¹⁶ See references in Mayoux, L. and Chambers, R. (2005) .

BOX 3: PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES: CHARACTERISTICS, ASSUMPTIONS AND COUNTER-CRITIQUE

RATIONALE

- Development is about 'people' and changing power relations so 'people' must be in the driving seat
- Need contextually relevant indicators and capture qualitative change
- Indigenous knowledge is most important and needs to be recognised and respected by policy-makers
- Participatory methods can be rigorous, can rapidly collect information and are inherently more empowering

CHARACTERISTICS

- Process: Participatory investigation, participatory monitoring over time triangulated with qualitative case studies
- Privileging local knowledge
- Locally derived indicators and perceptions of change
- 'Participatory sampling' with some purposive follow-up
- Causal processes are now a focus of investigation in themselves as 'rich pictures'
- Not just interested in averages but also in exceptions.
- Recommendations come from participatory negotiation and also examination of exceptions

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

- Participation is always empowering
- Locally derived indicators are the most relevant
- People will want to participate – particularly the poorest and most vulnerable
- Peoples' own accounts of attribution and processes are accurate
- Involving people in evaluation increases their voice in decision-making

COUNTER-CRITIQUE

- Power relations inevitably affect whole process – participation is never neutral or completely spontaneous
- Are local indicators, perceptions and accounts always the most relevant or accurate?
- Who actually participates? Who are the 'people'? Are they representative?
- How do they participate? How valid are the outcomes?
- Works well for local level, but not policy level – challenge of aggregation and comparability
- Linking learning with action may raise expectations and/or affect what people say
- Costs generally underestimated
- Not necessarily empowering – using people as unpaid data collectors and making them more vulnerable
- Unless quantified and rigorous will be ignored by policy-makers

end of the 1990s¹⁷. It is generally agreed that the World Bank Participatory Poverty Assessment process made a number of important contributions to understandings of poverty, understanding differences between poor people, stakeholder communication and policy changes. In particular it challenged the prevailing prioritisation of cash income concerns and marginalisation of gender issues.

There are nevertheless considerable challenges¹⁸. Since the mid-1990s, parallel to the rapid expansion of participatory methods, have been a series of critiques of both practice and the underlying theoretical underpinnings of these methods. These critiques have come not only from sceptics, but also proponents and practitioners of participatory methods in relation to key areas like poverty analysis, gender and empowerment (Shah and Shah 1995; Guijt and Shah eds 1998; Mayoux 1995 and Johnson and Mayoux 1998). Shortcomings in practice are due not only to 'bad practice' which followed rapid expansion in use of participatory methodologies, but also inherent tensions (and some would say insuperable limitations) in the underlying understandings of participation and the ways in which it has been promoted by development agencies¹⁹.

Firstly there will always and inevitably be questions about 'who speaks for whom' and 'whose voice should prevail and why'. Many of the theoretical critiques of participatory development have their roots in much earlier debates about the nature of democracy and political systems for representation. Participatory processes, even those initiated from the 'bottom-up' are not necessarily either inclusive or egalitarian. The extensive literature on People's Movements has shown how they frequently exclude or marginalise rather than include or privilege the very poor, women and other disadvantaged groups. Outsiders may further reinforce these existing inequalities because of their ignorance of local inequalities and/or their dependence on these power structures to gain access to 'communities'. From the 'scientific' standpoint, a key problem with participatory methods is that of sampling. Random sampling is not possible. Even with careful preparation there is much more dependence on people's willingness to turn up and be involved than in the 'captive' interview situation. There may also be logistical problems in identifying a venue and time accessible or conducive for everyone.

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

17 For findings see Narayan, D. , Chambers, R. , Shah, M. and Petesch, P. (2000) , Narayan, D. and Petesch, P. (2002) and for critical overviews of the Participatory Poverty Assessments in different countries see Booth Booth, D. , Holland, J. , Hentschel, J. , Lanjouw, P. and Herbert, A. (1998) and Brocklesby Brocklesby, M.A. and Holland, J. (1998) .

18 These are discussed with detailed references in Mayoux, L. (2005) , Mosse, D. (1994) and in relation to gender Mayoux, L. (1995)

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

everyone else also need to be provided with information in order to make informed contributions to participatory processes.

BOX 4: ARE THE PEOPLE ALWAYS RIGHT? SOME SHORTCOMINGS OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

PROBLEMS OF GRASSROOTS ANALYSIS

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

AIDS/HIV and male sexual activity in particular.

population pressure within the village leading to families, including young people, living very closely together.

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

Source: Mayoux fieldnotes Uganda 2002

EXTERNAL RAISING OF SENSITIVE ISSUES IN ANANDI

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

Source: Mayoux and ANANDI 2005

Thirdly power relations during the participatory consultation itself and also pervading the context in which it takes place, affect what people say and how they say it, to whom and under what circumstances.²⁰ Even when very poor women and men attend meetings they do not necessarily participate in discussions or influence the outcomes because of the ways meetings are conducted. It may be very difficult for groups themselves to initiate discussion of sensitive issues, even if they are highly relevant. Underlying inequalities and vulnerability may not be seen as up for discussion. To be seen discussing such issues publicly and openly in a participatory process may make groups and individuals vulnerable to various forms of discrimination and even violence. Where the main outputs from participatory exercises are diagrams representing 'community consensus' then this process may be highly misleading in the consensus represented and positively disempowering for minority views.

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

Finally although participatory methods, when well-facilitated as part of an ongoing process, are a key part of any reliable evaluation, one-off participatory consultations cannot be seen as a substitute for in-depth research or for more strategic policies to address poverty, inequality and empowerment. Reference to 'cultural sensitivity' and the need for 'community participation' are often cited as reasons for not addressing gender issues even where the organizations or individuals concerned ever having conducted any serious participatory assessment of what gender concerns women or men may have (Mayoux 1995; Guijt and Shah eds 1998). A key concern in critiques of participatory methods from the empowerment/rights perspective has been the ways in which development agencies (from multilateral agencies to NGOs) and politicians have used the rhetoric of participation and participatory development to mask processes in which participation is extremely superficial and/or unequal and/or manipulated to support their own ends.²¹

REVERSING THE PARADIGM? IN SEARCH OF THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS

It is clear that ways forward for organisational learning should not be to simply combine a flawed 'scientific' approach with an equally flawed and superficial attempt at participation. There needs to be a serious rethink of the ways in which different methods can be integrated and triangulated to achieve both reliability of information about the past, and a rights-based process for identification, implementation and accountability for the future.

²⁰ See eg Mosse 1994. The gender dimensions of this have been a particular cause for concern See papers in Guijt and Shah eds 1998.

As argued in detail by the author and others elsewhere²² there is a need for a new paradigm in which well-designed, well-resourced and well-facilitated participatory methods provide the basic structure for the learning process and ensuring that the voices of those normally excluded become centre stage – not only as respondents, but in determining the vision, goals and also analysis and subsequent accountability and taken seriously as a complement to external ‘expert’ knowledge. The participatory process needs to build the capacities of people themselves to identify, collect and analyse the information they themselves need to improve their lives and make development agencies accountable to them.

At the same time many of the tensions and trade-offs identified for conventional survey methods also need to be addressed by participatory methods. Technical, often statistical, questions arise concerning rigour, validity and trustworthiness, and how numbers can be generated or derived, and then analysed and used, just as they do with conventional survey methods. Indeed good statistical analysis complements the use of participatory methods and is essential in macro-level strategic impact assessment. Further innovation is needed to systematically capture and quantify complex chains of causality and attribution. Increasing the rigour of participatory methods requires looking at both the participatory process and the types of diagram and tools used and particularly the ways in which both are recorded and interpreted and fed into decision-making.

Participatory approaches, methods and behaviours cannot do everything:

- In some contexts participatory processes may be impossible or make participants too vulnerable (though arguably similar problems would also be faced by many other systematic quantitative investigations).
- There may also be circumstances where representation in participatory processes proves highly skewed despite following established guidelines for reaching the poorest and most vulnerable.
- For personally sensitive issues it may be necessary to conduct individual qualitative interviews because certain things cannot be discussed in public.
- Standard surveys may also be needed where the wider generalisability of sensitive qualitative questions needs to be ascertained and the qualitative investigation has not served to remove this sensitivity or indicated ways it can be addressed.
- For some purposes statistical correlations may be needed in situations where, or for questions which, mapping or other means of total population coverage are not possible.
- For some types of information it may just be simpler and much quicker to rely on very rapid surveys, or information on things like application and membership forms.

The key therefore is to have effective ways of enabling people to participate in parts of the assessment where this is most crucial to the overall goal of pro-poor and rights-based development, where they gain most in terms of learning for themselves and where their time and resources are used most effectively. It means that scarce resources are not wasted on surveys and qualitative research where participatory methods can be quicker, more effective and empowering. This then allows other qualitative and quantitative methods to be focused on areas where they in turn can make the best contribution to increasing rigour and reliability of findings through triangulation of outcomes from robust participatory processes. These methods can also be used in much more empowering ways. Individual surveys and qualitative interviews can be designed to

²¹ Mosse 2001; Cooke and Kothari eds 2001; DeStefano and Ryan eds 2004; Cleaver 1989; Kapoor 2002.

²² Mayoux, L. (2005), Mayoux, L. and Chambers, R. (2005) and references therein.

increase the understanding participants have of their situation and help them to clarify their options and choices by the end of the time they have spent with the interviewer. Diagram tools can be used in individual interviews to increase accessibility for non-literate people and their control over the interview situation and so that they have an accessible record of the process which they keep. Surveys and interviews with those who have power to increase their awareness and understanding of their own prejudices and preconceptions and think about ways forward which would be acceptable to them. (Mayoux, L. 2003).

‘Reversing the paradigm’ means more than tacking on a few participatory frills and a few anecdotal qualitative case Studies of poor people to a mechanistic statistical survey. If all the time, resources and energy spent on assessment is to further the agenda for pro-poor and rights-based development this assessment must clearly prioritise the voices, views and interests of poor and marginalised women, men and children, particularly those who are poorest, most marginalised and most vulnerable. It must involve them throughout the assessment process – in the overall development vision and goals, identifying indicators, participating in assessment, engaging in analysis, making recommendations, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. For facilitators, this demands responsible behaviours which restrain demands on people’s time, which enable people to learn and gain more control over their lives, which empower them and give them voice, which do not make them vulnerable, and which influence policy and practice so that they and other poor people gain. These principles must also be followed be asked during use of complementary conventional methods.

Finally, even identifying potentially realisable recommendations for improving practice is no guarantee that desirable changes will be implemented – this requires effective dissemination of information to the right people and negotiation of often competing or conflicting interests to bring about the required change. It requires not only dissemination and involvement of powerful stakeholders and those in key positions in governments and aid agencies. This alone is unlikely to bring about the necessary changes in attitudes, behaviour and policies. For pro-poor development to become a reality, poor people themselves must be involved not only as respondents, but also have access to the information generated, a role in its analysis and in identifying the practical implications for change. They must be seen not as unpaid informants for an extractive process, but active participants in learning and teaching for their own development. In the new paradigm the assessment process itself must prioritise the building of peoples’ skills, knowledge and networks to participate equally in the definitions, priorities and policies of the development agenda. Unless people themselves are fully involved in articulating and presenting their own perspectives and ideas for the future on an ongoing basis, it is unlikely that their voices will become strong enough to persuade those with the necessary power and influence to really listen and take action.

BOX 5: THE NEW PARADIGM: KEY PRINCIPLES

- Prioritises the voices views and interests of poor and/or marginalised women and men, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable
- Involves these people throughout the process of impact assessment from indicators, to representation in sampling to analysis and recommendations
- Ensures that the vulnerability of those most vulnerable is not increased
- Increases the skills, knowledge and networks of and/or marginalised people and communities as part of the assessment process

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APPENDIX OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

Approach	Date	Description	Key sources and websites
Activist Participatory Research (APR), also known as Participatory Action Research (PAR)	1970s	The basic ideology of PAR is that 'self-conscious people, those who are extremely poor and oppressed, will progressively transform their environment by their own praxis. In this process others may play a catalytic and supportive role but will not dominate' (Fals Borda 1991) The main aim is not so much knowledge per se, but social change and empowerment of the marginalised and oppressed.	Paolo Freire Pedagogy of the Oppressed Fals Borda Mohammad Anisur Rahman
Democratic evaluation (DE)	1970s	Advocates that all evaluators should ensure their work contributes to dialogue and preservation of democratic principles and particularly inclusion of the underprivileged. 'Deliberative Democratic Evaluation' combines democratic evaluation with DIP principles (below).	Barry MacDonald House, ER and Howe, KR (2000); Segone, M (1998) Floc'hlay, B and Plottu, E (1998) Critique: Lizanne DeStefano and Katherine Ryan eds (2004)
Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)	1970s	Diagramming and visual techniques originating in a number of scientific disciplines for analysis of complex systems: biological science, ecology, agricultural economics and geography. From the 1980s applied anthropology added oral and other methods to gain a more sophisticated understanding of poverty, social processes and grassroots perspectives on development. By the end of the 1980s these diagramming and oral techniques had been brought together into a flexible methodology for working with rural people to develop more sophisticated models to explain their responses to development programmes.	Chambers 1980, 1992, 1994a
Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)	1980s	Initially the term PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) was used to describe the bringing together of RRA and activist research. It was emphasized that the most important aspect were not the diagramming tools but their flexible application based on a number of underlying principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • embracing complexity and seeking to understand it rather than oversimplifying reality in accordance with predetermined categories and theories • recognition of multiple realities to be taken into account in analysis or action. • prioritising the realities of the poor and most 	Chambers 1992, 1994 a,b,c PLA Notes

		<p>disadvantaged as equal partners in knowledge creation and problem analysis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grassroots empowerment: aiming not only to gather information about impact, but to make the assessment process itself a contribution to empowerment through linking grassroots learning and networking into policy-making. 	
Appreciative Inquiry (AI)	1980s	<p>Appreciative Enquiry ' is a methodology for organizational change. It was first formulated in an article by Cooperrider and Srivastava (1987) as a critique of what they termed a 'problem-centred approach' to inquiry where the focus is on problems to be solved by a change agent whose main role is as problem finding, solution designer and prescription giver. Appreciative inquiry in contrast adopts an appreciative stance towards organisational change to lead to more innovative and long-lasting transformation. It consists of four main steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery: where bottom-up open interviews bring out stories of the 'peak moments of achievement' which the community or organization values most. • Dream: where the interview stories are combined to create a new dream for the future. • Dialogue: where all those involved openly share exciting discoveries and possibilities. Through this sharing of ideals social bonding and shared vision occurs. • Destiny: construction of the future through innovation and action. Because the ideals are grounded in past realities, there is confidence to make things happen. 	<p>Cooperrider, DL and Whitney, D 1999 Fry, R et al 2002</p>
Fourth Generation Evaluation	1989	<p>Identified as a new and emerging innovative form of evaluation by Guba and Lincoln. Its key emphasis is on evaluation as a process of negotiation, incorporating various stakeholders more centrally into the evaluation process. It is a development from, and reaction to, earlier fullness of evaluation which focused on measurement and description but later also came to involve judgements and evaluation itself. In developing these judgements fourth-generation evaluation takes into account stakeholders' consensual and competing claims, concerns and issues. It recognises that peoples' diverse perspectives and interests are shaped in a major way by their particular value systems, which in</p>	<p>Guba and Lincoln 1989</p>

		turn are influenced by their specific physical, psychological, social and cultural contexts. Through negotiation, fourth-generation evaluation helps identify courses of action for stakeholders. The evaluator plays a role primarily as facilitator or 'orchestrator' in negotiation processes with stakeholders, who participate in the design, implementation and interpretation of the evaluation as full partners.	
Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)	1990s	The successor to PRA. The term Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is seen as more effectively incorporating the underlying human rights tradition through emphasising the importance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changing from appraisal to learning and hence moving away from the use of participatory methods as an extractive process by outsiders to a sustainable learning process involving different stakeholders as equal partners. • the importance of relating learning to action incorporating programme and policy improvement as an integral part of the learning process. 	Chambers 1994 a,b,c PLA Notes
Beneficiary Assessment (BA)	1990s	Beneficiary Assessment is a qualitative research tool used in the World Bank to improve the impact of development operations by gaining the views of intended beneficiaries regarding a planned or ongoing reform. It seeks to provide reliable, qualitative, in-depth information on the socio-cultural conditions and perceptions of the target group(s), particularly the very poor. The approach relies primarily on conversational interviews, focus group discussions, and direct and participant observation. It is therefore low cost. Beneficiary Assessment provides the target population with the opportunity to voice their opinions, needs, and concerns regarding the development process. Furthermore, Beneficiary Assessment increases the participation of stakeholder groups, which, leads to their ownership of the development operations and increased likelihood of its support and success (World Bank 2002).	Salmen, L 1992 World Bank 2002
Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes	1990s	These approaches were developed in a number of countries the 1990s in order to extend the notion of democracy to allow greater deliberation of policies and their practical implementation through the inclusion of	PLA Notes 40 February 2001 PLA Notes 44 June 2002

(DIPs)		<p>a variety of social actors in consultation, planning and decision-making. Key features are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Focus on deliberation defined as careful consideration of the discussion of reasons for and against particular forms of action. 2) Inclusionary decision-making processes based on the active involvement of multiple social actors and usually emphasising the participation of previously excluded citizens. 3) Use of a range of procedures, techniques and methods including citizens' juries, committees, consensus conferences, scenario workshops, deliberative polling, focus groups, multi-criteria mapping, public meetings, rapid and participatory rural appraisal and visioning exercises. 4) Although the goal is usually to reach decisions, or at least positions upon which decisions can be subsequently taken, an unhurried, reflective, informed and reasonably open-ended discussion is required. 	
Empowerment Evaluation (EE)	1990s	Use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination. Focusing on training people in evaluation techniques to conduct their own evaluation, it employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Although it can be applied to individuals, organizations, communities and societies or cultures, the focus is usually on programs.	Fetterman, Kaftarian and Wandersman 1995
Most Significant Change (MSC)	1993	Most Significant Change (MSC) was originally developed by Rick Davies in 1993 as a means of participatory impact monitoring. The MSC approach involves the collection and "systematic participatory interpretation" of stories of change. This method of monitoring is a qualitative approach that does not rely on quantitative indicators. It has been widely used in the monitoring of aid projects throughout the developing world but its use is also expanding into government and corporate areas as the value of a dialogue based technique becomes appreciated.	'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use 2005 Rick Davies and Jess Dart.
REFLECT	1990s	Methodology for literacy generation piloted by Action Aid and currently implemented by over 350 organisations in sixty countries. Based on pedagogy and political philosophy of Paulo Freire and merged with techniques from PLA, it proceeds by engaging participants in discussions about their socioeconomic problems. 'Keywords' emerge from these and for the basis for literacy learning. Alongside this individuals and	REFLECT website: http://217.206.205.24/enghome.html

		communities conduct research and keep diaries related to these problems which then form the basis for lobbying and advocacy.	
Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI)	2001	Positive deviance is a development approach that is based on the premise that solutions to community problems already exist within the community. The positive deviance approach thus differs from traditional "needs based" or problem-solving approaches in that it does not focus primarily on identification of needs and the external inputs necessary to meet those needs or solve problems. Instead it seeks to identify and optimize existing resources and solutions within the community to solve community problems. The Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI) was formed under the direction of Jerry Sternin.	http://www.positivedeviance.org/pdf/fieldguide.pdf
Participatory Action Learning System (PALS)	2002	Methodology currently being developed by Linda Mayoux with Kabarole Research and Resource Centre in Uganda, ANANDI in India, LEAP in Sudan and partners of Trickle-Up in US. Here people as individuals and as groups use diagram tools to collect information they need in order to improve their lives in ways they identify and record this in individual diaries and group minutes. This information is then supplemented by programmes through participatory and conventional quantitative and qualitative methods for programme evaluation and policy advocacy. The dynamism of the system is maintained through annual fairs which provide a focus for bringing group level information and ideas together to formulate strategies and policies. The use of participatory methods is complemented where necessary by use of qualitative and quantitative methods incorporating principles of 'Empowering Inquiry'.	www.palsnetwork.info