

mwangaza

Issue 3 | June 2005

mwangaza is swahili word for illumination

act:onaid
international kenya

Contents

2 Community Involvement

- Turning tables
- Do we genuinely involve communities in our work?
- Working in disaster situations
- 'Small' things matter
- Do our reviews and reflections help build community confidence?

12 Finance, budgets and public accountability

- Maximising participatory reviews and reflection processes
- Leading by example
- Demystifying finance

18 Reality Checks

- Building relationships with poor people
- Understanding reality better
- A weekend of learning

24 HIV/AIDS Perspectives

- Puppets for HIV/AIDS education

27 Gender Perspectives

- Fighting Female Genital Mutilation
- Going beyond the 'visible'

31 Research Perspectives

- Community-based participatory research for sustainable development

37 News and Updates

Editorial

Welcome to this third issue of Mwangaza – a learning and sharing tool produced by ActionAid Kenya's western region team.

Over the last few years, ActionAid has been innovating its Accountability, Learning and Planning (ALPS) processes to become more meaningful and relevant to our mission and vision. The core principles behind ALPS seek to guide ActionAid to become primarily accountable to poor people and support processes that increase transparency and empower poor people. At the heart of these principles lies the recognition that poor people know best, and that all efforts must be made within ActionAid to ensure their centrality in all we do so that poor people can have effective influence and choice. But the rhetoric of ALPS is much more easier than the practice. Putting ALPS into practice requires innovation and a constant recognition for the need to break down our own barriers and boxes that prevent us from trying to make poor people central to all we do.

How do we build greater trust and stronger relationships with poor people? What are some of the tools we can use to change our own perceptions and attitudes? How can we encourage processes that provide greater choice and influence to poor people?

This issue shares some of the practical challenges, lessons, innovations and opportunities that we encounter when trying to apply the principles of ALPS in our work.

As part of the growth plan for Mwangaza, we have invited our first guest writers to share their thoughts. We thank you for your comments and feedback on the last two issues and hope you enjoy this issue. We look forward to your views, comments and suggestions.

Editorial Team:
Cecil Agutu; Ashish Shah; Eric Kilongi; Rebecca Wabwoba; Beatrice Nguo

Design and Layout:
Design Promotions & Media Interactive Limited

Produced By:
ActionAid International Kenya
Western Region
P.O.Box 4572, Kisumu
Kenya
General Email:
mwangaza@kenyalink.org

Subscriptions: Read and subscribe online <http://www.kenyalink.org/mwangaza>
Email: subscribemwangaza@kenyalink.org

Glossary

AAK	ActionAid Kenya
ALPS	Accountability, Learning, Planning Systems
APAK	Association of Persons Living With HIV/AIDS in Kuria
CACC	Constituency AIDS Control Committee
CBA	Capacity Building Accountant
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDF	Community Development Facilitator
DC	District Commissioner
DDC	District Development Committee
DDO	District Development Officer
DI	Development Initiative
HHCDO	Homa Hills Community Development Organization
HIV/AIDS	Human Imune Virus-Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IGA	Income Generating Activity
LATF	Local Authority Transfer Fund
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NACC	National AIDS Control Council
PA	Programme Assistant
PLWHA	People Living With HIV/Aids
PRRP	Participatory Review & Reflection Processes
PSC	Poverty Studies Centre
SED	Small Enterprise Development Programme
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing

Turning tables

Usigu DI experiments with community interview panels

PHEBEANS ORIARO *and* GEORGE OGINGA

The interview for the position of Programme Assistant (PA), for Usigu Development Initiative (DI) was conducted on 18th February, 2005.

As is the case with field based interviews, the interview panel consisted of the Human Resource and Organizational Development Manager, the Regional Coordinator – West, the Programme Coordinator – Usigu DI and the Community Development Facilitator – Usigu DI. Also for the first time in this panel was a member of the Usigu community that we work with.

ALPS emphasizes certain principles that we should uphold in our duty of partnering with communities to fight poverty. The principles guide us to interact and learn from our everyday interaction with poor people. The principles emphasize the centrality of poor people in all that we do. They remind us to create room for the community to participate in making decisions that affect them. Poor people know what is best for them; therefore we should break our misconceptions.

By continually working together and sharing decisions we promote our accountability to poor people as opposed to the usual upward accountability everyone is used to.

The recruitment posed many challenges. We needed to raise awareness about local community rights in recruitment processes and the need to be impartial in selecting the best candidate. This was especially difficult because we had not done it before – although ALPS did emphasize our responsibility to poor people.

We had to involve the community from the onset of the recruitment process, being aware that only they knew what is best for them. This was a bold and empowering step to make recruitment a process beyond AAIK staff. The other challenge was the language. We were not recruiting solely, an English speaker anyway, so we reasoned!

How do we pick the community representative? Ideally the community should have picked their representative from their forums. These forums exist. We work with them everyday - except when we are recruiting!

Mrs. Dorcas Ngoye, the chairperson of Usigu Children's Trust was selected to represent the community on the interview panel. Usigu Children's Trust is a child rights network that focuses on specific children needs from child abuse, to girl child education. Mrs Ngoye teaches in a local Primary School. She is married and resides within the community. She gladly accepted to join us after we convinced her that she was equal to the task.

On the day of the interview, Dorcas came earlier than other members of the panel (who had access to cars and motorbikes). She had used her bicycle.

The ActionAid Interview panel members found her waiting. Apparently she had taken this opportunity more seriously than we thought. She understood community needs and her questions were very focused. She asked about water and how the recruit would champion water provision. She talked about orphans, the girl child and women. It was an eye opener.

Then the critical moment came. Picking the best candidate! We provided the opportunity for Dorcas to express her views and opinions first. She had picked her best three and ranked them in order. She had also put down her reasons for the decision. It turned out that the three people she picked were also the best according to everybody else.

Alex Mitto, the chairperson of Ulusi Youth Group who was a candidate in the interview was humbled by Dorcas' presence in the panel.

'I have never seen anything like it. A community member interviewing me! I was so happy that I was being interviewed by somebody who understands the local issues so well. It also had a relaxing effect on me. The panel did not have an intimidating effect on me. I felt the panel was at my level. I was also sure that Dorcas knows the work we do within the community and therefore can assist the panel to objectively pick the best candidate. I knew it was right we had involved a local community member. Even the recruited staff will feel comfortable working in the community. She will be confident.'

Diana Akoth who was finally picked for the position expected a lot, especially after the advertisement for the position was placed all over the villages within Usigu. Every prospective candidate had the opportunity to see the advert.

Diana says 'when I saw Dorcas, I didn't know she had come for the interview. I thought she had come to visit the DI office like we do most times. When I noticed she was a panelist I felt a sense of belonging. She reassured me. She gave me the courage. The community members had no doubt that AAIK was seriously looking for somebody who will work with the marginalized persons in Usigu.'

Diana feels confident in her responsibility. She feels comfortable. She can confidently stand before the community and address issues with them. She also feels she developed a relationship with Dorcas. She says she will be consulting her a great deal.

This exercise enabled us to build a stronger relationship in the community and also increase the level of trust. It enabled us to identify closely with the community. It bridged invisible relations that may not seem much but when addressed can mean a lot to poor people.

It moved our accountability further. Take Dorcas for example, she knows what ideas Diana had and what Diana promised at the interview. She will remember what Diana said during the interview. She will definitely remind her about her commitments to the community even when ActionAid staff forget.

For Dorcas, this was a great learning opportunity. She learnt how seriously ActionAid takes issues of financial discipline, honesty and accountability to poor people. She noticed most of our questions were directed towards that direction. In fact, she concluded that ActionAid does not look for employees who are pursuing personal gain. They look for people with the right background and attitudes to deliver.

Do we genuinely involve communities in our work?

Lessons from Budalangi DI

EMMA ODUNDO

Trainings in ActionAid Kenya have always been determined and planned by ActionAid staff in their respective Development Initiatives (DIs.) This ranges from when the training is to take place, what trainings should be conducted, where and who should attend. As a result capacity building has always remained an ActionAid domain with the community's input being limited to their 'attendance'. When questions on 'why' and 'how' arise during PRRPs or at any other time, as staff defend the actions we had taken. Many concerns have always been raised about trainings by community members. For example Ernest Lwande of Jamii youth group in the 2004 PRRP said, *"When a letter comes from AAK for invitation to training it is always addressed to the secretary of the group. Since the letter is addressed to the secretary, he or she feels is the one to attend"*. This scenario has always led to some trainings passing without the knowledge of all group members while in some cases only one group member attends most of the trainings. The member often does not share what he or she learnt with the wider community.

Informed by this reality Budalangi DI felt the need to involve all groups in planning and owning the trainings. We sought to let community members decide the trainings that would be useful to them. The planning meetings were organized according to the thematic areas. Groups working on HIV/Aids for example felt that it was important for them to go through Behavior Change Communication first while the Food Security groups felt that Crop Husbandry training would be of great importance if it was conducted

before the planting season. As a result of this, groups were able to spread their trainings through out the year giving them proper planning at their group and individual levels.

A number of issues arose during these planning meetings. For example during the Food security planning meeting, one of the training needs that was identified was on book keeping and financial management. The groups present identified people who would attend and then come back and train other group members at local level. This is because sometimes some people who attend trainings miss out in some training because of their levels of education.

The result of this exercise bore fruits in the recent exposure tour for NABUSIMURU CBO. The CBO had planned for an exposure tour in early March and they were able to go for it within the time. *"We had time to prepare and plan our daily chores, unlike before when we were told to attend training the following day"*, says Lucy Ouma, the head teacher of Budalangi Primary School.

The DI team has circulated all the community planned training schedules to all groups in a tabulated way so that they are all prepared for the trainings to take place. This is an important step for the DI team towards achieving full community involvement in all the work that we do and as an important aspect of ALPS processes.

Working in disaster situations

The Sri Lanka experience

ERIC KILONGI

Faced with horrid images of death, destruction and desolation, I left Kenya to join the Tsunami response team mid January this year not very sure about my role in rebuilding people's lives.

One month later I came home with lessons about working in disaster situations.

The December 26th earthquake triggered massive tsunamis that affected several countries throughout South and South-east Asia.

In Sri Lanka, more than 30,000 people died. The southeastern coastline was the worst-hit. In this densely populated area many villages along the ocean were washed off. Almost the entire seafront was obliterated, with no buildings within 100 meters of the waterfront escaping undamaged. Water went as far as a kilometer in some areas and waves as high as nine feet left a trail of destruction that people had never witnessed before. People died, property was lost and hundreds of thousands lost their all sustaining hope and confidence in life.

People joked that there was a 'tsunamis of aid workers' as there was an overwhelming presence of aid workers to help the local people and most probably to make a name for themselves as donations were conspicuously branded.

ActionAid partnered with local organizations to identify and respond to the immediate needs of people that had not been addressed by other relief agencies. Its ground-breaking initiative was helping people to overcome trauma by providing psychosocial care – building the survivors' hope and confidence and thus quicken the recovery process. This was borrowed from the organisation's experience in India where a super cyclone killed tens of thousands of people and left behind a trail of destruction and desolation at Orissa in 1999.

ActionAid's psycho-social care work with community members and teachers culminated into partnerships with the national education coalition to facilitate the back-to-school campaign.

The biggest task for ActionAid was to identify partner organizations to work with. Since the needs were changing each day, this had to be done fast to ensure immediate needs of the people were responded to. To facilitate this, systems were put in place to ensure quick appraisals, development and response to proposals.

The biggest task for ActionAid was to identify partner organizations to work with. Since the needs were changing each day, this had to be done fast to ensure immediate needs of the people were responded to.

First, every one was an emergency staff. Staff were not to see themselves within the confines of their specialisation. A minimum of two ActionAid staff would visit the potential partners, to see who they are, the resources they already have and also meet directly the community people they work with and assess the damage they have suffered. The staff would then share with the co-ordinator in the national office or the region and help the partner organization write a proposal to respond to the needs of the people. Only one level of hierarchical relationship was maintained to ensure decisions were made fast.

Secondly, speed was very important but it would not hamper consultation and involvement of people. While conducting the appraisal, we would encounter emergency needs such as sanitary towels for women and household items. We would immediately sanction for items to be bought and be distributed by the people's organization to the affected people. A ceiling amount was agreed on to respond to such immediate needs. This was so because in an emergency situation, needs change every day. Immediate needs not responded to are thus lost opportunities to restore lives.

Once the needs of the people were identified, representatives of the local organization together with some beneficiaries themselves

ActionAid's aim was to use disaster as an entry point to focus on long term work - involving people in matters that affect their lives and build a culture of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness.

would then go and purchase the agreed items and distribute the materials to the beneficiaries. They would then display the transaction in public for the community to see and then report to ActionAid how they have spent the money. This was to ensure people were involved in determining and responding to their own needs and promote accountability. This approach was important because it recognized people as active participants in the rehabilitation and the rebuilding process.

Very often, disasters result in helplessness and people becoming beggars when they are treated as 'subjects' of governments, donors and relief agencies. Instead of building their confidence to

be involved in the rehabilitation and rebuilding exercise, people become passive recipients of aid and relief rations.

ActionAid's aim was to use disaster as an entry point to focus on long term work - involving people in matters that affect their lives and build a culture of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness.

The organizations faced several challenges.

Language and tribe has divided more than united the people of Sri Lanka. The north, east and north east regions are inhabited by people of Tamil origin who speak Tamil while the south is inhabited by Singhalese. East and North East regions are battle grounds for control by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) who control the northern region. Tamil people of the east, north and north east are marginalized by the government. Being a new entrant, ActionAid had to balance its investments between North and South. This is because the organization had to maintain its non-partisanship and neutral approach. Working with the government alone would destroy the credibility of the organization within the Tamil speaking people while working with the Tamil people alone was a sure way for the organization to be denied registration and be branded a pro-rebel organization as LTTE is seen as a rebel outfit.

The countries from which the emergency funds were raised needed to know that their money is making an impact. This meant that the organization needed to have a visibility locally and internationally. Being the pioneer of advocacy based work in a country with almost no tolerance for independent and divergent views; ActionAid played down its national profile until they are registered by the government. The organization concentrated on building legitimacy by establishing itself with partners at the community level. At the national level, ActionAid established linkages with government institutions to build support for its grassroots work and enhance its credibility.

This was aimed to give ActionAid space to negotiate for people-based development and not just infrastructural development that does not recognize people's own ideas and contributions.

ActionAid for example established linkages with the National Institute for Social Development through its School of Social Work to build local support for the psychosocial care work. Most of the trainers ActionAid had used to train local community people and teachers on psychosocial care were brought in from Tata Institute of Social Sciences in India and had been involved in similar work when the super cyclone struck at Orissa in India. The School of Social work also adopted the training manual which was used in India to develop their own. A similar partnership was also established with the National Institute of Education to build support for teachers and the teacher curriculum.

This also greatly improved its national profile as materials for psychosocial were co branded with ActionAid's identity.

This work laid ground for the organisation to facilitate the back to school campaign. The campaign called for the construction of makeshift schools instead of moving children to none affected schools where they would have to establish new relationships and also walk long distances. It also called for the parents to be involved in determining the locations and designs of the new school. This provided an entry point for involvement of parents in school management.

Being a Commonwealth Education Fund partner gave a soft landing for ActionAid. The organization engaged at the national level with the education partners to form a coalition to launch the education campaign.

The greatest lesson was on how the campaign was pitched. Most people were enthusiastic about ActionAid's way of work, because the organization sought to involve and empower people to come up with their own solutions.

The greatest lesson was on how the campaign was pitched. Most people were enthusiastic about ActionAid's way of work, because the organization sought to involve and empower people to come up with their own solutions.

Civil society decried implementation of "white man's ideas behind dollars and euros" (in their own words) as opposed to recognition and supporting people's own ideas. This approach required extensive communication skills as the staff had to first build trust with local communities and their organizations. This made it easy for staff to interact with local people and exchange ideas on how to overcome trauma especially for children. Partner organizations and community representatives saw the need for an education campaign to sensitise the local people to demand and participate in the rebuilding of schools for their children.

People's involvement in all the stages of responding to disasters: the emergency or relief phase, re-construction and the rebuilding phase is critical. It may take days or months to rebuild homes and infrastructure but it takes a life time to rebuild lives. People have to be in control of their own situations.

Communicating for profile or communicating for change?

Some thoughts from the Sri Lanka experience (building a profile by results!)

Organizations need a profile to be credible. Credibility enables organizations to gain power and influence. Some organizations focus on profile as a means to achieve their objectives. Others focus on building their profile and credibility by achieving their objectives.

During the Tsunami disaster, communications played an important role of ensuring that people are updated about the disasters and its effects on local people. Information began going out on a daily basis a week after the disaster struck. This was circulated through the email system and the website. As the emergency phase lapsed, weekly updates were compiled and later monthly reports. Communications also facilitated media coverage of Tsunami and its effects on the lives of people in the different parts of South and Southeast Asia. The focus of communications seems to be biased more towards outward international profiling.

The road less walked is that of communications as a means of empowering people to achieve greater results.

Communications can facilitate dissemination of information about the entitlements and rights of people in disasters to ensure minimum standards of people are met while responding to disasters. Information such as ration quantities, place to get them, requirements if any, maximum number of people expected to stay in a tent, among others makes affected people active participants in the process of relief and rehabilitation. They have the dignity of taking as opposed to the indignity of merely receiving what they have no much choice and say over. They can take action to demand minimum basic requirements as their rights and not privileges.

People become aware of the rebuilding process and they participate in efforts to reconstruct properties and rebuild their lives.

By telling stories of hope (people putting out to sea again to fish, people going back to rebuild their houses and people taking their children to school) media empowers people to participate in re-building and development and face life with confidence. The media can also expose cases of violation of human basic rights.

Even in the wider context of division and lack of tolerance for divergent views communications initiatives can facilitate the emergence of an alternative voice, people's voice without necessarily taking sides. The organization can support communities own efforts to promote democratic space for people's voices to be heard and to participate in development.

The road less walked is that of communications as a means of empowering people to achieve greater results.

Communications and media work should promote the visibility of poor people and the issues they are facing. It should inject resilience, hope and confidence and reduce dependency on aid and relief agencies. It should be a means to inform people and stir them to action. In this way, organizations can build a more solid profile.

Do we pay more emphasis on our work, mission, vision, values and principles to build our profile, or do we focus solely on building our profiles at the expense of effective ground work?

‘Small’ things matter

Learning’s from the PRA workshop in India

PHEBEANS ORIARO

We were sponsored to PRAXIS, India to take part in training on participatory practices. We had a chance to interact with 125 development practitioners drawn from all over the world. We also had a chance to meet people who have contributed immensely to development thinking and practice. We were divided into modules of 25 people each. I joined the Trainer of Trainers module.

Realizing the challenges of development work and the fact that development workers are all facilitators, we set to explore how to become good facilitators. It was surprising that things we normally ignore as being unimportant are normally the most important. We do not take our own innovations as seriously until other people try them out and they work.

The most important challenges in our work are our attitudes and behavior. People are socialized differently. Some see only their way. Others see themselves as having answers to all the questions about development challenges and poor people simply need to heed their advice and voila! – poverty will be a thing of the past!

How can we change our attitudes and behavior to create room and build the confidence of the poor communities that we work with to generate partnerships that will energize development processes? How do we enable communities to build relationships based on values and principles as opposed to our own hard and fast rules and power relations? Can we learn from poor people? What dispositions and characteristics allow us to learn from them? How do we fail to learn from communities?

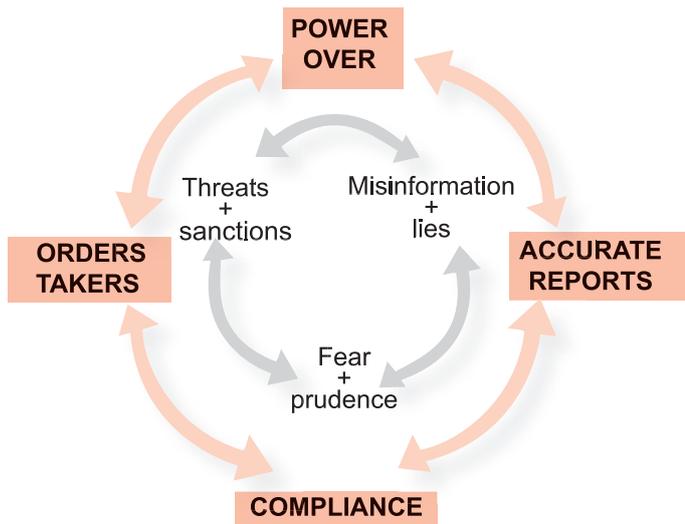
Despite well meaning policy documents, poverty has not reduced. Poor people’s conditions and lives have changed very slowly, and in some cases for the worse. Their aspirations, on the other hand, have changed faster.

Some of these policy decisions have been wrong. The people in charge of policy decisions have approached their work with attitudes of dominance, have been poorly conditioned, operate from greater distances from conditions they seek to change, are themselves in denial and have an inherent attitude of blaming the victim and tend to be patronizing. And yet some Governments have provided opportunities for development organizations to help them draft these policy papers. Frankly, development organizations are no better.

We also operate from positions of power. We are the “uppers” prescribing policies for the “lowers.” We have power over poor people. We have money. We are better educated. Our “closed” reality matters. And yet we only read about poverty often from big cities. Our link with poverty comes because we are employed to run anti-poverty programmes. We earn a living. No passion, no commitment.

Poor people on the other hand seek to respond prudently. They choose what to say. They misinform and give information selectively to meet our needs. They are the lowers. They have no power. They are conditioned to comply. They are order-takers. Their reality doesn’t matter. Some will play along, others will lose interest and withdraw.

We have power over poor people. Within our own organization we have power over each other. Donors have power over NGOs. This results in accurate reports, compliance, order taking and can generate a culture of misinformation and fear driven by threats and sanctions. In such a system, real learning does not take place. The principles of ALPS are helping ActionAid to recognize and be aware of our “power over”. How do we as ActionAiders break our power over others – internally and externally?



If we are true to making poor people central to all we do, we need to continuously challenge our attitudes and preconceptions. We need to keep working on our style and way of work, from organizational structures to formal and informal relations by ensuring what matters most are people not products, indicators, policies and procedures. The theory of development thinking has recognized the need for this shift for many years. The challenge is less in the theory and more in the practice. Applying the principles of ALPS is one such challenge. ALPS asks us to shift from a product based rigid system to a people based process.

The whole reason for this shift is a result of realization of the importance of **real** participation by poor people.

In facilitating development care should be taken that we respect realities from the point of view of poor people.

Genuine participation

- empowers
- builds trust and confidence
- builds relationship
- enhances ownership
- enhances learnings

How true are we to the principles we espouse? How do we keep ensuring that we test the centrality of poor people in all we do? Are we product based or people based?

To effectively facilitate participative community activities:

Don't:

- Rush, lecture, criticize, interrupt, dominate, sabotage.
- Take yourself too seriously, use sophisticated language.
- Validate your preferred views, be rigid or too linear.

Instead

Do :

- Be nice to people, establish rapport with people.
- Use your own best judgment, ask them - they can do it.
- Hand over the stick, be sensitive, share, watch.
- Listen and learn, embrace error, unlearn.
- Abandon preconceptions, be self- critical and self aware.
- Triangulate, be honest, improvise, have fun, enjoy, joke.

Point of departure & reference	Product based → People based	
Orientation, Planning and Action	Top-down Centralised Standardised and linear Controlling	Bottom-up Decentralised Diverse, local Democratic
Goals	Preset Fixed	Evolving
Characteristics and Procedures	Logical framework	Participatory reviews and reflections
Accountability	Upward	Downward
Local people Seen as ---	Beneficiaries	Actors, agents, Rightholders
Our roles	Teachers Benefactors Controllers	Facilitators Coaches, catalysts, Convenors
Behaviour	Dominating	Empowering
Outputs	Infrastructure Reports. Profile	Capabilities Processes Relationships Networks, Movements

Do our reviews and reflections help build community confidence?

The case of Mt. Elgon DI

FRANCIS SATIA

The long fight against injustice and poverty is beginning to show small results to poor people in Mount Elgon. Many of the CBOs that have been working with ActionAid are now seeing beyond ActionAid. The confidence of poor people to challenge those in power is gradually increasing. Part of this can be attributed to the way ActionAid works, our capacity building and consciously trying to ensure poor people remain central to our work.

Since ALPS was rolled out, poor people have increasingly occupied space and freedom to critique, reflect, advise and influence ActionAid and the partners we work with in terms of their past work, impact, planning and strategy. Participatory Reviews and Reflection Processes (PRRP) have created enabling environments for poor people to raise their voices and challenge and influence ActionAid and other community groups and also learn what the government must provide as rights not privileges. This space in effect has enabled poor people to recognize that it is possible to challenge “perceived” powers without being reprimanded.

During reviews and reflections poor people critique their leaders for failing to show the community ways and means of development. Leaders should be able to interpret government policies and be the role models themselves. Armed with greater information, poor people have increasingly used the opportunities that PRRP provides to challenge their leaders to account and deliver. There used to be a time when challenging your leader would land you at the mercy of the local administration police. These days, leaders have to listen whether they like it or not. Local leaders are challenged to account to the community, and in turn local leaders force the government to account for its actions.

At a recent reflection process, civic leaders were criticised because they associated themselves with any successful projects that are initiated in the community for political mileage. The leaders felt embarrassed when they were told by poor people that their major role is to oversee how the government is spending tax payer’s money, and that is how they would be judged.

During reviews and reflections poor people critique their leaders for failing to show the community ways and means of development

In one session of Reviews and Reflection, one supporter of a councillor attempted to falsely praise a councillor for the construction of a road. Before he could finish, people were already shouting at him. *“What are you telling us? It is our right to have the road. We owe no allegiance to the councillor!”*

Reviews and Reflection have enhanced the capacity of poor people to seek funding from National Aids Council, Constituency Aids Control Council, Local Authority Transfer Fund, Constituency Development Fund and District Poverty Eradication Commission. Our reviews and reflection processes therefore must be seen not as a feedback session, but a process that gradually builds the confidence of poor people to challenge those in power – ActionAid included.

Maximising participatory reviews and reflection processes

How PRRPS can help build into annual budgeting processes

NORAH OGUTU

Participatory review and reflections and planning (PRRP) process is a regular process that looks back at the plans and the implementation processes, the impact achieved and plan new programmes or plan how programmes can be sustained or improved. At the heart of review and reflection processes is the principle of the centrality of poor people. In simple terms it is a process that makes us go back to the community and ask if we are really making a difference in their lives. It is a process of supporting poor people to critique and evaluate our programs, style and approach and see if they add value at all in their lives.

Unfortunately we sometimes view PRRPs as a compulsory event that does not have any meaningful relationship with our programme work especially as it relates to budgets. There is a significant disconnect between budgeting processes and programme plans. Programme plans are done five months before inviting community members to participate in review and reflection processes. This does not offer communities a chance to contribute to programme direction and budgeting, thereby defeating a core ALPS principle. It denies communities to have effective control and choice over our own budgeting and resource allocation processes.

HomaHills DI was previously just trying to fulfill an obligation. "Nairobi wants a PRRP report" and the review has to be conducted by February each year. We are oblivious of the fact that this process can really enrich our budgeting process. It would enable us to incorporate peoples felt needs as loudly spoken by the community. Budgets are prepared by the DI staff and the regional office and figures are allocated according to the perception of programme staff and their own ability to utilize funds. Our budgeting processes are therefore not truly influenced by poor people.

Last year things were different. The PRRP took place slightly after initial budgeting processes had been done by ActionAid staff. We ensured that approvals to budgets would only be done once community inputs were effectively fed into the budgeting process. Few things were noted that would have great relevance to our programme work. The involvement of the community was very crucial in discussing the previous monies allocated to specific focus areas and compare with what was being presented including looking at value for money. By having the community argue for specific programmes to be given more funds and others to be removed, communities influenced the programme direction and strengths accorded to particular focus areas.

This challenged the local government officials present, especially the council to open up their finances and planning to the community.

It would make a great difference if this year we conduct our PRRP slightly before the budgeting process. This would enhance the following:

- The PRRP will help in developing realistic monitoring indicators with the community which they will find easy to internalize since they are part of the budgeting process.
- The PRRP as a budgeting tool will direct the budgeting process so that money is allocated best where it is required most according to the reality on the ground and not according to staff perceptions about realities.

We need to keep questioning ourselves about the tools we have to enhance community choice and control over resources. Let's not do reviews and reflections because we have to. ALPS provides some of the best tools to facilitate processes that increase the voice of community. Only when we can help poor people influence our budgets can we expect poor people to influence the budgets of their governments.

Leading by example

Opening up our accountability

ASHISH SHAH

Last year, all our development initiatives took the bold step of displaying our budgets and expenses publicly on Public Information Boards. The purpose of the public information boards was threefold:

Citizen Right: We display our finances, expenditures and budgets recognizing this as a citizen right. By blatantly publicizing our budgets and expenditure on a regular basis on huge public billboards, we are making a point that every citizen has a right to know how public money is budgeted for and spent and we're fulfilling that right by starting with ourselves. Accessing budgeting and spending information on public funds is not a luxury a few should enjoy – it's a right that all should have access to without having to ask.

Centrality of poor people: Beyond citizen rights, the second principle behind the Public Information Board project is to ensure poor people are at the centre of our accountability requirements. Too often NGOs make donors and the outside world the centre of accountability requirements at the expense of the people we claim to work with. Too often the partners whom we work with, whether community based organizations or non-governmental organizations often focus their accountability requirements to their 'donors'. CBOs maintain books of accounts, not for the community or their members, but for ActionAid. We want to change that by making poor people the centre of our accountability requirements and hope others shall do the same.

Increasing moral legitimacy: By displaying our own accounts and finances and opening up ourselves to scrutiny we hope to challenge others to be more accountable and transparent to poor people (whether government or non governmental organizations.)

But as Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as is the case with other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) our right and moral legitimacy to question the state and others on its level of transparency and accountability diminishes or increases depending on our own levels of transparency and accountability as institutions and organizations.

It has been exactly a year since we installed our first public information board. We take a quick peek at how these boards have worked on each of the three principles and the key challenges we face.

Citizen rights to financial transparency – a local county council opens up

ActionAid Usigu DI has been working with the local county council to open up planning processes to include greater community participation in the planning, use and management of local authority funds provided by the central government (commonly known as Local Authority Transfer Fund – LATF). Bondo County Council, thanks largely to improved management and more accountable councilors has started to ensure that citizens influence local authority service delivery planning and implementation at all levels. One of the bold steps Bondo County Council is taking this year with the support of ActionAid is to install huge public information boards to enable it display its budgets and expenses publicly. *"We need to become more transparent to our citizens, and we also recognize that there is so much wastage in fund use within the government at large. We have to prove our prudence and efficient use of funds to meet the demands of citizens. I want Bondo County Council to be the first local authority in Kenya to publicly display its finances in this manner. Once we*

start doing this at the council, we can then ask other government offices to do the same,” said the Chairman of Bondo County Council.

In addition, Bondo County Council has initiated a community driven independent anti-corruption committee and will be installing corruption complaint boxes in several wards with support from ActionAid.

Accountability to poor people first

One of the greatest disparities within community based organizations (CBO) is the fact that most members, let alone the wider community do not know, have control, or scrutinize their own budgets and expenses. It is usually the chairperson or treasurer of the CBO who is the sole custodian of financial records and details, which are often usually disclosed to ActionAid or other financial partners at the end of the year or when the accounting period ends. This not only creates a power imbalance between ActionAid and the CBO, but defeats any attempts to strengthen democratic and consultative decision making processes within the community based organization.

By opening up our financial transactions, the wider community has been able to monitor the CBOs we give grants to and follow up on the use of the funds. Several CBOs have already requested for public boards to help

By opening up our financial transactions, the wider community has been able to monitor the CBOs we give grants to and follow up on the use of the funds.

them open up their budgets and expenses to the wider community and have seen this as a tool for building even greater trust and increasing support with the wider community.

BAMA, a local CBO on the outskirts of Usigu DI has been one of the first CBOs to start displaying its budgets and expenses publicly for each transaction. Says Mr. Nyabola, a member of BAMA's board: *“This has helped build trust, confidence and ownership with community members. We have nothing to hide and we are proud to show that. As far as ActionAid is concerned, you don't need to wait for us to account to you – you can see how we use funds just the same way as community members see.”*

Building moral legitimacy

It is too early to judge whether we have the moral legitimacy to question others on their accountability. Whilst all the DIs are updating their boards, one of the biggest challenges we face is the frequency with which we update our financial transactions. We still have not reached a state where we as ActionAid religiously fill these boards and utilize the full potential of this tool. One thing is clear however, community members appreciate the power of the board and our move to open up our budgets and expenses. The fact that several community organizations are demanding for us to supply more boards is a positive sign. Whether the boards become just another routine or remains a powerful tool for challenging others remains to be seen. The process of seeing others open themselves up to financial scrutiny has begun, albeit slowly. We are confident that poor people will have greater choice and influence in our work as we continue to involve communities more effectively in our budgeting and planning processes.

Demystifying finance

Making accounting work for community partners

ADERA MUSYULA

In 2002, ActionAid International Kenya made a decision to hire Capacity Building Accountants (CBA) to boost its role as a “capacity builder” in the wake of challenges that weighed heavily on programme staff both at the DI and regions. Other than facilitating the local communities to realize desirable impacts on programme work, programme staff were supposed to help community organizations in book keeping and basic elements of finance. This was an enormous responsibility for staff who are not accountants by profession. This extra burden was thought to deter effective delivery and support by programme staff from playing a more strategic role of building stronger relationships with poor peoples organizations.

A greater focus on tracing use of finances by programme staff defeated the spirit of ALPS as our relationships with partners would be more of scrutinizing finances and use of finances instead of learning from the challenges that poor peoples organizations faced, or developing new ideas and strategies.

Given our commitment to keep overhead costs low, it did not make sense to recruit accountants in every DI. As a result, CBAs were recruited with their initial role of supporting partners and CBOs together with their primary groups in financial management.

The role of the CBA however has not been limited to assessments, checking of books of accounts and conducting trainings as earlier thought. It has gone further to shaping and nurturing many of the groups to understand the importance of managing and keeping good financial records not as an accountability requirement for ActionAid or any other donor, but rather to promote CBOs accountability to poor people and the membership of community organizations.

Training of CBOs and primary groups in financial management has been one of my

biggest challenges. The groups feel that it’s a requirement from ActionAid and our auditors and do it out of obligation as opposed to recognizing the importance of having finance systems that work for all group members and the wider community. The most important role for the CBA is to try and facilitate a processes that enables groups to appreciate the importance of keeping good financial records and the impact of better financial management. Of course this is a longer term process and the bigger challenge is how available we are to help community organizations improve their financial systems based on their own need as opposed to punishing community organizations when books of accounts are not kept in a way “auditors would normally like them to be kept.”

Book keeping can be simplified to suit even people with limited education background. The context and shape of the trainings depend entirely on the type of groups under review, their literacy levels and the activities they are involved in.

Book keeping can be simplified to suit even people with limited education background. The context and shape of the trainings depend entirely on the type of groups under review, their literacy levels and the activities they are involved in. The CBA should consider its applicability in their unique situations. For instance one cannot train a local NGO or an established CBO together with an upcoming self help group or a women group. Uniform classroom trainings will not work in such

circumstances. The kind of financial systems maintained by both groups and their needs will be totally different. Classroom trainings are inappropriate in such cases.

Most of the trainings conducted at the DI level are done entirely in Kiswahili and simple terms such as “Money in” and “Money out” or “Kuingia” and “Kutoka” are used in place of the famous accounting “Debit” and “Credit” terms. The accounting concept is universal and does not change with the change in the language. The bottom line is for the groups to track all funds received and the subsequent expenditure and to demonstrate to the wider community how the utility of the money can be reflected on the ground.

The bottom line is for the groups to track all funds received and the subsequent expenditure and to demonstrate to the wider community how the utility of the money can be reflected on the ground.

One classroom training is not enough to impart the required skills to keep proper books thus the need to make the capacity building process continuous. During group reviews and grant accounting sessions one is able to identify the areas of weakness and the necessary action taken. We refer to the sessions as “one on one” training and this can take between one to two hours depending on the groups needs. The process is slow but should not be “painful” to the learners.

Pamoja Tujenge CBO (Mount Elgon DI) has applied the petty cash imprest system, unlike in other groups. Initially the system seemed unworkable but over a period of time and

with constant reviews they have been able to maintain a cash float of kshs 10,000.

Chepkube water project CBO has requested to move to a new level of financial accounting – preparation of trial balance and final accounts.

Another important aspect that has worked is encouraging groups to keep books using the local language or Kiswahili instead of English. This has made it easy for some groups to maintain good records. For instance in Homa hills some of the women groups use *luo* when making the entries in their groups, this has made them understand and appreciate book keeping for themselves, and to them it is no longer something for the “learned” as earlier perceived. As long as the controls are upheld and all the supporting documents are available the language used should not be an issue, after all communities are the users of the accounts and not ActionAid or any other donor *per se*.

Cheptais Muslim women group is a member of Cheptais Ngachi CBO. Until 2003, they did not have a chance to attend book keeping and finance training since the training usually targeted CBO Officials. AAK identified some of their members to attend the same training conducted in Cheptais office. The training was simplified to accommodate all types of small businesses. A recent visit to the group revealed that the members were actually keeping simple records for their businesses and not only for the group activities.

Initially the trainings were meant for the officials and to be specific the treasurer and the secretary. Over time we have realized that group members also need to understand the whole concept of book keeping for them to understand how their funds are being utilized and hold their elected officials accountable. It might not be possible to take the whole group for classroom training but the first step is to encourage members to regularly inspect books of accounts. This in itself prompts them to ask questions regarding the same.

The whole idea is to get people to understand what the entries stand for in the books and how

they are related to the supporting documents. For instance which column stands for funds received, expenditure and the balance? What documents can verify this?

The financial reports presented to the members and the community are not enough to account for utility of funds. During grant accounting we insist on meeting all the members unlike before when we used to deal with the officials only. An example is the case of Mwangaza CBO in Usigu, where funds meant for civic education were diverted and used to acquire computer hardware. As much as the officials wanted us to believe that the purchase was done after consultation with the other members of the group, it came out during the meeting that three people had conspired and the members were not involved. This came out because members demanded to know how the funds were utilized. When we deal with the officials and ignore the other members, they start seeing the group as belonging to the “three” (Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer) and stop participating in the project.

When we visited Pamoja Tujenge in February this year we were able to access the books despite the treasurer and secretary not being around. In most groups the books are kept by one person thus limiting their access. The community should be encouraged to inspect the books of accounts of CBOs operating in their areas irrespective of whether they are members of the CBO or not. We hope as more community organizations put up public information boards, there will be financial accountability to the wider community.

Progress in this process is hampered however by “voluntarism fatigue,” integrity of officials, quality of leadership and the long term learning process of keeping good accounts. We cannot and should not expect community organizations to keep good accounts from only one classroom training. We still have a responsibility as “capacity builders” to be part of the long term process of helping groups appreciate the whole concept of accountability – not to ActionAid accountants and auditors, but to poor people themselves.

Thoughts

DALAUSI OUMA

I have been learning from the field. We need strong campaigns around information and civic education to eradicate poverty. We better improve our approach to work. We need to empower poor people to claim their rights and to transform institutions.

We should go beyond the groups to reach poor people. Poor people need opportunities to share with the groups, their activities, training and participate in the planning of CBO decisions. Let AAK work with the poor from the ground – not only from the Community Based Organizations. Training should be done on the ground, or church, or public gathering and not in a classroom so all can attend. Let us ask, why have we not reached all poor people? Is it because CBOs don't reach all the poor as well? Let us change our approach in the field so we know the poorest people and not just officials of community organizations. Let us enter in the village like water in the soil and let us enter in the village like oil into the bones, let us work together so that we fight poverty with the poorest on the ground.

Building relationships with poor people

PHEBEANS ORIARO

I set out on Friday 5th March for what was to be a very challenging weekend in Mt. Elgon DI.

The staff at Mt. Elgon had made arrangements for me to stay with a poor person in the area. On arrival at the DI I found Julius waiting to link me with my host.

When I arrived at Mzee Michael Masinde's home, we met the jovial old man arranging a small heap of firewood which he intended to sell to make some money. It was not difficult to convince Michael to host me for the weekend. I could however see the pain on his face despite assurance that he should not treat me any specially. He wondered loudly how such an 'important guest' should visit him and not be treated differently?

The neighbors seemed to sympathize with Michael's situation. The women brought traditional vegetables for Michael to prepare for both of us. The old man leads a lonely life somewhere in Mandizini Village, Kibuk sub-location in Mount Elgon district. His first wife was shot dead in Uganda by Amin's soldiers. 'When I went to see the body, I found she had been shot and the body was floating in the river water. They killed her like you would kill fish in the water', he said painfully. He abandoned his second wife and escaped with his only daughter back to Kenya.

When he returned to Kenya, he found that the family land which was left under his name had been taken by the person who had rented it. The case dragged in court and he didn't have the money to hire a lawyer. He gave up. His brothers who had been allocated pieces of land in Mount Elgon could only offer him a piece of land enough for the hut he currently stays in. He has no land to cultivate.

The grass thatched mud house he lives in was built with support from ActionAid during the

resettlement of the victims of the politically motivated ethnic clashes.

He is never assured of a meal. He gets manual jobs sometimes, like preparing pegs for marking boundaries of disputed plots or splitting firewood for sale. Breakfast and lunch are never even thought about. I only took two meals in the two days I spent with the old man.

His bed consists of a rack of slender pieces of wood. Bathing is done in a local stream which draws water from Kibuk river. The only thing he gets without struggle is water for domestic use. This is supplied by the little kids from the brother's homestead. In return for their efforts the future leaders are given avocado fruits from the avocado tree at the door of Michael's house.

On my last day, I took a "boda boda" (bicycle) from Kamtiong to Kimilili where I got means to Kisumu through Webuye. The whole journey cost me Kshs 310 one way.

People here know and understand AAK because the organization helped to resettle clash victims in 1996 – 1997. Many people around here got their houses through this initiative.

Poverty affects even the dignity of an individual as they are not consulted for important decisions. Michael's views are not listened to by local leaders.

Michael has left vivid memories in my mind. I will continue to visit him.

The essence of reality check does not lie in the activity itself but on the principles behind the processes to help 'development workers' understand poverty better and change our perceptions and attitudes. It enables us to look beyond 'conventional' approaches to fighting poverty.

The experience enables us to be closest to poor people and build relationships with poor people beyond the artificial “NGO” – community relationship. It raises our consciousness as development workers and probably transforms every aspect of our lives. The attitude change leads to greater commitment and passion to work with poor people as people, and not objects for our involvement. It enables us to think more critically and to explore possible situations with people to ensure that development processes are relevant to the poorest or least powerful. It enables us to see their reality.

Most importantly, the experience helps us to develop meaningful relationships with poor people. It is important that informal contact and relationships are built and maintained with poor people. These friendships continually change our mindsets and work. It enables us to open up poor people out of stigmatized situations that poverty confines them to. Poor people build greater trust with us if we drop our perceptions and boundaries. It provides the opportunity to build a team against poverty where poor people are an integral part.

“Reality checks” provide an opportunity to monitor through time and through regular contacts the changes in the lives of poor people. One year between visits provide a chance to take stock of what has kept these people going. How do they make the best of the difficult situations facing them? How does a poor person survive through the year without land, social support from families, money, shelter and the daily struggle for food? What have we done to see meaningful change?

Reality checks can contribute a lot in assessing impact of our work from a practical point of view. It adds value to our common (and normal) one-day meetings that we often have with the communities that we work with. It is normal to think our programmes are working and we are changing lives because community members say so. In some cases they say what we want to hear. This is an opportunity not only to hear from a church hall, or under a tree, but to ‘live through’ it for a few days.

Contacts with very poor people is never easy. They rarely attend meetings. Their leaders will. If they attend, then they will not talk. To make them talk

and be heard, we may be forced to go an extra mile. There is never time to make this extra mile. So we don’t capture their aspirations as much. Reality check enable us to come closest to poor people and engage them one on one.

Reality Check is an opportunity for reflection that is necessary both for individual personal growth and organizational performance.

As a team, we agreed on a series of DO’s and DON’TS that make reality checks successful.

- a. Reality Checks are voluntary. It is a voluntary undertaking. The decision to go is based on individual choice.
- b. Our colleagues in the field areas have to identify a person from the poorest of the poor (in their opinion). This is necessary because we wanted to go to areas far removed from our normal places of work.
- c. Many people wanted to carry bottled water. However it was important to realize that even just helping our hosts realize the importance of boiling water is a major achievement. Water is not a status symbol. It is a necessity. Will it be better if we carried our water which we drink everyday till we leave, and avoid diseases, or we together with our hosts, boil water and encourage our hosts to boil water. We can interact with other community members at the water-point if we do not make a big issue out of it. However these decisions are better left to individual discretion.
- d. Do not carry any food items. This will spoil the essence of the check. However, on the last day, on your way out, you can buy items of your choice to leave your host with. These could be food items etc.
- e. Interfere and be part of the ‘local way’. You are not special and should not be treated specially. Be alert of special treatment and challenge it. Naturally people would behave differently in the presence of a stranger. Avoid this from happening in order to learn as much as possible
- f. Understand and be sensitive to local culture. There are a few aspects that stand out. Look out for them.

ENJOY YOUR REALITY CHECK!!

Understanding reality better

LUCAS M. CHACHA

It is 5:00 pm today the 4th of April 2005, and I've just come back from Budalangi...not for any routine field visit but from what the west team has passionately code named 'reality check'... touching base with reality.

My journey to the 'unknown' started on the morning of Friday, April 1st 2005. I shed off all the extra comfort that I am used to (including the luxury of a four wheel drive vehicle) and made my way.

It took me two and a half hours from Kisumu to Bumala. I searched for the matatus to Budalangi until I gave up and just sat looking at an old jalopy bus, little knowing that it was the one to take me to my destination.

I reluctantly boarded the bus and traveled standing as it was full already.

When I enquired how far Mundere was from where we were, the old woman looked at me as if to wonder how on earth I would not know where Mundere is. Two hours later I arrived at Mundere, picked up my earthly belongings and proceeded to a waiting bicycle.

I had been informed that a bicycle would be waiting for me, to take me to my 'unknown' host. At Budalangi, I found Agnes, the Community Resource Person (CRP) waiting to take me to my new home.

We had to move fast as darkness was slowly setting in. We took another thirty minute bicycle ride to Bujando village where I was to stay for the weekend.

At Bujando we bid goodbye to the bicycle and started walking. As I walked the long journey many questions raced in my mind. Is this the same distance we expect poor people to travel when we hold meetings in towns? My resolve became weak as I began imagining the food I will eat and the kind of place I would sleep in.

My thoughts were interrupted when I heard a phrase that had now become familiar. I stopped to see an old woman, with a young girl standing next to a structure that stood in the silhouette of the setting sun. I walked on and waited for my guide to come so that we continue our journey. I heard her call me by name, and turned. She beckoned and led the way to the structure and I followed behind.

My nerves stood as she stopped outside the structure. I gathered strength and almost asked her why she was wasting time when it was already dark...We had arrived!

At this point I greeted my host, a smiling, frail middle aged woman. I gave the hut a second glance and looked for the door. There was none. I looked for the window and there was none. What I thought was a window, was actually a gaping hole in the mud wall. As I entered the hut, we stopped to pray.

My host, Susana Muyaga lit a lantern (koroboyi), and welcomed us to her home. I remained standing and wondered what my next move would be. I sat on the stool, and we all introduced ourselves.

I realized I was in the company of a poor woman, one that we are meant to be working with to eradicate poverty, and yet the environment seemed glaringly unfamiliar.

I gazed at the gapping spaces on the walls, the spaces on the grass thatched room, the opening for the door that was covered with an old rag, the floor that was so uneven, the few cooking utensils and the few clothes hanging from the edge of the room. These made her entire belongings.

Susana went out to cut vegetables assisted by her 10 year old girl, Christine, as I chatted with Agnes in the hut keeping warm with the fire. As we sat two women walked in and greeted us. They were surprised that Susana,

the little known poor widow of Bujuando, could host a visitor all the way from Kuria, and working for as big an organization as ActionAid International!

Soon after, Agnes left, and I was left alone. I did not even know where I was going to sleep. I pulled my stool and joined Susana, who was seated outside, cutting some traditional vegetables for dinner. I gathered courage and initiated a discussion. She told me the story of her life, how she was widowed thirteen years ago. I became comfortable and began to open up on my life stories. We were communicating in a way I have not usually communicated with poor people before.

When we were just about to take dinner, a middle aged woman walked in, with a baby in her arms. Carlyne, the woman, and her baby Auma had just come to greet the visitor. The baby was gaping for air as her eyes dropped. She had been sick since morning, but there was nothing she could do as the dispensary four kilometers away was closed, and she could not afford a nearby private hospital at Musende.

When I offered to help, Carlyne went off to dress up and get prepared as we went on with our dinner. She came back 15 minutes later with her nephew who would take her to the hospital on a bicycle.

Moments later an old man walked in. Peter Mukude is Susana's brother in law. We went into another long conversation with Peter. Later in the night, Peter offered to go with me to his house to sleep, solving a problem I had been grappling with in my mind for the last few hours. When we reached Peter's house, his wife welcomed us. Chicken had to be moved to create room for me to sleep. I scanned the tiny room, and saw a bicycle, two chairs, a bible, and a child sleeping on a piece of skin covered with an old cloth.

Peter asked his wife not to bother making the sleeping arrangements as he took charge. He brought out a mat, and an old mattress and spread it on the floor. He bid me goodbye and left.

I was woken by wails at about 1:30 in the night. I knew the worst had happened. Was little baby Auma dead?

I tried to listen incase I heard her name mentioned. In the next room, I heard Peter open the door, and run out. He stood outside for a while. I too woke up and joined him. He told me that an old neighbour who had been sick had passed on...He asked me to go back and sleep as he went to confirm the details. I was restless for the rest of the night. Peter came back two hours later.

The following morning, Peter offered to show me some developments in his home. He took me to a water point where he had just rehabilitated the collapsed walls with woven sticks, and was excited that it had held the soil together. On our way to the next project, we passed by Aumas home to find out if she had been treated. We found Auma asleep, and her mother burst into prayers of joy. The baby was feeling much better.

We then went past Susana's home to a site where Peter was intending to build a bigger house for her. He explained that it had taken over one year, and that it lacked grass for thatching, and some money to cook for the villagers as they help mudding the walls.

It was now about 8:30, and we went back to my host, Susana. She had prepared strong tea using traditional herbs for tea leaves, and boiled sweet potatoes.

We sat down to have breakfast. As we conversed, I realized that Susana's 10 year daughter had never been to school, and that there were no plans to take her to school. I encouraged Susana to take the child to school. Susana was not too sure that primary education was free, but promised to take her to school in May.

We visited several neighbouring poor homes that told the story of poverty, with shattered houses, small sized farms that were choked with weeds and children running around half-naked.

After some discussions with several poor people, it became apparent that:

1. The very poor are too busy seeking for survival to attend meetings and gatherings. We have learned that those who often attend

meetings called by ActionAid are not the poorest.

2. Poor people feel that some Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are for the elite and those who can read and write. They have no faith in the leadership of the groups that fail to reach and include them.
3. The poor are often discouraged from participating in any discussions at the CBO level.
4. The poor have ideas and suggestions. I was amazed that an amount as low as Kshs. 5000/=, can actually start an income generating activity (IGA) in the village, selling paraffin, tomatoes, and omena at home, and not even have to open a shop/kiosk.

Most of what I have documented remains my personal experiences which I can hardly transfer to anyone else. The emotions, the sympathy, the hope, the courage to survive will for a long time linger in my mind.

The truth is many of us are fighting a monster that we hardly know about. How serious it is, how it presents itself and how we can involve the poor in our efforts.

We need to challenge each other even more. We need to question always whether our work, and all we do will actually change the lives of people like Susanna. We need to build stronger relations with poor people. We need to reignite our anger to fight poverty and injustice in bigger ways. We need to innovate. We need to realize that working in ActionAid is not simply a job – it's an opportunity for us to make a huge difference in the lives of poor people – if we view our work in ActionAid as a simple 9 to 5 job, we will never change the world.

A weekend of learning

CECIL AGUTU

It has been a nice weekend at Got Agulu in Usigu Division of Bondo District. I spent the weekend with the family of Mzee Eliakim and Mama Janet who are both living positively with HIV/ AIDS. As a team we have decided to carry out exercises called Reality Check to get to appreciate our people and their issues much better. I had immersed myself in the life of this rural family for a weekend to experience their lifestyle and reality. The couple has six children. The elder son is a fisherman in Lolwe, an island on the Uganda side of Lake Victoria. I remember Mama Janet telling me that at the beginning of their marriage Mzee Eliakim wanted to settle at this island but she would not go because it was far from the mainland and her relatives, who feared traveling by water, would not be able to visit them. When her father saw that this issue was creating a rift he gave them a piece of land close to the lake at Got Agulu. This is where they stay with their family.

Got Agulu is a fisherfolk community and borders Uganda on the lake. Eliakim says the fisherfolk are often harassed, arrested, jailed and their boats and fishing gears confiscated for illegal fishing on Uganda waters. The fishermen use illegal fishing gears that catch immature fish. They cannot afford the recommended gears. Two other sons of Eliakim and Janet are fishermen in the beach at Got Agulu. They fish *Omena* (herrings) which is the main food for the family. The government has recently declared a recess for the lake to allow fish stocks to replenish. The family and members of Got Agulu community are hard hit since there is no fishing going on. The family sometimes manages only a meal of vegetables in two days. Eliakim is not even aware of the time the recess will end.

The long rains have just started but in an erratic manner and in small quantities. The family has planted maize and millet on a small plot which is all they have. Mzee Eliakim mastered his strength although he complained of backache. Together with his youngest son Oduori and daughter Helida we weeded the plot of maize and millet. Later we had a bath in the lake with his son nicknamed “General.” Eliakim had been bedridden for about a year and is still weak. However, he is determined to be the hard worker that he was. He tells me that whenever his body gives him a chance he works on his plot. A number of his livelihood activities have come to a standstill due to sickness. His small mud poultry house has collapsed and he has no ducks. He says he has been driven into poverty because he is not able to work as he used to. The most he can do now is to make ropes from sisal and sell a piece at ten shillings. The ropes are bought by people for tethering animals. On a good day he sells six ropes and on a number of days there are no buyers for the ropes. He wishes he could get two thousand shillings with which to buy fishing hooks for his older sons so that they can fish and feed the family. The family lives next to the lake but cannot afford good quality fish. Because I was visiting, the family was generous and bought one small fish which we took with vegetables for dinner.

Mama Janet is actively involved in the group of People living With HIV/ AIDS (PLWHA). She educates the community on HIV/ AIDS by giving testimonies. Stigma still prevails as one woman in the community recently told her that she had to be “mad” to be “going around telling people that she had HIV/ AIDS.” She is also involved in psycho-social support for PLWHA. The day I arrived, Janet and Eliakim were out in a community activity setting up a volleyball court for the youth in the area. During this time some PLWHA were selected to benefit from the anti-retroviral drugs programme run by the government with the support of donors. However the programme is

run from Kisumu city which is Kshs. 200 away by public means, way above the means of many PLWHAs.

Janet has been recognized for her work in the community and was rewarded with a bicycle to help her move around. However she does not know how to ride a bicycle. Her neighbour is now notorious for borrowing the bicycle for his own personal use and Eliakim is not happy. When the neighbour comes to borrow the bicycle he finds Janet out of the home so Eliakim tells him to come back when Janet is around since the bicycle is hers. Janet later gives the neighbour the bicycle. Eliakim tells me how Janet has worked for the community. He has been understanding and supportive on the family and community responsibilities of his wife.

Having spent two days with the family in the reality check, I am more convinced that we have to rethink the ways we are currently using to reach the poor because we are not effectively reaching the “real poor.”

Having spent two days with the family in the reality check, I am more convinced that we have to rethink the ways we are currently using to reach the poor because we are not effectively reaching the “real poor.” The extent to which community based organizations and other groups we work with reach the poor is varied. We must now be more innovative and work at reaching the most marginalized.

Puppetry for HIV/AIDS education

LOVENNA AKINYI

This article seeks to address several issues related to our use of puppetry as an outreach, education and communication strategy. We examine the rationale and advantages of puppetry as an IEC (Information, Education and Communication) medium and the importance of monitoring and evaluation as they relate in the specific areas where puppetry is used as an IEC medium

A wide range of approaches and practices have been employed to raise awareness on an array of educational, communication and therapy, especially as means or medium of intervention on health and other development issues. The goal is always to influence communities to change certain aspects of their behavior.

The West Region has over the past year sought to incorporate puppetry as a component to the theatre and drama skills that community based groups in different DIs have been using. This component is increasingly popular amongst the groups. However, like any other kind of intervention in the communities, there is always the need to make follow up to, monitor and evaluate impact.

Rationale and advantages of puppetry education

Puppetry, like theatre is a mimetic art. It holds up a mirror to society and gives people a chance to look at themselves. It also enables people to laugh at themselves. It is less threatening than the human performer, is non-partisan and can represent humans from any walk of life.

Puppetry in education is used to for various purposes:

- i. Teaching with puppetry**
Teaching with puppetry basically refers to educational puppet performances where puppets are used to educate.
- ii. Learning with puppetry**
This refers to the learning through the act of creating puppet theatre. The making of a puppet is the act of creating a personality and therefore plays a dual role in learning and development. Puppetry projects for adults and children can have tremendous educational value because the construction of a puppet is not just the construction of an object, it involves both making of a thing and the “bringing to life” of that thing.
- iii. Puppetry in therapy and counseling**
Therapists often use puppets for adults and children with learning disabilities, behavioural problems and communication failures. Being involved in a puppetry project allows people who have low self esteem or think they have nothing of worth to offer, to be good at something that people value. Puppetry allows them to contribute to society and thus regain some self respect. In therapy, maladjusted people can inflict violence on puppets and express their feelings against society without remorse or repercussions. It gives them the opportunity to express themselves.

Why measure impact?

As communication programs utilizing entertainment – (education approaches) become more sophisticated and strategic, monitoring and evaluation to assess impact even becomes difficult.

In the context of evaluating puppetry in community development, impact may be understood as “demonstrable significant or sustainable new information, attitudes and skills necessary for participants to make their own choices.”

Evaluation itself is a daily human activity, an essential step in the process of integrating learning and moving on to new discoveries. Evaluation supports the desire to understand

more deeply to see the truth more clearly and act more effectively.

Measuring the impact of a community puppetry education project provides a wealth of useful information. Firstly monitoring examines the response of participants to the process. Such impact helps ensure acceptability and usefulness of the future projects. Also monitoring paints a clearer picture of the effects of the project on quality of life standards such as empowerment, health and relationship to the environment.

In addition, impact is necessary to determine if the project objectives are being achieved. Moreover, monitoring and evaluation helps to identify where the project needs improvement and how it can be done.

Why use puppetry?

The use of puppetry has the advantage of non-threatening realism, impact and cost effectiveness. Any object can be given this gift of life by the puppeteer. A puppet is given the gift of speech and action by the puppeteer but at the same time is one step removed from the real world which removes the threat which a live actor may convey.

Puppetry breaks down barriers - Puppetry can be used to break down racial, social and political barriers and stereotypes because it mirrors, represents and often exaggerates aspects of human behaviour.

Puppets can say more than the live actor - Puppets can get away with being highly controversial and thus often say and do more than could live actors. This is especially true when dealing with taboo or sensitive issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS, family planning, sexually transmitted infections or the reproductive health system. A graphic performance is less embarrassing to the audience than a human actor. This can apply very well to issues involving corrupt practices.

Puppets are less expensive than live actors - Puppets are more portable, easier to transport and accommodate. Several, or if necessary, only one puppeteer, can present a whole cast of characters.

The puppet can deliver a strong message - Puppets can deliver a strong message in a light hearted manner without offending or frightening the audience. As an interactive medium, puppetry can open up sensitive topics and allow for questions, exchanges and discussions between the puppets, puppeteers and the audience.

Combining puppetry with other arts - Puppetry can be combined with other forms of art e.g. dance, songs, poetry, story telling, drama etc. to make it more interesting and appealing to the audience.

Adapted from: L, Keboga, Puppetry Mania, Family Planning & Promotion Services 2003

Puppetry follow up – The case of West Region DIs

In the year 2004, representatives from community groups involved in IEC work were trained in puppetry for 21 days. The main purpose for the training was to offer basic puppetry skills for education and communication in the communities. The trained puppeteers have since engaged in community education with some groups using it as an income generating activity in addition to education and communication functions.

How often do we effectively follow up on the training and capacity building processes we offer to communities?

In March 2005, the West Region instituted a follow up exercise on the puppeteers to assess progress (successes), identify gaps and challenges and means to bridge them. To achieve these, puppetry skills trainers were engaged. Some of the issues that have been highlighted by the assessment include;

1. Incomplete troupes i.e. the DI selection did not take into consideration the fact that a complete troupe consists of 5 to 7 puppeteers. Some DIs sent representatives from different groups (some outside the DI). This has created a challenge in the planning of performances and synergy of puppeteers.
2. Inadequate costumes (puppets) – some groups have had to travel long distances to borrow puppets from other groups to make complete sets.
3. Lack of immediate follow up by the Region and DIs on the trained groups. This has mainly been attributed to lack of capacity by AAK staff on puppetry and theatre related issues and may mean that as we build capacities of community members with skills, AAK staff should be involved

in training processes to provide sufficient follow up support once classroom trainings end.

4. Conflict in groups with the trained puppeteers feeling more important than the other group members especially where they are able to earn some income out of puppetry shows.

Puppetry skills become the first training to have a 'ground-based' follow up process. The follow up came at a crucial time when some groups were almost collapsing as a result of the theatre training. Trained members within groups had left their original groups to form separate puppetry groups. Some of the key recommendations made by the trainers are;

1. To have those with basic skills undergo Training of Trainers level to enable them train others within the community instead of relying on external trainers
2. Team building sessions for groups to build greater synergy amongst groups.
3. Continued monitoring and material support to have complete troupes with costumes.
4. Support groups to prepare puppets using locally available material.

Some critical questions for reflection are: What would have happened if this follow up exercise wasn't conducted? Would it have been a waste of resources (owing to the fact that the entire puppetry training and skills building process cost more than Kshs 1million? Or would it have been a training just like any other training where we call community members for a 5 day workshop then we let them go back home without any follow up?

How often do we effectively follow up on the training and capacity building processes we offer to communities? How often do we just treat our trainings and capacity building as routine events and fail to listen to and read the new dynamics resulting from such trainings?

Fighting Female Genital Mutilation

Lessons from the Alternative Rites of Passage Process (AROP)

LUCAS M. CHACHA

The practice of female circumcision in Kuria is going on unabated and has negative consequences on the community. Child dropout rates from school, early marriages, and the obvious biological, medical and psychological effects that go with this practice have adversely affected the girl child. In December 2004, ActionAid was involved in organizing the Alternative Rites of Passage (AROP) – a process that not only seeks to protect girls during the circumcision period, but also increase community awareness and pressure against the practice. AROP processes are commonly used by communities and organizations fighting FGM. Some of the key lessons learned by ActionAid during the 2004 AROP process in Kuria are shared below.

For what purpose is this event being organized?

The need for this kind of event followed an aggressive awareness and sensitization campaign over a period of six months. This made parents to request for an event where the children can be more informed on the practice and dangers of FGM. Earlier, we had concentrated on the parents and guardians and given very little attention to the girls themselves. We were responding to a genuine felt need.

The success of an event will be based on whether the purpose was clear in the first place. For our case, we aimed at achieving the following:

1. We needed to organize an event that would provide the participants with information to enable them make informed choices, whether to go or not to go for circumcision. It has become apparent that many of the girls who go through female genital mutilation usually go through a ritual which they least understand, both in terms of procedure and the consequences.
2. We also needed to provide a short term holding ground for girls who did not want to undergo the ritual especially as December 2004 was a period when FGM takes place amongst many clans. This followed the reality that many girls end up undergoing the rite due to pressure from mainly parents, elders and other peers.
3. We needed to create a pool of Girls, who would stay together for a period and therefore be bonded by their common decision to say no to FGM. This group would then provide peer support to each other in future.

The need for collaboration

In a situation where there are many common players fighting a common vice, it is crucial for all players to coordinate and work together. To often NGOs avoid collaboration and coordination by placing greater emphasis on profile as opposed to impact.

This event was organized jointly by ActionAid, MOH/GTZ Anti FGM Project, Kenya Alliance For the Advancement of Children Rights (KAACR), and Adventist Devt and Relief Agency (ADRA).

We shared roles in various aspects of the event that lasted two weeks. Bringing together four organizations that have different accounting procedures, practice, working cultures, and approach to issues was a nightmare. Initially it seemed this 'local collaboration' would not work. The alternative of having to foster this collaboration from our national offices was unworkable. It is best done at the local levels where the activity is carried out, thereby minimizing unnecessary bureaucracy and ensuring decisions are made as close to local realities as possible.

Do you continually monitor progress of the event? And do you invite your participants?

We learnt our lessons the hard way. We had planned for 200 girls to the AROP camp. When the day came, 289 girls attended. This sudden rise had serious budgetary implications. We had not been prepared for an upsurge in participants. We however had to manage the crisis, in a meeting that lasted until 2 am in the night.

The demand for the event was not factored in the planning. More parents desired that their children go through this programme, but we failed to read the signs in good time. We had used a photocopied letter to invite the participating girls. The parents requested us to open up the invitation to more girls, but we refused for budgetary reasons. The parents got brighter, and photocopied the 'photocopies'. There was no way we could tell who was our 'genuine guest' and who was not. We swallowed our pride and admitted the extra number. Thanks to ActionAid's flexibility to accommodate and listen to sudden changes given the dynamics of local realities.

Have you planned for all the nitty gritty?

We realized that we had overlooked such key aspects as providing sanitary towels to the girls we invited, neither did we plan for tissue paper for use in the toilets by the children. Secondly, we had borrowed mattresses from St Theresa Girls Secondary School. We later realized that we had not looked at the hygiene implications of a girl using another person's mattress. The headmistress made it a condition that we ensure all mattresses are covered with a plastic sheet before we use them adding more stress to an already difficult situation. We did it but it took us the whole night to have the mattresses covered.

What is unique/Different in your event?

Many a time we have always treaded on familiar ground and our campaigns have brought no new dimensions to our efforts. Alternative Rites Of Passage (AROP) are not

new in this country and elsewhere. The Kuria one however was unique in many ways:

1. Traditional AROPS take only 2 to 3 days. This time is too short for the girls to comprehend and internalize the concepts behind FGM. Ours was an enhanced programme and took a period of two weeks. There was enough time for the participants to share and provide support to each other, but more importantly, enough time to make the AROP a learning process as opposed to a one off event.
2. Other AROPS are normally faced with serious issues of Run Away girls who attend the event without getting due consent from the parents. Reconciling such girls with their parents after the 'successful events' has been a nightmare. In our case, we started with effective parent sensitization. Parents understood the concept. We went a step further and insisted that any girl coming to the camp must have a written consent from the parents, allowing her to attend the AROP, and a commitment that the parent will accept back the girl, and will protect her against the vice. We can happily report that not a single case of run away was reported to the committee after the event. All girls were accepted back to their parents ensuring both parents and girls participate in the process of challenging FGM.
3. The event focused widely on using role models and guest speakers to talk to the girls and to share their personal experiences with the girls. We had the Lady Mayor of Kehancha Municipal Council, Christine from Fida Kenya, Dr Lwenya from AAK, and Patricia Parsitao from an FGM Practicing Community, Lucy Githaiga from the Gender and Governance Programme, Jane and Silke Glaab from GTZ. We also had the Resident Magistrate, District Commissioner, District Childrens Officer, District Education Officer etc emphasising the need to have girls' rights protected. This was a deviation from what happens in many other AROPS.

Did you involve all the stakeholders, and did you listen to criticism?

For us, the honest answer to this critical question is No.

After the event came to an end, we began getting comments about what we should have done to make the event even more meaningful. These are comments we should have sought for even before organizing the event!

One logical critique was centred around the venue where the event was organized. The community and parents agreed that holding the event in the target areas of Ntimaru and Kegonga (where FGM rituals were taking place) would have sent the message more clearly than taking away the girls from their local environment where everyone would be able to appreciate the role of the AROP.

Secondly there were questions about the name of the programme (AROP). In the strict sense of the word, what we had was not an alternative to AROP, but a forum to share with the girls, and provide them with more information and skills to make informed choices about their reproductive health. The sessions went beyond FGM and covered the entire array of reproductive health and life skills, with FGM being only a component.

Do you provide follow up after the event?

In our case we did. We actually went ahead and developed a data base for all the girls at registration that included the name of the girl, age, school, church, pastors name, location, sub location, class amongst other details.

It was then easy to trace the children individually to their respective schools and homes.

Our follow up revealed that only 17 out of the 249 girls went back and underwent circumcision for various reasons. (Coincidentally, majority of these came from the group that was not invited officially for the Camp). The reasons are being analyzed and the facilitators have orga-

nized themselves into a team that will look into various aspects of the exercise that will then inform our next AROP to make it more meaningful. We went a step further and verified whether any of the following influence the chances that the child attends the event and later undergoes the rite: age of the child, denomination, type of school, type of family, age of the parents, literacy levels of the parents.

This will be the second part of the follow-up and is set to begin once schools open in early May 2005.

Did you address other aspects surrounding the campaign issue?

In our case, we attempted to address the surrounding issues that go with FGM and other forms of child abuse in the district. It is a fact that justice for children in the district is never fully achieved partially because of the environment against which children give evidence. We looked at the court room environment. The accused has to look at the child complainant in the eyes. For most people, including adults, this creates fear in the witness, and thus lowering the quality of evidence. No wonder many child related offences do not hold to sustain a conviction. We have therefore collaborated with the magistrates court at Kehancha, and we are supporting the improvement of the court rooms to make it child friendly. We will have soft paintings on the walls of the court room. We have set up a one way glass on the dock so that the accused can clearly see the complaining child and yet the child cannot clearly see the accused. We will have the magistrate sit at the same level as the child just to lessen the power over impression of the current court set ups. The magistrate has even gone ahead to set up specific days for child cases to avoid too many adults milling around the courts which further intimidates the children.

Perhaps the biggest lesson has been that every thing we do needs to be questioned more and more. There are lessons to learn from all our processes, no matter how small or big. It is these lessons that help us improve our future work. There is no doubt that many of the lessons from this years AROP has helped improve our anti-FGM work.

Going beyond the ‘visible’

Challenging power relations

LOVENNA AKINYI

Mama Mary of Mt. Elgon DI says that she feels “empowered” a lot because of AAKs training and exposure. *“I am now the local chief and my husband respects that. I am able to go to work every day. I also help to sort out community issues almost daily. But when I go back home, I have to behave like an African woman. I have to humble myself, I have to cook for him because this is his home.”*

Mama Eunice of Mt.Elgon says *“We are now more knowledgeable. We plant trees or vegetables in between coffee trees unlike before. For us, this is a big success. However, my husband uses the vegetables to feed another woman elsewhere. He never sleeps with her. My group also has an income generating activity. We are involved in rearing of local (Kienyeji) chicken. My husband has now allowed me to keep the chicken in this home unlike other men. However, some times he comes home and asks me to slaughter the best*

cock...and you see I cannot refuse because he is my husband, he is the father of my children.” Says Eunice. *“One day he came home drunk and uprooted the trees that we had planted claiming that we had become hard headed.”*

These may be considered success or non-success stories by different people at different levels. For Mama Eunice’s, being allowed by the husband to plant trees and grow vegetables between coffee trees is really a step ahead. The same applies to the Chief who has become a leader in a community where administrative work has mainly been a male domain.

However, supporting a husband and his other wife is two steps backwards for Mama Eunice. The chief has to ‘behave’ and ‘act’ like a woman and wife when she is at home. So where does empowerment begin and where does it end for Mama Eunice, the Chief and several other

Abanyala woman and culture: patriarchy at all levels

MARY SIGEI KOMBICH

Aboy child is traditionally preferred because he is considered to be more valuable. Even nutritionally the boy child is fed better because the community believes that “boys are very active and their bodies require more food.” This all expresses preference for boys over girls. This scenario goes alongside the one where a woman is not allowed to eat certain parts of chicken such as Imondo (gizzard). Analysis by the research coordinator found that the Imondo and Isuri are considered the sweetest part of the chicken. Besides permissions that needs to be sought by women to attend to Barazas (community meetings) still signifies the husband’s fears in letting women acquire more knowledge, ideas and skills. Ultimately Abanyala woman remains poor because of a deep rooted culture of male dominance, marginalization, ignorance, low literacy level that all conspire to make their welfare extremely unmanageable.

Community-based participatory research for sustainable development

JULIUS MUCHEMI

Julius Muchemi from Erima consulting recently conducted in a research exercise in Kuria DI to compile a comprehensive case history of land evictions that took place in the area over a decade ago. Below, he shares his experience on making research more participatory.

Our rural communities are the greatest researchers of sustainable development in modern times. The current challenge to sustainable development is empowerment of rural communities to take a leading role in determining the course of action on problems affecting their livelihood.

‘One way of solving this problem is by devolving scientific research techniques to levels where communities can integrate their traditional knowledge and expertise into these scientific frameworks to finding solutions to problems affecting their livelihoods’.

Put differently, scientists must devise mechanisms for devolving their empirical techniques and approaches to solution finding, to community-based traditional structures of solution finding.

‘The scientific research schema to guide community approach to research include defining the problem, constructing hypothesis, statement of research objectives and purpose, identification and review of relevant literature, designing methods and materials for data collection and analysis, determining appropriate presentation format of research findings, drawing of conclusions and determining recommendations for interventions, and finally design the interventions for eventual implementation of the recommendation’.

The vehicle for devolving this empirical research schema is by use of a family of participatory tools primarily designed for community development.

women who feel that they have been ‘empowered?’ Is this the level of empowerment that we are trying to achieve or have we left things hanging?

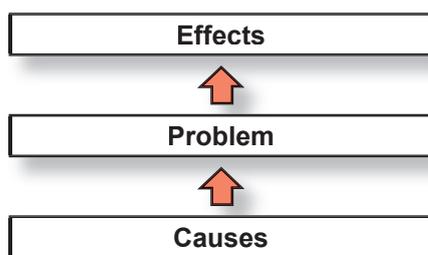
Going beyond the “visible” and establishing what empowerment really means is what is most important. What are the changes in women’s lives? Who makes decisions and who enjoys the benefits? Where does power really lie even at individual level? We should not be satisfied by “visible” participation of women just because women seem to be managing a poultry project or an income generating activity. The real test is whether power relations between men and women have changed. Of course, this is a longer term process, - but also too easy for us to lose sight of.

'The commonly used participatory tools are those designed for such processes as participatory rural approaches and participatory integrated community development processes.

These tools must be used with a lot of flexibility depending on factors such as the community's cultural values, local security situation and others as they can elicit the wrong results or be resented altogether by the community. As a rule of thumb, let every thought be guided by the watchwords **'let the community choose for themselves'**.

To ensure that it is the community's choice the facilitator of the research should always ask **'TO WHOM DOES IT BELONG TO'** be it a tool or a set of data or information.

'Most researchers are usually overwhelmed by the terms of reference which usually are drawn from a business and legal point of view to ensure the highest empirical value for money spent on the research. As such, the researcher jumps in the research exercise using the brightest scientific research paradigm as a way of proving their scientific competence and prowess'.



Such scholarly research approaches usually produces theoretical findings that hang somewhere in the space between the researcher and the community with each of them not knowing what to do with the document.

Problem identification

Participatory research should be designed from the community view point. Development organizations should be attentive to the cries of the communities at various levels. The cries could be of socio-economic plights or need for biodiversity conservation.

Once the community has expressed their problem they should be engaged into brainstorming sessions to analyze the problem in greater depth. The process should enable a common definition of the problem by both the researcher and the community.

Developing research objectives and hypothesis

Can communities formulate research objectives and hypothesis? If so, just how can they be engaged to do so? The community, when well guided can formulate objectives and research hypothesis to guide the study.

In scientific research methodologies, a clear set of testable research objectives and hypothesis are usually developed so as to guide the planning and conducting of the research project. A hypothesis is an 'educated guess' about the possible explanations or solutions to the problems.

The communities are taken through a session of problem analysis to establish the cause-effect relationship. It is imperative to formulate hypothesis that addresses both the explanation and solutions to the problem.

Community literature review

The literacy level of community is never homogenous. The elites of any given community act as custodians of information and literature. They will look for and keep track and traces of any report made about the community.

The report could be in the form of a whole document or extracts of newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets or correspondences.

The elites also know the sources of these literature and the custodial locations. These track and traces should be followed as they can provide very useful information about the circumstances surrounding the issues being investigated.

The Kuria eviction victims reported that land issues had never been covered by the media like other places within the country where tribal clashes took place. They however claimed since their land issues resembles others land issues in the country, literature about other places could shed light into the nature of their evictions. However they noted that the difference was that the dispossession of their land was instigated by the Maasai community. The evictions were orchestrated by the government security unlike other areas in Kenya. As such they recommended that a search be done in the international circles to see whether there has been a similar incidence of government perpetrating dispossession of ancestral domains. They pointed out that the late catholic priest Father John Kaiser had lamented and taken a leading role in condemning the incidence calling it violation of human rights and abuse of power by government. They cited the *'Newslime Magazine', vol. No 012 of September 4-17, 2000* as containing the story of Father Kaiser and his concerns about Kuria evictions and other incidences of tribal clashes. They said that the magazine could serve as relevant literature. They further indicated that government archives might be containing official government or individual documents that could shed light into historical relations between Kuria and Maasai communities. They also indicated that archival maps exist showing the boundaries that were put by the German and British colonial government.

Though it may not be scientifically constructed, if well documented, it can be brought into scientific standards as the new research document could serve as a formal source of literature for other works.

Sampling the respondents

Scientifically errors in sampling procedures can distort research findings and lead to false conclusions.

To avoid biases in the selection of research respondents which could be rooted in the social, cultural, economical and political underpinnings, the researcher should request for mandate from the community to select the respondents. However, it is important for the researcher to disclose the methodology that has been used in the selection of the respondent.

Developing tools for the research

Proponents of scientific research methodologies have noted that the basis of obtaining useful research results is adequate, objective and reliable data. Appropriate, well-defined tools are necessary to collect the required data. Several tools within the social research can be used to accomplish this purpose and include:

interview schedule, questionnaires, observations, tests, checklists, and rating.

The victims recommended field visits to the disputed land by the researcher, witness and photograph evidences of their occupancy of the disputed land.

Tools for data collection: The tools for data collection that the eviction victims in Kuria district suggested were a reflection of this fact. The victims suggested that the research team be guided by old men who knew the ancestral claims of the evicted victims. To ascertain the historical residence of the victims in Transmara, they suggested that official documents showing services such as trade, religious functions, police and administrative notices, medical services be gathered from the eviction victims. These, they suggested, should be photocopied for documentation.

The community outlined the evidence to be photographed to include: graves, sites where houses were constructed, partially buried pit latrines, foundation of the destroyed primary school where the victims children were attending school, abandoned farms, standing exotic trees, live fences, and cultural sites among others.

However, in participatory research the recommendation is to **'LET THE COMMUNITY DO IT'** and just what and how they do it and what they produce is a function of the facilitative skills of the researcher.

The tools suggested by the community do not always agree with the scientifically ascribed tools. The difference is that communities have a more verbal and visual mind...

The community is led into brainstorming sessions to suggest the tools they would want to be used to collect data for testing their hypothesis on the explanations and solutions to their problem. The guide to the process of developing participatory tools for the research is by supporting processes that generate data that can be used to answer the research questions derived from the hypothesis. The community should be led into brainstorming sessions to come up with the data that would be required to answer each research question and the tools to be used to collect each type of data. This is the crux of the participatory data collection. It makes the community to willingly answer research questions and supply additional information that would rather be withheld due to social and individual reservations. Just how the tools are applied in the study is like how a 'forked hoe' is used to cultivate a crop farm. It requires the selection of crops from weeds, roots and soils, and beneficial and harmful organisms to the crop and to the weeds. In essence it relies on the facilitative skills of the researcher.

The tools suggested by the community do not always agree with the scientifically ascribed tools. The difference is that communities have a more verbal and visual mind exemplified by historical narratives, graphical and spatial illustrations, and physical landmarks as opposed to the systematic documentation process of formal institutions.

Ancestral claims

Through the use of sketch maps the communities can easily illustrate such information as contentious issues over ancestral claims; traditional phenomenon with spatial patterns; and spatial arrangements of socio-cultural, economic and political issues.

To most professionals sketch maps do not sound very scientific and would rather use spatial technologies such as thematic maps, satellite images, aerial photographs, GIS software and GPS gadgets to develop correctly reference maps. However, the power of sketch maps to capture historical socio-cultural data is unprecedented.

In order to collect data on claims over ancestral territories, the community suggested that the old men be engaged in identifying the features that delineate their domains. They further suggested development of sketch maps of their areas which should be used to challenge the colonial and adjudication survey boundaries that dispossessed them of their historical inheritance.

Plights of the eviction

The community, in expressing the impacts of eviction on victims, suggested that individuals be asked questions that would enable determination of property lost, injuries suffered, rape and defilement incidences, and people killed. This led to the development of questionnaires that communities were ready to answer as they identified issues they could handle individually. They further suggested that since the communities were living miserably due to the evictions, the researcher could visit them in their rescue clustered villages. They recommended that photographs be taken to serve as evidence of the current sufferings. This enabled the integration of household observations, photography and video coverage with the field visits.

Initiation of the Research

It is expedient for any research done on issues that affects the livelihood of local communities to be brought to attention of the various stakeholders involved with community

development initiatives. Such stakeholder would include community members –ordinary members and elders, civic leaders, government administrators and representatives of religious organizations and non governmental organizations. The best way is to identify all the formal and informal institutions prior to contacting them.

A team to oversee the entire research should be constituted from all the stakeholders representatives. The team should be of reasonable size to ease management and decision making. The team role would be to: create awareness, mobilize the community members for specific research activities, safeguard the interests of the community, advise the external researchers on the imperatives of community dynamism that might interfere with the research process, settle disputes and any other unforeseen incidental issues to the research process.

Awareness creation

When starting the research the team overseeing the research is taken through awareness creation workshop to spell out the terms of reference for the research. The terms of reference should spell out details on the inception of the research, the design of the research, the implementation of the entire research process, the people to be used to collect data, logistical requirements from the stakeholders, how the stakeholders will be involved with the research, external researchers to undertake the research and dissemination of the research findings and further action.

In Kuria two types of workshops were conducted to create awareness on the research. The first workshop was done with the eviction victims to seek mandate to assist them in investigating the land issues facing them despite the fact that they had approached ActionAid International Kenya for the same. This was to find out whether there was a harmonized agreement on the need to undertake the study.

Capacity building

The capacity of the local researchers chosen to assist the community in collection of data

needs to be developed. They need to be transformed from discrete individuals to a team of local research assistants. The process entails integration of basic cognitive knowledge into the discipline under which the research topic falls so as to collect data with understanding of the subject. Further they need to be trained in participatory research with special emphasis on scientific research framework to be used to guide the research and the participatory approaches to be used to deliver the research framework.

Responsibilities should be well distributed to ensure equitable involvement of members of the teams and adequate coverage of all the research tasks.

The team of research assistants should then be taken through the content of the tools to understand the content and approach of delivering the tools. Research ethics should be emphasized to ensure integrity of the individual research assistants, confidentiality of research data and protection of respondents' ego. The team should conduct some pilot research to test their competence, familiarize themselves with the tools and assess the quality of the tools in gathering adequate, objective and reliable data. The dummy sample could be preferably the team overseeing the entire research. The pilot phase helps to coach the research assistants and to refine the tools.

Planning of data collection

Once all the components of the research process are adequately prepared, a program should be developed with the two teams –research assistants and research overseers with consideration of socio-economic calendars and diary of community activities. The team of research overseers should consult with the community members to ensure their availability and that there is an enabling environment. Responsibilities should be well distributed to

ensure equitable involvement of members of the teams and adequate coverage of all the research tasks.

Data analysis

'Scientific ways of data analysis entail the use of statistical tools which can be classified as either descriptive or inferential. Descriptive statistical tools include mean, median, and standard deviation and are used to describe a group of subjects. Inferential statistical tools include parametric and non-parametric tools and are used to draw inferences concerning the relationships and differences found in research results. Inferential statistical tools include analysis of variance, Chi-square, Correlation coefficient, F-test, Mean, multiple regression analysis, standard deviation, T-test, Z-test and computer as a tool.'

Communities have their own analytical ways to analyze the diverse data they collect in their day to day or historical incidences and episodes.

Communities have their own analytical ways to analyze the diverse data they collect in their day to day or historical incidences and episodes.

The same knowledge can be used and applied to analyze data at a certain level. Scientific framework for data analysis can be used to enhance traditional tactic of data analysis. In most instances the community needs to know the process, credibility of the team analyzing their data and be prepared for the outcome. However, it is important to integrate representatives of the community in the process of data analysis to enhance representation of the community.

Presentation of research findings

Scientists use different data presentation formats to communicate the results derived from data analysis. These formats could be narratives or graphical. Graphical formats include tables, charts, diagrams and maps which have an advantage of being visually appealing and making it easy for users to see comparisons, patterns, and trends in data.

Presentation of research findings should be done using community friendly tools. It is commonly said that 'a picture is worth more than a thousand words'. When communicating research findings to communities it is advisable to use community friendly formats such as graphics, photographs and video shoots which enhance the understanding of the local communities.

Presentation of research finding should be done in well designed dissemination forums with adequate representation of the different interest groups, socio-categories and gender. To ensure adequate dissemination of research findings to all the different community socio- strata it is advisable to set up a dissemination team. From the ongoing discussion a team referred to as 'research overseeing team' formed at the inception of the research could be used to devolve the research findings due to its familiarity with the research process.

The final document containing research findings should be deposited to institutions identified by the community to offer the custodial responsibility so that they can access it as they wish.

J.G. Muchemi; ERMIS Africa P.O. BOX 12327 Nakuru, Kenya;
Tel. +254-(0)51 2213323, +254-720 703 606/735-226972;
email: muchemijg@yahoo.com, www.ermisafrica.org

International Development Centre

The Poverty Studies Centre has a new name: The International Development Centre (IDC). This is part of the transformation process currently underway that will see the IDC become a valuable one stop resource for Civil Society Organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. The name change reflects our Vision to create a world class centre for sharing, developing, learning and the transformation of development thinking and practice. We seek to enhance the capacities of Civil Society Organizations by providing facilities and services that enable continuous learning, innovation and sharing in the fight against poverty.

We value your thoughts or ideas on how we can achieve our Vision. An easy to read information pack on the ideas behind the International Development Centre (IDC) is available online at:

<http://www.kenyalink.org/mwangaza/idc>

Our current training products are still on offer. Please contact us for more information or fill in the enclosed form.

Who Counts? campaign

Who Counts? is an initiative launched in April 2005 by Mango, a UK registered charity. Mango exists to help NGOs strengthen their financial management by providing training, carefully selected finance staff and guides to good practice.

MANGO launched the *Who Counts?* campaign because of its experience that NGOs often aim to increase accountability to beneficiaries, but find it hard to deliver it in practice.

Who Counts? is part of Mango's contribution to *makepovertyhistory*, under the "Better Aid" banner. It also links with the Commission for Africa's call for greater transparency in the use of public funding and flows of money to African states. Who Counts? is just as relevant for those concerned about the efficient and effective use of the unprecedented funds made available to NGOs following the Asian Tsunami Disaster.

MANGO believe that financial reporting to beneficiaries is a simple and important way for NGOs to improve their impact, and that all NGOs should do it unless there is a clear reason not to.

If you agree that financial reporting to beneficiaries is important, then please SIGN UP and join the campaign at <http://www.whocounts.org>. You will receive up to date information, and also strengthen the movement pushing for good practice in the NGO sector.

For more information please visit the website or contact whocounts@mango.org.uk or phone Alex Jacobs on +44 (0) 1865 433885

About the contributors

Ashish Shah	Regional Coordinator ActionAid International Kenya, Western Region
Adera Musyula	Regional Accountant ActionAid International Kenya, Western Region
Cecil Agutu	Policy Research Coordinator ActionAid International Kenya, Western Region
Dalausi Ouma	Regional Driver, ActionAid Kenya, Western Region
Emma Odundo	Programme Coordinator ActionAid Kenya, Budalangi DI
Eric Kilongi	Communications Coordinator ActionAid International Kenya
Francis Satia	Programme Coordinator ActionAid Kenya, Mount Elgon DI
George Oginga	Community Development Facilitator ActionAid International Kenya, Usigu DI
Julius Muchemi	ERMIS Africa
Lovenna Akinyi	HIV/AIDS and Gender Coordinator ActionAid International Kenya, Western Region
Lucas Chacha	Programme Coordinator ActionAid International Kenya, Kuria DI
Mary Sigei Kombich	Programme Assistant ActionAid International Kenya, Budalangi DI
Norah Ogutu	Programme Coordinator Homa Hills Community Development Organization
Phebeans Oriaro	Programme Coordinator ActionAid International Kenya, Usigu DI

Mwangaza enquiry form

Please provide us with some information about yourself

Name:

Organisation:

Telephone:

Email:

Postal:

City:

Country:

Are you inquiring in your personal capacity or organisational capacity:

Please state how we can help you

I would like like to:

subscribe to mwangaza

be put onto your mailing list

get more information about off-site training courses for 2005

make other enquiry (please state)

Please choose the off site training product(s) you are interested in

NB: we will only provide trainers, training materials and course content for off-site services. Participant accommodation and training venue must be provided by the client.

Course	No of people you wish to book for	Please specify date(s) you would like us to conduct this training*
Poverty Internalisation		
Community Organisation/Leadership		
Micro-Enterprise		
Business Skills		
Proposal Writing and Fundraising		
Child Rights		
Financial Management		
Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation		
Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)		
Project Management		
Rights Based Approach		

* Off-site training courses will be offered on first come-first served basis

Postal: P.O. Box 4572, Kisumu, Kenya
Telephone: +254 (0)57 62245/62016/62239/62227
Fax: +254 (0)57 62239
Email: mwangaza@kenyalink.org
Physical: Off Kisumu-Kakamega Road, before
Kiboswa Market, see sign board