

Participatory Development Planning

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Tool summary

Similar to participatory policy-making (Tool, F2) participatory development planning is more of a general approach than a specific 'tool'. It can be defined on the basis of a general set of principles, notable amongst which are: a willingness to involve local people in the development decisions that will affect them; and a desire to support locally-led development and empowerment as seen in the 'best practice' cases,. Although it can take the form of a one-off exercise, the approach brings much greater benefits and more sustained impact if it is adopted as part of a broader commitment to participatory development. In other words, the participatory planning process should ideally be followed by a participatory approach for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the development activities.

What is it?

The core aims of participatory development planning are to give people a say in the development decisions that may affect them and to ensure that development interventions are appropriate to the needs and preferences of the population that they are intended to benefit.

Participatory development planning can be undertaken by government agencies or other development agencies and CSOs at the national, regional, municipal or community level. Most of the methods and tools are inexpensive and simple to use and many have been designed for use with or by community members and do not require literacy.

The types of stakeholders participating in this approach can range from rural or urban local communities, community-based organizations and other CSOs in the for local development planning, to larger CSOs, international NGOs, the private sector, and the academia, in the case of national or even regional development planning. The level of stakeholder participation varies greatly depending on how seriously the approach is being taken, and can range from minimal i.e. involvement only in information-gathering or consultation to more active forms such as for e.g. in identifying, prioritizing and designing the development program/activities.

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While participatory development planning is generally initiated by the government or development agency involved, there are also opportunities for CSOs to take the lead. For example, there are many instances where NGOs have organized and facilitated participatory action research to help development decision-makers learn about local needs and preferences in order to plan locally-appropriate interventions. Other CSO-led approaches that are outlined in the subsequent sections of this article include: awareness-raising and mobilizing of communities and citizens to encourage them to get involved in development planning processes; building the capacity of local-level stakeholders to participate in these processes; and campaigning for or against particular development interventions. In the best of instances, long-term working relationships develop between, for example local government offices and NGOs or development agencies and the communities in which they work, to enable the planning to benefit from the knowledge and experience of the different stakeholder groups. These linkages may take the form of formal partnerships between the parties involved or informal arrangements based on mutual trust.

There is a vast array of tools available for participatory development planning. The following list illustrates some of the more commonly used ones:

- *Information-sharing tools:* News and updates on a participatory planning process can be transmitted via traditional media such as newspaper, radio, and television or electronic media such as websites and emails or via meetings and presentations with the communities in a given geographical area..
- *Consultation tools:* Stakeholders who are either interested in or likely to be affected by the development decisions can be consulted through discussion forums such as round tables, public hearings, town meetings, community debates, focus groups, or electronic conferencing, surveys, opinion polls etc.
- *Collaborative planning tools:* These include: structural mechanisms such as stakeholder representation on decision-making bodies, establishment of local-level planning committees, participatory budgeting, or finance schemes to fund community-managed development; technology-based tools such as [participatory GIS](#) (Geographic Information System) or [3-D modeling](#); and process methods like [participatory action research](#) and [community planning](#) based on [Participatory Learning and Action \(PLA\)](#) such as community mapping, priority ranking and wealth ranking.

How is it done?

Since many of tools listed here are described elsewhere in the CIVICUS toolkit, this section will focus on a generic process to show how a government or development agency can involve local communities in planning interventions while also providing information how CSOs can initiate their own activities to promote participatory development planning. This section will illustrate the use of 'process' methods rather than 'structural' methods as categorized above. Readers interested in learning more about the structural methods may for e.g. refer to example, [Barns \(2003\)](#) or [Howard \(2002\)](#).

Participatory development planning has received a major fillip on account of the decentralization reforms that seeks to bestow local governments with more responsibilities and makes them more accountable to their citizens (See for example [Goldman & Abbot -2004](#), [Kang -2002](#) and [Republic of Uganda -2003](#) which provide good guidance for local governments wishing to undertake participatory planning).² Decentralization legislation often sets legal requirements for citizen participation in local government planning such as for e.g. the Bolivian Law of Popular Participation. Numerous participatory mechanisms have been developed to involve citizens in setting the development strategies of the local government and deciding on resource allocation (see for e.g. [Imperial- 2001](#) and [Bitarabeho- 2008](#)). However, decentralization can also bring challenges to local planning, particularly if local governments lack the funds or capacity to carry out their new responsibilities. In such contexts, CSOs can have a major role to play in supporting sound and participatory development planning by articulating local needs, mobilizing greater resources, and building the capacity of local government staff to use participatory methods and approaches.

Methodological steps involved in a government-led participatory development planning process

In order to make participatory development planning more effective, the government body or the development agency needs to link the participatory process and the outcomes of this process to its own planning framework. It is often difficult to integrate and synchronize these different planning systems, particularly where different levels of government administration are also involved. Government-driven participatory processes can adopt either a long or short term approach. The longer-term approach involves several months of participatory research, negotiation and debate (see [Goldman & Abbot, 2004](#)). An example of the longer-term approach is provided in the Brazil case study in the last section of this article.

The short term approach involves community-based planning process spanning one to two weeks that can be replicated with relative ease using the available resources of the government body/development agency. Such an approach involves the following steps:

- Design of an integrated planning system by combining the community-component with the more conventional planning framework used by the government/development agency;
- Situational analysis of the area including variables such as poverty levels, distribution of ethnic groups, presence of CSOs, etc.
- Selection of pilot communities based on the situational analysis to test the participatory planning methods and introduction of the proposed planning exercise to the communities through meetings with local leaders and the community members;
- Training of community-level facilitators and government/development agency staff in the participatory methods through field-based workshops;
- Planning and implementation of community-level planning by small teams of trained community members and government/agency staff working in each community. These may include participatory methods such as visioning, ranking, livelihoods analysis, etc.;
- Feedback to communities of the outcomes of the planning processes and how these will be taken forward by the government/agency involved;
- Analysis of outcomes of all the community-level planning exercises and identification of key issues;
- Participatory workshop(s) or task forces involving community representatives and government/agency staff and decision-makers to draw up development plans based on the outcomes of the community-level planning plus other sources of information like secondary data, market surveys, capacity assessments etc.;
- Presentation workshops to highlight the process and outcomes to the decision-makers of the government body/development agency and other external stakeholders like partners, donors, etc.; and
- Development of follow-up actions including plans for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process using similar participatory techniques.

CSO-led tools to support participatory planning

CSOs can help promote and facilitate participatory planning in many ways such as for e.g.:

- **Campaigns:** CSOs can organize campaigns to influence development planning by actively supporting certain initiatives like for e.g. the provision of basic services to poor communities or demanding the withdrawal or revision of other inappropriately planned initiatives.
- **Mobilizing communities:** CSOs can play a key role in mobilizing communities and citizens to encourage them to get involved in development planning processes. This could include for example in raising the awareness of local people about particular development issues and building their capacity to seek outside action as well as taking their own actions to address the pertinent issues (see for example [PACT Tanzania -2006](#), [International HIV/AIDS Alliance - 2006](#) and [Kang -2002](#)).

Benefits

The benefits of participatory development planning include (adapted from [CIFOR -2007](#) and [IDS Resources](#)):

- **Strengthened voice:** Participatory planning processes can give people, particularly the poor and marginalized sectors of the population, more voice and influence over development decisions;
- **Better informed plans:** By consulting those whose needs the plans are meant to fulfill, the resultant development interventions are more likely to be relevant and appropriate to those needs;
- **Strengthened capacity of citizens:** Through their involvement in participatory planning activities, local people and CSOs can learn more about the decision-making processes of government bodies and can acquire valuable skills for identifying, analyzing and prioritizing development issues, and for articulating their needs and concerns to the relevant authorities;
- **Strengthened capacity of governments:** Government staff involved in participatory development planning can not only learn about the use of participatory methods and approaches but can also benefit from a 'reality-check' by seeing for themselves the conditions of the local people and the relevance of existing or planned development interventions;



- *Better understanding:* By working together, different stakeholder groups can develop mutual understanding and trust among themselves and can learn how to collaborate on any follow-up activities and any future joint initiatives;
- *Enhanced transparency and accountability:* Participatory planning processes open up the operations of government and development agencies to public scrutiny and help set up mechanisms whereby these agencies are held accountable for the implementation of the plans; and
- *Strengthened democracy:* Participatory development planning can create processes that are more democratic and equitable, enabling the citizens to share decision-making power with their locally elected representatives and other external agencies.

Challenges and lessons

The challenges and risks associated with participatory development planning include:

- *Time and money:* The participatory techniques themselves are as such inexpensive to use. However, the overall planning process can require a considerable staff time and resources on the part of the government or development agency, especially if it involves extensive preparatory activities like information campaigns and training of facilitators, and the convening of large multi-stakeholder meetings. For local stakeholders, their participation can have significant costs in terms of their time and effort, particularly if they need to forego any wages or sacrifice time spent on subsistence activities.
- *Resistance and manipulation:* Some groups or individuals involved in the participatory planning process may find it difficult to accept the collaborative decision-making approach. For example the government decision-makers may feel threatened that their responsibilities and power are being undermined and may become obstacles to the process (see [Co et al. -2004](#)). Other stakeholders may try and manipulate the process to push their own agendas.
- *Bypassing existing planning structures:* If participatory approaches are not carefully integrated into formal planning frameworks, they can undermine these existing structures thereby risking conflict and a poor receptivity of the outputs of the participatory planning on the part of public authorities.

- *Scaling-up risks:* The success of participatory approaches relies on their adaptability to different situations. Therefore, when governments or development agencies attempt to replicate and standardize the use of such approaches on a large scale, there is a risk that the participatory element will become negligible or even meaningless.

- *Tips for effective participatory development:*
 - Involve decision-makers from the start: This is essential to foster a sense of ownership for the outcomes of the participatory planning process, and will also help in enabling these key stakeholders to learn the value of involving local people in decision-making;
 - Plan for micro-macro linkages: Before starting a participatory planning process, thought needs to be given as to how it will link with the larger-level planning processes of the government or the concerned development agency;
 - Provide extra support to marginalized groups: Special efforts need to be made to enable disadvantaged groups to participate in the planning process. These efforts may include for example: arranging special focus group meetings with different social groups; employing female facilitators to work with women's groups; providing transport for poorer groups to attend meetings outside the community; and compensating day labourers for wages lost due to their participation in planning sessions. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that participation is not obligatory. Everyone should have the right to participate but not everyone may have the time or interest to do so;
 - Respect differences of opinion: Different stakeholders will have different, and sometimes conflicting, values and interests and it will be impossible to satisfy all the needs expressed. Rather than seeking an artificial or forced consensus, it is important to strengthen the capacity of weaker groups to articulate their needs and concerns. An excellent guide on participatory methods for analyzing and managing power relationships in multi-stakeholder groups is provided by [Sithole \(2002\)](#) and [Mayers \(2005\)](#).
 - Follow-up with local stakeholders: One of the most common complaints of communities involved in participatory planning processes is the failure of those organizing such activities to report back on the outcomes of the process. The commitment to inform the communities should be followed up as soon as possible after the conclusion of community-based activities.

Key resources

Barns, J. (2003). *Engaged governance: an overview of the Philippines experience*. Paper prepared for the Interregional Workshop on Engaged Governance, Colombo, Sri Lanka, December 9-11, 2003.

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN014414.pdf>

☞ This is a paper that looks at the provisions for citizen participation in local planning in the Philippines, through Local Development Councils and other bodies.

Bitarabeho, J. (2008). *The Experience of Uganda – Local Government’s Role as a Partner in the Decentralization Process to Strengthen Local Development*. Local Government Finance Commission, Uganda. Paper Presented to the Conference on Access to Development Funding for Local Governments in Africa, Johannesburg, 15 – 17 September 2008.

http://www.lgfc.go.ug/uploaded_files/1221550727A%20Paper%20on%20the%20Experience%20of%20Decentralisation%20in%20Uganda.pdf

☞ This paper outlines how decentralization in Uganda has been accompanied by measures to ensure participatory planning.

CIFOR. (2007). *Towards Wellbeing in Forest Communities: A sourcebook for local government*. CIFOR, Bogor.

http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/publications/pdf_files/Books/BAIborno0701.pdf

☞ A practical guide that includes a section on participatory planning and monitoring, with tools such as interactive mapping and scenario-based planning.

Co, E., Velasco-Fabonan, J., Nishimori, J.P. (2004). *Some experiences from the Philippines in urban community development planning*. In PLA Notes 49, April 2004. IIED, London.

http://www.planotes.org/documents/plan_04910.pdf

☞ This article outlines three pilot participatory urban planning activities in the Philippines, led by a national NGO and closely involving local government officials.

Eldis (no date) *Resource guide on participation*.

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/participation>

☞ A web portal with a huge content of participation-related material, including manuals, case studies and links to other resources, many of which are of direct relevance to participatory development planning.

FAO (no date). *‘Participation’ website*.



http://www.fao.org/Participation/ft_find.jsp

☞ This site is a 'one-stop shop' for information on participatory approaches. It includes a searchable library covering a wide range of issues and numerous case studies, and a comprehensive section on participatory approaches and tools, in both English and French (type 'planning' in the search box to access those tools most relevant to participatory development planning). It also includes databases on organizations and other websites for further information.

Florisbelo, G. R., and Guijt, I. (2004). Municipal rural development plans in Brazil: working within the politics of participation. In PLA Notes 49, April 2004. IIED, London.

http://www.planotes.org/documents/plan_04912.pdf

☞ This article describes how a Brazilian NGO has developed a participatory process for elaborating municipal rural development plans and overseeing their implementation.

Goldman, I. and Abbot, J. (2004). Decentralization and Participatory Planning. In PLA Notes 49, April 2004.

http://www.planotes.org/documents/plan_04901.pdf

☞ An overview article for this issue of PLA Notes (an informal journal on participatory techniques and approaches) that focuses on community-based planning linked to government planning systems.

Halkatti, M., Purushothaman, S. and Brook, R. (2003). Participatory action planning in the peri-urban interface: the twin city experience, Hubli–Dharwad, India. In *Environment and Urbanization* 15: 149. Sage Publications and IIED, London.

http://km.fao.org/uploads/media/Participatory_actionplanning_in_the_periurban_interface_twincity_experience_Hubli_Dharwad_India.pdf

☞ This paper describes a participatory planning project in five peri-urban areas, managed by an agricultural university and its NGO and community-based organization partners.

Hardcastle, J., Rambaldi, G., Long, B., Lanh, L.V., and Son, D.Q. (2004). *The use of participatory three-dimensional modelling in community-based planning in Quang Nam province, Vietnam*. In PLA Notes 49, April 2004. IIED, London.
<http://library.wur.nl/wda/dissertations/dis3970.pdf>

☞ This report is a description of the project in Quang Nam Province that used Participatory Land Use Planning methodology

Howard, J. (2002). [Original title unknown] MPhil Thesis, IDS, Sussex.
http://www2.ids.ac.uk/logolink/resources/downloads/PPcase_studies/Nicaragua-Esteli1.doc

☞ An extract of this thesis is provided in the IDS Logolink site (see below) as an example of participatory planning. The brief extract outlines the legal provisions for citizen participation in municipal planning in Nicaragua.

IAPAD (no date). *Participatory Three-Dimensional Modelling*.
http://www.iapad.org/participatory_p3dm.htm

☞ This website discusses the rationale and applications of 3-D modeling and includes numerous case studies and tips and advice on how to use this tool.

IDS (no date). *Participatory Planning Topic Pack. Logolink: Learning Initiative on Citizen Participation and Local Governance*.
<http://www2.ids.ac.uk/logolink/resources/topicpack.htm>

☞ Logolink is a web portal representing a global network of practitioners from CSOs, research institutes and governments that encourages field-based learning on citizen participation in local governance. The 'resources' section of the site includes a 'participatory planning topic pack' that is the reference cited here.

IIED (2004). PLA Notes 49, April 2004.
http://www.planotes.org/pla_backissues/49.html

☞ This issue of PLA Notes focuses on decentralization and community-based planning, with case studies of PLA work from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Imperial, D. (2001). *Introducing participatory planning practices with local governments: A Philippines case study*. In Decentralized Rural Development and the Role of Self Help Organizations. RAP Publication 1999/33. FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok.

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/ac158e/ac158e0f.htm>

☞ A case study of the provisions for participatory planning in the Local Government Code of the Philippines.

International HIV/AIDS Alliance (2006). *All Together Now: Community mobilisation for HIV/AIDS*. International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Brighton.

http://synkronweb.aidsalliance.org/graphics/secretariat/publications/All_Together_Now.pdf

☞ This manual offers practical advice for those involved in mobilizing communities. Together with the companion volume 'Tools together now! 100 participatory tools to mobilise communities for HIV/AIDS', the manual outlines 100 tools that will be of relevance to anyone involved in community mobilization for participatory planning, in any development field.

Kang, S.S. (2002). *Decentralisation: The Kerala Experience. With special reference to tourism development*. Paper presented at the international colloquium on regional governance and sustainable development in tourism-driven economies. Cancun, Mexico, 20-22 February, 2002.

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan002906.pdf>

☞ A detailed paper outlining the decentralization process in Kerala, which has been hailed as one of the more successful examples of how decentralization can support – and be supported by – participatory development planning.

Mayers, J. (2005). *Stakeholder Power Analysis*. IIED, London.

http://www.policy-powertools.org/Tools/Understanding/docs/stakeholder_power_tool_english.pdf

☞ A practical guide to a six-step process tool to identify and assess stakeholders' interests, interactions and power relations in the context of development work.

PACT Tanzania (2006). *Community Mobilisation Manual*. Advocacy Experts Series. PACT Tanzania, Dar es Salaam.

http://www.pactworld.org/galleries/resource-center/community_mobilisation_manual.pdf

☞ A guidebook for NGOs on how to go about mobilizing communities for action on development issues. The manual includes step-by-step guidance on participatory methods that are relevant to those involved in mobilizing community-driven planning.

Rambaldi, G., Chambers, R., McCall, M. and Fox, J. (2006). *Practical ethics for PGIS practitioners, facilitators, technology intermediaries and researchers*. PLA Notes 54, April 2006. IIED, London.

http://www.iapad.org/publications/ppgis/ch14_rambaldi_pp106-113.pdf

☞ A review of the ethics of using participatory GIS (in terms of visualizing place-specific local knowledge and making it available in the public domain) and a practical guide to good practice.

Rambaldi, G., McCall, M., Weiner, D., Mbile, P. and Kyem, P. (2004). *Participatory GIS*.

http://www.iapad.org/participatory_gis.htm#PGIS

☞ This web-page gives an outline of the development and uses of participatory GIS and provides links to related tools.

Republic of Uganda (2003). *Harmonised Participatory Planning Guide for Parishes/Wards*. Ministry of Local Government.

http://www.khanya-aicdd.org/publications/CBP_Parish_HPPG_0307.pdf/

☞ A practical guide for local government on participatory planning, following an eight-step process.

Sithole, B. (2002). *Where the Power Lies: Multiple Stakeholder Politics over Natural Resources: a participatory methods guide*. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/publications/pdf_files/Books/where.pdf

☞ An excellent guide to recognizing, analyzing and managing 'micro-politics' within communities and multi-stakeholder groups.

USAID (no date). *Development Resource Management Portal*.

<http://rmportal.net/tools/social-context-of-biodiversity-conservation-tools/themes-partres>

☞ A web portal that includes resources (case studies, manuals, etc.) on participatory planning. While the focus is on conservation, most of the material is equally applicable to a development context.

World Bank (1996). *The World Bank Participation Sourcebook*. World Bank, Washington, D.C.

<http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/sourcebook/sbhome.htm>

- ☞ A compendium of case studies and how-to guidance that was originally written for World Bank staff though many of the resources are relevant to a wider audience. A section on participatory planning includes advice on identifying and involving stakeholders.

Case Studies

Rural community and sub-district-level planning in Indonesia

The Indonesian government launched the Kecamatan (Sub-district) Development Program (KDP) in 1998 as a response to a severe economic crisis. The aim of the program which ended in 2008 has been to alleviate poverty and improve local-level governance by: providing poor communities with the financial and organizational resources to decide how to improve their livelihoods; build appropriate infrastructure; provide health care and education services; and build effective local government and community institutions. The World Bank-funded program provided flexible grants, ranging from US\$50,000 to US\$150,000 per sub-district which were channeled straight to the communities to finance activities that villagers defined as the most important. In addition, the program set aside funds for the thousands of participating villages specifically for participatory planning at the sub-village, village and sub-district levels.

Villagers elected facilitators, a man and a woman, who assisted with the socialization and planning process. The facilitators held group meetings, including separate women's meetings to discuss the needs of the village and their development priorities. Social and technical consultants were available to help with the socialization, planning and implementation processes. For the sub-district level planning, an inter-village forum composed of elected village representatives made the final decisions on project funding based on proposals that came from the communities. KDP community forums then selected members to be part of an implementation team to manage the projects, assisted by technical facilitators provided by the program. While the KDP suffered from numerous shortcomings, it is nonetheless an impressive example of allowing ordinary citizens to plan and fund what development they want to see in their communities.

For more information on this case, visit: <http://go.worldbank.org/UFC7JTGER0>

Municipal rural development planning in Brazil

The Centre for Alternative Technologies (CTA), a Brazilian NGO, has devised a participatory process to develop municipal rural development plans (MRDP) in three municipalities as a means to support pro-poor local development. The process started in all three municipalities with an elaborate three-phase PRA that included:



- A mobilization phase that involved contacting communities and negotiations and networking between partners to agree on the guiding principles for the local development process and each partner's role;
- A community planning phase that involved a series of group meetings and family interviews in every community and an initial analysis of the key issues emerging; and
- A final stage that included providing feedback to the communities, deepening the analysis of the issues identified by the communities, and the identification and prioritization of proposals to address some of these issues.

The PRAs lasted several months and concluded with the process and results being documented in a MRDP that then became the official agreement between civil society organizations and the municipal council. In order to ensure implementation of the plan, CTA and its partners established a municipal council for rural development (MCRD), making use of the national legislation that encouraged such bodies. The council is responsible for implementing the plan and also provides a forum where the municipal policies and proposals for rural investment are discussed. The council is composed of representatives from the town council, agricultural/forestry extension and research services, CTA, rural workers' unions, women's groups and smallholder cooperatives. Following national guidelines, at least 50% of MCRD members represent smallholder agriculture.

For more information on this case, see [Florisbelo, G.R. and Guijt, I. \(2004\).](#)

Peri-urban community-level planning in India

In 2001, an agricultural university in the Hubli–Dharwad twin city region of India partnered with international and local NGOs as well as community-based organizations to run a one-year participatory action planning project (PAPP). This project operated in five peri-urban villages that were selected based on their potential to show how trends in peri-urban areas could affect natural resources and local livelihoods. Factors such as proximity to the city, presence of immigrant populations, and incidence of alcoholism, gambling and other urban influences, were taken into account. The early stages of the participatory planning process involved initial rapport-building activities with the communities using methods like using street plays and then PRA exercises, including group discussions with various sections of the communities to facilitate a village-based analysis of the problems faced by different groups and the identification of community representatives to participate in all future events. A diagnostic workshop was then held where the community representatives presented the findings of their

analyses and community, government and NGO representatives collaboratively identified possible solutions. Finally, village representatives designed and presented their own action plans and logical frameworks viz. the format of the action plans, in their communities.

For more information on this case, see [Halkatti et al. \(2003\)](#).

