BUILDING BRIDGES

between citizens and local governments
to work more effectively together

THROUGH

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Part I
CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

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FOREWORD

This series of training manuals coincides with the launch of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) Global Campaign on Urban Governance. The theme of "inclusiveness," reflecting the Campaign's vision and strategy, is deeply embedded in the themes and learning strategies covered by these manuals. While they have been planned and written to serve the developmental needs of non-governmental and community-based organisations, their leadership and staff, the context for learning implementation is consistently conveyed within the spirit and reality of widespread collaboration.

There is growing evidence and increased recognition of several themes that define and frame the urban governance agenda for the new century and millennium. The first, inclusiveness, implies that local governments and communities that want to be on the leading edge of social and economic change must recognise the importance of including everyone, regardless of wealth, gender, age, race or religion, in the process of forging decisions that affect their collective quality of life.

The second recognition involves shared leadership that cuts across the spectrum of institutional and community fabric. Ideally, these shared leadership forums will be based on mutual trust, open dialogue among all stakeholders, and a wide range of strategies for turning good ideas and common visions into concrete actions.

As described in the Prologue, this series of learning implementation tools has been a collaborative effort by Partners Romania Foundation for Local Development, UNCHS (Habitat) and the Open Society Institute. Major funding for the project was provided by the Open Society Institute's Local Government Initiative Programme with other financial support from UNCHS (Habitat) and the Government of the Netherlands. Partners Romania managed the project under its Regional Programme for Capacity Building in Governance and Local Leadership for Central and Eastern Europe. These responsibilities included field testing the Participatory Planning and Managing Conflict and Differences manuals in a training of trainers programme involving 18 participants from 13 Central and Eastern European countries and members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The initiatives for launching this series of training manuals came from two different regions of the world. The Steering Committee for the Regional Capacity Building Programme for Central and Eastern Europe identified conflict management and participatory planning as two of their region's training needs during their deliberations in 1997. In addition, a diverse group of NGO, CBO and local government leaders from across Sub-Saharan Africa met in 1998 and identified these topics, as well as others covered in this series, as important training needs.

Finally, I want to thank Fred Fisher the principal author of the series and the superb team of writing collaborators he pulled together to craft these materials. These include: Ana Vasilache, director of Partners Romania, who managed the process from Romania; Kinga Goncz and Dusan Ondrusek, directors of Partners Hungary and Slovakia respectively; David Tees, who has contributed to many UNCHS publications over the years; the trainers who participated in the field tests of the materials; and, the team of UNCHS staff professionals, headed by Tomasz Sudra, who brought their considerable experience and expertise to fine tune the final products.

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PROLOGUE

There's a story lurking behind the development of these materials. It's worth taking a few moments to share with you. As indicated in the Foreword, this particular project had its initial roots in two major regions of the world, Central and Eastern Europe and Sub-Sahara Africa. But, efforts to develop and disseminate user friendly training materials started many years ago with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) commitment to provide training materials for local government officials in developing countries.

The UNCHS Elected Leadership Series of training manuals, developed within the Local Leadership and Management Training Programme, was particularly popular. It includes 13 manuals designed to help local government elected officials increase their knowledge and skills in key leadership roles and responsibilities. The series, available in more than fifteen languages, is used worldwide, not only by local government elected officials but leaders in non-governmental and community-based organisations. It was the adaptation of this series by the social sector that prompted UNCHS (Habitat) to initiate this series.

Several factors contributed to the success of these learning materials. First, they were user friendly. Trainers could be trained to use the materials in less than two weeks with the second week devoted to their conducting workshops for elected officials representing either the host country or countries represented by the trainers. Second, UNCHS encouraged the adaptation of the materials to reflect cultural, linguistic and other differences represented by the user community. User groups were encouraged to make changes in the text, the training designs and the suggested delivery modes to meet the particular needs of constituents. Potential users of training materials are rarely given such explicit freedom to adapt and alter learning resources to meet the needs of their constituents. Third, the practical skill development orientation of the materials attracted the attention of other audiences. The leaders of the social sector, representing non-governmental (NGO) and community based (CBO) organisations, also found them useful in meeting some of their own staff development needs.

In response to the social sector's use of the Elected Leadership materials and their frequent requests for training assistance, Habitat's Local Leadership and Management Training Programme convened a select group of NGO/CBO leaders from 15 countries in Sub-Sahara Africa (23-28 November 1998) to advise Habitat on their training needs. They were joined by a number of local government managers from Kenya since one re-occurring theme in NGO/CBO leadership and managerial effectiveness deals specifically with their relationships with local governments. The participants to this work session, convened in Nakuru, Kenya, reached consensus on what they believed to be the management development needs of their organisations. These were subsequently translated into detailed curriculum development outlines for consideration under future funding opportunities.

More than a year prior to the Nakuru workshop, the Steering Committee of the Regional Programme for Capacity Building in Governance and Local Leadership for East and Central European Countries identified participatory planning and conflict management as two of their top priority training needs. While the constituents in this particular programme are primarily local governments, the training needs they identified coincided with some of the training needs identified by the NGO/CBO institutions participating in the capacity building strategy workshop in Sub-Sahara Africa.

Since UNCHS works with all these institutions, it made sense to combine the two efforts. Consequently, two of the manuals in this series are funded in large part by the Open Society Institute's Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative with assistance from the Government of the Netherlands working through UNCHS.

Making democracy work at the local level

The manner in which the development of these learning materials has unfolded highlights several trends that are taking place worldwide. First, the possibilities for actually achieving local self-governing status around the world have never been better. The top-down, authoritarian governments in a large part of the world quickly collapsed after several decades of mismanagement and deceit. With their demise came opportunities for citizens to re-establish local self-governments to control the destiny of the physical place they called home. The Partners Romania initiative to build local government capacity through training is recognition of these shifts in the political landscape of these regions. It also recognises the importance of linking local governments and community based institutions (NGOs/CBOs) in efforts to secure local self-governance processes and democratic values.

In other parts of the world, where local governments often exist on paper but central governments essentially control the process by denying access to resources, citizens have become restive, even angry. Increasingly, citizens are demanding a greater and more potent voice and influence in the way their communities function. Central governments have been loosening their grip on the governing process in recognition of their failures to deliver promises and under increasing pressure to restore power and resources to local governments and their networks of community based institutions. Non-governmental and community based organisations have been effective advocates in efforts to restore

the local self-governing process in many regions of the world. This project is recognition of the symbiotic relationship that often exists between local government institutions and the collective NGO/CBO networks at the community level.

The intended audience

It should be clear by now that the intended audience for these learning materials is diverse. Obviously, it includes the initial target NGO/CBO institutions and those individuals serving in leadership and management roles. Much of what is included in this series of manuals can also meet the training needs of local government elected and appointed officials and their professional and technical personnel.

There is an important intermediary audience that we want to focus on for a moment. It is the network of training providers who serve local governments and community organisations. These include designated local government training institutes, NGO umbrella support institutions, local NGOs or CBOs who see their roles as providing capacity building experiences for others, private sector training organisations, and, of course, individual trainers and consultants.

Our message to this collective audience of potential users is to be creative in the use of the materials and the identification of learning opportunities to serve the primary constituents outlined above. While training materials, such as these, are seen as the basic building blocks for designing and delivering skill workshops, their potential is much greater. For example, the Participatory Planning and Conflict Management manuals are designed to facilitate planned change efforts in the community. Other manuals in the series can become effective tools for helping NGO and CBO leaders implement organisation development programmes. And, the creative trainer/consultant will see the series as a comprehensive set of tools she can use in many different ways to structure interventions at various levels of the community to meet client needs.

Finally, the series has been borne out of concern from grassroots organisations and leaders that their ability to serve the community is directly tied to their continuing commitment to learn. Equally important is the recognition that NGOs, CBOs and local governments have a responsibility to help others learn as well. The management literature is full of references to *learning organisation*s. We urge all of you who partake of the information and ideas put forth in this series to think about the opportunities and responsibilities you have to create *learning communitie*s. Start by creating opportunities to use these training materials with management teams, neighbourhood action groups, fledgling non-governmental organisations, and individual citizens who want to become more effective in serving their community.

ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This manual is reach in user possibilities. Here are just a few examples of how these planning tools might be used to increase collaboration and participation within organisations and communities and among various groups or individuals within a community such as local governments, NGOs, CBOs, their leaders, staff, and citizen constituents.

- Training local government and NGO/CBO staff members to be more effective in working across organisational boundaries in shared leadership situations.

- Helping staff members in larger organisations develop knowledge and skills in providing staff consulting services of a facilitative nature to operating units within the organisation.

- Facilitating visioning and strategic planning endeavours at the request of local governments and other organisations such as operating NGOs and CBOs.

- Providing assistance to tactical planning groups that have been assigned program or crisis planning tasks by local government councils or large NGOs.

- Managing large community based dialogues about critical issues that are tearing apart the social and economic fabric of the society.

- Facilitating inter-organisational or intergovernmental work sessions on issues, opportunities, problems, or concerns that cut across institutional and jurisdictional boundaries.

Part I not only includes a detailed look at the participatory planning process as it has evolved over time but provides insights and strategies for implementing the process in your community. In addition, Part One suggest you stops form time to time to reflect on what you have been reading, and how you might use the ideas gained to improve the quality of life in your community. It's the literary equivalent of stopping along the road to smell the flowers.

Quite a rich storehouse of participatory planning resources, isn't it? Rather than dally any longer, we suggest you did write in and enjoy what we hope will be an enlightening and productive journey of discovery and service.

Part II is presented in two parts. **Component 1** includes a few training design ideas and exercises in case you want to organise and conduct a more traditional learning event. For example, you might want to conduct a short workshop to introduce the concepts and ideas of participatory planning to local government and community leaders. Or brief trainers and facilitators on how to use the materials to design and facilitate a participatory planning process working with a planning team assembled by local leaders. These facilitated work sessions could focus on either the development of a long-range strategic plan for the community or an action plan to address a more immediate problem within the community. Many of the tools in Component 2 will also be useful to use in these types of training programs.

It was evident from the field test of these materials in Romania that a training of trainers program focusing on skill development in the various phases of participatory planning and using a classroom case study approach, is not very effective. The planning tools are most effective when applied to a real problem or opportunity working with those who have the direct responsibility to develop a plan based on participatory methods.

Given the lessons learned from the field test of the draft materials, Component **2** includes exercises and worksheets to be used during a participatory planning process based on a real need and real people (not that trainers aren't real, but hopefully you get the picture). These tools are presented in the sequence that they are discussed in **Part 1** of this manual. However, we will alert you one more time that facilitating a participatory planning process will be a *voyage of discovery* requiring you on occasions to take a side road or double back and retrace territory already covered.

Participatory planning tools are also effective management training resources. Planning is a major management responsibility involving decision making and problem solving. So, be inventive and figure out how you can use these tools to expand your services as a trainer or to use them in a myriad of ways that doesn't even mention the words *participatory* or *planning* in the title of the workshop or the consulting service you are providing.

Just remember, this is a voyage of discovery!

Consider this a voyage of discovery

We like to think of learning as a *voyage of discovery.* Like all voyages this one will take you into new territories. From time to time we will be suggesting you take certain detours to make this *Voyage* more productive and enjoyable based on your individual perspective and needs. Or, you might decide to skip part of the journey because you've been there before. That's perfectly alright with us. After all, we prefer not to have bored passengers on board.

To help to get the most from this voyage of discovery, we will from time to time issue *Travel Advisories.* These are intended to alert you to certain conditions we know about from the experience of field testing the materials and getting advice from many individuals who helped in the final production of this and other manuals in the series. We hope you will enjoy this voyage of discovery.

And last but not least, many thanks to all participants who put their signatures below and attended the Training of Trainers Programme in June 2000, to field test the manuals. (see hard copy)

Fred Fisher

CHAPTER 1
PERSPECTIVES ON PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Coming together is a beginning;
Staying together is progress;
Working together is success.
ARAB PROVERB

(If you don't understand what Travel Advisories are, go back to the previous page where it is explained!) This chapter is largely historical and somewhat theoretical. It may be of less interest to those of you who want to get to those chapters that are more action oriented. Feel free to skip to Chapter Two. Or, read the Key Points at the end of the chapter in case your boss or some other authority figure is inclined to test your thoroughness in reading this material.

There is a revolution, of sorts, going on in the development world. It concerns *participatory planning* along with other aspects of participation. This grass-roots revolution involves those who profess to help others develop socially, economically and politically, and those who are recipients of development assistance. Robert Chambers, one of the icons of the development era, states:

From the 1950s through the 1960s and 1970s, in the prevailing orthodoxies of development, it was the professionals who had the answers...poor and local people had the problem, and much of the problem was to be solved by education and the transfer of technology. Increasingly, that ideology has been questioned and undermined. The balance has shifted. Development imposed from the top down was often not sustained. More and more we have been recognised as much of the problem, and their participation as the key to sustainability and many of the solutions. [1]

Chambers goes on to say that participation has become a major theme in development. He claims it is the new orthodoxy in the World Bank, although one can read a good deal of scepticism into this and other statements he makes about the Bank's real commitment and contribution to authentic participatory development. In spite of all the noise being generated about participation, Chambers reminds us that "as usual with concepts, which gain currency, rhetoric has run far, far ahead of understanding, let alone practice". [2]

We think this is true as well of all the acronyms that have emerged in recent years to describe the various approaches used by practitioners of participation. In 1994, twenty nine different approaches were identified as having been developed since the 1970s. Principal among them is a process called *participatory reflection and action* (PRA) which the authors admit, is an amalgamation of methods, techniques and behaviours. Others with participation in one form or another in their title are PALM, LPP, PAO, PAR, PORP, and PSA, not to mention another PRA meaning *participatory rural/relaxed appraisal.* [3] All this, of course, raises the question: Does the world need another manual on "participatory planning?" We will get to that question a bit later. For now, let's review the new wave of processes washing onto the shores of unsuspecting countries worldwide.

A brief look at PRA

Since PRA, as in *participatory reflection and action* is given frontrunner status by many in this field, we will look briefly at its origin philosophically and conceptually and what it embraces in practice. According to its major proponent, PRA has deep historical roots. They include such developmental fields of endeavour as action-reflection research, applied anthropology, action science, and agro-ecosystems analysis. At the forefront among those who have contributed to the PRA approach is Paulo Freire with his practice and experience of *conscientisation* in Latin America. Freire believed poor and exploited people can and should be enabled to analyse their own reality. This approach to adult education, although it sounds rather prosaic, was threatening enough to the Brazilian dictators in power at the time to have Freire banned from his own country. [4]

We would be remiss if we didn't mention one of the major contributors to the current zeal for participatory action-reflection research, Kurt Lewin. His pioneering efforts in these methodologies date back to the 1940s, creating the conceptual and research base for much of what has happened since. What made Lewin's work so relevant was his integration of democratic leadership, group dynamics, experiential learning, action research and open systems theory during the 1930-40s in efforts to overcome racial and ethnic injustices. Of course, earlier contributions were made to *participatory research methodologies* by other pioneers (e.g., Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford). Unfortunately, it is impossible in this short document to recognise all those who blazed the trail for new schools of contributors and practitioners, such as those associated with "participatory reflection and action" (PRA).

PRA principles

PRA by 1996 was being practised, in one form or another, in about 100 countries and was the conceptual home for over thirty PRA-related networks. Summarising the principles and practices of PRA is not a simple task. True to his commitment to think and work "outside the box," Chambers often speaks in metaphors and similes. The principles of PRA, as summarised by the initiator of the process, are: