

## Getting the Idea

The participatory approach is an idea whose time has come. It offers new and promising ideas for appropriate and sustainable development.

It "flips" the traditional "top-down" development approach to a "bottom-up" approach which encourages, supports and strengthens communities' existing abilities to identify their own needs, set their own objectives, and monitor and evaluate them. It also allows development workers to learn from the community.

This approach focuses on the relationship between the clients and field staff, and the clients and the community, and builds on two-way communication, clear messages, and a joint commitment to what "works" for the community.

This manual describes this participatory approach as it is applied to an evaluation and monitoring system for traditional or small scale fishing communities. As in many instances, it may be a new concept, we have put a glossary of terms in the back of this manual to help you.

While it may not always be possible to adopt the whole approach in every project, it is possible to experiment with some activities to see if it works. Try it, adapt it, play with the ideas presented here, and observe the effects. Sustainable development can be built on the foundation that this approach sets out, especially when approached with the sense of adventure and creativity called for by new ways of thinking!

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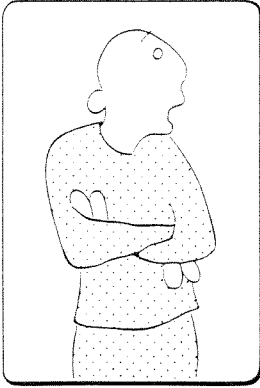
## Getting the Idea

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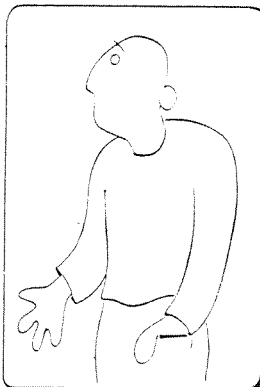
Before we begin....

It should be explained that, because this manual will be used by field staff in many countries of the world, the illustrations used are simple drawings so that differences such as nationality, culture, dress and race are not a problem.

Three distinct categories of people are characterised in the illustrations:



"Insiders" are those who belong to the community. They are distinguished by textured clothing.



"Outsiders" (frequent) are field staff who visit the communities often. They look the same as insiders except that they do not have textured clothing.

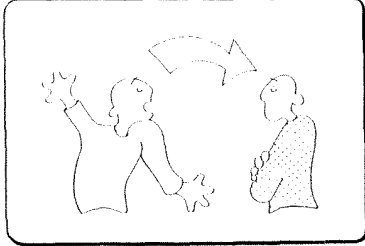


"Outsiders" (infrequent) are those who seldom visit the communities. They are characterised by sunglasses and a clipboard.

## Changes in Development Thinking

We have found that development has gone through two very definite stages, and is now entering a third.

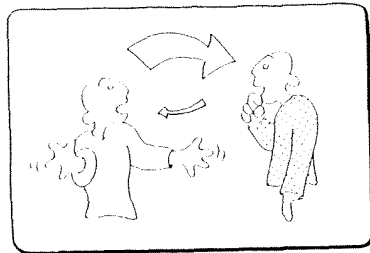
### *In The First Stage.....*



**We, the outsiders made most of the decisions.** We decided what the problems were, and how to solve them. We designed the project and set the project objectives and activities. We provided the necessary inputs and management, which we then monitored and evaluated to see that our objectives and activities had been achieved.

**The result was not encouraging.** Community interest often decreased over time. Very seldom were activities carried on by the community after we withdrew. It became clear that sustainable development was not being achieved.

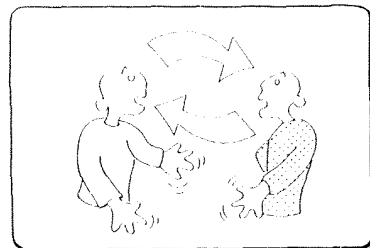
### *In the Second Stage.....*



**We, the outsiders still made most decisions, but we began to ask insiders more questions.** Overall, our role was much like that in the first stage, except that studies of the community done by us to help establish the needs of the community offered new insights into its preferences and motivation.

**The result was that we began to realise that insiders knew a great deal.** Especially, insiders could generally identify why activities had or hadn't worked.

### *In the Third Stage.....*



**Insiders, with support from us the outsiders, are active in decision-making.** Insiders identify their problems and the solutions. They set the objectives and activities and monitor and evaluate progress to see that these are being achieved and continue to be relevant. We encourage insiders to do this.

**The results are promising.** The approach has begun to show encouraging results; communities are beginning to show greater self determination and we, on the other hand, are learning how to better facilitate the process.

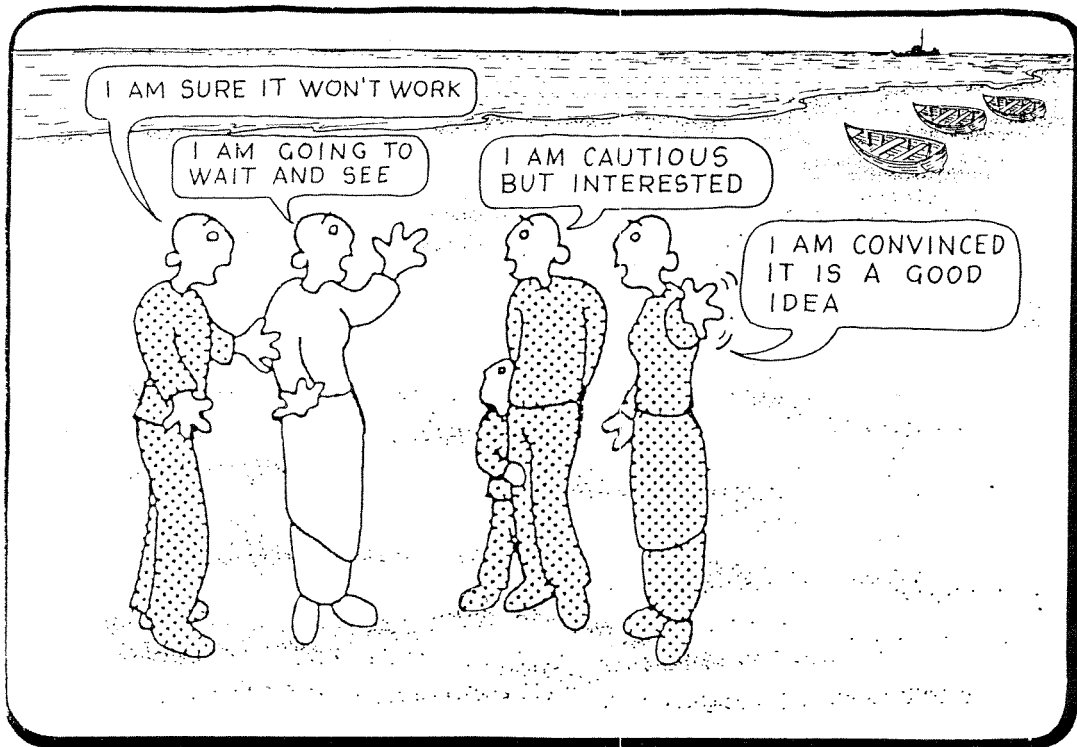
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## Getting the Idea

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### New Ideas Mean Change

Accepting or rejecting new ideas usually means going through a personal “sorting out” period. We may examine other similar ideas, or our personal experience, and imagine whether or not the new idea makes sense relative to this. We can all react very differently to new ideas.



Changing is not easy. Sometimes it can mean giving up something that is comfortable, such as a particular strategy for community development, even when we know it is not working very well. Staying with what is comfortable may seem better than risking the unknown.

Under most conditions all people, whether from a large urban centre in a developed country or from a traditional fishing community in a developing country, recognise a certain amount of threat in change. Accepting new ideas and changing may be what "development" is all about, but risking the unknown can be just as difficult for someone from a developing community as it is for us. People in a developing community are just like us, comfortable with things the way they are, even if they aren't working very well.

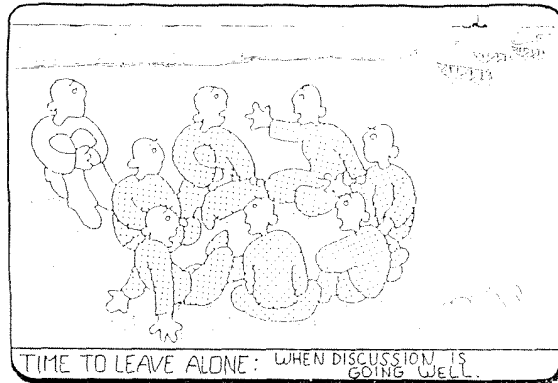
## Chapter One

One idea which may need changing in ourselves is learning when it is ....

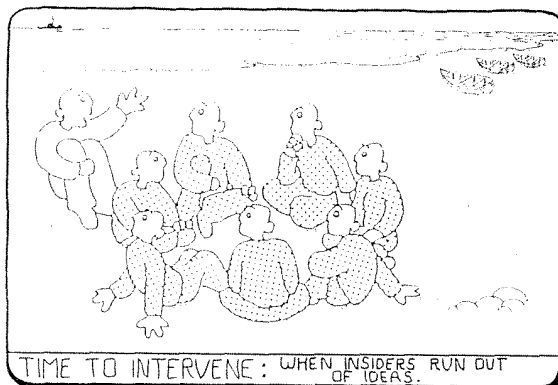
### A time to leave alone and a time to intervene

Over the years, communities will often develop their own unique ways to deal with problems. For the most part, these work well. But sometimes, when new, unexpected problems present themselves, or when the community social structure has broken down, the community may be unable to cope. It is then that outsiders can intervene and introduce possible new ways to look at a problem or situation.

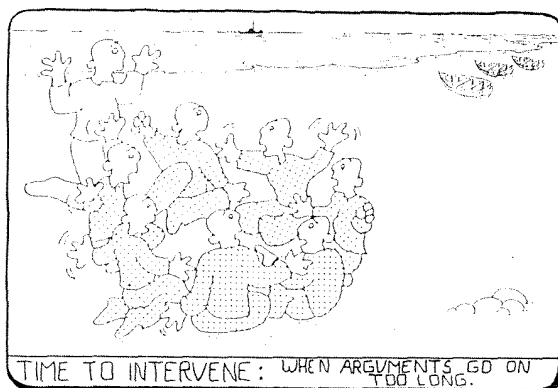
When such "outside" intervention is necessary due to the inability of traditional methods to cope with a problem, conditions may afford the opportunity to present new skills and/or strategies to assist the community in identifying possible courses of action that can be taken.



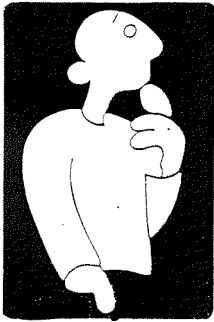
When involved in assisting a community while it wrestles with a problem unique to its experience, it is important that "outsiders" providing support to the community recognise the appropriate times when outside intervention is of the greatest value.



Once the "outsider" has identified when to intervene, one must remember that the form the intervention takes is also important. Our assistance is often most valuable as a provider of ideas as stimuli to discussion, thereby allowing the discussion results to be the recognised property of the members of the community.



### Two-way Communication



For a participatory approach to work, partners working together must be able to communicate. Generally, it is much easier to talk to someone, (without giving them, or ourselves, a chance to hear what they have to say), than to have an even two-way conversation. In the following pages there are five exercises for you to go through. To improve your two-way communication skills, try the communication exercise, the listening exercise, and the two self-reflection exercises with your colleagues and the self-analysis exercise with the community.

#### A Communication Exercise

#### Think about your communication training

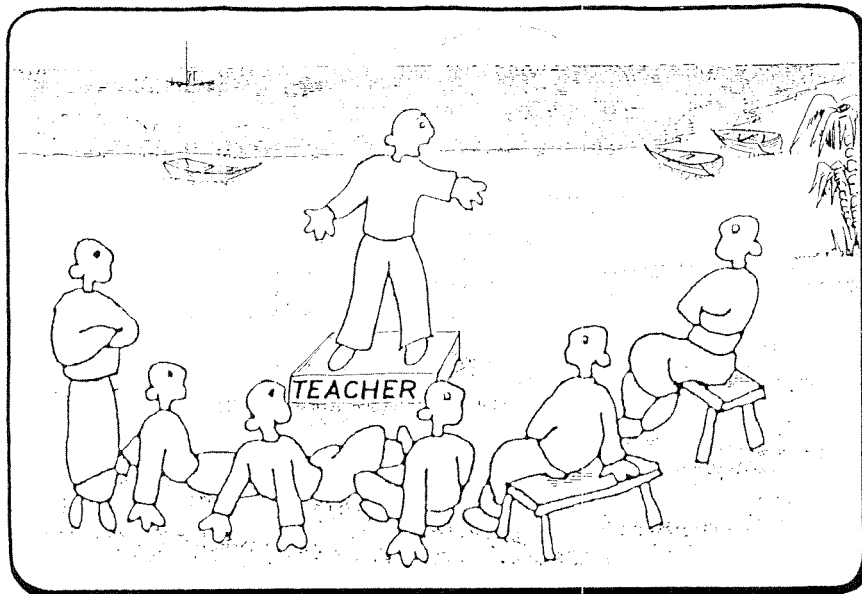
Were you trained to have special information that you would then teach others?

How do you share your knowledge?

As trained fisheries personnel we are usually taught about certain subjects. We are often expected to teach others, and to do this we are frequently trained in one-way communication.

Role playing "teacher" and "student" with your colleagues can be a very effective way of understanding the differences between one-way and two-way communication.

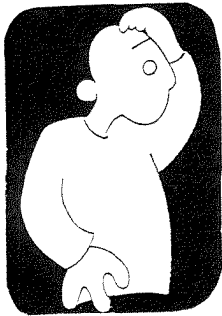
Choose a "teacher" and decide on a subject for the lecture. Try to make it a subject that is more familiar to the "students" than the "teacher".



During the lecture, the "students" should be not allowed to contribute. After some time (five or ten minutes) stop the lecture and discuss among yourselves what it felt like to be a "student" with knowledge of a subject but without a chance to contribute. Discuss what it felt like to be a "teacher", knowing the "students" had something to contribute but were unable to speak. Then try the role play exercise with the "teacher" encouraging the "students".

# Chapter One

## Listening Exercise



### Do you communicate well?

Are you most comfortable as a listener or as a speaker?

Do you ask questions that show you understand what was said, and that you are interested in more *information*?

Although we are often trained to speak, we are seldom trained to listen. Listening also requires training. It is important to train ourselves to be good listeners. When we have properly listened to what others say, we are able to respond in a way that ensures that the other persons will come to their own decisions and gain their own insights?

With your colleagues, choose a topic on which opinions are likely to differ and write a strong statement for both sides of the topic. For example:

"I feel women should not work on boats."

and

"I feel women are as effective on boats as men."

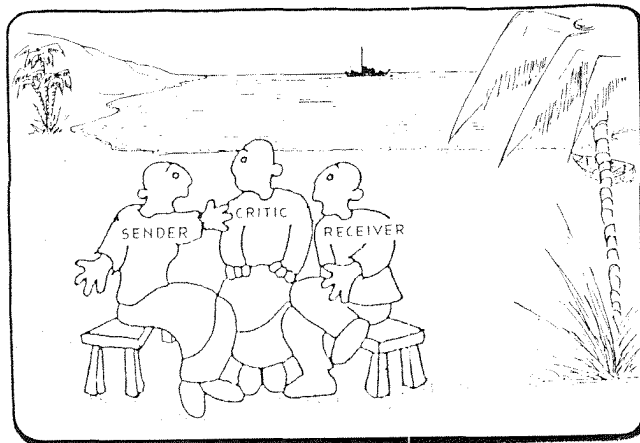
or....

"I feel development people from outside the country can never really understand the local situation."

and

"I feel development people from outside the country understand our situation better than we do."

Break into groups of three. Two people will choose a point of view. One of these persons will be a **sender** of the message, the second person will be a **receiver**, trying only to understand the sender's point of view. The third person will be a **critic**, observing the sender and the receiver. After five minutes, stop the conversation and ask for feedback from the critic:



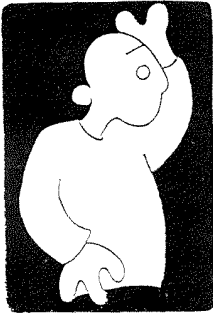
Did the responses of the receiver criticise the sender? Were the responses supportive of the sender?  
Did the responses probe for more information or did the receiver seem bored?  
Did the situation get out of control?

The most effective response is the one which: communicates to the sender that the receiver is interested in the sender as a person; has an accurate understanding of what has been said; and encourages the sender to go on, to elaborate and further explore the topic.

Change roles until everyone has had a turn being a receiver.

## Getting the Idea

### Self Reflection Exercise 1



#### How did you communicate today?

Did you feel people enjoyed talking with you?

Did you talk as much as you listened?

What did you learn?

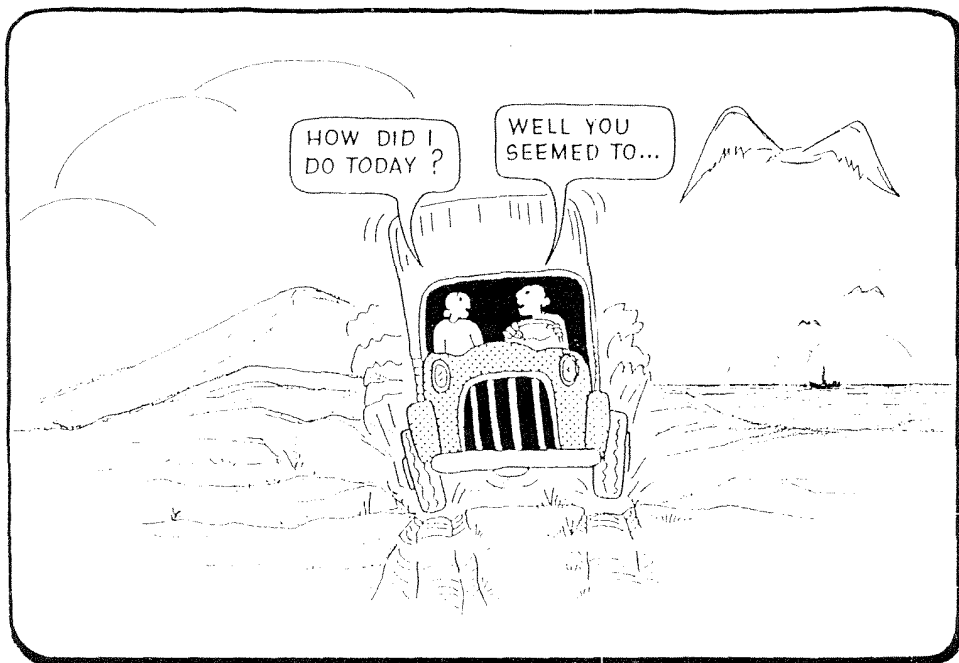
Did you talk to people or with people?

How could you have communicated better?

Good two-way communication takes some time to develop. It can be nurtured by continuous reflection and by asking yourself and those around you how you are doing (asking them to be your **critic**).

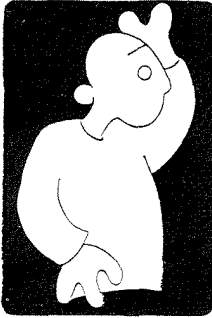
Allow some time during field staff meetings to talk about experiences in communication. Discuss communication that worked and communication that did not work. We often learn more from our mistakes, although they are sometimes more difficult to talk about!

At the end of a working day, perhaps on the way home from work, take some time to think about the conversations you had with people. Do you think they went well? What could you have done better? If you are working with colleagues, ask them to give you some feedback. Then, if your colleagues agree, do the same for them.



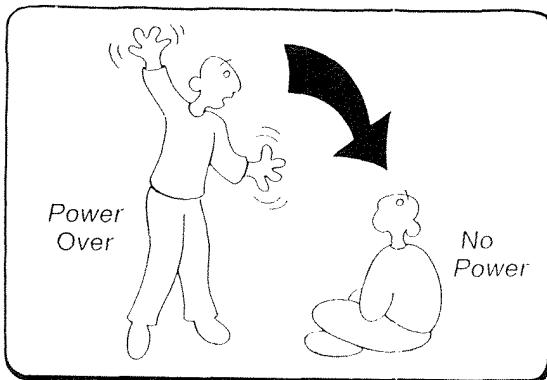


## Self-Reflection Exercise 2



The relationship between insiders and outsiders should be a partnership, but relationships are not always equal. We are often prone to use **power-over** because of our education, money, political or social position

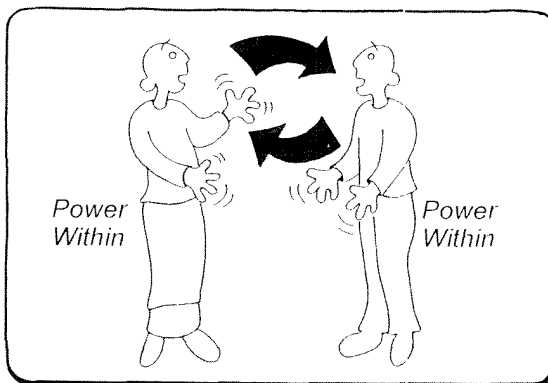
In the past relationships between insiders and outsiders have commonly been that of **power-over**, where outsiders often acted as though they had more local knowledge than insiders..



Think about the relationships you have had with insiders. Is it one of **power-over**?

Good partnerships are when partners contribute equally and respect what each brings to the relationship.

Think of experiences you have had when you worked with someone who could have had "power-over" you but instead respected what you were contributing.



That person knows how to share power. How did you feel?

Good partnerships share power.

Good partnerships mean better development.

Ask community members how you are doing. You could have them do the S.W.O.L. (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Limitations) Analysis on your performance. This is a good exercise because it recognises that there will be BOTH strengths and weaknesses in your performance.

Being aware of different kinds of communication, learning to listen, and being aware of how you are doing, are the first steps towards the development of two-way communication.