

## Participatory Assessment

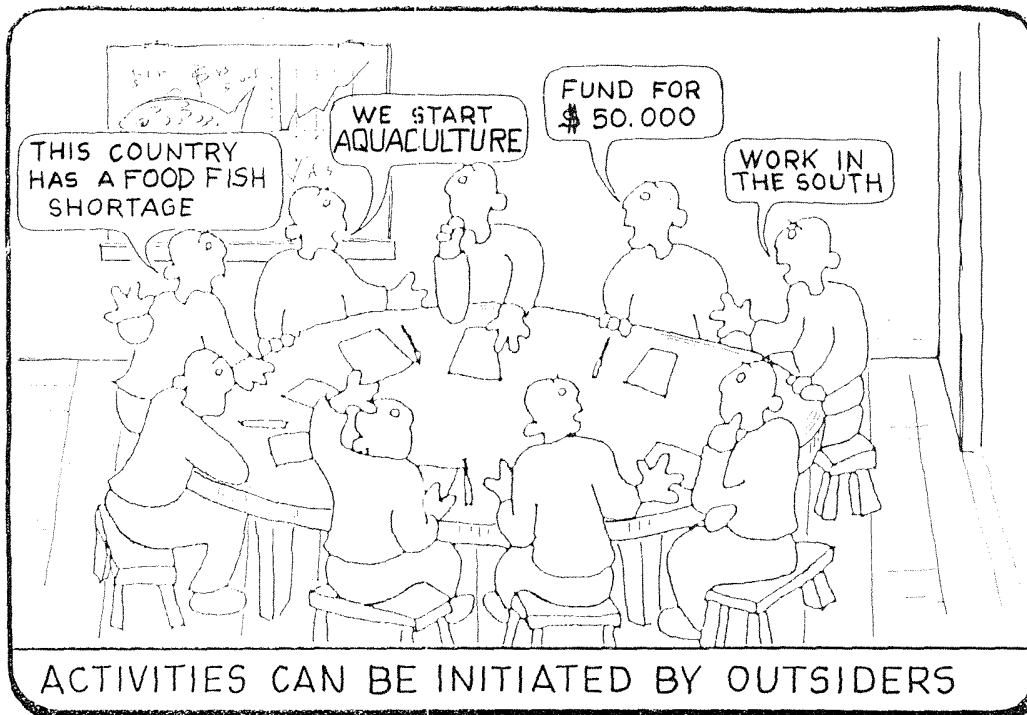
### What is Participatory Assessment?

Participatory Assessment is a method for determining, from the insiders' point of view, what activities are needed and which can be supported; it also determines whether the activities, either chosen by themselves or by outsiders, are reasonable and practical.

Insiders, facilitated by outsiders, go through a process in which they identify the conditions that are necessary for successful completion of activities, and then gather information to determine whether or not their community has these conditions or can create them.

Often the way that activities are planned can mean that some decisions have already been made without input from the community. It may be:

- that the problems and the solutions to the problems have been established by outsiders;
- a budget has been decided upon;
- that the national or local governments have negotiated with outsiders or, in some cases, have initiated the project;
- that the area within a country has been determined and that field staff have been assigned specific roles.



*When decisions may have already been made by outsiders*

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One of the decisions often left to field staff is the choice of communities in which to carry out activities. For example, in a designated area, there may be a great many communities in which activities could be introduced. But there may be constraints, such as a lack of vehicles and trained field staff, which make working with some communities difficult. Field staff will have to consider their own abilities and constraints. They will also have to consider which communities have both the problem that the activities address and the physical and community conditions necessary for success.

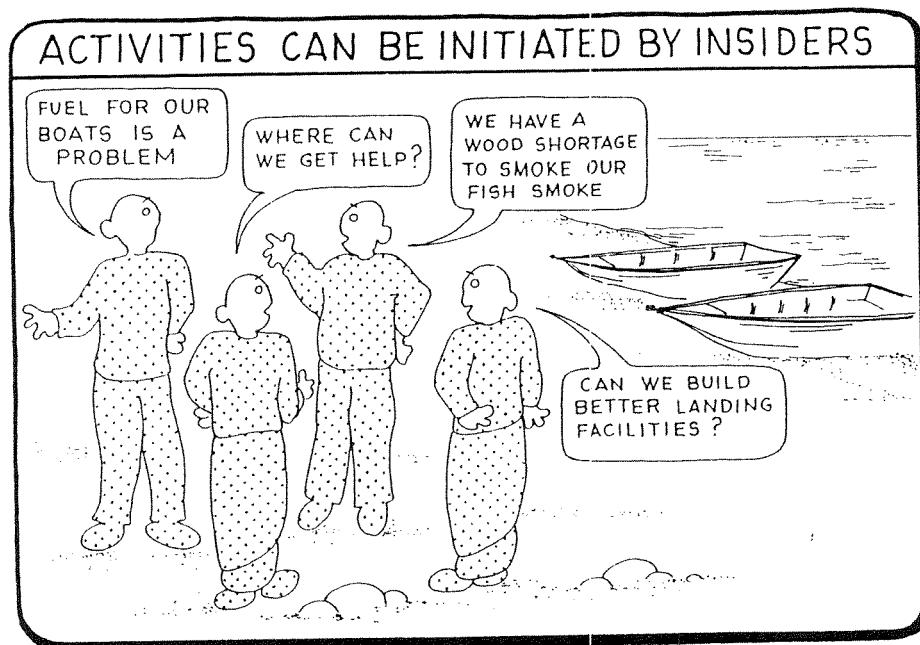
If field staff must choose communities, a modification of the Participatory Assessment method that is described in this chapter can help them decide which communities to approach.

### *When activities are initiated by both outsiders*

When this is the case, participatory assessment is the best method for developing community objectives, activities and plans. In community fisheries, insiders provide many of the inputs, such as labour, materials, and management; outsiders may choose the community based on whether they feel the community has the conditions necessary for activities to succeed. Participatory Assessment provides a framework for insiders and outsiders to determine whether or not they want, need, and can support the activities proposed.

### *When activities are initiated by insiders*

When insiders approach outsiders for assistance with activities, a Participatory Assessment can be very useful. It can confirm to insiders that they have identified the right problem and the right solutions. It can also help outsiders understand the proposed activities and why the community has chosen them.



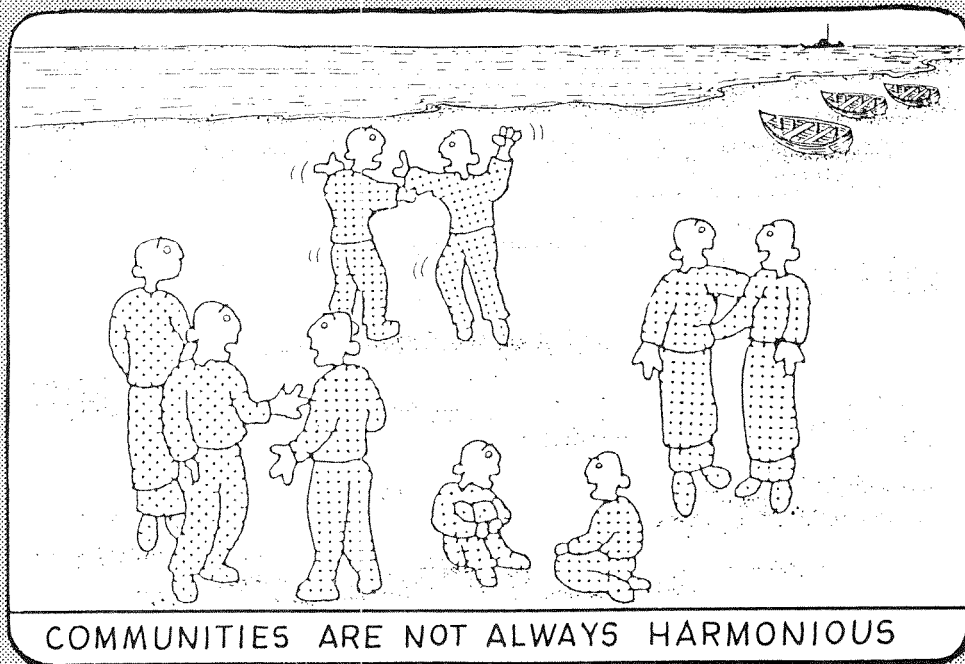
## Chapter Two

There has recently been a change in thinking within some countries that fund development. Funds may be allocated for a sector but immediate objectives and activities are not decided upon. Instead, there is a planning period when plans are made with **communities** and these plans are then combined to produce the project documents.

A community is a group of people, often living in the same geographic area and who identify themselves as belonging to the same group. The people in a community are often related by blood or marriage. They may all belong to the same religious or political group, class or cast.

However, though communities can have many things in common, they are still very complex, and should not be thought of as one group: communities are often composed of specific groups such as those owning boats and those without, new immigrants and old residents. Women may be thought of as very different from men, and have different rules of conduct .

A number of separate interest groups that belong to one community may be affected by the change that is introduced. There may be conflicts!



Often the ways that communities address problems and crisis are tied to the relationships of kinship, religion and politics, and strong ties between community members have developed over generations. Depending on the issue, a community may be united or divided in thought and in action.

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**Participatory Assessment is  
*facilitated* by outsiders.**

As facilitators, outsiders openly discuss what they can offer to the community. This may be material resources that the community does not have, such as boats or engines. It may be technical or organisational advice. Outsiders also communicate to insiders that the decision to accept, modify or reject proposed activities is a decision insiders must consider carefully. After all, potentially they have the most to lose if the activities fail and the most to gain if they succeed.

*All objectives should be considered.*

To ensure, as far as possible, that everyone receives what they want and need, Participatory Assessment considers all relevant objectives. The objectives of insiders who may directly benefit, those of insiders who may indirectly benefit, and those of outsiders are all identified and considered. Participatory Assessment encourages discussion of all objectives, and therefore it can help identify conflicting and complementary objectives.

Even when the objectives of insiders and outsiders are different, often with slight changes, everyone's objectives can be achieved. In the following example, where outsiders have proposed organising a fisherfolks' co-operative, there are three "sets of objectives which must be considered.

**Outsider objectives:** To maintain a sustainable supply of fish protein for the fishing community

**Insider objectives:** To supply a cheap and steady amount of fuel and fishing material; to reduce damage to fishing boats  
(boat owners)

**Insider objectives:** To ensure: steady employment; income/share of catch  
(crew)

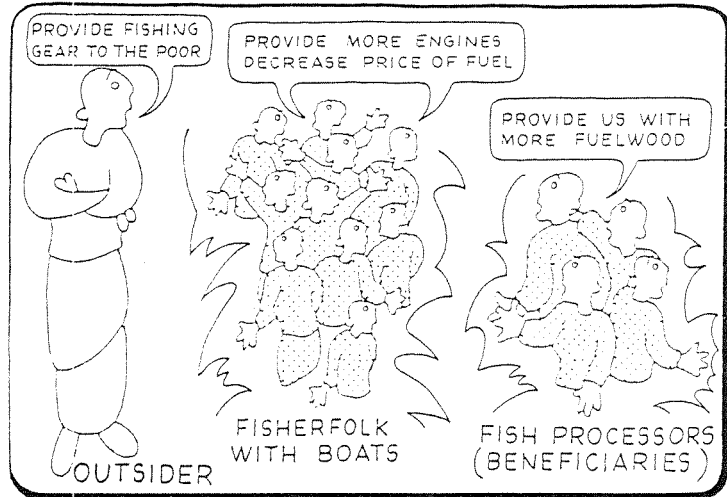
Are these objectives in conflict? If outsiders objectives are met, does this mean that the objectives of boat owners will not be achieved? Can something be done so that all objectives are met to some degree?

Addressing conflicting objectives is possible. One solution might be to change activities. Instead of a fisherfolk co-operative (which may be a concept quite foreign to the culture), a fisherfolk organisation based on traditional social structures may be considered.

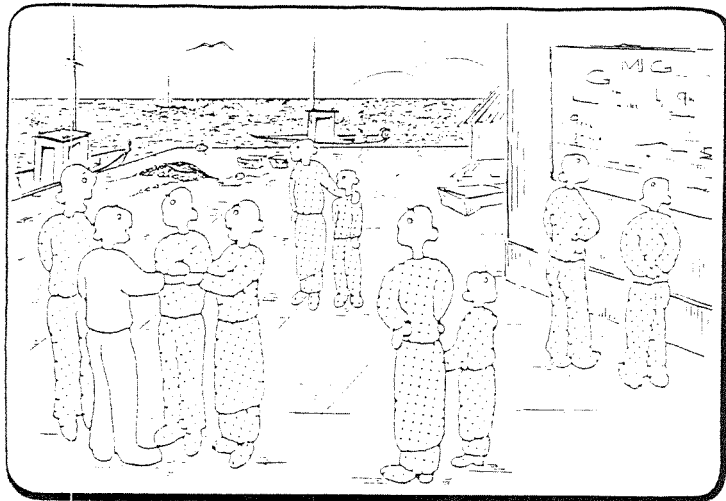
Modification of the activities, for example, the provision by the outsiders' agency of subsidised fishing equipment, the introduction of grants and loans and the provision of training may ensure that all objectives are met.

**NOTE:** Remember - there is a time to leave alone and a time to intervene.

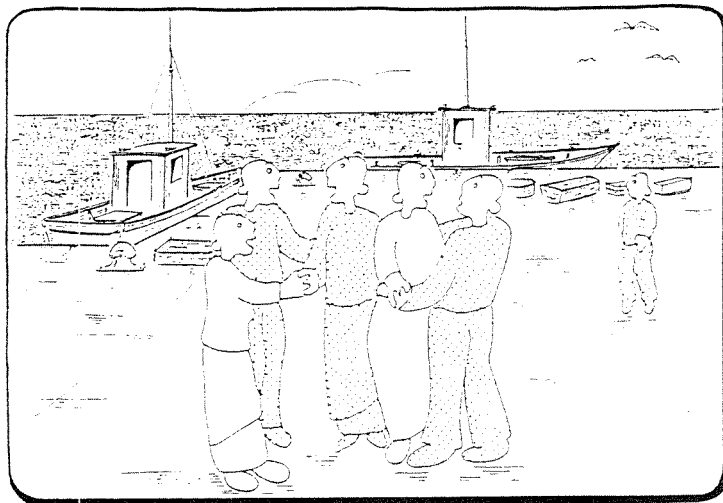
Even with different objectives....



Good communication, good information, and imagination can lead to successful negotiations.....



So that everyone can benefit.



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## Participatory Assessment

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### *Participatory can be the basis for negotiation of conflicts*

Participatory Assessment, through discussions of the proposed activities, identifies potential conflicts which can be dealt with before they become a problem.

For example, one proposed activity might be the improvement of boat landing facilities on the shore side to decrease wear and tear of the fishing boats and the strategy could be that the community supply volunteer labour for the landing facilities. However, this activity would only benefit the boat owners; and there is a strong possibility that those without boats may be coerced into providing volunteer labour. Compensation, such as wages and perhaps building materials, must be negotiated from the beginning, or labour may be withdrawn at a critical time.

### **Benefits of Participatory Assessment**

*Can be the  
beginning of a  
participatory  
relationship*

Participatory Assessment is often the first interaction of outsiders with the community. It encourages the beginning of a participatory relationship between insiders and outsiders. First impressions are important and set the stage for the future.

*Involves and  
commits the  
community at  
an early stage*

Participatory Assessment provides the community with the opportunity to decide, at the beginning, whether or not to accept the project as planned by outsiders or accept it with some modifications. When the community makes this first decision, there is a greater chance that they will be committed to what is, in reality, their project.

*The recognition  
of objectives  
provides the  
basis for  
negotiation*

Participatory Assessment encourages discussion of all relevant objectives so that potential conflicts can be identified and negotiated before they hinder success.

*Provides a  
positive  
learning  
experience*

Participatory Assessment provides the opportunity for both insiders and outsiders to better understand the development process in which they are engaged

*Provides  
information for  
future use*

The information for Participatory Assessments can complement baseline and evaluation information.