
Rights-based Approaches: Recovering Past Innovations

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1 Introduction

Surprisingly, the rich history of rights and participatory approaches is relatively unknown to many development and rights practitioners. Consequently, historical insights applicable to today's challenges of inequality and exclusion often remain untapped. Drawing on our 30-year practical experience and related research on these efforts, this article will examine three main areas of past innovation and thinking that link rights and participation and explore how they address power and encourage critical consciousness and citizenship. First we will trace diverse historical and conceptual streams shaping participatory approaches, and then will examine specific legal rights strategies and women's rights experiences from the last several decades.

2 Recovering diverse streams of participation

The mainstreaming of participation over the last 25 years has tended to detach participatory methodologies from a long history of political processes and social movements, so that often even the most innovative practitioners are unaware of the many streams of participation (see Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, this issue). To explore these streams, we will categorise them based on our own experience, recognising that there are other types of classification and that two important currents – social movements and trade union organising – are not included.

Categories are not neat. They often overlap and mutually reinforce or challenge one another. Sometimes approaches are associated with an individual or several individuals who have developed key aspects of thinking and practice that have then been modified over time. As these approaches are applied in different settings, their initial intent and practice can often be distorted in ways that undermine or contradict their original

purposes and vision of change. Whether approaches encourage actions that are capable of transforming systemic inequities depends in large part on the intentions and orientations of the people who use them. Practitioners' backgrounds, worldviews and underlying assumptions about power can shape how and where approaches are applied and can influence the results ultimately achieved.

We cover the following selected broad traditions of participation experience:

- Human relations and organisational development
- Community organising and education for action
- Popular education
- Participatory research and participatory action research
- Adult and non-formal education
- Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)/Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

2.1 Human relations and organisational development

In the late 1930s and 1940s, North American writers, researchers and practitioners from a variety of disciplines began to study group dynamics and human relations as a way to improve group effectiveness, productivity and human potential.¹ Following World War II, their thinking moved beyond the original focus on industrial relations to broader organisational settings, giving rise to a range of processes, techniques and exercises such as sensitivity training, T-groups, small group consensus-building (Delphi), role plays, games/simulations, brainstorming, feedback, participant observation, facilitation, values clarification and action research (geared toward planning and improving social actions). Instead of seeing the emerging approaches only in terms of improving private sector operations, these thinkers saw the methods as concrete ways to address major societal problems and contribute to more democratic

relationships and leadership. However, these innovators did not seem to incorporate an explicit analysis of power or a focus on transforming inequities. Essentially, the underlying assumption was that if people could only understand the social dynamics present in their lives, they could cooperate together to help solve larger problems.

The National Training Laboratory (NTL), organised in the late 1940s, served as a creative base for many of these psychologists and academics. Over time as NTL gained strong support from US government/military contracts, its research and training moved from a focus on individual and personal growth to an increasing emphasis on management of government structures and corporations which helped spawn the field of organisational development and behaviour. Along the way, their contributions also influenced education, therapy and community development work by providing practitioners with a set of participatory methods to engage people in thinking about their personal and group behaviour and broader social relationships.

When carried out with a vision of social transformation, these approaches have been applied to enhance people's sense of individual and collective power and encourage social action. They have influenced the thinking and practice of countless academics, trainers and activists and constitute an important stream that feeds into participation and rights work. However, certain cautions apply. Over the years their vision of social change narrowed to a focus on government and corporate management. As currently taught, the approaches are often used as techniques for team building and management relations. People schooled in these approaches may be highly skilled in creating a congenial group spirit and high levels of interaction, but do not necessarily link their work to aspects of participation that focus on broader social justice goals, political empowerment or decision-making by the marginalised.

2.2 Community organising and education for action

Community organising and community education, as they emerged in the USA, developed out of a particular historical context, i.e. the 1930s depression and its aftermath. These two related currents were influenced by union organisers in the USA and educators in Scandinavia who during

the mid-1800s developed "folkschools", designed to affirm and strengthen the cultural heritage and practices of rural peoples. Community organising and education, as developed in the USA, focused on transforming relations of power, especially in terms of race and class, but placed emphasis on different aspects of social change. The community organising current arose from an urban context of poverty and racial discrimination, while community education emerged from work in poor rural areas by the Highlander Center, an American version of the Scandinavian "folkschool".

The two main figures associated with these currents, Myles Horton and Saul Alinsky, were friends, yet Horton (Horton and Freire 1990; Adams and Horton 1975), the co-founder of the Highlander Center, saw his work principally as one of educator and Alinsky as organiser. Alinsky emphasised the role of outside organiser and catalyst in creating community organisations and change strategies that often used highly confrontational tactics to draw official attention to neglected issues. Horton, on the other hand, believed in tapping existing organisations and community leaders, providing them a space to analyse their own problems and expand their political awareness while connecting them to other colleagues and resources in order to deepen their analysis and create more effective solutions. Horton summarised the community education approach: 'You don't just tell people something; you find a way to use situations to educate them so that they can learn to figure things out themselves'. He also stressed the importance of analysing failures as a way to learn from mistakes and strengthen future actions. Among its many education and action efforts, "Highlander" collaborated with Appalachian groups using participatory research methods to generate local knowledge about land tenure relations in poor communities and establish the foundation for a powerful regional alliance building and advocacy effort.

Alinsky's work and writing (cf Alinsky 1971) inspired a variety of "citizen action" organising efforts in the USA that thrive today, including the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and many state-wide citizens coalitions working on a range of issues from "the living wage" to "housing rights". Internationally, Alinsky helped train a first generation of community organisers in the Philippines, many of whom were

then instrumental in Marcos' downfall and later became prominent NGO leaders, activists and more recently, prominent government officials. As international policies began to affect communities with whom the Highlander Center worked, it gradually brought activists and local leaders from poor areas of the USA together with counterparts from around the world to analyse common issues and strategise across borders.

2.3 Popular education

The popular education stream was formed in the 1950s and 1960s based on the thinking and work of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. He drew on an explicit analysis of power and class through his own experience with state repression and poverty. Freire believed that poverty was rooted in unequal structures of power and that education to gain critical consciousness about the systemic roots of inequality was a prerequisite for transforming those inequitable relationships.

Working with peasants, Freire found that socialisation and cultural formation affected rural people's consciousness about their place in the world, preventing many from seeing themselves as citizens worthy of rights and capable of action. On some levels, peasants internalised a belief that they deserved their subordinate position in society, blaming themselves for their poverty and marginalisation. This realisation led Freire to place great importance on helping people develop a critical awareness of their own power and potential and a deeper understanding of politics and change. Though he did not incorporate a gender analysis into his thinking, his notions about consciousness-raising were similar in some ways to the analysis made by feminists in the 1980s and 1990s, about the invisible forces shaping women's acceptance of inferiority.

To confront this vision of power and powerlessness, Freire and his colleagues developed processes that helped marginalised people reflect on their lives in critical ways to strengthen their confidence, sense of solidarity, organisation and skills of analysis and literacy. Problem-posing in nature, Freire's approach tapped activist and community knowledge about concrete problems and themes of injustice, developing related images in the form of drawings or photos to promote dialogue and awareness. These images, combined with key words, were the basis for generating

reflection, literacy skills and critical thinking that, in turn, served as a foundation for building and strengthening community organisations and social change movements. This approach to "liberation education" was contrasted with traditional "banking" education methods, where teachers or experts deposited knowledge into the minds of students, reinforcing passivity and the notion that people are empty vessels, ignorant, waiting for knowledge.

Freire's ideas (1992a; 1992b) and approaches were deepened, challenged and applied to a variety of contexts.² Feminist academics (cf hooks 1993; Brady 1994) as well as practitioners, for example, despite being inspired by his thinking, questioned his focus on class as the sole determinant of poverty and exclusion. Other analysts challenged some of his views on culture and consciousness. While they agreed that mechanisms of power shape how people see themselves, they believed that peasants' unwillingness to engage overtly in politics may be due to an implicit analysis of risk and power and not just to internalised attitudes of subordination. Instead of direct action, peasants may opt to resist oppression quietly (see Gaventa 1980).

As is common with other approaches, popular education methods can be distorted. When popular education is reduced solely to a set of random participatory techniques and detached from any kind of organising or action, it loses its ability to strengthen people's critical understanding of power and their view of themselves as change agents. In certain cases, popular education has been associated with revolutionary movements that have applied the approaches in rather formulaic ways and engaged people in limited discussions about preselected political themes. In some instances, this has been due to the difficult nature of the method, as it depends on the skillful facilitation of group discussions about complex social issues with people who are not accustomed to such conversations. In other cases, leaders were concerned that holding completely open discussions would result in questions or demands that they could not answer or that would increase criticism of their leadership. In other contexts, right-wing governments and dictatorships have adopted technical aspects of Freire's literacy method as an efficient and engaging teaching approach, while eliminating the problem-posing and consciousness-raising discussion of social justice themes.

2.4 Participatory research and participatory action research

Participatory research, or participatory action research as it is sometimes described, emerged from the work of academics and activists concerned about power relations related to knowledge creation, poverty and class.³ The approach evolved from international efforts that are often traced to researchers and educators in Tanzania during the early 1970s working to involve community people in research explicitly as partners and decision makers.⁴ Together they investigated and analysed social problems such as health care, each tapping their own sources of knowledge and experience to create a more accurate, collective understanding of issues so that more effective actions could be taken in response.

Participatory research takes different forms, but usually brings local people together with outside researchers and development activists to study issues of common concern and share control over the process of inquiry and action. Like action research, participatory research rejects the positivist notion of one objective “truth” that should be proven by deductive reasoning and evidence, recognising instead that knowledge and reality are often socially constructed on the basis of deeply embedded values and worldviews. In contrast to some mainstream action research, however, participatory research is explicitly intended to promote more equitable relations of power and hence, is not neutral. For both these reasons, participatory research is open to challenge by traditional researchers and development practitioners. Aimed at transforming structures of injustice, it is based on a collective analysis and creation of knowledge that produces new awareness, critical thinking and more effective strategies of social change.

2.5 Adult and non-formal education

In the USA, the formal field of adult education emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century in response to needs of immigrant workers. Inspired by the ideas of John Dewey (1916; 1963), educators grew to believe that adults required a different environment and structure for learning, based closely on people’s life experience. Early American leaders in the field⁵ envisioned adult education as a process of group discussion leading to social action and integrally related to building citizenship and community leadership. Focused more on integrating people into American society than questioning

inequities, adult education incorporated principles of group dynamics and problem solving and ultimately became dominated by job training and continuing education programmes for individual enrichment and life-long learning. Prominent educators such as Malcolm Knowles (1950) eschewed the political dimensions of popular education, choosing to stress the learner-focused nature of experiential learning as the heart of adult education.

In the 1960s, these ideas influenced the formulation of a new but related concept, non-formal education (NFE), used to categorise a type of out-of-school learning geared especially toward adults. Founded on a belief that formal educational systems around the world were not serving the needs of poor countries, UN agencies and educators such as Philip Coombs proposed an alternative system that would teach adults the concrete skills they needed to contribute to national development. Adopted as a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) strategy in the 1970s, NFE was grounded in theories of adult learning and generously funded by the US government through universities, although by the 1990s, the concept had lost much of its initial influence. NFE came to encompass a series of initiatives ranging from traditional job training and skill development to more creative participatory approaches of simulations, gaming and popular education.

2.6 PRA/PLA

The family of approaches and practices known broadly as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) emerged from attempts in the 1970s by development practitioners, universities and international development institutions to obtain better information for development planning. Project failures caused by a lack of consultation with local people and by time-consuming, costly and often inaccurate household survey methods of data collection, moved practitioners to advance more rapid processes that surfaced people’s own knowledge about problems and needs. Methods of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) emerged in response, as did approaches to “agroecosystems analysis” for understanding complex farming systems and indigenous knowledge. However, the data-gathering process was usually extractive in nature and findings were not always discussed with communities, nor did the process involve them in decision making

about appropriate actions. In the mid-1980s, Robert Chambers and other early proponents expanded the initial extractive approach of RRA and re-conceived it as PRA, to engage communities and tap their knowledge in a more open process, relying on visual tools that did not require literacy and emphasising the importance of changing the attitudes and behaviour of development “experts”. PRA offered agencies better information and also provided communities with some tools of analysis to discuss their own problems.

While many of these approaches were originally formulated in Asia and Africa to help development professionals better access local information, organisers and educators with no knowledge of PRA, such as Malena deMontis and Lisa VeneKlasen, were developing very similar tools with poor communities during the early 1980s in Latin America.⁶ Rather than data gathering for development planners however, the focus was on empowerment and collective learning to strengthen participation and leadership in community-run development initiatives and organisations. With the help of outside activists and organisers, groups generated their own knowledge and analysis and were sometimes challenged to rethink their assumptions or add new information. They then applied this learning directly to improving community projects and expanding decision-making opportunities for more marginalised populations such as women.

An emerging emphasis on community action and initiative, rather than “appraisal” for planning, was inspired to some degree by the intersection with Freirian popular education traditions, influencing many PRA practitioners and giving rise to a broader umbrella of approaches sometimes called Participatory Learning and Action (PLA). The evolving set of PRA and PLA tools and processes drew on a variety of experiences that included participatory research, applied anthropology, certain techniques for diagramming and visualising relationships, some of Freire’s work and widely used popular education methods. Highly visual, the approaches involved people in creating their own knowledge by mapping community resources; making lists, matrices, diagrams, and comparisons; ranking and prioritising concerns; doing role plays and discussing options, and developing action plans and strategies.

The PLA/PRA traditions offer compelling

opportunities for community engagement, yet serious questions have emerged about some of their assumptions and practices. Initially issues of gender and other power relations were not addressed effectively and, to this day, questions remain about the assumed homogeneity of the experience of poverty in communities (cf Guijt and Shah 1998). In some instances, peasant knowledge is glorified as the ultimate truth and not appreciated as being a product of larger political processes that need to be challenged and analysed. The role of consciousness so important to the work of Freire and many feminists is often ignored or addressed only superficially. Similarly, the role of probing questions and new information that help people confront misconceptions and deepen their knowledge is sometimes overlooked.

These approaches can generate significant expectations on the part of the poor about participation and change, yet they do not guarantee that people will be involved in actual planning or decision making. Examples from World Bank programmes underscore this problem.⁷ In part as a result of PRA work, the World Bank has adopted the language of participation and empowerment and created spaces, such as the Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) processes designed to tap the “voices of the poor” and the thinking of civil society in shaping policies. Power relations and agendas that are not always easily discernable, however, limit the impact of these voices. For institutions like the World Bank, predetermined policy directions shape their programmes and while they consult with the poor through civil society on certain issues, these preset policy directions prevent meaningful civic participation in major decisions (cf ActionAid 2004). Eventually this can lead to alienation, cynicism and an actual decrease in the willingness of the poor and marginalised to participate in these types of efforts.

3 Participatory legal rights strategies

During the 1970s and 1980s, a variety of innovative legal rights and empowerment strategies emerged in closed political environments throughout the world. These “legal resources” or “legal services” approaches, as they were sometimes called, combined participatory community development and legal rights education, and were particularly strong in Latin America and South Asia where they

were tied to significant social movements and revolutionary struggles (Paul and Dias 1985; Schuler and Kadirgamar-Rajasingham 1992).

Legal resources initiatives ran the gamut from legal literacy programmes to community-based legal services and legal promoters (paralegals) and also included other combinations of problem-centred approaches to law and legal solutions that involved strategies to foster development and social change. Many of these approaches exist today, but have undergone significant adaptations given changing contextual and historical influences and have generally seen an increase in the role of lawyers.

Similar to the tensions and contradictions in the rights-based development discourse, these legal strategies were shaped by distinct disciplines and paradigms, each with their own theories, language and frameworks for practice.⁸ The strategies and their implementation tended to differ and be defined according to the perspectives and professional backgrounds of those leading them. Breaking out of the paradigms that shaped the approaches, whether framed as legal, development, or empowerment, was sometimes difficult.

For example, legal resources projects when staffed predominantly by lawyers (which was more prevalent in Africa than in Latin America) tended to be legalistic and grounded in the notion that legal expertise was the primary tool for addressing problems. In such cases, the content of legal education and services programmes centred on a simplification of laws, such as the “civil code”, “family law” and “labour law”. This content was often taught by lawyers or university students who would lecture to a local gathering or workshop organised by a community development group. The education was sometimes tied to legal aid, where make-shift clinics were established to provide individual assistance to people who did not have the means or information to pursue a complaint. This approach to rights education continues today in many countries.

Alternatively, projects for legal education and services that emphasised participation and empowerment emerged primarily from development and social change perspectives. This was a complex task in many countries during the 1970s and 1980s because many governments were repressive dictatorships. However, the experience of legal education and the basic act of pursuing legal solutions as part of development projects were frequently the only strategic route to affirming a

sense of citizenship among poor and disadvantaged communities. Indeed, some projects in Latin America literally focused on helping people get birth certificates and identification cards to be able to use government services.

These projects often adapted popular education methods, using pictures, posters and plays to depict and facilitate an analysis of common problems. Problem-centred rather than legalistic, emphasis was placed on understanding the many causes of a problem and exploring solutions that could be handled at community level. Only after these problem-solving processes had generated some critical analysis would information about law and legal processes be introduced to affirm people’s sense of rights and expand their thinking about possible solutions. In the 1980s, these strategies were particularly prevalent among women’s groups throughout the world. Thus they tended to focus on family laws because the issues of marriage, custody, maintenance, divorce, inheritance and domestic violence were central to women’s sense of self, basic survival and participation in development schemes. These initiatives were run by women’s organisations who frequently also ran complementary micro-credit, health and self-esteem programmes. Multidimensional grassroots projects like this continue today in many countries but often under the radar of human rights or economic development groups. Similar programmes were organised with workers’ organisations and trade unions using the cracks in closed political environments that allowed them to engage the state on basic demands, albeit in a limited and restricted fashion.

In some cases, participatory legal resources projects combined legal education with the added value of community-based legal promoters. Again, there were a wide variety of approaches and applications of the paralegal notion depending on the extent to which legal expertise dominated the design and implementation. In the most participatory projects, community organisations elected their legal promoters to play a facilitator-adviser role and to accompany individuals through a legal case. A focus on women also seemed to contribute to the quality of the empowerment aspects of a programme since gender discrimination demanded that groups develop strategies to address problems at an individual and personal level as well as levels of the family, community and the broader public arena. One innovative example was Peru-Mujer, which operated

Table 1: Making Formal Rights Real Rights

Which rights?	Where are they found?	Advocacy challenges
All rights that apply to both men and women	Rights found in general human rights instruments	To ensure that these rights are consistently applied to both sexes
Rights that are specific to women or that need to be expanded to ensure basic rights for women's situation	Rights covered in specialised instruments, such as CEDAW	To ensure that these rights are treated with equal seriousness as the general human rights
Evolving rights	Not yet defined or covered in any treaty or instrument	To press for the explicit definition and acceptance of these rights

Women, Law and Development International and Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Project. *Women's Human Rights Step by Step*, Washington, D.C., 1997, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women).

in several cities and rural communities in Peru and worked with pre-existing neighbourhood groups which elected their own promoters democratically, ensuring both relevance and accountability. Despite Peru's closed system, the organisation gave people experience in democratic decision making and advocacy, and led a successful effort to gain legal credentials from the Ministry of Justice for promoters so they could represent clients in lower level family and community courts. Moreover, Peru-Mujer was recognised as a pioneer in integrating strategies of organising, critical consciousness and collective problem-solving with direct engagement with the state (Dasso 1992).

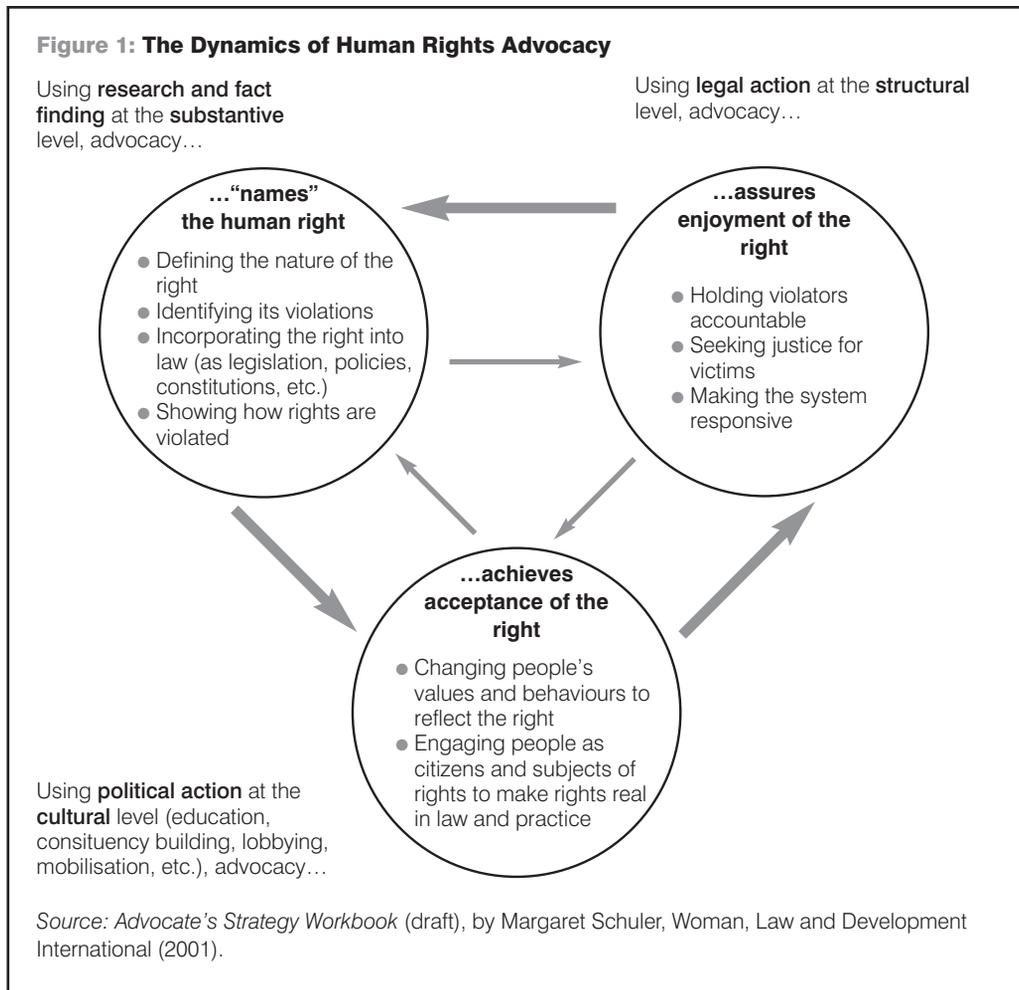
These legal education and empowerment programmes often described their strategies as legal literacy, emphasising power as an important basis for their work and drawing on the thinking and work of Freire. During the 1980s and 1990s, these community-based approaches fed into and shaped the global advocacy strategies of women's movements in UN conferences where significant advances in women's rights were made.⁹

4 Women's rights advocacy experiences

The experiences of global women's rights movements, that connected local, national and transnational change efforts, offer a variety of rich lessons for linkage strategies, including:

- 'how-tos' of combining participatory processes of personal transformation, leadership development, policy influence and political change;
- models for integrating economic livelihood work with rights, participation and advocacy; and
- a reconceptualisation of rights for groups seeking to use the human rights system and expand it to include and legitimise other crucial rights (e.g. economic/social/cultural rights).

Over the last several decades, as feminists, human rights activists, gender researchers and practitioners sought to articulate and defend women's rights, they confronted an international human rights system that did not adequately respond to the kinds of violations that women experience. For example, human rights law and practice were not generally understood as applicable to the personal and sexual abuses women suffered. Operating under a rigid legal separation between the public and private sphere, violations based on gender were ignored. In this inhospitable context, activists challenged and pressured the system to respond to women's experiences and needs. Through sustained and coordinated action linking community development and service delivery efforts to local, national and international advocacy and research, problems such as domestic violence and war-related rape came to be understood as human rights abuses, while mechanisms for prosecution and enforcement are still evolving.



Given substance by the 1993 Vienna World Conference of Human Rights, this reinterpretation of human rights did two important things. It not only demanded a breaking down of the public/private distinction that had been such a strict feature of rights affecting women, it also forced a legal obligation upon states to protect citizens from certain abuses committed by non-state actors. Women's issues no longer could be shunted aside as private or family matters, not subject to public regulation, as easily as they had been in the past. The legitimacy bestowed on women's rights by these important advances gave further momentum to organising and education initiatives.

Analysing these experiences led to useful insights about the dynamic and evolving nature of the

human rights system, and ways to utilise the system effectively, that are presented in the following frameworks.

The first (see Table 1), *Making Formal Rights Real Rights*, outlines the kinds of advocacy aims and challenges encountered for different categories of rights. These include: recognised human rights for both men and women, recognised rights particular to women, and rights that are still evolving and not yet fully recognised.

The second (see Figure 1), *The Dynamics of Human Rights Advocacy*, describes three necessary and interactive processes and moments related to promoting and advancing rights. The circle on the upper left represents the step of *naming* or defining and clarifying the content or substance of a right.

The circle at the bottom illustrates the step of or gaining acceptance of the right both at the formal or public level and at the cultural, social and personal level. And the final circle describes the *enforcing* step that involves the development or improvement of structures to ensure that the right is fulfilled and implemented in people's daily lives.

5 Conclusions

Work on domestic violence offers some concluding insights about the links between personal and public power, as well as the links between development, rights and participation, especially as they relate to marginalised groups. Development practitioners have learned that, besides counselling and economic projects, systemic change is required to adequately address questions of abuse and women's needs; rights activists and legal professionals have learned corresponding lessons, specifically that the law cannot "solve" problems of abuse and inequality without additional complementary individual, community and social efforts. Changes in the *substance of the law* and policy or in the behaviour and practice of *enforcing structures* (the courts, police, hospitals), have little impact on abuse unless complemented by *cultural changes* (personal empowerment, education and the development of critical thinking and skills). Economic development alone, which is often seen as the solution to inequality, will not automatically lead to the improvement of governance systems or the advancement and exercise of rights. Like other marginalised groups, women are socialised to accept and blame themselves for their abuse, despite its injustice.

The issue of domestic violence explodes the public/private dichotomy in how the law is framed, but also very concretely in how change in the personal and intimate sphere must be an integral part of larger political change and rights-based strategies. Dealing with domestic violence also illustrates the overwhelming influence of invisible forms of power and culture: values and social attitudes, in shaping the degree of responsiveness of state institutions to enforce and implement law and policy. Beyond legal reform, experience demonstrates how education and awareness-raising of civil servants is critical aspect to making rights real.

Perhaps it is partly the realisation that power and powerlessness are unavoidable factors in women's lives that has led some development and rights organisations to pursue more holistic approaches to change. Poverty and inequality for women and other marginalised groups are products of a complex blend of personal and political factors, of prejudice and subordination, as well as of systemic failure to provide equitable access and protection. Thus, to create change for excluded populations, participation and rights strategies need to be grounded in broad visions and processes of empowerment that is both an individual personal (private) process *and* a collective (organisational) political (public) process. This evolution of vision and practice, as seen in the history of participation, legal resources and women's rights strategies, can provide rich lessons for the quest to find practical ways to link rights, participation and development and build more effective change strategies.

Notes

- * This article was drawn from 'Rights based approaches and beyond: challenges of linking rights and participation', by Lisa VeneKlasen, Valerie Miller, Cindy Clark and Molly Reilly (2004), *IDS Working Paper* 234, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. This article and the *Working Paper* it is based upon are part of a research initiative called 'Linking Rights and Participation', coordinated by the Participation Group at IDS and Just Associates (JASS), USA, in collaboration with country teams from Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, India and Indonesia. For more information and country studies, see www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/research/rights.
1. Some of the names associated with this stream of participatory approaches were luminaries in the field of social psychology and education and included: Karl Lewin, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Pieter and Jones, Chris Argyris, Gordon Lippett, Douglas MacGregor, Sidney Simon, among others.
 2. The number of influential thinkers and practitioners in popular education are too numerous to name but some of the most well-known internationally include: Anne Hope and Sally Timmel from South Africa, Karl Gaspar and Ed de la Torre from the Philippines, Marcos Arruda and Augusto Boal from Brazil, Myles Horton from the USA, Adam Curle from the UK and Maria Suarez from Costa Rica, among others.
 3. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the International Council for Adult Education became a major leader in advancing the field through its journal and conferences and the formation of an international network called the Participatory Research Group. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development also took up important work in this area. Some of the major writers and lesser-known innovative practitioners in participatory research include: Yusuf Kassam, Budd Hall, Orlando FalsBorda, Deborah Barndt, Dian Marino, John Gaventa, Rajesh Tandon, Malena deMontis and Lisa VeneKlasen, among others.
 4. The roots of PR/PAR go back farther, to the ideas of Karl Lewin, the Tavistock group in the UK, action research work done in Latin America and Paulo Freire's investigations of social themes.
 5. Eduard Lindeman and Mary Parker Follet, among others.
 6. From project documentation and interviews with Malena de Montis and Lisa VeneKlasen about El Regadio, a participatory research and development initiative in El Regadio, Nicaragua from 1981–84; also see OEF International (1991) and Fals Borda (1982; 1985).
 7. For a critical review of the diverse and evolving meanings of participation as used by development agencies, see Cornwall (2000). See also Chambers' (2002) reflections on the World Bank's 'Voices of the Poor' participatory poverty assessment findings represented in the *World Development Report*.
 8. These influences include law, critical legal studies, participatory development, gender, popular education, empowerment, human rights and political change theory.
 9. Some of these advances in the language of UN agreements have been subsequently bracketed or challenged, and continue to be hotly contested.

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