

Waiting to be Heard: Preliminary Results of the Equity & Sustainability Field Hearings

Deborah S. Rogers (IRiSS, Stanford University), Bálint Balázs (ESSRG, St István University), et al.* 2012 - 2013

A project of IfE - Initiative for Equality

BACKGROUND



India

The *Equity and Sustainability Field Hearings Project* is a global participatory assessment project to gather integrated information on adaptation and sustainability from impoverished and disempowered communities around the world. Local partners collaborated in designing and implementing a questionnaire or reporting template on the perspectives and goals of local communities. This project is an important model for the sustainability sciences because:

- it cuts through the disciplinary silos by asking broad, urgent, problem-based policy questions about specific life-world perceptions of local communities,
- it provides immediately relevant results, contributing to the search for realistic pathways to adaptation and sustainability that will be supported by local communities, and
- by finding an efficient way to gather the voices of the poor (who have the most to lose and the least power to influence the thinking on the transition towards sustainability), it represents an inclusive approach to creating knowledge and significantly broadens the constituencies given an effective voice in discussions on sustainability.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

In early 2012, NGO *Initiative for Equality* (IfE) circulated a broad call for partners to conduct Equity & Sustainability Field Hearings around the globe. A group of 18 academic and civil society organizations was convened to conduct Field Hearings in 34 communities across Asia, Africa and Europe (Bangladesh, China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritius, the Philippines, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Hungary and Scotland). We asked people to assess trends in their community, to speculate about causes, to propose changes needed for sustainable societies, to describe perceptions of privilege and deprivation, and to articulate wishes for the future of their family and community. We published “*Waiting To Be Heard: Preliminary Results of the 2012 Equity & Sustainability Field Hearings*”—with 60 coauthors and based on interviews with over 2700 individuals—in June of 2012. These Field Hearings results were then presented during the Rio+20 and continuing sustainable development dialogues.



Kyrgyzstan

METHODOLOGY

The project steering committee developed a questionnaire or reporting template in English, which local Field Hearings Partners then translated and modified to be culturally appropriate for their own communities. Using either public meetings, focus groups, or individual interviews, respondents were asked to:

- assess trends in their community in health, education, the economy, politics, conflict, families, happiness, circumstances for women, and other areas (are things getting better, worse, or staying the same?)
- speculate about the causes of these trends



Mauritius

- propose changes needed for their community to become sustainable (what is needed for a good life for your family and community that would last into the future?)
- describe their perceptions of privilege and deprivation (how are privilege and deprivation experienced in your community? Where do you see yourself?) and
- articulate their wishes for the future of their family and community

PEOPLE & PLACES



South Africa



India



Nigeria



Kyrgyzstan



Philippines



Uganda



South Africa



China



Hungary

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- Most communities reported worsening income insecurity, social breakdown, and environmental degradation.

- While many explanations were offered, certain themes turned up repeatedly: corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, social and economic inequality, competition for scarce resources, growing populations, changing weather, lack of appropriate training and planning, and lack of sufficient trust and unity among community members.

- The gap between wealthy and poor was perceived as increasing greatly almost everywhere. Wealth and poverty were seen as directly associated with access to political decision-making and economic opportunities.

- All communities expressed extremely modest and sustainable aspirations, hoping for a future in which their very basic food, housing, health care, education, and job security needs could be met. This is a significant finding that contradicts the assumption that growth is needed in order to achieve sustainable development.

- Many communities asked us to continue the discussions and help them seek solutions.



Malawi

*COAUTHORS

Nazmul Huq
Syed Iqbal Ali
Sarder Alam
Saqib Huq
Md. Mahmudul Alam
Mohammad Mashnun
Hossain
Lei Zhang
Yiwen Hu
Duoyi Peng
Zhuangyue Luo
Zhengyi Feng
György Málovics
Barbara Mihók
István Szentistványi
György Pataki
Elizabeth Lakatos
László Jakab

Manish Vyas
Shailash Majumdar
Ashu Saxena
Ajit Kumar Saxena
Aizhamal Bakashova
Olga Djanaeva
Asel Dunganaeva
Nazira Dzhapakova
January Watchman Mvula
Daniel Phiri
Eliya Jumbe
Mc Donald Mvula
Brian Damison
Grace Haundi
Nawsheen Hosenally
Dashini Allagapen
Priscilla M. Achakpa
Frank T. Yawon

Samuel Tough
Mr. Amama
Ahmed Chinade Abdullahi
Tina S. Clemente
Sonia G. Masaoay
Karl Leonid R. Silva-netto
Charles De Guzman
Darlene Miller
Pamela Harris
Diana Sanchez
Betancourt
Gray Maguire
Charles Nhemachena
Richard Osaliya
Rose Nandudu
Leonard Otika
Robert J. Macheri

