

# Whose learning and accountability?



*Cathy Shutt SDC Learning Event on Beneficiary Accountability*

*January 31st*

# + Objectives and Outline

- Share generic lessons and issues relevant to BA from a process that had similar principles and aims – to explore people perceptions of change to enable learning to improve responsiveness; look at how to encourage responsiveness
  - More superficial than BA
  - Included INGO staff as assessors
  - Told from perspective of critical external consultant ‘general facilitator’
- Outline:
  - Introduction
  - Objectives
  - Process
  - Lessons



# + Introduction

- **Story from 2 separate but related processes with Plan International**
- **Deliberately framed as outside of 'normal' 'donor' M&E processes that produced "dead documents"**
- - **One: critical stories of change** in Kenya – exploring effects of youth participation in local governance
  - **Two: 'testing a theory of social change' of related to youth participation** in community led t Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania 
- **Main questions & concepts developed by Plan UK**
- **Actors and roles**
  - Government Staff from District Offices – co researchers in story 1
  - Citizens/'beneficiaries' – co researchers
    - in story 1 – quite limited influence over agenda
    - In story 2 - Key researchers helped to shape questions within an agenda shaped by Plan
  - Me: 'general facilitator' external critical friend
  - Plan staff – co researchers, interpreters of language and power



# + Summary of Processes

- Pre arrival negotiation between me Plan UK, Plan programme managers re choice of communities; criteria for citizen researchers
- Pre- workshop discussion and chaos resulting from clash between project and real worlds
- Workshop:
  - Introduction to objectives, research questions and agenda (developed in UK)
  - Explored the community representative and staff perceptions of changes/outcomes, challenges etc
  - Established roles and responsibilities of research team – FGD facilitators, note takers
- Translated research questions and prompts into local languages, designed tool developed a research plan
- Research ' Discussions and interviews with children, youth, adult men and adult women'



# + ‘Participatory Analysis’

- Reflection on methods quality of data
- Synthesis and analysis of findings in story 2 with reference to CLTS theory of change and a simplified version of Hart’s ladder of participation
- Established preliminary conclusions and identified lessons



# + Simplified Ladder of Participation

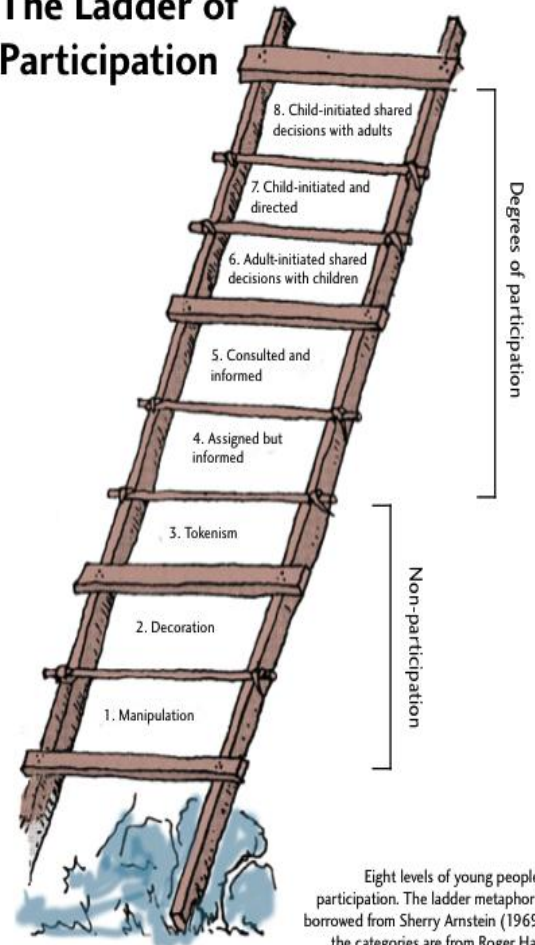
4) Sharing decision making with adults

3) Providing labour and feeling able to voice opinions

2) Providing labour but not voicing opinions

1) 'Tokenistic' – attending events but saying nothing

The Ladder of Participation



# + Headline findings response/dilemmas for Plan

- CSC and CLTS: some positive change but local power relations (formal and informal - witchcraft; including and not including Plan) a real issue
  - The Plan's CBO model ineffective for challenging power relations
  - Questions raised about the effectiveness of Plan's relationships with different actors
- CLTS power relations – participation not that great
- Children getting hit as a result of their participation in CLTS contradicted Plan's Child Rights and Child Protection aims

*“The old men have the time to be involved in the CBO because they own land and businesses so even when they are attending these meetings their money continues to generate itself...As for me, If I sit there for even 5 hours and then get nothing as a pick me up what will I eat?”*

*“We do not know how elections are done to the sub-location development committee or even the CBO. Selection is done by “wazees” over 50 years old who do not consider youth issues.” (Male youth Chivara)*

# + Writing up brokerage dilemmas!


- CSC judged by contractor to have succeeded in facilitating learning but failed to meet their donor expectations in terms of success stories
- CLTS Longer report and articles – me with lots of challenges
  - As we moved up aid chain messages go sanitised and - key issues about methodological weaknesses; different voice and different perspectives got left out
  - Final result: I had become more accountable to my contractor my efforts to fit their narratives (not for DFID) that I had not thought about how to use learning to enable responsiveness at community level their donor rather than communities

ikstemergent iied

# 63

participatory learning and action

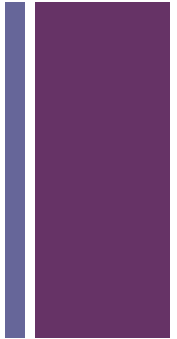
How wide are the ripples? From local participation to international organisational learning





# + Response actions?

- Plan: Discussions on CBO carried on – expatriate CD’s ‘baby’ difficult to challenge, but it became a less central organisation for youth participation work – other youth groups become more important.
- Plan: Child rights - discussions about child rights went up organisation
- Suggested trying to develop more participatory writing style - broker and translators make clear different voices of different actors – get ‘specialist’ and local opinions
- Suggested a set of guidelines about negotiation of contracts with ‘consultants’ so they anticipate issues and help to ensure responsiveness
  - Seek to reach agreement that the consultant is playing the role of a ‘critical friend’ who is granted permission to come back and ask follow up questions on responsiveness accountability to bens TOR feedback,
  - Try to anticipate and discuss implications of possible clashes in perceptions and social realities of these different groups throughout – questions, analysis writing up.



## + Process Issues /Lessons?

- Senior staff creating safe space to admit failure and participation of local staff (national facilitators) that understood local power relations key.
- Staff and citizen researchers found it hard to shape question, despite rhetoric about participation, clear few staff or community reps had used participatory tools
- Different community representatives enjoyed different aspects – some the opportunity to visit other communities, others liked project world theories CLTS and Hart's ladder
- But there were also questions about why Plan spent so much on workshops and the kind of work we were doing (did not feature in report)
- Problems of interpretation and translation and 'representation in reports' when the projectised world meets the 'real world' should be anticipated, negotiated and managed
- Difficulties of conceptualising accountability relationships and practices in cross-cultural research characterised by multiple interpretations and understandings of what is right or wrong

# + Conclusion How did it stack up against SDC BA principles?



Principle	'Compliance'
Participation and ownership	Weak - even though community members shaped questions, collected data and participated in analysis, Plan UK owned evaluation questions and in some instances this was resented by Plan Country Programme staff
Representativeness and Inclusion	Poor - choice of communities not ideal, elites sent as researchers, we did not know who had been invited to FGDs, women looked as if they had been forced to come
Differentiation	Tried systematic process to look for patterns and differences in perspectives of different groups related to child and youth involvement
Self critical quality of analysis	Partly achieved in writing up and publication, but difficult to produce documents faithful to community realities and projectised versions needed by headquarters. My interest in writing about complexity and weakness in process not welcomed by peers.
Responsiveness	Unsure - raised issues about the effectiveness of the CBO model that did shape frontline practice; CLTS raised questions about consistency with human rights at different levels of Plan