

The PADev Story

PADev 2007-2013 End-of-Project Report



Ton Dietz
and the PADev Team



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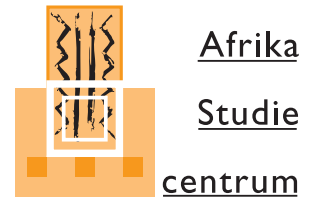
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Table of Contents

PADev: How it started	3
The design of the PADev research programme	5
The fieldwork in September 2008 and its follow-up	7
The fieldwork in 2009 and follow-up	9
The fieldwork in 2010 and follow-up	10
Preparing the PADev Guidebook and outreach: 2010-2011	11
The last round of workshops, 2012 and follow-up	13
A summary of the major results of PADev: 25 conclusions for debate	15
PADev Publications	18
References	21

PADev: How it started

New dynamics in evaluation practices of development activities

In the mid-2000s there was growing concern about the lack of quality and design flaws of evaluation practices in and around development activities (e.g. Pitman *et al.* 2005). Internationally, this concern resulted in an emphasis on 'rigorous' and 'evidence-based' approaches, based on research practices developed in the medical sciences. In this approach, randomized controlled trials are the most desirable evaluation design, and quasi-experimental approaches (such as difference in difference, pipeline or regression discontinuity designs) are second best (e.g. Bertrand, Duflo & Mullainathan 2004). Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo became two of the most influential scholars experimenting with this approach. The co-authored book *Poor Economics* (Banerjee & Duflo 2011) could become a classic in this field. The approach has become a new orthodoxy in circles of development economists and has received its rightful place in the wider monitoring and evaluation sector (e.g. Kusek & Rist 2004, Bamberger *et al.* 2006, Bamberger & White 2008). Several larger donor agencies (including DfID and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but even more so the Gates Foundation) have moved towards a stronger emphasis on these 'rigorous approaches', showing value for money in monitoring as well as evaluation, although increasing numbers of voices are arguing for more moderate positions when the situation determines the most appropriate methodology.

In Dutch NGO circles dealing with development, poverty alleviation, human rights or the 'environment and development', there was also considerable unease with existing monitoring and evaluation practices, and about government-based donor agencies working as back donors for civil-society agencies and creating demands that were too close for comfort. Edwards & Hulme (1996) gave an early warning, Mohan (2002) and Dittoh (2008) presented critical case studies about poverty alleviation and NGOs in Northern Ghana, and Robberts & Jones (2005) talked about the negative impact of a wildfire of 'managerialism' in NGOs all over the world. There was discussion in evaluation circles within NGOs about the fact that many evaluations focus on too short a period, they are nearly always donor- or sponsor-driven, they are too narrowly focused on input and output and not enough on long-term impact, projects are frequently evaluated in isolation of wider developments in the region, and the opinions of the supposed beneficiaries are largely neglected.

PADev: An alternative approach to impact evaluation

In late 2006, MDF (Management for Development Foundation), a Dutch consultancy firm that has been active in training for development capacity building for many years, organized a conference that was attended by most of the relevant Dutch NGOs and almost all the specialists involved in monitoring, evaluation and learning in the development-oriented agencies in the Netherlands. Ton Dietz was asked to present his experimental approach, which had been applied in the Pokot area in northwestern Kenya in 2001 and 2002 and was meant to be an attempt at 'participatory assessment of development' (Dietz 2007, based on Andiema *et al.* 2003, followed by Andiema *et al.* 2008, Dietz & Zaanen 2009, Dietz 2011, 2012). This generated considerable enthusiasm and was followed by a request from three collaborating Dutch development NGOs (ICCO – and partners, Woord en Daad, and Prisma) to develop a method to make it possible for local people in developing countries to express their assessment of 'development and change'. All three organizations work from a normative, faith-based perspective that is rooted in Dutch Protestant traditions. They were interested in developing methods for impact measurement based on a long-term perspective and from a beneficiary's point of view as opposed to the clinical, value-free and expert-driven approaches of the 'randomized control trials approach' (see Verschuren & Zsolnai 1998 for attempts to acknowledge the normative character of evaluations).

ICCO suggested working in Northern Ghana where they had a long history of supporting partner organizations (and particularly PCG, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana) and Woord en Daad suggested working in southern Burkina Faso where they had good collaboration with an NGO called CREDO. At the time, Ton Dietz was working as a professor in human geography at the University of Amsterdam with Fred Zaal. Both had been involved in earlier work in the region and with reliable and creative research partners based in Ouagadougou and Tamale (see Dietz, Millar & Obeng 2002, Zaal *et al.* 2003 for joint evaluation exercises and Dietz *et al.* 2004, van der Geest *et al.* 2004 and Zaal *et al.* 2004 for the results of a research programme on the impact of climate change in the Sahel).

The aim and intellectual foundation of PADev

4 The aim of the PADev project was to design and test a participatory and holistic methodology for evaluating development interventions. Instead of looking at the interventions of only one external actor, the PADev method first studies the changes in a region over a specified period (generally 15 years or longer) and then tries to establish which interventions contributed to which changes. This yields valuable information for NGOs (and governments, businesses and other agencies linked to development and change) in the area: they learn about their own impact *vis-à-vis* other actors and, in addition, they find out which types of projects have been most effective in that particular geographical and cultural setting. This can be an important lesson for future interventions and a major bottom-up learning tool. It can also feed the growing demands in development-oriented work – and beyond – for ‘downward accountability’ and upward ‘hearing the citizen’s voice’ (Ebrahim 2003, Townsend & Townsend 2004, Menocal & Sharma 2009, Jacobs & Wilford 2010). It can also be used as a tool to measure empowerment from below (Rebien 1996, Fettersman & Wandersman 2005, Jupp *et al.* 2010). But gradually it became clear that the method was locally also seen as a powerful tool for ‘participatory history writing’ (as suggested by Robert Chambers when he commented on the PADev results at a workshop in 2010) beyond the development discourse. It became obvious too that it fitted nicely in the oral culture of story-telling that is widely practised in the region (see Goody 1987 for a theoretical reflection on the interface between the oral and the written).

Of course, the PADev work did not take place in an intellectual vacuum. The team of facilitators (university staff, students and NGO staff) had had varied careers in development-oriented research and ‘action’ all over the world. The experiments with ‘participatory approaches’ in development go back a long way. Freire (1970) with his ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ and Hildebrand (1981) with his ‘sondeo approach’ can be regarded as some of the pioneers, often based

on work in Latin America. Ton Dietz and Annemieke van Haastrecht (1983) followed Hildebrand’s example in Kenya. And Robert Chambers (1981; 1983) was soon to become an influential initiator of many ‘rapid rural appraisals’, ‘participatory appraisals’ and the like. Others, such as Greene (1988), Paul (1989), Brunner & Guzman (1989), Cousins & Earl (1992), Garaway (1995), Cummings (1997), Estrella & Gaventa (1998), Jackson & Kassam (1998), Keough (1998) and Estrella *et al.* (2000), followed suit. Many debates also followed, sometimes critical of the lack of theory or of ‘chasing a ghost’ (Boyd *et al.* 2002, Kapoor 2002, Mabry 2002, Campbell & Vainio-Mattila 2003, Cornwall & Brock 2005, Forss *et al.* 2006; but see also Mosse 1994 and Smits & Champagne 2008 countering the ‘poverty of theory argument’ in rapid appraisals and participatory evaluations). Others criticized participatory approaches as a ‘new tyranny’ (e.g. Mosse 2001, Cleaver 2001, Christens & Speer 2006). Proponents often stress the political, potentially empowering character of participation, some with special emphasis on the empowerment of women and gender aspects of inclusion and exclusion (e.g. Rifkin & Kangere 2001, Donnelly-Roark *et al.* 2001, Holte-McKenzie *et al.* 2006, Webster & Engberg-Pedersen 2002, Tembo 2003, Hickey & Mohan 2004, 2005, Williams 2004, Chhotray 2004, McKinnon 2007), following critical assessments of the technocratic, anti-politics approaches of many development-oriented agencies in the past (Ferguson 1990, Escobar 1995, Michener 1998). In this debate there has always been a tension between those who favour ‘endogenous’, ‘local’ or ‘actor-oriented’ solutions to development problems (e.g. Coffey 1984, Ray 1999, Long 2001, Millar *et al.* 2008) and those who see danger in ‘localisms’ (e.g. Mohan & Stokke 2000, Botes & Rensburg 2000, Botchway 2001, Mansura & Rao 2004). Localization and globalization are often two sides of the same coin (de Haan 2000). Some authors explicitly address the power elements involved in ‘development-as-westernization’ (Kabou 1991, La Blanche 2004) and influential writers like Amartya Sen have succeeded in widening the concept of development from being a narrow perspective of material progress to a much wider approach: development as freedom (Sen 1999; following Anand & Sen 1994).



The design of the PADev research programme

It was decided to work with teams of scholars and students from the University of Amsterdam (Department of Geography, Planning and International Development Studies), the Tamale University for Development Studies in Northern Ghana and a consultancy firm, Expertise pour le Développement au Sahel in Ouagadougou. David Millar, who had been awarded his PhD (1996) in Wageningen, agreed to be the overall financial and organizational coordinator on the African side. Francis Obeng, who had defended his PhD in Amsterdam (2005), was the field coordinator in Ghana and Adama Bélemvire became the field coordinator in Burkina Faso. He had earlier worked with the Dutch researchers involved. Evaluators working at ICCO (Dieneke de Groot) and Woord en Daad (Wouter Rijnveld and later also Wim Blok) were integrated in the research teams from the start, not representing their own organizations but working under the umbrella organization and the University of Amsterdam. It was agreed that the scientific coordinators (first Fred Zaal and later Ton Dietz) would be in sole charge of deciding what to study and the reporting methods. In 2007 it was decided to make an inventory of the monitoring and evaluation practices in the region and of the most important development-oriented agencies, with a focus on NGOs. University of Amsterdam student Jerim Obure did this as part of his MSc studies in International Development. Later many other students from this Masters programme would participate as well. Obure's research resulted in his Masters thesis (Obure 2008) and in a joint presentation at a conference in the US organized by the American Evaluation Association (Obure et al. 2008). Francis Obeng and David Millar in Ghana and Adama Bélemvire in Burkina Faso found additional co-researchers, some of them senior people (like Saa Dittoh and Richard Yeboah in Ghana and Ziba Balibio in Burkina Faso) while others were more junior.¹ All of them were related to either the University for Development Studies in Tamale or EDS in Ouagadougou. Despite their busy schedules (David Millar had become Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University), the senior people were present at the workshops and meetings.

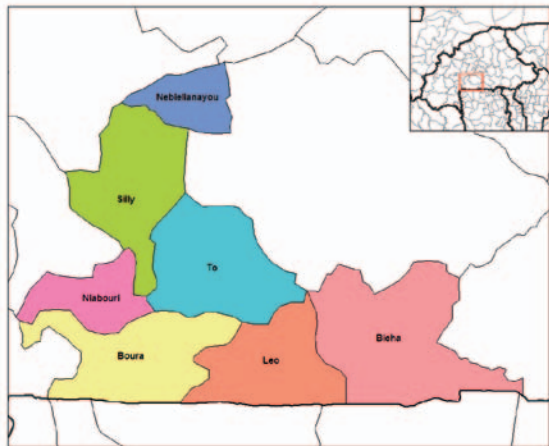
¹ In Burkina Faso: Nadège Compaoré, Janvier Kini, Donald Basimbo, Lucien Oubda, Abdoul Lengani, Caroline Ouédraogo and Alain Yambré; and in Ghana: Mamudu Akudugu (Mamoud), Frederick Bebelah, Margaret Akuribah, Christiana Kansangbata, Joyce Ahenkorah, Conrad Weobong and Samuel Z. Bonye. Not everybody participated in all the workshops.

Soon after the fieldwork activities started, the overall coordinator Fred Zaal moved from the University of Amsterdam to the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam. He handed over the overall responsibility for the project to Ton Dietz but remained one of the core researchers. This also meant that the Royal Tropical Institute became one of the research partners. Ton Dietz also changed jobs in 2010 to become Director of the African Studies Centre in Leiden, which became a research partner as well. To enable the smooth finalization of the project, he kept his job at the University of Amsterdam for one day a week (until July 2012) and was then guest professor there afterwards. Nicky Pouw from the University of Amsterdam joined the last two rounds of fieldwork.

The plan was to develop the method of 'participatory assessment of development' by incremental learning and by putting all the data and findings on a website. This was the responsibility of the programme's post-doc, Kees van der Geest, who had done his MSc and PhD research in Ghana and knew the area well (van der Geest 2004, 2011). The fieldwork was designed in four rounds. In September 2008 the research team concentrated on three areas where Dutch development assistance (by ICCO or Woord en Daad and others) had a long history and was still going on. Langbinsi in Ghana's Northern Region and Sandema in Ghana's Upper East Region were chosen as they were areas where ICCO had had a long involvement, while Tô in southern Burkina Faso was chosen because Woord en Daad had on-going involvement there supporting development partners. Each fieldwork area had about 30,000 to 50,000 inhabitants and was typically an area of around 1000 km² with a central market area of about 10,000 people. Although mostly rural, there would also be centres with modest urban characteristics in these areas.

Maps of the fieldwork areas in the PADev project

a) Burkina Faso (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silly_Department)



6

b) Northern Ghana





The fieldwork in September 2008 and its follow-up

Participant selection, enhancing participation and facilitators

In each of these initial fieldwork areas, the country coordinators selected a trusted local organizer who they knew from earlier collaboration to organize a three-day workshop. These local organizers were instructed to select about fifty local people who would represent the region's community. And up to 15 officials (salaried people working for the government, NGOs or other formal organizations) would also be invited, if possible both men and women. In addition, 30-40 other men and women, old and young, were to be invited, some from the central market area in the fieldwork region but most would be from villages and hamlets nearby. Local dignitaries would be there too, like a chief, a priest or an imam, a (head) teacher or a leader of a women's or youth association. Care was taken, however, to invite as many ordinary people as possible and indeed there were people at all the workshops who could not read or write and the majority did not speak either French or English. We also ensured that people were included from a variety of religious backgrounds and different forms of Islam and Christianity, and always a few people who would regard themselves as 'traditionalists' and one or two 'free thinkers'. However, it appeared to be almost impossible to get people from the group of the really poor to attend the workshops. This is in line with observations elsewhere in the literature (e.g. Googh *et al.* 2006, Daly & Silver 2008). Only a dedicated attempt to focus on the ultra-poor succeeded in making this type of participatory assessment truly inclusive (Kazimierczuk 2010). It remains to be seen if approaches like these can have a transformative function for the ultra poor, despite claims in the literature (e.g. Mertens 2001).

In this first round of fieldwork, efforts were concentrated on seven different exercises that were organized in focus-group meetings with visual aids over three days (Morgan 2004) and using stones and sticks (with the person talking holding a talking stick and then handing it on to the next person). In addition, we asked all participants to fill in (or they were helped to fill in) a short questionnaire about themselves, their parents, their children and their siblings (see the PAdEv Guidebook), which gave a rich overview of about 750 people connected to the 50-60 workshop participants per workshop. Kees van der

Geest coordinated this survey and produced a report that combined the results for each round (van der Geest 2008 for details of the first round).

Each focus-group meeting had two facilitators, one from the African research team from either Ghana or Burkina Faso and one from the Dutch research team or a student from Amsterdam. One facilitator would chair the meeting and facilitate the discussion while the other took notes either on a laptop or on paper (putting the information into the laptop in the evenings). Care was taken to have a good translator in each group and, if there was more than one local language spoken in the group, there would be a translator for each local language (Temple & Edwards 2002). Care was also taken to train the facilitators to avoid influencing the workshop participants, although there will always be an element of 'researcher-influenced responses' or 'socially desired answers' in focus groups like these (Cousins 1996, Cousins & Whitmore 1998).

Seven initial PAdEv exercises

On the first day, a general meeting was held at which the research team introduced themselves and introductory speeches of welcome were made before starting the first exercise, namely the 'timeline' or events exercise (see PAdEv Guidebook p. 21). Groups of officials, older men, older women, young men and young women discussed the events that they could remember and listed them in a timeline. For an interesting recent reflection on timeline methods and life-history story-telling, see Adriansen (2012).

The events exercise created a relaxed atmosphere in the group and collectively each group remembered a wide range of events from the last 30-50 years. However, the different groups always came up with slightly different sets of events. Memories became more consistent for more recent times, which is self-evident. The various timelines were combined in the workshop report, but which group mentioned which event was always shown. A break for refreshments was held during the events session.

After lunch, the same groups continued with the second exercise, which was to assess the most important changes in the area over the last 20-30 years (i.e.

in one generation), differentiating between trends in natural capital, physical infrastructure, economic capital, human capabilities, social and political changes and cultural changes (see PADev Guidebook p. 23). Here the livelihoods approach was followed, using Bebbington's (1999) suggestions. The third and final exercise of the day was a debate in each of the five groups about perceptions and manifestations of wealth and poverty (see PADev Guidebook p. 27). This was inspired by the 'voices of the poor' approach, developed by the World Bank in c. 2000 (Narayan *et al.* 2000, Narayan, Chambers *et al.* 2000, Narayan & Petesh 2002). We emphasized the differences in funeral practices between the five wealth categories and paid particular attention to semantic issues because talking about wealth and poverty is full of 'insulting words and phrases', and this regularly caused controversy. The participants then went home and the research team had dinner, wrote their individual reports and met up to discuss their experiences and what they would do the following day. One sub-group prepared a condensed summary of the wealth categorizations that would be used on the third day. And another sub-group looked at the composition of the group and prepared a list of people according to geographical area that could be used to make the sub-group for the next day.

The second morning was devoted to an exercise that involved listing all the development initiatives, interventions or projects over the past 30 years (see PADev Guidebook p. 31). This was done by geographically organized focus groups: one or two groups from the central market area and groups for villages or clusters of villages north, south, east and west of the central market area. However, the officials continued to be one group and mostly spoke from a 'central place' perspective. Listing was done by going round the workshop group until nobody could remember any other development initiative in their zone. For each initiative, the facilitators asked about the sector, the agency, the project's duration and when and where it took place. This was the most tiring session and people needed lunch to recover. It was also evident in all the groups that collectively they knew much more than if we had only asked individual participants. It was clear too that it mattered a great deal who one spoke to as well.

After lunch, the groups split into male and female sub-groups and people assessed the usefulness of each initiative and looked at its impact on the six 'capitals and capabilities' in exercise five (see PADev Guidebook p. 35-36). After the participants had gone home, the workshop facilitators had dinner, evaluated the day's events and prepared for the next (and last) day.

On the third day, exercise six allowed people in each group to select the 'five best' and 'five worst' initiatives from the long list they had made the day before (see PADev Guidebook p. 39). They tried to remember the history of each of their best and worst initiatives and then they used ten (and sometimes twenty) stones to assess the impact of each of these best and worst initiatives on the five wealth categories: who had benefited most (for 'best' projects) and who suffered most (from 'worst' projects). This was the last of the seven exercises used during the first fieldwork round (see PADev Guidebook p. 47). After lunch, people finalized their activities and there was a general discussion, a round of farewells and prayers.

Reports and follow-up to the first round of fieldwork

After each workshop, one team member was assigned the task of writing a workshop report, and doing some follow-up activities in the communities. The reports quantified some of the findings, combining qualitative and quantitative forms of reporting (Carvalho & White 1997, Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998, Bourguignon 2003 on the so-called 'mixed methods'). Fred Zaal was responsible for Langbinsi (Zaal *et al.* 2009), Ton Dietz for Sandema (Dietz 2009) and Adama Bélemvire for Tô (Bélemvire 2009). Fred Zaal (2009) later produced a synthesis for this first round and a PowerPoint presentation was included on the website with the major findings as well as an explanatory video about the approach adopted. Two students from the University of Amsterdam participated in this round: Martha Lahai (originally from Sierra Leone) and Agnieszka Kazimierczuk (from Poland). Martha applied the PADev method at the village level in two separate villages in the Langbinsi area (Lhai 2009), and Agnieszka did the same and also experimented with the method among secondary-school children in the Langbinsi area (Kazimierczuk 2009, a.o. inspired by Christensen & James 2000, Grover 2006).



The fieldwork in 2009 and follow-up

In early 2009, the research team went to three other regions where there had been major NGO involvement from Dutch-supported organizations in the past. However the Dutch funding had mostly or entirely stopped about ten years ago. The idea was that this would give a good basis for a real ex-post impact assessment. These new areas were Silly in Burkina Faso and Nandom and Lassia Tuolu in Ghana, both of which are in the Upper West Region. Adama Bélemvire and Fred Zaal prepared the report for Silly (Bélemvire & Zaal 2009), Kees van der Geest the one for Nandom (van der Geest 2010) and Francis Obeng wrote the report for Lassia Tuolu (Obeng 2010).

There were three changes compared to the first round of workshops. The first was that the assessment of initiatives (exercise five in the PADev Guidebook) was divided into a 'then' and 'now' assessment. 'Then' implied a year after the initiative started and was up and running (historical assessment) and 'now' meant the project as it is today, making it possible to see changes in the assessments. The second change was the addition of an exercise on the third day when the participants were asked how they viewed the linkages between the changes (discussed on the first day) and the list of initiatives made on the second day (see PADev Guidebook p. 43). This was an attempt to say something about perceived attribution. The third change was added contextual information in the workshop reports on the study area that was based on other literature and Internet-based sources of information. Again, an individual survey was also added (van der Geest 2009).

Three students from the University of Amsterdam joined this round of workshops and added their own fieldwork studies, which formed the basis for their Masters theses. Jolien Oosterheerd (2009) studied the migration mentality and experiences among people in and around Nandom. Sanne Böhmer (2009) looked into the impact of educational projects in and around Nandom and

Aureliën Marsais (2009) considered the differences between the phrases used in development discourses of organizations active in southern Burkina Faso and their actual practices in the area in and around Silly, also adding insights into development-oriented literature in French (e.g., Bonnal 1997). Jolien and Sanne both come from the Netherlands, while Aureliën is French.

After these first rounds, the research team started to share some of their findings. This was partly done in sessions with an advisory committee of representatives of IOB, SNV and ISS. And it was also partly done in Dutch-language journals for those interested in development issues (Dietz & Zaal, *Internationale Samenwerking* 2009), in English-language journals-cum-websites for those interested in global issues (Dietz *et al.*, *The Broker* 2009), in presentations for the funding agents (Rijneveld 2010, for *Prisma*), for different groups of students in guest lectures all over the Netherlands and for NGOs that were keen to hear the results of this new approach.



The fieldwork in 2010 and follow-up

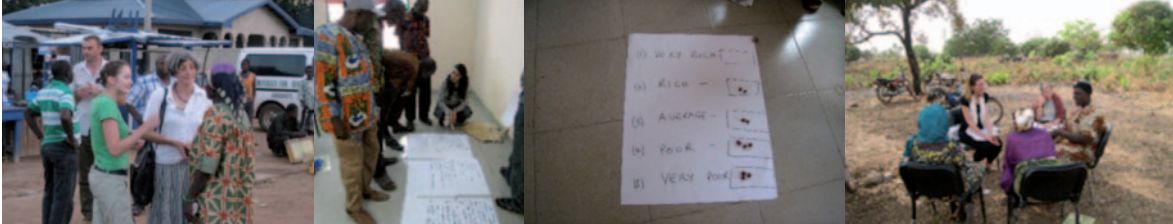
The research team organized a third round of workshops in early 2010. They were the most challenging as they were organized in isolated areas. Many people from Tamale or Ouagadougou said that these were 'forgotten areas' or even that 'nothing was going on in terms of development'. The team went to Niabouri in Burkina Faso, to Wulensi in the eastern part of Ghana's Northern Region and to Daboya in the western part of that region.

The same design was used as in the second round, with an addition to exercise six to systematically include people's perceptions about why the 'best' and 'worst' projects were perceived as such (see PAdDev Guidebook p. 39). In addition, an exercise was done to find out people's opinions of agencies (see PAdDev Guidebook p. 51). All the facilitators now used a digital format and put the results of the workshop sessions directly into their laptops. Reports were made by Adama Bélemvire and Fred Zaal for Niabouri (Bélemvire & Zaal 2010), by Richard Yeboah (2011) for Wulensi and by Ton Dietz (2013) for Daboya.

Although clearly less integrated by the 'development industry from abroad' than the earlier fieldwork areas, there was a surprising mix of development initiatives, quite a number of which appeared to be supported by foreign-based agencies. More than in the former six fieldwork areas, these had an Islamic and/or Asian background which was reason enough for us to devote a special study to the importance of Islamic agencies in Northern Ghana (Altaf 2010; also informed by Iddrisu 2005). Maybe the biggest surprise was finding a small micro-credit office of the Bangladesh-based Grameen Bank in a remote area of Northern Ghana.

Four (former) students from the University of Amsterdam and one from the University of Antwerp in Belgium participated in this round of workshops and added their own studies, partly for their theses and partly at the request of PAdDev. French Canadian Geneviève Audet-Bélanger (2010) studied the impact of environmental and agricultural projects in the Langbinsi area; New

Zealander Roger Bymolt (2011) did his own HAdDev study in Wulensi where he experimented with a somewhat different approach (hence the H instead of the P) and added a lot of insight to later versions of the PAdDev Guidebook; Zjos Vlamincx (2011), from Belgium, went to Langbinsi and studied the impact of the first PAdDev workshop there on people's empowerment and initiatives and the utilization of PAdDev findings by key (public and non-governmental) development actors in Northern Ghana (inspired by Henry & Mark's [2003] work on the influence of evaluations on people's attitudes and actions); and Agnieszka Kazmierczuk (2010) went back to 'her' village in the Langbinsi area to conduct a PAdDev exercise among the ultra-poor there. For the third time, an individual survey formed part of the workshop activities and was once again coordinated by Kees van der Geest (2011).



Preparing the PAdEv Guidebook and outreach: 2010-2011

After this third round of fieldwork, the team members actively presented the results at conferences and worked on producing a 'methodology booklet'. The initial ideas about the guidebook were presented and discussed at a meeting about Impact Evaluation in Wageningen (Dietz & de Groot 2010), at one in Utrecht (Evaluation Revisited, Zaal & Rijnveld 2010) and at a conference organized in Prague by the European Evaluation Society (Rijnveld 2010). A preliminary version of the guidebook was discussed at a conference on the PAdEv results in September 2010 in the presence of Robert Chambers and Irene Guijt. Both had been major sources of inspiration. Robert Chambers can be seen as a guru of participatory approaches to development for a long time (among his more recent work, see Chambers 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1995, 1997, 2009, Chambers & Mayoux 2005, Chambers *et al.* 2009). Irene Guijt (2008) shows alternatives to rigid forms of impact evaluations in her 'Seeking Surprise', taking the complexity theory as her point of departure. Our workshop, which was held in the Netherlands, resulted in the first version of the PAdEv Guidebook that was published online (Dietz *et al.* 2011) as a joint product with many authors and as Version 1.0 to indicate that others were to follow.

The presence at the University of Amsterdam of a Chinese scholar; Qiu Li, who was involved in Chinese environmental NGOs and was enthusiastic about the PAdEv method, resulted in a Chinese translation of the guidebook that was also released online (Dietz & Qiu Li *et al.* 2011). Interest in it in China was considerable. Ton Dietz was asked to give three lectures at Zhejiang Normal University (Institute for African Studies), Peking University and the Institute for West Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in October/November 2010 about the PAdEv approach as an example of Dutch research in Africa. And one of these lectures became a journal publication in Chinese (Dietz & Qiu Li 2012).

Ton Dietz (2011) used his inaugural address as Professor in African Development at Leiden University in January 2011 to highlight the PAdEv approach and its results. This received a lot of coverage on Dutch television, radio and in newspapers (see PAdEv website; Press and Quotes section). Roger Bymolt (2011) presented the PAdEv results at the Royal Tropical Institute where he had started as a consultant after completing his MSc. Ton Dietz also included a section on PAdEv in a book on local development and poverty that was co-edited by Nicky Pouw (Dietz 2012a). In 2010 and 2011 Ton Dietz was also asked to discuss PAdEv findings at lectures and debates organized by the board or staff at ICCO, Prisma and Woord en Daad. There were meetings between the PAdEv coordinators with its directors, Jack van Ham and later Marinus Verweij, Henk Jochemsen and Jan Lock respectively. David Millar used the PAdEv methodology as part of data collection for the development of the Northern Savannah Bio-Diversity Conservation strategy paper for the World Bank and the Ghanaian Ministry of Land and Mineral Resources (2010) and as part of the Evaluation of the Cotton Sector in Northern Ghana for the World Bank and the Ghanaian Ministry of Food and Agriculture (2011). David Millar and Francis Obeng and colleagues at the University for Development Studies in Tamale and at its Navrongo Campus and Wa Campus, as well as at a private university started by Prof. David Millar in Bolgatanga, were involved in a wide variety of follow-up activities such as teaching, student supervision and outreach events throughout the period when they were using PAdEv experiences. This included modules for teaching in the Endogenous Development Research Methods programme for post-graduate students of UDS (PhD and MPhil levels). Frederick Bebelah (Wa, Ghana) used PAdEv methods in his PhD study on the impact of the construction of the Bui Dam on livelihood activities in the surrounding communities. And Roger Bymolt and Fred Zaal integrated the PAdEv approach into a variety of consultancy activities in Africa led by the Royal Tropical Institute.

Others too started to use the PADev approach in their research work. Examples included on the PADev website are Just Dengerink's study of the impact of biogas projects in Uganda (Dengerink 2011) and Cornelis de Schipper's research on youth perceptions of violence and the efforts of NGOs and the government to address violence in urban Nicaragua (Schipper 2012). A report by the Norwegian Agency for Development Corporation (Norad) on the wider effects of Norwegian civil-society support to countries in the Global South mentions that PADev is the only evaluation effort they came across that has been able to capture the long-term effects of development interventions beyond the narrow objectives of projects. It further quotes PADev work by Roger Bymolt, which found that workshop participants tended to perceive projects having a bigger impact in the present than in the year in which they were initiated. This, they feel, is a positive sign for project sustainability (Norad 2012).



The last round of workshops, 2012 and follow-up

In January 2012 the research team went back to two locations where workshops had been organized in 2008: Tô in Burkina Faso and Langbinsi in Northern Region in Ghana. Ghanaian research-team members were present in Burkina Faso and *vice versa*. An improved guidebook was tested as was a template for data input. The list of events and development initiatives was updated in both areas and participants received info-sheets with abstracts of all the prior activities that had taken place in their area (in English in Ghana and in French and More in Burkina Faso; see the PADev website).

One additional exercise was tested to measure the differentiated impact of initiatives on wealth categories. Workshop participants were asked to distribute ten stones among the five wealth categories to indicate the differences they perceived between the wealth groups. However, in a new experiment they were also asked to look at each wealth category and estimate the relative importance of a 'best' initiative for that particular wealth group. It could well be that the group of the very rich had benefited most (e.g. five out of ten stones) but that, relatively speaking, it did not mean much to them. And the other way round, it was possible that a group of very poor inhabitants only benefited marginally but that, for them, it made a lot of difference. As might be expected, this additional exercise generated a lot of discussion and necessitated training. At the end of the workshop, there were discussions about the way participants had experienced the PADev approach in 2008 and now again in 2012.

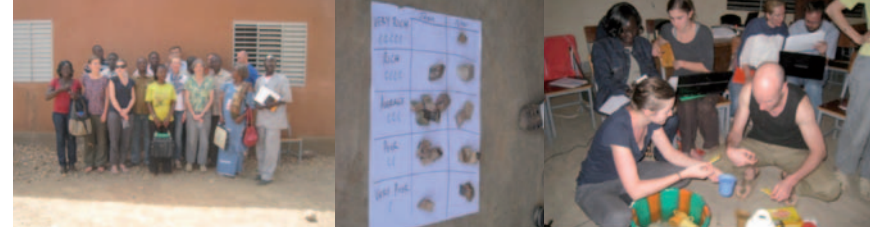
After the workshop, meetings were organized with the most important agencies active in the area and the PADev impressions of their performance were compared with their own self-assessment of their work and its results. A final workshop with invited guests was organized in Tamale to discuss the PADev approach. And the team worked together in a 'write shop' to think about and start the design of joint publications on the basis of the PADev results.

Joint publications, outreach and follow-up

Some of these initiatives have already resulted in draft texts, for example about local perceptions of development and change in Northern Ghana for a book entitled *Rural Development in Northern Ghana* (Dietz, van der Geest & Obeng, 2013) or preparation for a joint article in the *American Journal of Evaluation*. Wouter Rijnveld made an overview of PADev findings about Woord en Daad's partner CREDO (Rijnveld 2012, in Dutch) and gave a presentation at the 10th biannual conference of the European Evaluation Society in Helsinki, jointly prepared with Fred Zaal (Rijnveld & Zaal 2012). Ton Dietz gave keynote lectures about the PADev approach and results in Edinburgh (Dietz 2012b), in Cape Town (Dietz 2012c) and in Amsterdam (Dietz 2012d) and numerous other lectures for students in the Netherlands. Wouter Rijnveld used his PADev experiences to co-organize a course entitled: '*Leren van resultaten doe je samen*' - *nieuwe wegen in plannen, meten en leren*' (in English: 'Learning jointly from results: New ways of planning, evaluation and learning'; see the PADev website). In October 2010 PADev results were presented to the director and staff of ICCO (Dieneke de Groot and Ton Dietz). And in 2012, David Millar and his colleagues used the PADev methods in the mid-phase review of the five-year country strategy programme of Action Aid International in Ghana and in a policy assessment of climate, water and sanitation for Water Aid International in Ghana (in early 2013). Adama Bélemvire, Kini Janvier and other members of the Burkina Faso team made use of the PADev methodology in various consultancy projects. And Fred Zaal started preparations for a combined impact assessment approach, including elements of PADev, for the evaluation branch of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign affairs (IOB; planned for Mali and Kenya in 2013/2014).

All PADev raw data were put online in 2012 as were the template for data input, an overview of the costs involved in the PADev exercise and an assessment of what the costs would be if PADev workshops were to be organized with local staff in Africa. The guidebook (version 1.1) has been translated into French and Spanish (www.padev.nl), while the English version will appear as a book, published jointly by the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam and the African Studies Centre in Leiden. The website www.padev.nl will definitely be online for the next ten years and preparations have started to integrate the website's content in the digital library of the African Studies Centre to avoid losing any of its information at a later date. A final synthesis will also soon be made available on the PADev website based on the three rounds of individual surveys.

14 Woord en Daad (W&D) funded a follow-up activity in 2012 to study the uptake of development activities among the ultra-poor in areas and projects supported by W&D in Bangladesh, Benin and Ethiopia, using PADev methods, with fieldwork by Anika Altaf and supervision by Nicky Pouw (UvA), Ton Dietz (ASC) and W&D staff. Provisional fieldwork reports were prepared for the activities in Bangladesh and Benin. Fieldwork in Ethiopia started in February 2013 and is still on-going at the time of writing. In 2012, attempts were made to obtain funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for a project to study the impact of school-feeding programmes on the ultra-poor in Kenya and Ghana (Agnieszka Kazimierczuk, supported by Nicky Pouw and Ton Dietz) but this has not yet been successful. Discussions were started by Ton Dietz in 2013 with a variety of 'development and disability' organizations in the Netherlands to start follow-up research on 'development, disability and the ultra-poor'. In *Vice Versa Leert* ('Over inclusie'; Feb. 2013), journalist Marusja Aangeenbrug summarized a round-table discussion with Marlies van der Kroft, Betteke de Gaay Fortman and Ton Dietz: '*Nú moet de knop om*' (It is time to turn the switch).



A summary of the major results of PADev: 25 conclusions for debate

Methodology

- 1 The PADev project was primarily meant to develop and test an approach to make it possible to answer two basic questions on ‘impact assessment’: (a) how do Africans themselves perceive recent developments and changes? And (b) how do they assess the impact of development initiatives on their lives, and in the context of wider changes in society from a long-term perspective?
- 2 The approach that has been developed enables local people to assess their own development histories. Though the assessment was done collectively, it allowed room for category-specific reconstructions: officials and ‘ordinary people’, the old and the young, men and women, and people representing different geographical areas, occupations and religious groups. The method can be seen as a bottom-up, participatory way of history writing. But it can also be used for (ex-post or impact) evaluation purposes, and as preparation for new initiatives. It empowers local people and encourages local learning. And it breaks away from short-term, context-poor, expert-driven, donor-oriented ‘projectitis’ forms of evaluation that are so common in the development industry.
- 3 It proved difficult, however, to get the ultra-poor to participate in workshops like these. A dedicated approach is needed to reach them, preferably a separate workshop or round of meetings. If organized this way, it could be successful. It is also difficult to get mobile people to participate. This is true too for some of the very rich (who ‘are away on business’) and for mobile herders. In areas where people have experienced trauma, the method requires special (psychological) care and handling.

Main findings

- 4 The findings of the PADev workshops give a holistic ‘big picture’ of development and allow one to see the contributions of different development initiatives in the context of wider societal change. Often there was a diverse and complex mix of assessments of a large variety of development initiatives by a diverse group of people at the workshops. It was surprising to discover that the method also yielded interesting results when used with secondary-school children and that their historical

knowledge goes much deeper than originally envisaged, probably due to intensive contacts between them and their grandparents in an oral culture that loves story-telling.

- 5 In all the workshop areas, people are reporting major changes in their natural environment. On the one hand, there are improvements in agricultural productivity but at the same time they are noting a deteriorating environment (the expansion of crops and livestock ‘eats’ forests, kills wildlife and destroys bio-diversity). Among the agencies trying to assist, Christian and secular NGOs are both important in most of the fieldwork areas. People were quite negative about government agencies in this domain, regarding them in many cases as not being very active or effective (and less so than in the past). Workshop participants too reported relatively many ‘bad’ projects, particularly among government agencies.
- 6 In the physical domain, people reported almost everywhere a major expansion and improvement in the roads and modern buildings (mainly by government agencies, often assisted by foreign aid). There has also been a major expansion of the public water system (mostly initiated by government agencies and Christian NGOs), with people reporting much better water quality and reduced burdens on women. Recently there has been a massive expansion in telecom opportunities by the private sector and some expansion of electricity networks by the government.
- 7 In many areas there are better health facilities and more health-insurance schemes now thanks to government initiatives that are supported by foreign aid, Christian NGOs and government agencies in the case of Ghana.
- 8 There has been a strong increase in educational facilities as a result of government programmes supported by foreign aid (sector support; ‘Education for All’). However, primary-school coverage is nowhere near complete yet and there are complaints about the lack of quality and of prospects after education. The overwhelming opinion, though, is that human capabilities “to deal with the modern world” have significantly improved.
- 9 There has been growth in the private sector and there are more (female) traders now in most areas but major industrial growth is nowhere to be seen and the growth in paid/salaried jobs is very slow. Many young people with ‘good’ educational backgrounds are not working in paid jobs.

The large majority of young people are not employed in positions that offer an income that is locally regarded as a decent income for decent work. Everyone is complaining that there is very little involvement among government agencies in facilitating employment.

- 10 Foreign agencies active in the economic sphere have become more diverse and now also come from the Arab world, China, South Asia, Brazil and South Africa. Major out-migration is taking place in most areas and there is also a strong growth in remittances. The provision of micro-credit is growing slowly but mainly thanks to secular NGOs and not because of an active private commercial banking sector or successful government initiatives.
- 11 Compared to their parents and grandparents, young people seem to have wider social networks. Their orientation is no longer local, but is now national or even global. And 'development expectations' are much higher today than in the past. There is growing anger among the youth about slow change and in some places this discontent is being easily mobilized by ethno-political and religious entrepreneurs. People everywhere report a much stronger and more visible role for women, mainly thanks to the empowerment activities of Christian and secular NGOs.
- 12 There are mixed feelings about the way democracy works: on the one hand people are reporting more local involvement but also more instability and in-fighting. They also report more visible local corruption, and potentially dangerous and violent exploitation of ethnic and religious differences. But, on the other hand, the perceived ineffectiveness of many district assemblies has become a source of local initiatives (if 'they' don't do it, we will do it ourselves).
- 13 Almost everywhere there is an uneasy mixture of governance arrangements. Local chiefs are still quite important but formal government leaders are better educated now (many having a university degree) and some are acting with the mentality of officials of a 'developmental state', not only a 'rule and order state'. Sometimes this goes together with a paternalistic, top-down mentality and with a state arrogance that is not appreciated.
- 14 Everywhere there has been rapid growth in Christianity and Islam, and in the number of Christian and Islamic organizations and NGOs. There is a hybridization of religion occurring, mixing Christian and Islamic traditions with local elements. Sometimes this creates tensions but generally there is peaceful co-existence.

- 15 People are reporting rapid cultural change with growing language abilities, and a change in dress and home styles, food habits, male-female relationships and old-young relationships, particularly near local centres. Many people regret, though, that 'the youth are forgetting our age-old customs' (and such opinions were also heard among the youth at the workshops). There is some resistance to globalization and to western education, particularly in Islamic circles.

Change agents

- 16 Overall, agents of change in the fieldwork areas are still primarily government agencies and a wide variety of NGOs. The private sector is not yet dominant, although telecom companies have started to have a major impact. There is a growing Asian presence and over the last five years one has been able to see a fast hybridization of development initiatives in which government agencies, foreign donor agencies, foreign, national and local NGOs, church and mosque-based agencies, the private commercial sector and a variety of local community groups, sometimes backed by diaspora organizations, have started to form fluid networks of collaboration and joint involvement. In some areas (with Nandom in the Upper West Region in Ghana being the best example), an external development dependence attitude has given way to an entrepreneurial attitude, particularly among educated women and men in Nandom Town.
- 17 In the eyes of most of the local workshop groups, aid (foreign-backed innovations) has played an important role as a driver of change. This has generally been much appreciated but particularly so when embedded in local agencies and practices.
- 18 People not only judge initiatives by their outcome (practical success) but also or perhaps even mainly by the intervention process (respect, decent relationships, trust, dependability).
- 19 'Good' agencies are perceived to have a long-term commitment, take their time, dare to experiment and dare to fail, and they are seen as honest and dependable. They play broker roles (networking, knowledge exchange) and commit to solving conflicts, and offer help when there are major problems. They are flexible and can change from a structural to a more disaster-oriented approach when the need arises, as often happens in drought-, flood- and epidemic-prone areas.

- 20 'Bad' aid is aid that is perceived as disrespectful, top-down without consultation, and that 'creates trouble' without taking responsibility for solving conflicts. It is quick ('hit and run') and looks for fast and visible success, which is often not sustainable. 'Bad' aid does not live up to its promises and expectations.
- 21 Government agencies in most areas are more often perceived to be involved in 'bad' aid than NGOs or the private sector.

Use of PADev as a tool

- 22 PADEV could potentially be an effective tool to increase cooperation between development agencies be they public, faith-based or secular non-governmental including the commercial private sector; because it provides an overview of projects undertaken by various agencies in a certain area and shows what their comparative advantages are and in which areas they 'score' less based on bottom-up assessments. The district assemblies in Ghana might be a good institution to take up the role of sharing the findings collectively with the development actors in a certain district as an input for community action plans. However, further investigation of such potential cooperation and community-action planning based on joint PADev evaluation outcomes is necessary.

Inclusive development

- 23 Development initiatives are mainly improving the lives of people who are locally defined as rich and/or in middle-income groups, and not the lives of the (very) poor. This is not only a result of deliberate exclusion by the agencies who organize interventions but it is also due to the fact that the ultra-poor in a community often exclude themselves and are invisible when decisions are being made to design interventions. Physically and mentally handicapped people (and also socially and emotionally handicapped people) and persons from minority groups are particularly vulnerable and form a disproportionate proportion of the ultra-poor.
- 24 The current emphasis in donor agencies on 'visible success' (effectiveness, impact) increases the chance of development agencies focusing on the locally rich and already successful, and failing to commit themselves to the (ultra-) poor.

- 25 The current emphasis in Dutch government circles on business and development, or 'trade first; development will follow', ignores the fact that in areas like those studied in the PADev project, the external commercial private sector is still very weak, if not largely non-existent. On the other hand, it is undeniable that recent economic growth in the countries where this fieldwork took place, namely Ghana and Burkina Faso, has been rapid. But this has not yet translated into local economic development. Massive expectations that are difficult to manage and undermine social and political stability have been created. On the other hand, the rapidly growing cities in West Africa are generating a growing and geographically wider demand for ever more products from previously 'forgotten' areas. Enabling better-functioning urban-oriented value chains is one of the most urgent development challenges linking the rural hinterlands to the booming cities (and to foreign demand). If successful, these will create the increases in employment and income that many local people are hoping for and that they are demanding from their political leaders.



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² Source of cartoon: barryjphillips.blogspot.com

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