

2009

Athina Delimara: *Post-fire decision-making in Greece: awareness and participation*

The purpose of this research was to look into broad issues on civil society organisations, citizens' awareness on environmental issues and their participation in the decision-making progress. Special issues are explored such as the citizens' perceptions of environmental NGOs and their role, access to information and environmental education. A second part is devoted to environmental legislation, citizens' awareness of it and whether there is correct implementation or not. Ways for the citizens to monitor government's proposed plans as well as to what extent citizens can interfere at the stage of planning and implementation.

The research methods used were semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, survey and review of the relevant literature as well as collection of secondary data.

The main conclusions can be divided into three categories:

- a) The seemingly weak civil society in Greece does not necessarily depict the reality, since the space that civil society moves and the constant change of its inner relations are unpredictable.
- b) Citizens, having recognised the importance of access to information, demand and exercise their right to it as a way to achieve better quality of environmental education.
- c) Becoming aware of environmental issues enables citizens to participate in the decision-making process, monitor the effectiveness and implementation of environmental laws and last but not least, affect policies.

Abbie Goodwin: *Confronting consumption: tracing consumption patterns in Bermuda*

Godfred Bonnah Nkansah: *ICTs and Special Educational Needs in Ghana*

This research focused on the relationship between ICTs and disability education, and explored the potential contributions that ICTs could make to meeting special educational needs. The research assessed the needs of three disability groups: the Deaf, Blind, and Intellectually Disabled, and the ICTs required to address these needs. It also assessed the factors constraining effective special education delivery in Ghana, and their implications for the deployment and use of ICTs in special education. The research revealed that, socio-cultural beliefs and perceptions about disability, ignorance of the capabilities of people with disabilities, and the high cost of meeting some specific educational needs had synergistically affected attitudes toward disability, and the kind of provisions made to support special education. Special education consequently lacked the support needed to make the operations of the subsector effective—more especially the extension of ICT services to special schools to enable disabled students benefit from the digital revolution. ICTs were found to be particularly useful aids in behavioural control, cognition and learning, improving pedagogy, ensuring parity in access to educational curricula for persons with disabilities, and also promoting their social development. Their deployment and use in special schools had, however, been largely constrained by factors such as cost, lack of skilled personnel to manage ICTs at the school level, inadequate infrastructure, lack of appropriate digital educational contents, and the regular breakdown of mostly second-hand ICTs donated to schools. A six weeks field research in Ghana involving questionnaire surveys, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with a wide range of participants provided the data for the study.

Steven Jones: *The effect of 'capacity-development' on local participation in drinking water governance: a case study of the rural municipality of Yélékébougou, Mali*

Community participation in water governance in developing countries is considered important for increasing sustainable access to drinking water and improving broader local governance. The promotion of participation has therefore become a key aim of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This research explores the effects of 'capacity-development' initiatives by the international NGO WaterAid and its local partner organisations on community participation in water governance in the rural municipality of Yélékébougou, Mali.

The research finds that the promotion of community participation in Yélékébougou is currently focused on "participation as payment" because lack of payment for maintenance of handpumps appears to be the critical obstacle to immediate water access. However, "participation as payment" as a means of pursuing cost recovery from communities is not working. The focus on "participation as payment" also detracts from the promotion of "participation as citizenship" and the associated potential longer-term benefits to water access and democratic decentralisation. This study also supports the idea that 'designing' institutions and spaces of participation is problematic because institutions actually emerge as a mix of socially embedded forms of activity and more formal and 'modern' arrangements.

The immediate outcome of failing to achieve "participation as citizenship", "participation as payment" or effective institutions for water governance is that drinking water access is neither sustainable nor equitable. However, there is currently insufficient data about the detailed implications for water access for different people.

The key recommendations resulting from the research are to: explore the potential for subsidised handpump insurance, consider the constraints and opportunities of existing social structures, focus on ongoing institutional support rather than isolated training, and develop methods for monitoring water access which are suited to low-literacy communities.

Natasha Lee: *Has gender been incorporated within NGO policy from 1986? An example from rural Uganda*

This research focuses on a rural NGO in Uganda, with reference to its policy and activities in relation to gender. The role of men and women is closely studied in relation to current international trends, with a particular focus surrounding the role of men in community activities. Policy will be addressed, looking at whether this is community led, or specifically governed by the project management. The NGO is led by a board of trustees both within Uganda and Britain, and interviews will ascertain how policy has changed, and to what extent the community are involved with decision making. Community participation will ensure that views are obtained by those impacted by policy changes, and will allow a comparison to the opinions of the management.

Natalie Partridge: *Recovery programmes for women – a comparison of pre- and post-tsunami established NGOs in Sri Lanka*

On the 26th December 2004 a tsunami devastated nearly two thirds of the South East to Northern tip of the Sri Lankan coast. Thousands of people were killed and even more displaced. As in a lot of disasters vulnerable groups such as women became more vulnerable.

The immediate response locally and internationally was over whelming and there was a sudden increase in the number of non-governmental organisations (NGO) established in Sri Lanka. This study aimed to look at how pre-tsunami established NGOs and post-tsunami established NGO in the Galle and Kalutara districts implemented and carried out recovery programmes for women and in turn what factors facilitated the recovery process. The study was conducted between May and June 2009, key personnel from two NGOs (one established pre and post) were interviewed, and focus groups were conducted with women participants engaged in five recovery projects. Findings report that key elements that facilitate a rapid and effective recovery response are proximity, prior relationships and knowledge of the communities involved. Furthermore, the undertaking of a needs assessment is vital for the success of the recovery programmes. These elements were particularly evident in the NGO which was already established within the community. Hence a key recommendation from this study is that NGO's established in response to natural disasters should consider collaborating with the local established NGOs with similar objectives and values. This will be advantageous in understanding the local knowledge and need, the ability to access and exploit pre-existing relationships and thus enhance their ability to initiate and implement recovery programmes successfully.

Simrat Riyait: *An evaluation of national disaster management policy at local level, Port Maria, Jamaica: Tropical Storm Gustav, 2008*

Jamaica experiences a range of natural hazards which have the potential to create disasters if they impact vulnerable populations. The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) is a national agency responsible for managing these disasters. They focus on mitigation and preparedness activities conducted before the hazard and implement disaster management procedures at parish and community level. This dissertation aimed to evaluate how national ODPEM disaster management policies were implemented in the town of Port Maria in St Mary parish during Tropical Storm Gustav, 2008. Specifically, the communities of Frontier and Palmers Park and Pagee were chosen as they were located on the floodplain of the Port Maria River and were flooded during Gustav.

The research involved conducting interviews with ODPEM and the Parish Disaster Committee as well as supporting agencies. Furthermore, questionnaires were conducted in the two communities based on the information collected. The results showed that ODPEM guided the Parish Disaster Committee into adopting the disaster management policies and there was a strong relationship between the two agencies. The Parish Disaster Committee implemented these policies at community level, however certain communities had more awareness of some stages of disaster management than others.

It was suggested that the Parish Disaster Committee use a Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) approach to fully implement national disaster management policies at community level and address the unique issues within each community. These practises would be essential to reduce vulnerability to disasters, especially with the threat of increased hazards from environmental climate change.