COMING TOGETHER TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE

Using Participatory Tools for Community Development in Puriang, Meghalaya India

March 2008

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Acknowledgements

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UUPCC Community Capacity Building Team
March 2008

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Chapter 1
Background and Process Information

The Village of Puriang

A view of beautiful Puriang village

The village of Puriang is located in the East Khasi Hills district of northeastern India in the state of Meghalaya. This village of approximately 450 households (4,000 people) is located high on a beautiful hillside a short ways off the main road connecting the state capitol of Shillong with the town of Jowai. Although there are hundreds of coal trucks traveling this road hauling output from the state's many coal mines, the people of Puriang primarily work in agriculture.

Most of the village's farmland is located in the valley more than an hour's walk down a steep hillside on a dirt road. The village grows its own vegetables there, including potatoes, tomatoes, beans, lettuce, and other crops. As vegetable crops are harvested, they are hauled up the hill by hand and sold at market or to middlemen immediately as there are no facilities for storing perishable goods in this area. The rice paddies are harvested in the autumn.

Puriang has a number of playing grounds and a small community hall as well as many active churches. The village has several primary and secondary schools that are operated by churches, the government, or private groups for children to attend. Because colleges are located in Shillong or Jowai, few students finish grades 10-11.

One of Puriang's playgrounds and the Community Hall

Water is available in abundance during the six-month wet season when the Puriang villagers obtain water from nearby springs. During the dry-season, water must be collected from the far source -- a stronger spring located down a steep hillside. Water collection is a real drain on the time of the people of Puriang – both women and children make this two hour round trip journey twice each day.

The path to the water source

Water is located midway down this valley

There is no village health center nor a health worker located in Puriang. Because there is no dispensary nearby, medicines are not readily available. This makes obtaining preventative and curative health care extremely difficult. Although the Public Health Center (PHC) is located 30-40 minutes away in Mawryngkneng, nearly all important health issues require an expensive trip to Jowai, Shillong, or even Guwahati. Residents often have to borrow money to cover transportation costs and health care expenses.

Because the poverty issues within the community are real, the village became interested in looking at new ways to organize community development plans. Leaders of the Unitarian church became aware of the benefits of using a participatory planning process to write community action plans. After consultation with the village council and elders, the village committed to implementing a 3-day participatory planning process.

Background on Participatory Planning Tools

For more than 20 years, development and planning agencies throughout the world have been using participatory tools to enable communities to become the primary architects of their own development. Using approaches adopted from Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), these tools use a participatory approach to mobilize communities and enable village institutions to help themselves. The result is the creation and implementation of Community Action Plans (CAPs) that find solutions to the community's highest priority problems.

Key PRA tools include community mapping, institutional analysis, seasonal calendars, ranking, and action planning. Other useful exercises are time and trend lines, transects, and gender calendars. These tools, used by experienced facilitators, can help a community to organize what it already knows and mobilize resources it already has to come to consensus about an action plan to guide development. Armed with a plan that the entire community supports, local leaders are better able to negotiate with external partners such as government agencies or NGOs to secure resources not presently available to the community.

Participatory community-based tools help to**:**

- **Build village consensus on public issues** using conflict mediation techniques
- **Create action plans** based on community consensus about highest priority needs and ways to address them
- **Assist local institutions to mobilize their own resources** to focus on these priority needs
- **Form partnerships** with external government, NGO, and private sector agencies

Using participatory tools creates an environment where all members of the community – men, women, youth, elderly, poor, and well-to-do — can come together to discuss the future of their community.

These tools were used in a 3-day community planning process in the village of Puriang, Meghalaya, India in March 2008 to assist the village to:

- **Organize its information** - Communities are filled with knowledge and information about their needs and ways to solve them, but that this information may need to be organized.
- **Mobilize its resources** – All communities have some resources – human, material, managerial – to solve their problems but these resources may need to be mobilized
- **Create a Community Action Plan (CAP) --** Organizing information and mobilizing internal resources enable a community to resolve internal conflicts and develop consensus on its highest priority needs and how to solve them. This consensus becomes part of a formal planning process and leads to a Community Action Plan (CAP).

The goal of the participatory planning meetings in Puriang, Meghalaya is to identify priority needs, to recognize its internal resources, to develop possible solutions, and to create a Community Action Plan that the entire village agrees upon. With this CAP, Puriang will be able to demonstrate to external government, NGO, and donor agencies that the community has conducted a serious analysis of its needs and is already making contributions toward meeting them.

Early Discussions

The Unitarian-Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, Virginia (UUCF) has been in partnership with the Unitarian Church in Puriang, Meghalaya for the past three years. The Fairfax church has been supporting Puriang's Unitarian church and school as well as the village through an emergency fund. Over the years, several UUCF members have visited Puriang with a strong interest in assisting in improving the quality of life in Puriang and in alleviating poverty in the village.

The organization that organizes partnerships between Unitarian churches around the world is the Unitarian-Universalist Partner Church Council (UUPCC). The UUPCC also has a team lead by Professor Richard Ford that implements participatory Community Capacity Building programs in villages where partnerships exist. Dr. Ford is one of the founders of the techniques of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and has more than 40 years experience in implementing PRA tools around the world.

The Fairfax church was interested in offering such a program to Puriang. Through the UUPCC, it initiated discussions with the leadership of the UUNEI and leaders in Puriang about facilitating a set of participatory planning meetings. Professor Ford also met with several officers of the UUNEI as well as development specialists in Meghalaya and leaders in Puriang.

Professor Ford explained that **all** residents of Puriang must be invited to participate, not just the Unitarians. Participatory planning is never successful if people feel excluded from the process. Local leaders indicated that they were open to bringing all churches, organizations, and genders together for a participatory Community Capacity Building program. They were willing to the try this new participatory approach to planning.

Northeastern Hills University (NEHU) professor Dr. Nongkynrih recommended that the UUPCC contract with a local organization to facilitate the process. The Khatarshnong Socio-Organization (KSO) has a well-trained and experienced field staff who know the tools of participatory planning extremely well. Although they generally work in the Cherrapunjee area of Meghalaya, the Director expressed great interest in assisting with the program scheduled for Puriang.

It was decided that the planning meetings would be held in March 2008.

Planning Meetings

To organize and coordinate the Community Capacity Building program in Puriang, a team from the UUPCC in North America worked in conjunction with the KSO facilitators and leaders of the Unitarian Church of Puriang. This group coordinated a week of activities for the participatory planning process that included introductions and meetings with key officials and leaders.

Meetings with Local Officials

The Community Capacity Building team met with the Block Development Officer (BDO) and the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA). The purpose of these meetings was to inform these gentlemen that the team would be working in Puriang on implementing participatory planning meetings using PRA approaches. Both men expressed their thanks to the team for coming to Meghalaya and gave their support for the process.

Meetings with Village Headman, Elders and Executive Committee

More than 25 people attended this meeting, including the Puriang's Headman. The Community Capacity Building team leaders explained the participatory planning process to the group and its link to PRA, often a critical factor in receiving Government of India financial resources. The team described the key steps in the process that would take place during three consecutive evening meetings:

- Identify the strengths & resources in village, Block, and District
- Discuss the needs of the community
- Build consensus on village priorities
- Prepare action plans to begin implementation of identified projects

Puriang's leaders attend a meeting to learn about participatory planning and to express their thoughts and concerns.

The team stressed that everyone in the village is invited (men, women, youth), that everyone's ideas would be valued, and that everyone will be involved in developing the plan.

These leaders asked excellent questions and expressed several important concerns:

- One was whether the plan would be KSO's plan or the village's plan. The team reassured them that the plan would be Puriang's plan and that the facilitators would simply help implement the exercises.
- The village Secretary asked a key question – "Will it really work?" The team explained that it only works if the village and its leadership decide to implement the plan and follow-up. A plan is simply a piece of paper until it is brought to life through the efforts

of the Executive Committee and the people of Puriang.

- Another area of concern centered on whether the Executive Committee should be the only participants. The team explained that the more people who agree with the plan, the stronger the plan will be and requested that the Executive Committee permit the widespread participation of the village in the process.

To close the meeting, the Headman expressed his thanks and hopes that the program would be a success in bringing development to the village, but that he was concerned that it might fail. He wished the team God's blessings and told it that the elders and Executive Committee would meet to decide if the village would participate.

After meeting together, the Executive Committee and elders decided to allow the village to implement the 3-day participatory planning process.

Three Community Meetings

Residents were informed of the meetings using a thorough publicity program. On Wednesday evening, a man walked the village to invite people to attend.

Residents attend the first planning meeting

Evening 1: Thursday -- The first night of meetings focused on data collection and information sharing. The facilitators led people through a series of exercises that helped participants share information about Puriang, its needs, and its strengths. More that 200 people attended the first evening's meetings and worked in three small groups on the activities described in Chapter 2. The group had excellent representation from both men and women. Several village elders and Executive Committee members attended.

Evening 2: Friday – More than 100 people participated, including village elders and Executive Committee members. The second evening focused on generating a comprehensive list of village needs and on coming to consensus on Puriang's most important needs. The activities included both small and large group activities as described in Chapter 3.

Evening 3: Saturday – More than 100 people participated on this evening as well. This evening focused on a detailed analysis of the top four village priorities – water systems, health care, agriculture, and the road to the fields. With that analysis, residents created Community Action Plans for these four top priorities. The activities included both small group and large group activities as described in Chapter 4. The meeting closed with the commitment of those Executive Committee members in attendance to present the information to the entire committee at their next Executive Committee meeting the last week in March.

Chapter 2
Data Gathering and Information Sharing

Spatial Data

Evening 1: Activity 1

Village Sketch Map

Objectives:

- To create a sketch map of Puriang
- To use the mapping process to start discussion about the village and its development needs
- To use the map as a tool to tell the facilitation team about their villages accomplishments and resources as well as their needs

Process:

Participants in this activity were invited to draw a map of Puriang. They were encouraged to include the places where people live, work, play, learn, shop, and meet. They also were asked to show the natural resources that exist and where water sources are located. They also discussed public and private lands and their usage. They were asked to show places of importance, places where they like to be, and places they dislike.

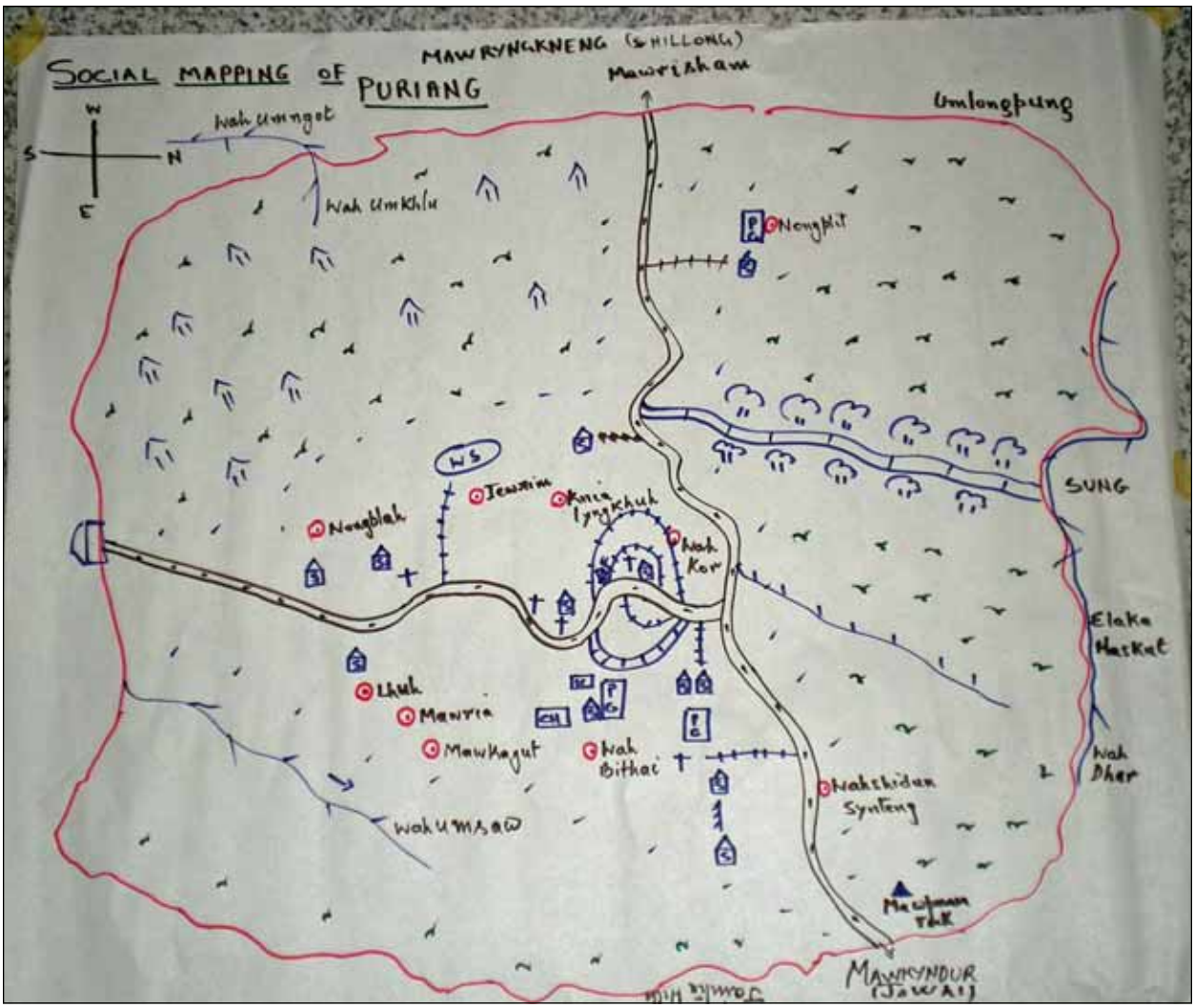
At the end of the exercise, one person made a clear copy of the map on flip chart paper and reported back to the community the next day.

Comments:

The group that created the map included a mix of men, women, and youth. Participation and involvement in the process was excellent. Making the map and then analyzing its contents provided time to discuss needs of the community, including lack of a nearby water source, the extremely poor condition of the road leading to the fields, and lack of sanitation facilities. Participants also noted that there were not many small industries in the village. The mapping process did enable the group to highlight the village's accomplishments. For example, the community now has ten schools, including secondary education.

As the first night drew to a close, the group felt as if they had not finished putting everything on the map. They asked to borrow paper to continue mapping on their own during the day tomorrow. They brought this more complete map to the second night's meeting and presented it to the community. This new map highlighted the Puriang's neighborhoods and rivers.

Puriang Village Map



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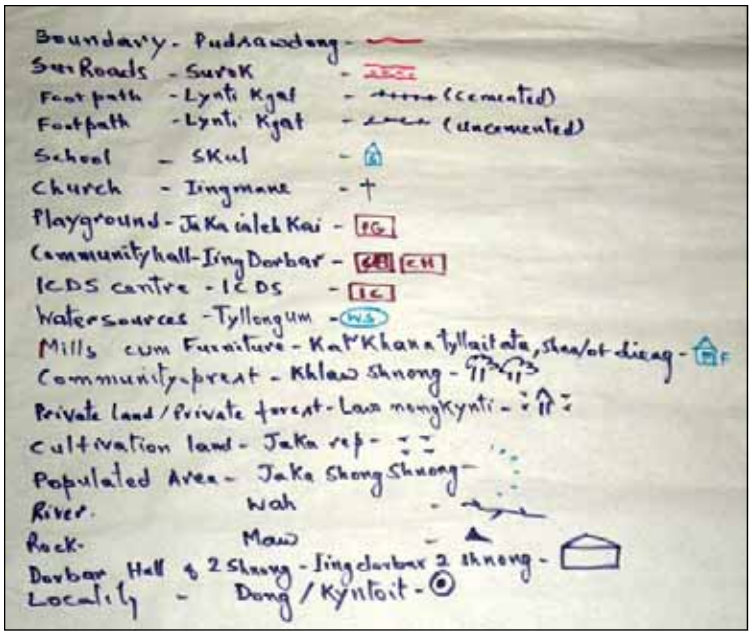

Data Gathering and Information Sharing

Institutional Data

Evening 1: Activity 2

Organizational and institutional Analysis

Objectives:

- To determine which institutions in the community are the most significant and why
- To assess villagers' perceptions about which groups cooperate most effectively with each other
- To identify missing elements in a village's institutional capability

Process:

Villagers were shown an example on an institutional analysis. The facilitator explained that the larger circles represented the more important institutions and the smaller circles the less important. They were asked to list organizations that existed within Puriang and then those that exist outside the village. After creating the list, they indicated the importance and influence of each group by ranking and size of circle. They were also asked to consider such things as the number of beneficiaries, quality of service, and implementation of positive changes when deciding on a group's importance.

Comments:

The village has many organizations that act and work within the community and the various churches and schools. The Executive Committee was considered the most important institution because of its role in planning village participation in government programs and as interface with key outside organizations such as the Block and their elected Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA). The School Management Committees were also seen as critical to improving schools and managing teacher's salaries. The group selected the Health and Sanitation Committee as the third most important organization. This is a new committee and is only getting started in its work. Clearly, the participants are hoping that it is able to implement improvements in sanitation and health.

Although the village does not have a Village Development Committee, there are a number of organizations that are working in poverty reduction. People valued the Ration Committee's role in providing food to those who are extremely poor. They also considered the ICDS's role as important because it is the only village source of nutritional information and protein-rich food for pregnant women and small children.

The Village Defense Party was cited as doing a very good job at providing police services to Puriang and as having made a real impact in reducing the amount of alcohol that was

sold improperly in the village.

The churches all had women and youth groups, but they seemed to work separately. There are two new Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Puriang. They are closely associated with the poverty alleviation efforts of several other small groups in the community.

The Public Health Center (PHC) was considered the most vital institution outside of the village because there are no health services within the community. Many residents are concerned about having a strong and effective PHC. The Block office had an important influence in rolling out government development and poverty alleviation schemes and as a conduit to other government funding sources.

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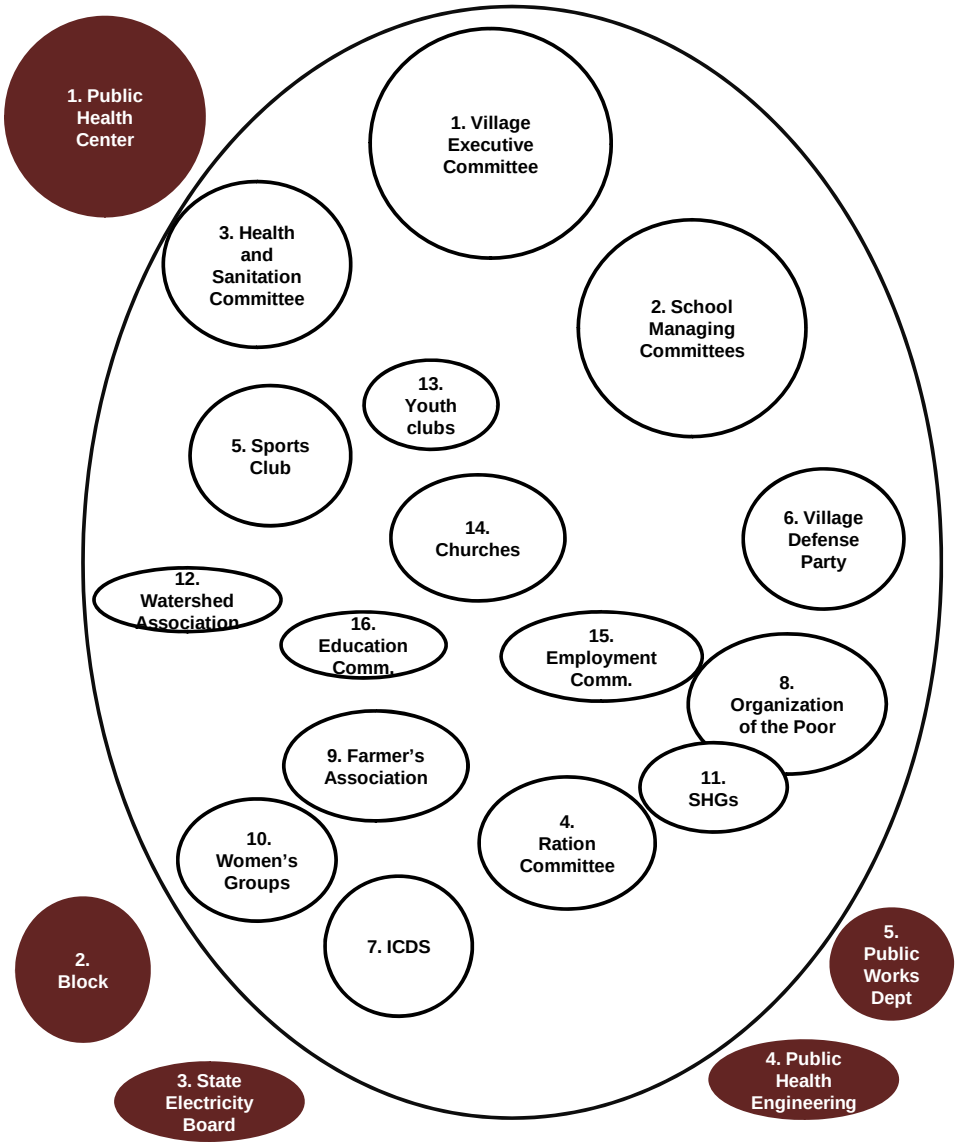
Puriang Institutional Analysis



Puriang Institutional Analysis

Detailed List of Organizations, Schools, and Churches

Inside the Village (by importance)

1. Village Executive Committee
2. School Managing Committee
   i. Unitarian Secondary School
   ii. Puriang Secondary School
   iii. Govt. Lower Primary School
   iv. Presbyterian L.P. School
   v. Iewrim L.P School (private)
   vi. Church of God L.P. School
   vii. Roman Catholic L.P. School
   viii. Marbrandos L.P. School (private)
   ix. Sawkyntoit L.P. School (village)
   x. Nongplit L.P. School (private)
3. Health and Sanitation Committee
4. Ration Committee
5. Sports Club
6. Village Defence Party
7. ICDS
8. Organization of the Poor
9. Farmers Association
10. Women's Organizations (one at each church)
11. Self Help Group 1 and 2
12. Watershed Association
13. Youth Club (one at each church)
14. Religious Groups
    i. Presbyterian
    ii. Unitarian
    iii. Church of God
    iv. Catholic
    v. Church of Christ
15. Village Employment Committee (VEC)
16. Village Education Committee (VEC)

Outside the Village (by importance)

1. PHC (Public Health Center)
2. Block
3. Me SEB (Meghalaya State Electricity Board)
4. PHE (Public Health Engineering)
5. PWD (Public Work Dept)

Participants creating Puriang's institutional analysis

A group representative reports the team's findings to everyone

Data Gathering and Information Sharing

Temporal Data

Evening 1: Activity 3

Recent Village History and Stories

Objectives:

- To encourage community residents to reflect on changes taking place in their community, especially in the last 15 to 20 years
- To open conversations on the meaning of these changes

Process:

Participants were asked to talk about the recent history of Puriang and the major activities that have impacted or changed in the village. After completing the history, they were asked why they liked living in Puriang.

Comments:

Participants listed recent events in the village. With the exception of the terrible floods of 1974, many accomplishments in health, education, and organization were noted. They also really appreciated that Puriang generally has an adequate food supply and that the village's hillside location results in a lower incidence of malaria which would reduce their productivity.

Recent Village History

1974	Torrential floods affected the crops tremendously.
1974-1975	Electricity was connected because the Presbytery requested and needed it
1990	ICDS nutritional program introduced for pregnant women and children under 6
1990	First upper primary school opened (Grades 5-7)
1991-1993	Roads paved
1999	First secondary school opened (Grades 9-10)
2005	Village Executive Committee established

Reasons Why People Like Living in Puriang

- I was born here and it is my homeland
- We have enough food
- Unlike some villages, we have enough water -- even in the dry season
- There are enough places to work
- We have a better climate than other villages. We are high up on the hills so there are fewer mosquitoes and malaria

Data Gathering and Information Sharing

Temporal Data

Evening 1: Activity 4

Seasonal Calendar

Objectives:

- To show activities that go on throughout the year
- To discuss the demands on their time at various times of the year

Process:

Participants were asked to create a seasonal calendar showing what happens throughout the year in the village. They were asked to consider weather, water, crop production, live-stock production, available resources (natural & human), human health, wood collection, and other annual activities.

Comments:

As an agriculturally-based community, the participants immediately charted the activities associated with planting, maintaining, and harvesting the fields and their most important crops. Animal diseases become a concern in concentrated periods associated either with the dry season or the rainy season. No veterinary services exist in the village. During the monsoon season, cholera and dysentery become common among Puriang residents.

The school calendar coincides with the key holidays in the area—Christmas and New Years. During December and January, school is closed for these holidays. It is also closed because these are the coldest months and there is no heat in the school.

The workload for farm workers and families is also lower during December and January.

Facilitator H.H. Mohrmen draws the seasonal calendar with input from more than 80 Puriang residents

Puriang Seasonal Calendar

Type of Works	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rice Paddy	♦	♦			♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦		♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦
Tomatoes		♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦
French Beans	♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦	♦♦♦		♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦	♦♦♦
Coriander	♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦
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Cows					♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦					
Illness - Chickens		♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦								
Illness - Pigs		♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦								
Illness - People						♦♦♦♦♦ ♦	♦♦♦♦♦ ♦		♦♦♦♦♦ ♦			
Firewood Cutting	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦										
Festivals	♦♦♦♦♦ New Years	♦ 26th Republic Day						♦ Independence Day				♦♦♦♦♦ Christmas
Schools	No School	♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦ Break	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦♦ Exams	♦♦♦♦♦ Exams	No School

Data Gathering and Information Sharing

Gender Data

Evening 1: Activity 5

Roles of Men, Women, and Youth

Objectives:

- To learn the different roles that men, women, and youth play.

Process:

Participants were asked to list the key roles that men, women, and youth play in the community both at work and at home.

Comments:

Men and women both indicated that they felt responsible for their families and played an active role in bringing their children up. They split their family responsibilities with men responsible for teaching children skills such as hunting, fishing, and farming. Women take on the responsibility for making sure the children attended school and completed their homework. The men are responsible for hunting, fishing, and farming They also do most of the firewood cutting and charcoal burning. Although women do work in the fields, they spend more time cooking, washing, and carrying water. Women are also responsible for selling produce in the market towns. Young people also carry water before and after school. Young people assist in caring for their young siblings each day.

Key Roles and Responsibilities

Women	Men	Youth
Taking care of children	Farming	Influenced by parents
Cooking	Hunting	Play football
Washing	Fishing	Singing in the church
Market	Cut reeds to make baskets	Hangout
Responsible for making sure children do their studies and homework	Responsible for teaching children skills – hunting, fishing, farming	Looking after young siblings
Sell produce at the market in Shillong or Jowai	Firewood cutting	Homework
Responsible for family	Responsible for family	Carry water
Carry water	Prepare wood for house	
	Burn charcoal	
	Make baskets to carry vegetables	
	Play football	

Chapter 3
Needs Analysis and Prioritization

Evening 2: Activity 1

Listing of Unranked Needs

Objectives:

Create a list of community needs without ranking them by importance

Process:

Based on the discussion generated during the first evening's activities, the facilitators listed what they perceived to be the community's needs. This list was presented to the community for verification and also for additions. The large group split into three teams to evaluate the list. A revised list of unranked needs was then compiled which included comments from all three teams.

Comments:

Thus far, parallel data collection tasks have been used to collect spatial, temporal, institutional, and social information. The first night's activities were designed to assist the community to organize information on both its accomplishments and its needs. Participation the first night was excellent, so a substantial number of needs arose during the evening's discussions.

The facilitators compiled a list of approximately 25 needs. Because the list was long, the needs were reshaped into nine categories. This list and these categories were reviewed in the small group analyses. The discussion was lively and many additional needs were identified. These were added to the original list and a complete list of unranked needs was compiled.

One key area of addition was the lack of small businesses and services in the community. People wished there was a tailor, a barber, a blacksmith, and an agricultural supply shop. The youth were vocal in making sure that additional educational concerns of theirs were added to the list—the lack of a school bus during the monsoon season and a desire for night classes so young people who must work the fields during the day could complete their education in the evening. Additional health concerns were also added, focusing on the difficulty of getting medicines or ambulance transportation.

Preliminary List of Unranked Needs for Participant Review

Education

- Not all village children attend school
- Low teacher salaries
- Teacher grants for salaries

Health Care Systems

- No health services for village
- Not many people to teach health skills in the village
- Not many people with knowledge of health in the village
- No pharmacy in village
- No regular health worker visits
- High costs for health care and transportation
- Seasonal diseases like cholera and dysentery

Water Supply

- Carrying water takes a lot of time
- No water supply into the village

Small Industries / Income Generating Activities

- Not many small industries
- Not many ways to earn an income except agriculture

Agriculture

- Crops sell at very low prices at harvest time
- Middleman makes all the money
- No storage facilities to sell crops at a different time
- No food processing facilities (to can tomatoes or make finished product to sell at higher prices)

Recreational Facilities

- Sports facilities could be improved
- No recreational center
- A place for cultural events

Road to Sung

- The road to the fields is unpaved

Sanitation

- No garbage site
- Not many latrines
- Not everyone has sanitation education/ knowledge

Capacity Building

- No training for village groups in how to work cooperatively to achieve goals

One of the three groups reviews the preliminary list of unranked needs. They added several more village needs to this list.

Final List of Unranked Needs

Education

- Not all village children attend school
- Low teacher salaries
- Teacher grants for salaries
- No school bus
- No night school
- Low income of the family to support education
- Lack of teaching aids and materials
- Dropouts are increasing

Health Care Systems

- No health services for village
- Not many people to teach health skills in the village
- Not many people with knowledge of health in the village
- No pharmacy in village
- No regular health worker visits
- High costs for health care and transportation
- Seasonal diseases like cholera and dysentery
- No sub-centre or dispensary (government)
- No medicine in PHC
- No ambulance

Water Supply

- Carrying water takes a lot of time
- No water supply into the village

Small Industries / Income Generating Activities

- Not many small industries
- Not many ways to earn an income except agriculture
- Lack of entrepreneurs and services—barber, tailor, forge, blacksmith

Agriculture

- Crops sell at very low prices at harvest time
- Middleman makes all the money
- No storage facilities to sell crops at a different time
- No food processing facilities (to can tomatoes or make finished product to sell at higher prices)
- No agricultural chemicals and fertilizers are available
- No seed bank

Recreational Facilities

- Sports facilities could be improved
- No recreational center
- A place for cultural events

Road to Sung

- The road to the fields is unpaved

Sanitation

- No garbage site
- Not many latrines
- Not everyone has sanitation education/ knowledge
- No cooking gas
- No washing place/platform

Capacity Building

- No training for village groups in how to work cooperatively to achieve goals
- No training for men and women in parenting or family planning

Needs Analysis and Prioritization

Evening 2: Activity 1

Prioritization of Problems and Opportunities using Pairwise Ranking

Objectives:

- To enable the community to come to consensus about which problems are the most important for the future
- To use pairwise ranking to help community residents carry out a full discussion of their preferences in a conflict-free manner

Process:

The facilitators prepared a matrix on a large flip chart listing the key needs identified during the previous activity. The main categories of needs were included as well as some of the needs identified by the youth (school bus and night school). The group was asked to compare each set of choices, one pair at a time. They were asked to decide which was more important. After working through all the pairs, the scores were counted and the items ranked.

Comments:

The pairwise ranking exercise was done in a large group. Despite the size of the group, it proceeded smoothly. The one drawback of ranking with over 100 people is that sometimes discussion was heard from only a few people.

The top priority was basically a unanimous decision — the water supply. In order to increase discussion and thought about the next highest priorities, a second matrix was prepared to re-rank the top five priorities—water, road, capacity building/training, agriculture, and health care systems.

Initial Results of Pairwise Ranking

Need or Problem	Rank
Water supply	1
Road	2
Capacity building / Training	2
Agriculture	3
Healthcare systems	4
Small Industries / Income Generating Activities	5
Sanitation	5
Education	6
School bus	7
Night school	8
Recreational facilities	9
Cooking gas	10

Results of Initial Pairwise Ranking

Need	ED	HC	WT	AG	RF	SI	RD	SN	CB	GS	SB	NS	Score	Rank
Education		HC	WT	ED AG	ED	ED	RD	ED	CB	ED	SB	NS	4.5	6
Health Care Systems		r	WT	HC	HC	HC	HC RD	SN	CB	HC	HC	HC	7.5	4
Water Supply				WT	WT	WT	WT	WT	WT	WT	WT	WT	11	1
Agriculture					AG	AG	AG	AG	CB AG	AG	AG	AG	8	3
Recreational Facilities						SI	RD	SN	CB	RF	SB	NS	1	9
Small Industries/Income Generating Activities							RD	SI	CB	SI	SI	SI	5	5*
Road								RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	8.5	2*
Sanitation									CB	SN	SN	SN	5	5*
Capacity Building										CB	CB	CB	8,5	2*
Cooking gas											SB	NS	0	10
School bus												SB	4	7
Night school													3	8

Final Results of Pairwise Ranking

Need	WT	AG	HC	RD	CB	Score	Rank
Water System		WT	WT	WT	WT	4	1
Agriculture			HC	AG	AG	2	3
Healthcare System				HC	HC	3	2
Road					RD	1	4
Capacity Building/ Training						0	5

Final Ranking

Need	Rank
Water System	1
Healthcare Systems	2
Agriculture	3
Road	4
Capacity Building/Training	5

Chapter 4
Creating a Community Action Plan

Evening 3: Activity 1

Problem Analysis

Objectives:

- To assist community residents to identify the causes of their most important problems
- To help them think about why some previous solutions have not worked
- To consider new or creative strategies that might be more effective in helping the community to meet its basic needs

Process:

The large group was split into two breakout groups. Each group completed the problem analysis matrix. All participants were asked to list the causes of the problem and the coping strategies they have used in the past for dealing with the problem. Then, they were asked to list possible solutions to the problem. Each group considered two of the top priority needs..

Comments:

This was the first exercise that focused on solutions. The process encouraged the community to think first about the causes of its problems, then to remember previous attempts they have made to solve them, including why they did not work, and finally to reflect on these points before offering new option. Each group was able to pinpoint a variety of causes to each of these problems and how it has impacted the community.

Problem Analysis: Agriculture

Causes	Previous Coping Strategies	Possible Solutions
• No storage system • Exploitation of price of agriculture produce • No proper supply of fertilizers • Cows eat all the vegetables in the fields as the restrictions are not enforced by the villager and village council • No quick means of transport for vegetables and crops	• None	• Sell the products at a reasonable price • Good and proper storage system • Ask for proper supply of fertilizers which will boost agricultural productivity

Problem Analysis: Water System

Causes	Previous Coping Strategies	Possible Solutions
• Sources are small • Fewer forests/deforestation • Malfunctioning of the PHE • Population is increasing	• Lower population • Water sources can supply needed quantity • Pump system (now malfunctioning) • Carry water from the well	• New good water sources and good supply facility • Close follow-up about the function of PHE • Experienced worker / servicemen • Stop deforestation • Planting of trees

Problem Analysis: Healthcare systems

Causes	Previous Coping Strategies	Possible Solutions
• No medicine in PHC • No sub-centre in village • Irregularity of health worker from PHC • No sanitation facilities • Distance of PHC • High cost of transport • Traffic jams	• Use herbal medicines • Go to hospital in Shillong / Jowai for medical needs • Taking loan for healthcare	• Share / consult with the government dept for the health workers • Train the villagers • Find support from govt. dept. (PHC/ Block) • Ambulance • Discuss the traffic jam problem with the government

Problem Analysis: Roads

Causes	Previous Coping Strategies	Possible Solutions
• No black topped roads to the agricultural fields • No proper drainage system • Flooding of roads has eroded the soil	• Repair by villagers in cooperation with the Block	• Ask or propose to the government for black topping the road

Creating a Community Action Plan

Evening 3: Activity 2

Action Planning

Objectives:

- To integrate the information from all the other activities by creating a Community Action Plan (CAP) to address high priority needs
- To consider which portions of the CAP can be provided by members of the community and which will need outside assistance

Process:

The large group was divided in two. Each sub-group was asked to create a preliminary Community Action Plan for two of the community's high priority needs. They were asked to use the ideas generated during the Problem Analysis exercise as a starting point. The facilitators asked them to list the activities that needed to be done to solve the problem. For each activity, they listed the resources, such as labor, money, and materials, that they would need to implement that activity. Then, participants were asked to list what group or person would be best to complete this activity and when it should take place. Finally, they listed the indicators that would measure the success of completion of that activity.

Comments:

Prior to beginning, the facilitation team was worried that the community would feel unempowered to find solutions to problems of water and the road to the fields. Fully solving these problems will require assistance and approval from the government in completing the 30+ km pipe for the water system or in constructing a new road. However, participants found that they could take action on these issues. Regarding water, they chose to focus on a few items that they could take action on now. The existing year-round water source runs slowly because the pump for it has been broken for several years. They could actively follow-up with the PHE to fix or replace this pump. They also thought that they could begin a project to build a check dam so that there would be a proper place to wash, bathe, and clean vegetables. Neither of these solutions requires waiting for the completion of the government water project.

They also realized that they had not formally proposed the Sung road project to the Block and their local Gram Sevak. The new Village Employment Committee would be able to offer their labor for this project through the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Although health services also will require government resources, the village noted several items on their action plan that involved their own capacity building – regular health meetings and training in health and sanitation for people in the village. They also listed improving sanitation conditions such as having latrines and trashcans as an action item. Implementing these ideas does not necessitate that the village wait for government assistance, but could find experts or NGOs/CBOs to provide assistance, give advice, or conduct training.

The two key activities in the agricultural plan are small business ideas – buying fertilizers locally and processing food. If the village analyzes the opportunity for making an income from fruit and vegetable processing, there may be the possibility that their products would demand a better price in the market place. They wisely listed that they would need a lot of technical assistance for this project.

Participants writing a Community Action Plan on their highest priority needs.

Community Action Plan: Water System

Activity	Resources Needed – Labor, Materials, Money	Technical Assis-tance Needed	Who?	When?	Indicators of Success
Build a check dam	Stone, stone chips, sand, cement, iron, volunteer labor, and money	Experts	Executive Committee	2008	• Washing, bathing and cleaning of vegetables
Repair or replace the pump to the current all season water supply	Pump machine, pipe, cement, stone chips, sand	Experts		2008	• Easy availability of water • Less expensive for buying loading baskets • Spend less of our time for water • Cleanliness • Health

Community Action Plan: Road

Activity	Resources Needed – Labor, Materials, Money	Technical Assistance Needed	Who?	When?	Indicators of Suc-cess
Propose the project to the Prime Minis-ter Gram Sevak Yojana (PMGSY)		Contractor Engineer	Executive Committee	Mar 08	• Can have more time for agricul-tural work in the fields • Use of manpower (head load) will reduce • Increase in family income
Propose through National Rural Em-ployment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)	Labor Wages	Experts Engineer	VEC Village Em-ployment Committee	Apr 08	• Migration of peo-ple will stop • Increased family income

Community Action Plan: Health Care System

Activity	Resources Needed – Labor, Materials, Money	Technical Assistance Needed	Who?	When ?	Indicators of Success
Sanitation	Trashcans, toilets, workers		Health & Sanitation Committee (HSC)	Sept 2008	• Health & cleanliness
Community Health Worker Training	Money Educated person to work with (stipend)	Resource person	HSC Executive Committee	2008	• Close to health care • Less expensive
Ambulance	Driver Money		HSC Executive Committee	2008 – 2009	• Less expenses • Quick health care • Employment
Proposal to government	Money		HSC Executive committee	2008	• Less expenses • Quick health care • Employment
Training to the villagers	Posters and materi-als	Resource person	HSC Executive Committee	2008	• Awareness • Sanitation • Health
Health Meetings	Convener	Facilitator	HSC Executive Committee	2008	• Participation • Unity

Community Action Plan: Agriculture

Activity	Resources Needed – Labor, Materials, Money	Technical As-sistance Needed	Who?	When?	Indicators of Success
Have fruit/food processing	Money Machines	Resource per-son for small industries: • Agriculture Department • KVIC/DIC • Block	Executive Committee	Apr 08 to Apr 09	• Avoid spoilage & rotting product • Increase skills of the farmer • Enjoy good price in the market
Supply of fertiliz-ers and agricul-tural supplies		Agriculture Dept	Executive Committee	Mar 08 To Jul 08	• Prevent disease & pests • Healthy plants • Increased size of plants • Good market price

Chapter 5
Meeting Summary and Next Steps

Each sub-group presented the preliminary Community Action Plan to all participants. During these presentations, a few new ideas were added to the action plans. The facilitators noticed that nearly every action item was referred to the Executive Committee of the village. Executive Committee members explained that they intended to present the results of these 3-days of meetings at the next full Executive Committee scheduled for the end of March. They also explained that this process was very new for Puriang and that they had never experienced anything like it before. They noted that they had never held community-wide meetings in the past. They felt responsible for deciding if these Community Action Plans should be implemented and they felt responsible for overseeing their implementation if the Executive Committee decided to proceed.

This was an excellent expression of an organized and clear path forward. It also openly expressed the village's concern about the difficulty of implementing action plans. The words of one Executive Committee member sums up both the hopes and the fears for the future.

> *We are happy that you've been able to be with us from the beginning of the process on the 12th until now on the 16th. It's some kind of wonder — everybody was saying that it's just like in a dream. It's a kind of process that they've never experienced in their lives before.*
>
> *We are so happy that you came here to help the village. And we hope that the issues that have been brought to the top will be able to succeed with the training you have set up.*
>
> *God be with you and may you return home safely. And pray God that from the process we will be able to progress more.*

The facilitator team thanked everyone widely for their assistance and participation. And the participants thanked the facilitation team for bringing this new process to the village. The evening ended with many handshakes, kisses, and Khubleis.

Chapter 6
Going Forward — Recommendations for Puriang

Presentation of Results to Headman and Executive Committee

There were many village elders and Executive Committee members present during the planning meetings. The leadership provided by these gentlemen during the process was invaluable. As decided by them in the final session, a full presentation of the results should be made to at an official meeting of the Executive Committee. As the official representatives and leaders of Puriang, the ongoing guidance and insights of the Executive Committee will be needed to effect change and organize individuals and committees to assist them in implementation.

Choosing a Village Development Committee (VDC)

Although the Executive Committee must oversee development activities within the community, many villages in India and Meghalaya have formed a Village Development Committee (VDC). Because a VDC includes a larger circle of people in implementation activities, including women and youth, these communities are able to accomplish more things at a faster pace.

- Form a VDC - The Executive Committee should consider establishing such a committee. A process should also be established for these committees to regularly report their activities to the Executive Committee. Because development activities affect men, women, elderly, and youth, VDCs generally have representatives from all of these groups.
- Build Capacity of VDC through Training - Assistance and advice on forming a VDC is available through Dr. Nongkynrih at NEHU as well as through Khatarshnong Socio-Organisation (KSO). Many times, village leaders will arrange a training program about how to organize and manage an effective VDC. These leadership training opportunities are already available through the KSO and other organizations to help members of the VDC take advantage of such training.
- Learn from Other Leaders – There may be an opportunity to invite an Executive Committee member from a village that has a successful VDC to come to Puriang. This person could tell the Executive Committee how they started a VDC, who serves on the VDC, and what the Village Development Committee has accomplished for their community. Both KSO and Dr. Nongkynrih can recommend villages with excellent VDCs.

Capacity Building and Training

The participants at the planning meetings wisely identified a real need within the community for various training and capacity building activities. Training ranked as the 5th most important need in Puriang. The KSO facilitators agreed with this recommendation. In many of the Community Action Plans (CAP), residents listed training as key to their success. For example, they

recognized that villagers needed health and sanitation training.

In addition to the training opportunities identified in the CAP, KSO advised that the village consider capacity building/training programs in the following areas:

- Organizing and managing effective groups – this should include learning how separate groups can work together cooperatively
- Youth – a need exists for providing training to youth in group management and health skills.
- Women – there are many areas where the capacity of women can be improved through training, including health/nutrition education, running effective women's groups, and learning income generating skills.
- Small business / income generating activities (IGA) – very few industries and services exist in the community. As the village considers forming additional SHGs or fruit processing, training in small business management will be needed.

Keep the Community Informed and Involved

The Puriang Community Action Plan was created through broad participation. It is critical to sustain the involvement of the entire community. Although nearly 250 people participated over the three nights of community meetings, many residents may not know the results. After the Executive Committee has decided how to go forward, they should find a way to inform people who attended as well as other residents of the plan. Another community meeting may be an effective method. Because the village is so large, it might be best to have three separate update meetings in different neighborhoods.

Ongoing Facilitation

One of the key reasons that participatory planning meetings are often successful is that trained facilitators help the community through the process. It is advisable to consider inviting KSO or another trained facilitator to assist the action committees in their early meetings.

Forming Partnerships

Community groups can do a great deal for their own development, but they normally cannot do it all. Working through the local government, the Village Development Committee or Executive Committee needs to learn about NGO, government, and international programs and organizations that can help them implement their Community Action Plan and other capacity building activities. It is usually difficult for small communities to attract attention from external and international groups. However, communities that are organized and have built consensus about their highest priority needs are more likely to be taken seriously and receive attention. Now that Puriang has an agreed upon plan, they can transform this Community Action Plan into development partnerships with external organizations as well as with government agencies.

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