Evidence and Lessons from Latin America (ELLA) is a south-south knowledge exchange and learning programme, that seeks to inspire development policies and practices that are grounded in evidence about what works in varied country contexts. This programme is led and managed by Practical Action Consulting (PAC), Latin America and financed by UKAid.

During its first phase (2011-14), the ELLA programme produced and disseminated knowledge on some 21 different topics, and ran six Learning Alliances aimed at south-south learning on a sub-set of these topics. This booklet presents the stories of twelve people who participated in the ELLA programme during these years, the learning they gained, the actions they have taken in the period since then, and some of the outcomes and impacts these actions have had.

This publication has been produced by the ELLA Programme team at Practical Action Consulting, Latin America. To download a digital version of this document or find out more about the project, visit: ella.practicalaction.org
CONTENTS

01  FOREWORD

02  INTRODUCTION

06  A CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN FOR KENYA
   How the ELLA programme shared Latin America’s experience on adaptation in drylands with Kenyan ministry officials to inform their national action plan

08  INTERNATIONAL LESSONS TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOUTH AFRICA
   How a South African human rights activist used Latin American lessons on strategic litigation, working with victims and right based budgeting

11  FROM PERUVIAN POTATOES TO UGANDAN COFFEE
   How the Market Intelligence manager for the Ugandan Coffee Development Authority took the experience of farmer business skills development from the Andes to Uganda

14  LAND USE POLICY IN MYANMAR
   How an NGO Director applied lessons in Myanmar drawing on Peru’s approach to land use zoning in the management of extractive industries

16  MOZAMBICAN KIDS PREPARED FOR DISASTERS
   How a UNICEF official took ideas from Rio de Janeiro to Mozambique on incorporating disaster preparedness in primary school curricula

18  ACCESSING CAMEROON’S FORESTRY INFORMATION
   How a Cameroonian NGO has used lessons from Latin America on leveraging international agreements to access information on forest use
USING WATER EFFICIENTLY TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHALLENGES IN NEPAL
How a Nepalese expert took ideas on efficient water use technologies from Pintadas in North East Brazil to Manang District in Western Nepal

COMMUNITY SCORECARDS FOR CAPE TOWN’S TOWNSHIPS
How South Africa’s Human Sciences Research Council adapted Latin American models of citizen participation for pilot programmes to improve local services in Cape Town’s informal settlements

HUMAN RIGHTS LAW IMPROVEMENT IN TOGO
How a Togolese human rights group learnt from Mexico’s Victims Law to incorporate ideas on preventing torture into Togo’s new Criminal Law

USING WATER EFFICIENTLY TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHALLENGES IN NEPAL
How a Nepalese expert took ideas on efficient water use technologies from Pintadas in North East Brazil to Manang District in Western Nepal

‘CHULUKE CHULUKE’: A RADIO PROGRAMME TO INFORM MALAWI’S FARMER POLICIES
How an enterprising journalist used lessons from ELLA to produce radio broadcasts aimed at informing platforms for the then forthcoming Malawian Presidential elections

INFORMATION ACTION CENTRES IN THE DELTA STATE
How an NGO built on Mexican NGO approaches to engaging the state, to access government service and budget information in the Delta state of Nigeria

AFTERWORD: REFLECTIONS ON THE TWELVE STORIES
ELLA (Evidence and Lessons from Latin America) is a programme which synthesises and shares research on a wide range of Latin American development experiences, with a view to informing policies and practices in other developing regions of the world. During its first phase (2011-14), the programme produced and disseminated knowledge on some 21 different topics, and ran six Learning Alliances aimed at south-south learning on a sub-set of these topics.

This booklet presents the stories of twelve people who participated in the ELLA programme during these years, the learning they gained, the actions they have taken in the period since then, and the outcomes from these actions.

Preparation of the stories has been led by ELLA’s Monitoring and Evaluation officer, Alicia Quezada, who reviewed each case, interviewing the participants in early 2016 on how they have used learning from the ELLA programme in their work - a form of follow-up tracer study, with limited triangulation.

The twelve stories do not capture the wider impacts of the ELLA programme during these years: the use put to the 100,000+ downloads of ELLA research, or by the 1800 members of the six ELLA Learning Alliances. Rather they are a semi-random sample of the participants in the Learning Alliances, biased towards those who were members of the ELLA study tours (nine of the twelve). As such the stories are intended to be illustrative of the types of impact that a south-south knowledge programme such as ELLA can have.

What we learn is that knowledge does travel across regions, with impacts on policies and practices, when there are clear shared problems, when knowledge is adapted to the local context, when opportunities arise and are taken, and above all when committed, energetic individuals are involved. The twelve stories are first and foremost about human agency, the power of entrepreneurial professionals to take lessons and ideas, in this case, from Latin America to Africa and South Asia.

Programmes like ELLA can aspire to achieve these impacts with due care in their design and implementation. I hope the stories will spark your interest in such programmes!

Mark Lewis
ELLA Programme Director
THE ELLA PROGRAMME

In its initial design (2011-2014), ELLA was a programme to synthesise and share research on a wide range of Latin American development experiences, with a view to informing policies and practices in other developing regions of the world. The two principal components of the programme were the production and dissemination of knowledge products on some 21 different topics, and the running of six Learning Alliances aimed at south-south learning on a sub-set of these topics.

The synthesis of Latin America’s experiences covered topics on economic development (including extractive industries management, and smallholder agriculture), environmental management (including climate change adaptation in semi-arid regions, and urban environmental issues) and governance (including citizen participation, and the defence of human rights). For each of the topics, a guide, briefs, and summaries of research and research organisations were produced and widely disseminated.

Based on this research output, ELLA ran six exchange and learning programmes – Learning Alliances – that brought together peers from Latin America, Africa and Asia into online learning communities. Participants were from government, civil society, the private sector and the research community, and the structured learning and discussions lasted between three and six months. In each case, the online communities were complemented with (face to face) learning groups in selected capital cities in Africa and South Asia; with a study tour to Latin America for a select group; and with Learning into Practice awards. Some 1800 people participated in the six Alliances, of whom 70 people were selected for study tours, and 24 won ELLA awards.

The programme was led and coordinated by Practical Action Consulting, Latin America: working with GRADE, Peru (economic topics); Fundar, Mexico (governance topics) and REDEH and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (environmental topics).

THE ELLA ‘MODEL’ FOR INFORMING POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The programme had the ambitious objective of taking research knowledge from Latin America to inform policies and practices across the world in Africa and South Asia, in principle targeted at some twelve (diverse) countries across these two regions[1]. We adopted two main strategies to tackle this.
First we put effort into wide dissemination of the research output, on the web, to identified potential users in the twelve targeted countries and through global thematic networks. And in doing so, we did our best to produce topic guides and briefs that spelt out causality –the variables, including policy variables that led to successful development outcomes– which also made explicit the underlying enabling factors and contextual variables in Latin American countries that had made this possible. In this way, we hoped that the African or Asian reader would be able to read this research output and draw their own lessons as to it’s applicability in their own context.

Second, our main effort at research uptake (in terms of energy and financial resources) was through the Learning Alliances. In advertising these we targeted potential policymaker and practitioner users of ELLA knowledge in our twelve priority countries, while leaving applications open to participants from all of the global south. We preferred a demand-led approach in which committed, interested individuals from different sectors put themselves forward. In consequence, most Learning Alliances had members from 50 or more countries, coming from a variety of backgrounds, though we limited the community to people actively working on the theme of the Alliance.

Given the nature of the ELLA programme –sharing knowledge from Latin America with a broad audience– it was not feasible to explore all the issues relating to the context on specific topics in a wide range of countries (the ROMA approach\(^2\)). Instead the strategy was to reach out to a broad spectrum of individuals, and to identify those with the need, interest, commitment and some form of power to leverage change in their own countries. The main way of identifying such people was through the online interaction, and these individuals were the most likely to be selected for the study tours and ELLA awards.

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ELLA IMPACTS – METHODOLOGY FOR THIS PUBLICATION

The outputs, outcomes and impacts from ELLA were captured as the programme proceeded and written up in an ELLA M&E Report (November 2013)[3], which was complemented with an ELLA Lessons and Reflections Report (August 2014)[4].

Three years later, in 2016, we decided to follow up with a sample of people who participated in ELLA during 2012-2013. The main instigation was to see how knowledge from a programme such as ELLA travels through space and time, in predictable and unpredictable ways, and the impacts that can be unleashed over time: a form of tracer study.

Practical Action consulted with the three partner research centres (GRADE, Fundar and REDEH) about Learning Alliance participants with whom it might be interesting to have follow up discussions. Based on these recollections, in some cases on continuing contact, and on programme records, 18 people were contacted for interview. This was not a scientific selection process with random sampling, nor was it intended to be. At the same time, nor were individuals carefully handpicked for maximum showcasing - there were plenty of others who would have had stories to tell (see the ELLA M&E Report). Of the 18 people contacted, 12 stories have been written up:

- All 12 are people who participated in one of the six Learning Alliances.
- Nearly all (11) participated online, and three (also) participated in one of the face-to-face national learning groups, in one case as the coordinator of the group.
- Nine people went on study tours to Latin America and four received ELLA awards (two were beneficiaries of both), and one person participated online only (and in the national learning group)

The write-up of the case studies has been based primarily on interviews with each participant, conducted by the ELLA M&E officer, supplemented by some use of project documentation. Triangulation of the feedback from the interviewees has been limited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Protagonist</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Learning Alliance Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Victor Orindi</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Climate Change in arid and semi-arid regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Venessa Padayachee</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>James Rogers Kizito-Mayanja</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Smallholder Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>David Allan</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>Extractive Industries and Land Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Tito Bonde</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Resilient Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Patrice Kamkuimo Plam</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>Citizen Oversight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Oscar Obasi Igwe</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Smallholder Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Diana Sanchez</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Citizen Oversight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>Ghislain Koffi Dodji Nyaku</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Ram Chandra</td>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>Climate Change in arid and semi-arid regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Gladson Makowa</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>Smallholder Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Festus &amp; Augusta Keneboh</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>Citizen Oversight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE ISSUE

Four-fifths of Kenya are arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), posing many challenges in the face of climate change which is already hindering development of the country. In the ASAL regions, most people’s livelihoods and economic activities are reliant on climate-sensitive natural resources. The 2010-2011 Horn of Africa crisis demonstrated Kenya’s vulnerability to climate change and variability. But Kenya is not the only country facing the challenge in its arid regions. Across Latin America, Africa and Asia, between 15% and 25% of people live in arid or semi-arid areas, typically in small isolated rural communities which are often the most severely affected by climate change and the least equipped to cope with it. Given similar challenges across the global south, south-south learning is potentially a useful way of informing climate change plans, and this was the focus of the 2012 ELLA Learning Alliance on Climate Change Adaptation in Arid and Semi-Arid Regions.

THE PERSON

In Kenya in 2012 the government was developing a five year National Climate Change Action Plan. Victor Orindi, who was working as a Climate Change Advisor in the ASAL Secretariat of the Ministry of State for the Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands, was one of a group of officials developing this plan. Victor, along with some fifteen other people from government and other sectors, participated in an ELLA Kenya Learning Group, chaired by Steven King’uyu of the Climate Change Secretariat of the Ministry of the Environment. This learning group met on half a dozen occasions, tracking the discussion from the online Learning Alliance on drylands climate adaptation. Following on from the learning group, Victor and a colleague, Halima Nenkari from the Livestock Department, were selected to participate in the ELLA study tour to Pintadas in North East Brazil, to see first hand how community-based adaptation was being promoted in that semi-arid region.

THE LESSONS

The learning group and the study tour to Brazil brought home a number of lessons for Victor...
and his Kenyan colleagues, covering as they did several dimensions to adaptation, including infrastructure challenges, water resource management, making full use of biodiversity and ensuring food security. Case studies from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru were shared.

In Pintadas, Victor witnessed first hand local coping strategies in the face of climate emergencies, innovative credit policies, the role for cooperatives, new water security technologies, and other means of promoting resilience in ASALs through community-based adaptation. “We saw how we can better use existing resources as useful products for the livestock sector. On one of the farming areas we visited in Brazil, for example, we saw a farmer growing cactus... in Kenya we find it everywhere... And they used it for example for feeding livestock [...] We were encouraged to think more broadly”.

**THE OUTCOMES**

In this way, the Kenya National Climate Change Action Plan was in part informed by the discussions from the ELLA programme: “I can say that some of the things that helped us in framing or in getting the plan together were the experiences we learned from a number of places, the Brazil visit included...”. After this, Victor also embarked on a project to prepare the National Adaptation Plan, which was finished in November 2015: “[The south-south sharing] provided me with different ideas, from both the online dialogue and from the national-level dialogue where we connected with different partners [...] and they all enriched the process [of development of the plan]”.

Victor says that one of the main things the plan gathered from the Latin American experience was about mainstreaming climate change at the highest level which not only facilitates coherence between different sectors but also budgetary allocation. “The importance of coordination across government and across different levels is one of the things we learned during the ELLA Programme. Each sector has its roles and priorities reflected in the national action plan. This gives them the ease of implementation, with the lead agency, the Ministry of the Environment, providing support and general coordination [...] it means they can also get a budget from respective ministries or departments”.

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[6] Idem

[*] First showcased picture: Dry riverbed in Kenya, by Shever (https://flic.kr/p/9mkSU)
INTERNATIONAL LESSONS TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

How a South African human rights activist used Latin American lessons on strategic litigation, working with victims and right based budgeting.

THE ISSUE

Promoting and defending human rights is not an easy task. Activists around the world dealing with sensitive issues frequently face a hostile environment and controversy. Sharing experiences with peers from across the globe can be heartwarming and encouraging in the difficult pursuit of justice. But sharing experiences can also lead to new insights, and sometimes those insights can be transformational. This is the story of a South African human rights advocate, and how her participation in the 2013 ELLA Learning Alliance on Human Rights shifted her mindset.

THE PERSON

Venessa Padayachee is a committed defender of human rights. She is the Advocacy and Lobbying Manager of the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO) in South Africa, a civil society organization which specialises in social crime prevention and offender reintegration, juvenile justice and criminal justice reform. Venessa signed up and became an active participant in the online ELLA Learning Alliance, discussing with peers from across the global south, a wide range of innovative Latin American approaches to promoting and defending human rights. She was subsequently selected to participate in the ELLA study tour to Mexico.

THE LESSONS

During the online discussions and in the subsequent study tour, participants discussed issues relating to international and national legal frameworks, mechanisms for defending rights, ethnic and minority rights, and the integration of rights based approaches into public policy and programming. Venessa had a particular interest in the use of strategic litigation, the mobilisation of victims in addressing human rights, and the use of
right-based budgets, all of which have been championed in Mexico, whose capital city has had a novel experience with integrating rights into budget allocations.

THE OUTCOMES

This knowledge opened up new possibilities for Venessa. It helped her to think about her work more strategically. Venessa considers that what she learned gave her a more comprehensive overview of human rights and its framework at an international level, and insights into how to use different advocacy strategies, mechanisms and tools: “It really empowered me to be more robust in discussions around what my strategies are”.

The experience encouraged her to assist in a strategic litigation project, led by Sonke Gender Justice and the Detention Justice Forum, on overcrowding at Pollsmoor, a maximum security prison in Cape Town. Pollsmoor’s capacity has been seriously exceeded and overcrowding not only generates the conditions for gross human rights violations but also makes rehabilitation more difficult. NICRO has brought the issue of overcrowding to parliament and to other forums over a number of years but progress has been slow. So they are now trying a strategic litigation approach and currently the case is with the High Court - Western Cape division.

Mexico and South Africa share very high crime levels. One consequence is that families, of both victim and offender, often find themselves embroiled in extensive litigation and other complications. Both countries have made efforts to guarantee the human rights and fair processes for those involved. But where South Africa has faced challenges in harmonising its domestic law and implementation with international and regional treaties, Mexico is a good example of domestic harmonisation with international laws, which in turn has led to the enactment of further supportive laws and institutional reforms. What Vanessa saw in Mexico City and Oaxaca shifted her thinking, towards how to mobilise victims themselves. This was inspired by the fact that Mexico has a specific piece of legislation for victims, while in South Africa victims’ rights are scattered across different pieces of legislation: “…learning that other countries have this [a separate victim legislation] helped us in our thinking, so I forwarded it to the campaign people”. Venessa looked at the legislation and explored how victims are mobilised in Mexico (e.g. where girls went missing and their parents became advocates, taking up their cause) and she thought about how
According to Venessa Padayachee, in late 2015, NICRO was asked to assess South Africa’s performance in relation to and compliance with international standards on inmate management, offender rehabilitation and inmate monitoring of conditions of incarceration. So they used the UN principle of treatment of prisoners and consulted from other documents, but they basically shown how the country was failing when it comes to meeting those standards.

she could help NICRO’s replicate this model to the benefit of those they work with: “Our advocacy work has been done by social workers and me. And we didn’t realise that we actually have this huge beneficiary base. Our beneficiaries themselves are the very people that can have a voice on these issues […] The experience in Mexico has clearly shifted my mindset around how to broaden the scope of what we can do and the potential of people mobilisation”. Four years after that visit to Mexico, Venessa says that for some cases, when conditions are favorable, she tries to encourage families and community leaders to organise themselves to express their voice on issues that affect them.

In addition to the potential for strategic litigation, and different approaches to working with victims, Venessa was also impressed by Mexico’s example of rights based budgeting and how this is helping embed a human rights culture in public administration. On her return to South Africa, Venessa came across the Budget and Expenditure Monitoring Forum where she is currently an active participant advocating on budget issues to tackle gender-based violence. The rights-based budget approach gave her new tools to be a better advocate in South Africa. Looking outside her context helped Venessa to open up to new approaches: “You get so caught up in the day to day, so I really enjoyed that experience [Learning Alliance and visit to Mexico,] to reflect and think that there is something I can try in South Africa. It’s funny, sometimes you have to go out of your own country to gain perspective”.

[7] According to Venessa Padayachee, in late 2015, NICRO was asked to assess South Africa’s performance in relation to and compliance with international standards on inmate management, offender rehabilitation and inmate monitoring of conditions of incarceration. So they used the UN principle of treatment of prisoners and consulted from other documents, but they basically shown how the country was failing when it comes to meeting those standards.
THE ISSUE

In Peru the potato is cultivated in 19 of the country’s 25 regions, it is a primary staple food for Andean people, it produces more income than any other crop, and it provides 110,000 jobs in 600,000 small agrarian units (before considering related jobs in industry and services)[8]. In Uganda, coffee is the most important commercial agricultural commodity, and a major foreign exchange earner, providing income for over 1.5 million households and contributing on average one-fifth of Uganda’s total export revenues over the last decade[9]. But what development lessons might one very different crop have for the other? Improving the commercial nous of smallholder farmers was one of the topics in the 2013 ELLA Learning Alliance on Smallholder Farmers and Rural Development, and this is the story of how ideas travelled from Peru to Uganda.

THE PERSON

James Kizito-Mayanja is a Ugandan public officer who is devoted to his work. He is the Market Intelligence and Information Manager for the Ugandan Coffee Development Authority (UCDA), and always on the look out for ways to improve the lot of smallholder coffee growers in Uganda. He signed up for the ELLA online Learning Alliance and shared experiences with peers from Latin America, Africa and Asia on boosting the incomes of marginalised farmers. As an active contributor to the dialogue, James was also selected to join the ELLA study tour to Peru, visiting potato and other Andean crop farmers in the Andes and market gardeners on the coast - but not coffee growers, to his initial disappointment, as the tour was not long enough to travel to all of Peru’s regions.

THE LESSONS

During the online Learning Alliance, it became clear to participants that the basics of business skills were an important ingredient in the successful engagement of smallholder with larger scale commercial chains, in order to sell into higher value domestic urban markets, and for export. During his visit to potato growers in Peru,
James saw how marginalized farmers had been successfully empowered to enter into business as contract farmers. He saw that farmers’ knowledge of the market requirements (prices and quality adherence) were critical in enhancing competitiveness and consequently sustainability.

THE OUTCOMES

When James returned to Uganda, he was convinced that farmers’ productivity and incomes could increase if Uganda acted to promote more commercial awareness in coffee growers and helped contract farming. James wanted the same for Ugandan farmers that he had seen in Peru: “We visited FOVIDA [a Peruvian NGO] which had empowered farmers who were able to sell to supermarkets. These were marginal farmers from high up in the Andes. So when I came back the question was how to empower our farmers with farmer organisations [...] if they are empowered, they will know how to reduce their cost of production, where to sell their product, at a good price, and also to address quality issues”.

James liaised with authorities to discuss how they could use the lessons from smallholder farming in Peru in the coffee sector in Uganda. He shared lessons from the tour with UCDA top management, the National Union of Coffee Agribusinesses and Farm Enterprises (NUCAFE) and the Uganda Coffee Farmers Alliance (UCFA). He facilitated discussions on the extent to which good practices in Peru might be applied in Uganda. Together with NUCAFE and UCFA, James helped achieve an increase in the funding for cooperatives and farmer organizations, to improve the access to markets by small coffee farmers, through training in business skills.

Now three years later, James declares: “We implemented what we learned in the two weeks study tour in Peru and the four month e-learning interaction”. A National Coffee Policy has been launched[10]. As part of this effort, the UCDA has trained farmers’ trainers on five modules: (i) Coffee Farming as a Business (ii) Access to Agro-inputs and Output Markets (iii) Agribusiness Procedures: What does it take to trade (iv) Coffee Value Chain and its Dynamics (v) Governance of Farmer Organisations[11]. James says there is a need for a critical mass of trainers in coffee agribusiness to increase farmers’ productivity and earnings, and to link farmers to the market through win-win contracts.

Training coffee farmers in Uganda has entailed changing the mindset from selling a rough and ready product to selling a finished product that reflects the demands of the
market: “In Peru, farmers were able to know their production costs, and their marketing costs, and they were also able to know how to price different products [reflecting an understanding of] what the market demands. For me, small-scale producers need to know with certainty the kind of product that the market wants, what sells, and able to produce these. In Uganda, we hope that farmers will now not only be exporting but also adding value, improving quality, and also roasting. They will be selling a finished product. They will not be selling green coffee. The Farmer Ownership Model is similar to what FOVIDA is using, where farmers integrate upwards right from production, processing, and do the marketing [...]”.

James is clear about the need to train farmers to enter into business: “After my visit to Peru what I’m taking now to Uganda is that small-scale farming is business. I’m happy that after three years I’m seeing that the capacity of small-scale farmers in agribusiness is being built especially in the two organisations [that I work with], NUCAFE and UCFA. I also see farmers integrating upwards”.

Another common feature that James identified between the potato sector in Peru and the coffee sector in Uganda is the gender challenge in rural areas and the transformative and powerful role that women can play: “[In Peru] when we went to the Ica region and discussed with the farmers organisations, we saw women leaders who were very engaging, we saw them contributing. I came back to ensure that Ugandan farmers are empowered, but on top of that to ensure that there is equality in gender”. There have been efforts in this direction including the “Gender based advocacy for the implementation of the National Coffee Policy in Uganda activity” implemented by the NUCAFE in April 2015[12].

[8] La papa: Principales Aspectos de la Cadena Agroproductiva, Ministerio de Agricultura, 2012
[10] National Coffee Policy, August 2013
THE ISSUE
Extractive industry and social conflict are frequent bedfellows. Competition for land between mining with its multi-million dollar revenues, and agriculture which is often in the hands of more marginal farmers and livestock herders, combined with the adverse environmental impacts from mining, are common sources of conflict. Over the last two decades, Latin America governments have experimented with new policies and approaches to land use planning and access for the extractive industries, including a focus on obtaining “social license” for extractive activities. How this has been approached, with greater and lesser degrees of success, was one of the issues addressed in the 2012 ELLA Learning Alliance on Responsible Extractive Industry Investment.

THE PERSON
On the other side of the world in Myanmar, David Allan was the Director of Spectrum - Sustainable Development Knowledge Network. Spectrum is an NGO that supports multi-stakeholder engagement on sustainable development issues, including the management of natural resources. Extractive industry development was firmly on Myanmar’s economic agenda in 2012, so David signed up to participate in the ELLA Learning Alliance on extractives, together with peers from civil society, government and the private sector from across the global south.

He was also one of the beneficiaries of an ELLA ‘Learning into Practice’ Award which he used for further study of Peru’s Land Use zoning system.

THE LESSONS
David and peers discussed many issues, but what struck many participants was the fundamental importance of clear and legitimate land tenure systems that help to tackle the challenges related to valuing land, land transaction procedures and transparent and effective compensation methods for extractive investments. A particular takeaway for David was how Latin American countries, including Peru, were using ecological and economic zoning, to improve transparency in natural...
resource decisions and conservation. David considers that one critical thing in considering land use issues is how to come up with a satisfactory menu of mixed land use options: “This is one of the things that came from the ‘ZEOT process’ [the Ecological and Economic Zoning process that is practiced in Peru] and is something that can be reinforced in Myanmar processes where we deal with mixed land-use issues very badly. Had I not been on the study visit to Peru I’m not sure it would have been so apparent to me that mixed land use was one of the key issues that we had to deal with”, says David.

**THE OUTCOMES**

In one of the national parks in Myanmar, Spectrum has been supporting buffer zone mapping and land use negotiations with local communities, using some of the land use lessons from Latin America. Spectrum has the buy in from both government and local communities in this work as Myanmar experiments with improvements to its land use policies. David himself has become a key advocate in Myanmar, sharing best practice ideas on the way forward for the country. Some ideas are feeding reforms in Myanmar. “So what’s happened in the multi-year process is that the national land use policy has gone from nothing to being in existence, […] and overall awareness of land use conflict issues are now considered a much bigger issue and treated very seriously”, says David. David believes that the Latin American experience shows that greater state and civil society involvement contributes to more effective land use regulation and management in the impact zone of extractive projects. There are dangers in leaving it in the hands of the private sector. He hopes that civil society involvement in Myanmar will result in improved land use policies to reduce social conflicts.

Myanmar has recently released its first public report under the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a voluntary global standard that asks countries to publicly report the revenues that extractives companies make to national governments[13]. Discussions are now moving to revenue sharing arrangements in the country, and David recalls the experience he learnt from Peru: the country passes on a high percentage of the mining canon to local government, but this poses enormous challenge for local capacity in managing such large and sudden increases in the flow of funds. David notes that “The ELLA experiences have allowed me to put a lot more valuable comment into policy discussions in Myanmar, which are really important, and a big factor in unresolved civil conflicts”.

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[*] First showcased picture: Sun going down on Myanmar, by Joe Le Merou (https://flic.kr/p/7CsTUF)
THE ISSUE
Disasters are often something most people only think about when news of an earthquake or a flood is broadcast in the media. However, natural disasters can happen anywhere, at any time, and those worst affected are often the most poor and vulnerable people, so disaster preparedness has become an important industry. Preparing for and managing disasters in urban environments was a primary topic in the 2013 ELLA Learning Alliance on Climate Resilient Cities.

THE PERSON
Tito Bonde was one of over 250 people who signed up for the ELLA Learning Alliance. He was an independent consultant at the time, who had spent over a decade working on disaster and emergency management issues, and he now works for UNICEF in Mozambique. Tito was an active contributor to the Learning Alliance discussions, and he was selected as one of twelve people for an ELLA study tour to Brazil, which allowed participants to see first-hand how Rio de Janeiro was promoting climate resilience and disaster management.

THE LESSONS
The Learning Alliance helped peers from across the global south to share experiences on planning for resilience, risk assessment and reduction, early warning systems and community involvement in disaster preparedness, among other issues.

When Tito visited Rio de Janeiro in May 2013, he was very impressed with how disaster risk reduction was taught as part of the curriculum in primary schools. The city’s Civil Defence Authority ran a programme within municipal schools to teach civil defence techniques and environmental education in public schools.
Children in fifth grade worked in groups to map the risks in the neighbourhood surrounding their school, and had lessons to understand how to reduce risks and what to do in the case of an emergency. Tito noticed how fifth graders were responsible for evacuating the school during simulation exercises; the Rio de Janeiro programme has led to much increased awareness among children and their relatives, and the programme is not resource intensive.

THE OUTCOMES

When Tito started working for UNICEF, he thought back on his Brazil experience “In countries like Canada what I saw in Brazil is normal practice but I had seen it in Brazil, and realised we could also do it in Mozambique, as Brazil is not a first world country and in some ways it has similarities with Mozambique”. Tito was able to use his Brazil knowledge to contribute to the work being carried out by UNICEF and the government on introducing disaster risk reduction into the school curriculum in Mozambique: “...there had been some work around this before I came to Mozambique. However, in the last year we have been able to make steady progress pushing for the development and adoption of a basic school preparedness plan for primary school, particularly those in the most risk-prone areas”. The programme is in a pilot phase and has strong support from government. Given the vulnerability of the country and the education sector to natural disasters, the school preparedness initiative is a plus for the country, which complements other multi-sectoral approaches to building disaster resilience.

[*] First showcased picture: Mozambican children waving by Drew Corbyn
The Issue

Freedom of Information Acts (FIA) have provided the basis for improved public access to government held information in many countries, but in others, no such legislation yet exists. Where the domestic legislative environment is not forthcoming, civil society organisations look to international laws, rules and policies to help leverage change in their own countries. Civil society in Latin American countries has pursued such a course, and this was one of the subjects programmed for the 2012 ELLA Learning Alliance on Citizen Oversight.

The Person

In Cameroon, Patrice Kamikuomo-Piam was a Project Manager in the Centre for Environment and Development (CED), a civil society organisation working for sustainable and equitable management of forestry resources in Central Africa. CED had long been concerned about the lack of transparent information on the management of Cameroon’s forests, and been frustrated in their attempts to improve information access. Patrice signed up for the ELLA online Learning Alliance on Citizen Oversight, along with peers from across the global south to see what Latin America had to offer. On conclusion of the online discussions, Patrice was also a participant in the ELLA study tour to Mexico in 2012, to observe first hand Mexican civil society in action, and he was subsequently a recipient of an ELLA Learning into Practice Award.

The Lessons

Many Learning Alliance participants were impressed by the strategies adopted by Latin American civil society over the decades, to make information available to citizens as a right. From his study tour, Patrice observed that in many ways the situation in Mexico was “ideal” because of the more advanced legal framework, at least compared to Cameroon: “In Mexico they have a specific law and the institutional mechanisms to enforce it [...] and they even have centres for citizens to ask for the information”. He saw how information was translated into “citizens’ language” for social
oversight purposes, and how it was used to monitor government practices. Patrice also learnt about how Latin American activist used international law to bring about domestic change.

**THE OUTCOMES**

With ideas now clearer, Patrice and CED took forward the idea of taking advantage of the new voluntary forestry agreement with the European Union – the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade in timber and derived products (FLEGT): "We do not have a law but we realised we have opportunities in the legal framework that can be used for enabling effective citizens’ access to information. The FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Cameroon represents the best legal tool for improving transparency within the forest sector.” The agreement formally entered into force in December 2011, following its ratification and notification by both parties. This international agreement has transparency provisions with an Annex requiring parties to publish documents and data on the forestry sector when specifically requested by any other stakeholder. CED has taken advantage of this demand for transparency in the Agreement.

According to Patrice, it is not an ideal framework like a FIA, but it is a “second best”. Patrice and his team have asked for information from the government and shared it with remote communities in forest areas that are affected by commercial activities. Drawing on experiences from Latin America, they are monitoring the effective implementation of the transparency annex by publishing annual reports, where they analyse transparency in the sector, identify limitations and weaknesses and recommend actions to government and to the private sector, to promote good governance in the forestry sector in Cameroon.

CED has grasped the opportunity provided by FLEGT and for the last three years CED has been trying to get FLEGT reflected in the annex to the national forestry law and regulations. Drawing on experiences from Latin America, Patrice notes "We are trying at the national level to push the government to revise the forest law. We, as civil society, we have tried to push so that these provisions can be put inside the forest law and its implementing decree, so that we have a national law, which clearly specifies that information will have to be made public”.

[*] First showcased picture: Ekom Nkam Waterfall on Cameroon, by Carlos Reis (https://flic.kr/p/A5C5g)
THE ISSUE

Engaging with commercial markets is often challenging for smallholder farmers. Geographic isolation and weak negotiating positions present difficulties. Contract farming is one response to this, in which large agricultural units or companies replace or supplements their own production with purchases from local smallholders on a contractual basis. In such agreements, the conditions of purchase should be set out transparently, and sometimes state that the company will provide technical assistance, inputs and other services to the contracted smallholders. Contract farming has a longer history in Latin America than in some other regions, and was one of the Latin American experiences discussed during the 2013 ELLA Learning Alliance on Smallholder Farmers and Rural Development.

THE PERSON

Oscar Obasi is an enthusiastic and committed professor at the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture in Umudike, Nigeria, and keenly interested in improving the livelihoods of poorer farmers. He is a researcher and an advocate, and a keen ‘student’ himself and readily signed up for the ELLA Learning Alliance, in which he was an active discussant. Following on from the online dialogue, Oscar was also one of twelve participants in a study tour to Peru, to see how contract farming had developed in that country. He was keen to learn lessons for Nigeria. He was also a recipient of an ELLA ‘Learning into Practice’ Award, which he used to examine the case for expanding contract farming in cassava in Nigeria.

THE LESSONS

Members of the Learning Alliance saw from the case studies discussed that the modality of contract farming differs in each case, and that whether small-scale farmers can benefit from contract farming will depend on the type of crop, the business firm that they deal with, the technical support they receive, and the broader public policy environment. From his study tour to the Mantaro valley in Peru, Oscar noted that “Contract farming in Latin America is more developed than in Nigeria.”
The farmers we saw in Peru have agreements, which have been put together with the help of a legal adviser and an NGO intermediary. In Anambra State in Nigeria it is different. The firm often goes directly to the farmer, and discusses the quantity of commodities and supplies with them, with neither legal agreement nor an intermediary to help.

THE OUTCOMES

So Oscar started to formulate some questions about how contract farming could be made to work better in Nigeria and if so, to what extent it could be promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture. He decided to research into one local experience with contract farming in Nigeria, which was more developed than most, the case of cassava. His three month research led to an article ‘The Effect of Contract Farming on Productivity and Welfare of Cassava-Based Farmers in South Eastern Nigeria’ (since published in the European Journal of Business and Management). He found that those under contract farming had larger land areas of cultivation, are relatively younger and more educated than farmers not in contract farming. The research also revealed that farm size, productivity, net returns, and welfare levels of the contract farmers were higher than those not involved in contract farming. The conclusions were that contract farming had beneficial impacts and Oscar could see it should be promoted.

Based on his experience in the ELLA learning programme, he also wrote up how socio economic and marketing infrastructure should be improved to reduce costs, and how policies were needed to address potential shortcomings in the system. A couple of years after these findings were shared, and with more researchers and experts promoting contract farming systems, the policy environment has started to improve for contract farmers in Nigeria. In Abuja, the Federal Government is considering contract farming in its national plans, and is providing support for production with fertilizers, access to credit, and training. Oscar also thinks there are now more cassava-based contract farmers backed by legal agreements.

THE ISSUE

Citizen participation in the oversight of public policies and programmes can take many forms. Pressing for transparency and access to information, pushing for involvement in discussing policies, programmes and budgets, and seeking to feed back on the effectiveness of programmes and services at national and local level are all strategies used by civil society, to work with government for greater citizen participation and improved democratic governance. Latin America has led the way on many of these, and practical case study examples from across the region formed the basis for the 2012 ELLA Learning Alliance on Citizen Oversight.

THE PERSON

Diana Sanchez is a Colombian who has lived and worked in South Africa for many years. She works in the Democracy and Governance research programme of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), South Africa’s statutory research agency for human and social development. Diana participated in the ELLA Learning Alliance on Citizen Oversight, with peers from Latin America, Africa and Asia. She was not only an active online member, but also a convener of an ELLA South African Learning Group on citizen oversight, which ran during 2012, and met on half a dozen occasions to discuss issues raised in the Learning Alliance. Diana was also a member of the Citizen Oversight study tour to Mexico that took place the same year.

THE LESSONS

Many issues were raised in the Learning Alliance, but Diana’s primary interest was in citizen participation at local government level, and the oversight of local services, in particular the use of citizens’ report cards, a modality that has yielded interesting results in Latin America and elsewhere. HSRC is a knowledge and service provider to the South African Treasury’s Cities Support Programme (CSP), which provides a platform for South Africa to experiment with new mechanisms for citizen participation in city government. As convener of the ELLA South Africa Learning Group, Diana was able to take the
ELLA material on examples of scorecards from Latin America, and from elsewhere, and adapt and discuss these with South African participants of the learning group.

Diana says that while the Latin American report cards were not exactly what the urban context in Cape Town required, the practical experiences shared through literature, and by members of the Learning Alliance network triggered creative and flexible thinking. "We were inspired by many Latin American cases, in particular stories from Mexico, but also from some cases from India and Malawi. So we adapted them to the reality of Cape Town, and specifically for the provision of energy and water. We realised that it was completely feasible to adapt ideas and tools to slowly develop a context-relevant method".

THE OUTCOMES

Informed by the learning from ELLA, a HSRC pilot project using a Community Scorecard was implemented in 2014 to 2015 in Cape Town in five informal settlements known collectively as 'The Heights'. While it is too early to evaluate impact, residents and city officials have reported improvements in service provision. Electricity problems are solved more efficiently and good communication channels have been built between residents and public officials.

According to Diana, the success of the project was due to the careful adaptation of existing methodologies, allowing flexibility for the new tool of Community Scorecards to be built as the process unfolded, with the direct input from both residents and city officials.

Following on from this positive experience, Cape Town municipality has requested HSRC to replicate the experience in other informal settlements around the City starting with Gugulethu township in 2016. As the CSP operates at the national level, the aim is to take and apply these lessons and methods to other cities. Diana says that learning from real live practical experiences in other regions of the world is eye opening, but you do have to adapt the lessons to the local reality.
THE ISSUE

A comprehensive approach to promoting human rights requires the harmonisation of domestic law with international treaties. Achieving this however can be a long and difficult process, often requiring the mobilisation of a wide range of stakeholders, and the protection of activists and human rights victims who are involved in the pursuit of harmonised human rights legislation. How Mexico set about this, in the case of the Victims Law and in other processes, including working for a law on femicide, was one of the subjects of the 2013 ELLA Learning Alliance on Human Rights.

THE PERSON

In Togo, Ghislain Koffi Dodji Nyaku was working as the Director of CACIT (Collectif des Associations Contre l’Impunité), a Togolese grouping of human rights NGOs and associations, which works for justice and support for the victims of violence in the country. Ghislain saw the pertinence of the ELLA Learning Alliance to CACIT’s mission and became an active member of the online dialogue with peers from Latin America, Africa and Asia. He was also selected as one of twelve participants for a study tour to Mexico to see first-hand how human rights are promoted and defended in that country.

THE LESSONS

One of the key lessons for participants in the Learning Alliance was how harmonising domestic law with international treaties took many years in Mexico, advocated by victims of the war on drugs and of the guerrilla movements, and by human rights defenders. Many issues were taken into account in framing a domestic Victims Law: the inclusion of victims’ families in investigations and in legal proceedings and their protection from intimidation; compensation provisions for victims and their families; and the setting up of a national registry of victims, and a national assistance fund, among others. Multiple stakeholders were involved, including academics, lawmakers in Congress and Senate, and wider civil society. Eventually a Victims Law was passed and signed in early 2013 and is being implemented.

HUMAN RIGHTS LAW IMPROVEMENT IN TOGO

How a Togolese human rights group learnt from Mexico’s Victims Law to incorporate ideas on preventing torture into Togo’s new Criminal Law
THE OUTCOMES

Following the study tour, Ghislain was convinced that Togo required a similar victims law to that passed in Mexico, and on his return, he had the very new Mexican law translated into French, to get a discussion going back home. “We took the Victims Law from Mexico to Togo. We sat together with our staff, we translated it into French and we prepared our advocacy to the National Assembly and other authorities who were engaged in the development of a new criminal law”. This led on to three years of advocacy on the part of CACIT with Parliament and other Togolese groups.

Three years later, although there has been no Victims Law, CACIT has been able to contribute to a new Criminal Law, passed in early 2016, which incorporates some of the thinking from the Mexican case studies. It does not go as far in favour of victims as in the Mexican case, but the criminalization of torture and mechanisms to monitor and prevent torture and human rights violation in prison are two important elements in the Law. Ghislain recalls that CACIT used to engage in torture cases after the violation had taken place, but now they are able to engage beforehand, to try to prevent violations.

Ghislain’s experience in Mexico also helped him to adjust some of CACIT’s other approaches to victims. CACIT changed their support method to victims, to help them to organise themselves, and to build their own capacity to face likely challenges.

Also based on the experience of different countries in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, CACIT is now adopting a strategy to improve its own relations with the Togolese authorities: “In Mexico we met the parliamentarians, supreme courts, senators, and we realised they have worked with Fundar directly to prevent violation and advocate for human rights. So now here we are doing the same, we are adopting the same approach. Before we did not work with the authorities so frequently. Now we have a good relation with them and contact them directly to help the victims. We have improved our ways to engage with authorities”.

THE ISSUE
In framing the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations notes that 2600 million people directly depend on agriculture and that half of the land used for agriculture is affected by soil degradation. Each year, the world reportedly loses twelve million hectares to drought and desertification, and as with many environmental problems, poor people are the most affected by this loss. Up to a quarter of people across Latin America, Africa and Asia live in semi-arid areas and much work is needed to agree and act on priorities to address growing aridity. These issues were core to the 2012 ELLA Learning Alliance on Climate Change Adaptation in Arid and Semi-arid Regions, which sought to share Latin America’s experience with these challenges.

THE PERSON
Nepal is one of the countries in South Asia that is very aware of this problem, and a group of experts work with government to agree on how best to tackle these challenges. Ram Chandra, an independent adviser, is one of these experts. He has spent 25 years working on agriculture, forestry and climate issues. He was quick to sign up to the ELLA Learning Alliance, which gave him the opportunity to discuss climate resilience and Latin America’s experiences with peers from across the global south. Ram was an active contributor to the dialogue, and at the conclusion of the online discussions, was one of a group of twelve participants who went on an ELLA study tour to North East Brazil to see first hand how that region of the world was promoting climate resilience.

THE LESSONS
Participants in the online Learning Alliance shared many examples of the way in which different regions were tackling reduced annual precipitation, rainfall variability, and cycles of drought and flood. Approaches to water resource management were at the centre of many discussions, and from the districts of Pintadas in the north-east of Brazil, Ram was able to see and document water access, storage and use technologies. A main takeaway was that improving water access is insufficient in itself, and that building capacity, the introduction of new technologies and technical assistance to enable communities to use water more efficiently were also vital.
THE OUTCOMES

On his return to Nepal, Ram produced a comprehensive leaflet (in Nepali) which picked up on lessons from Brazil on efficient water use, and shared this with the staff of the Agricultural Development and Livestock offices in Manang, a remote district in central Nepal which suffers from aridity problems. Three years afterwards, Ram knows that the district authorities have integrated that knowledge into their work plans: drip irrigation, an efficient irrigation canal, water conservation ponds and water harvesting are now more common. “It’s not only due to my training but they have actually integrated the water management approach into semi-arid adaptation activities in all work plans”, says Ram[15]. He is very pleased to know that what he saw in Pintadas of how people actually manage water in water scarce conditions has contributed to this remote district in Nepal.

But this is not the only result of Ram’s participation in the ELLA Programme. At the national level, he plays an important advisory role. His experience on South Asia and Central Asia has been complemented with lessons from other continents, so with this strong background he now forms part of a consulting team for government. In 2014, he was a climate change expert for the development of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan where he still uses the knowledge generated in interactions with fellow participants in the ELLA Learning Alliance on Climate Change Adaptation in Arid and Semi-Arid Regions. In 2015 he worked as the climate change and energy expert writing for the National Conservation Strategy Framework. “I’m pretty confident that the learning I had from ELLA helped me to widen my work as a consultant. The experience gave me lot of opportunities to learn and it helped me to enhance my capabilities and to build my confidence”, says Ram[16]. He notes that the series of conversations and discussions in the learning alliance provided an opportunity to read a lot of case studies and to benefit from a knowledge sharing mechanism that was very useful for his work.

In the last two years, Ram has been involved in the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) project where they are identifying climate smart agriculture technologies and where he is actively using the knowledge he shared with people in Manang District on issues related to water scarcity and agricultural farming systems. Ram is the CDKN Country Engagement Leader in Nepal and a key adviser on several climate related bodies.

[16] Idem
[*] First showcased picture: Elderly farmer carrying his harvest in Nepal by Sharada Prasad (https://flic.kr/p/eyzZ2w)
How do you get the message out to spread the word on good agricultural policies? Policy briefs churned out by the communications departments of research organisations, social media campaigns sponsored by civil society, and the direct lobbying of public officials, parliamentarians and ministers are among the many channels. This is the story of a journalist in Malawi, who designed and produced an interactive radio programme devoted to agricultural issues, ahead of his country’s general elections – incorporating lessons from the 2013 ELLA Learning Alliance on Smallholder Farmers and Rural Development.

Gladson Makowa is a Malawian journalist with a keen interest in agricultural issues, and a particular skill for radio journalism. He was quick to sign up to the ELLA Learning Alliance when it was advertised, and became an active participant, discussing with peers from across the global south, the successes and challenges of Latin American agricultural policy reforms and their impact on smallholders. Following his online participation, Gladson was one of a select few who won an ELLA ‘Learning into Practice’ award, to take forward lessons from the Learning Alliance as part of a radio programme series.

Gladson was particularly interested in how Latin American small-scale farmers had met the challenges of market liberalisation, and in the support provided by the state, donors and NGOs to integrate them into value chains, through contract farming, measures to assure input quality, and the provision of market information.

Malawi was facing upcoming general elections, and ahead of the elections, Gladson was keen to promote awareness of, and responses to, the problems faced by Malawian smallholders, complementing efforts by NGOs to do the same. He took lessons from the ELLA online Learning Alliance and knitted them into a radio programme, Chuluke Chuluke [17], in
He reports that some political parties such as the People’s Party (PP) and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) included proposals discussed in the programme within their manifestos. This was also the case of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which won the May 2014 elections. Looking at the DPP manifesto, Gladson says that it indeed gathered some of the proposals discussed in *Chuluke Chuluke*. According to Gladson, more than two years afterwards, there is still a long way to go with reforms in favour of small farmers but there have been improvements.

Gladson transcribed the radio broadcasts materials and distributed the conclusions in a report to the authorities and electoral candidates. “I wanted to capitalise on the coming general elections to make all stakeholders think about the possible direction of Malawian farming in the years to come. This is the time when parties are making their manifestos and therefore the ideas of major policy changes are filtered into their policies. The parties easily copy good ideas into their manifestos and later these may become policies”, says Gladson.

Collaboration with the Farmers Union of Malawi, Shire Highlands Milk Producers Association, the National Smallholders Farmers Association of Malawi and the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET). He broadcast ten thirty-minute transmissions, each devoted to a different agricultural policy issue – contract farming, the review of the Seed Act, reform of the Milk Act among others - and followed this with an interactive on-air discussion with listeners. “The design of the radio programmes was very related to the knowledge shared in the Learning Alliance (…) The themes were developed but with a regional development approach, which considered issues of productivity, but guided by new questions, new analytical categories and new concepts picked up from the Learning Alliance”.

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A repeated word magnifies the quantity in vernacular language Chichewa; shortened from traditional proverb that literary means ‘many are the bees but you point at the one that has bitten you’. Gladson explains that it shows that there are even many ways, problems and solutions to experiences of farmers and NGOs in Malawi.

First showcased picture: Rabio cabin He reports that some political parties such as the People’s Party (PP) and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) included proposals discussed in the programme within their manifestos. This was also the case of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which won the May 2014 elections. Looking at the DPP manifesto, Gladson says that it indeed gathered some of the proposals discussed in *Chuluke Chuluke*. According to Gladson, more than two years afterwards, there is still a long way to go with reforms in favour of small farmers but there have been improvements.

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First showcased picture: Rabio cabin

Malawian farmer standing in his field affected by floods. Photo: ©FAO/Luca Sola
THE ISSUE

The right to know what government is doing and how it is using citizens’ taxes is a cornerstone of democracy. Transparency and access to information are the watchwords. In their absence, not only are citizens uninformed, but the scope for corrupt practice is greatly enhanced. In many countries, Freedom of Information Acts have paved the way for greater transparency in principle, but achieving the effective implementation of such laws can be another matter. Latin America has experience to share on citizen strategies for accessing information and this was one of the subjects discussed during the 2012 ELLA Learning Alliance on Citizen Oversight.

THE PERSON

Back in 2012, Festus Keneboh was the Executive Director of Afrodep, the Afro Centre for Development Peace and Justice, a civil society organisation dedicated to research, training and advocacy for conflict resolution in Nigeria. Festus was keen to learn more about making information accessible to the public, as Afrodep was embarked on designing a project to address public information in the Delta state, in the light of Nigeria’s passage of an FOI law in 2011. So he signed up for the ELLA Learning Alliance, and became an enthusiastic participant in the series of online discussions.

THE LESSONS

During the Learning Alliance it became clear to participants, Festus foremost among them, that although legal frameworks are very important in enabling access to information, of equal importance was seeing through on the legislation to establish effective working relations with government and public officials. While avoiding co-optation, civil society organisations need to establish good enough working relations with government
to allow collaboration and information access to pursue their aims: a fine line to tread.

THE OUTCOMES

Against the backdrop of these discussions, Festus pressed ahead with the Afrodep proposal on public accountability and citizen participation in budget processes for the Delta state in Nigeria. The core of the idea was accepted and a programme approved for UNDP funding, in collaboration with the Overseas Development Department and the Ministry of Economic Planning for Delta State of Nigeria. When the project started in late 2012, it established three Information Action Centres (IACs) across the state (in Ndokwa West, Ika South and Aniocha North Local Governments) that would serve as a hub to access and disseminate information to citizens on public budgets.

Tragically, Festus died one year after the project started. But by then, the IACs were functioning as centres where citizens could not only ask for specific information on public programmes but where they could also comment on and propose changes to public programmes and request additional information. Festus’s wife, Augusta, is continuing his legacy and now leads the project. She is pleased to say that the IACs have improved transparency and increased local government’s responsiveness to citizens in the areas where it operates. She highlights that during these years, Afrodep has used practices learnt from Latin American countries on promoting social accountability and transparency in government projects. Most useful was the guidance on how to track public budgets.

Although the IACs still face many challenges, they have achieved changes towards more inclusive and democratic local governance. Community leaders and communities at large are now more aware of their participation rights and more able to speak out on how services are being delivered. The IACs are also now seen by the local governments less as a threat and more as a complement to support their functions.

[1] First showcased picture: Advocacy visit to Emu Eboma community in Delta State
REFLECTIONS ON THE TWELVE STORIES

The case study stories in this collection are varied. They come from ten countries in West, East and Southern Africa and South Asia. The people featured work for government, civil society groups, in the university sector and one as a private sector consultant. Their work embraces land use, agriculture, climate change, disaster management, citizen participation, and human rights. But there are common denominators between them, which we briefly reflect upon here, in order to cast some light on aspects of south-south knowledge exchange and learning.

COMMON CHALLENGES

The obvious starting place for south-south learning is that the knowledge exchange addresses a challenge or problem that is common to both regions (or countries), and that this resonates with the individuals exposed to this learning. All of the people here had a good idea that they might be able to find some answers in Latin America to the problems faced by their own countries: whether it was David Allan and the land use tension triggered by extractive industry in Myanmar, Ram Chandra and his concern for water resource management drylands of Nepal, or Oscar Obasi and James Kizito-Mayanja’s interest in contract farming as a means to improving farmer incomes in West and East Africa.

Sometimes the solutions can also be unexpected: Venessa Padayachee’s realisation that mobilising the South Africa victims of human rights abuses themselves can be an effective means of defending their rights; and Patrice Kamkuimo-Piam’s appreciation of how international law can be successfully leveraged for domestic change in Cameroon.

ADAPTING KNOWLEDGE

Understanding context is regarded as vital in finding solutions to development challenges. So in taking lessons from one region to another, adaptation of that knowledge is important. Diana Sanchez makes it clear that the way citizen score cards were developed in Mexico and other Latin countries needed adjusting to become effective instruments in Cape Town. Ghislain Koffi Dodji Nyaku took ideas from Mexico’s Victims Law, but had to adapt these when advocating for including elements in Togo’s new Criminal Law.

In the first phase of ELLA (2011-14), the onus was on the individual to read about, discuss and see the Latin American experience, and to adapt this to their own realities
‘back home’. In ELLA’s second phase, the programme has been structured to research and compare realities in two regions (Latin America and Africa) to help the participant in that process of inter-regional lesson learning.

**THE INDIVIDUAL**

In all these stories, we meet exceptional individuals, who are committed, hard-working and entrepreneurial in seeking solutions to the problems their countries face. It would be invidious to pick out anyone in particular. All have demonstrated that they know how to identify opportunities for change, based on their personal learning. Ultimately, for a programme of ELLA’s nature, which has sought to spread knowledge and learning far and wide, it will be individuals who carry forward that learning and make an impact. Throughout, the programme has sought to identify these committed individuals with whom to work: the online exchange and learning communities provided a good opportunity to do this.

**THE ORGANISATION**

Having noted the agency of the individual, it is clear that these individuals have taken their learning to benefit their organisations. Festus Keneboh in Nigeria’s Delta State passed the learning and baton on to his wife and the NGO that they have led, the Afro Centre for Development Peace and Justice, to make public information more available to citizens. Venessa Padayachee is clear that the South African NGO she works for, the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO), has benefited from learning about the way that human rights NGOs operate in Mexico. In the case of Victor Orindi in Kenya, the benefits of the ELLA face-to-face learning group in Nairobi, were directly fed into the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Secretariat of the Ministry of State for the Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands, and to the Kenyan Ministry of the Environment.
WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

Often those benefiting from south-south programmes will use their learning to grab an opportunity when it arises. Many of the stories here illustrate this point. In the Kenyan climate change adaptation example, from the outset, there was a deliberate focus on feeding ideas for the 2012 Kenya National Climate Change Action Plan. But in the case of the Malawian journalist, Gladson Makowa, it was he who saw the opportunity to share lessons from the ELLA Learning Alliance on smallholder farming in a radio programme that fed the debates for the forthcoming general elections in Malawi in 2013. For Tito Bonde, the wait was more than two years before he could use his insights from Brazil in a UNICEF programme on incorporating disaster preparedness into the primary schools curriculum in Mozambique.

TYPES OF IMPACT

The impacts that can flow from knowledge projects have been categorised by academics in different ways. Usefully a summary of three different typologies of policy impact has been brought together and compared in an IDS Practice Paper[18]. There are similarities between the three, and for our purposes here we have drawn on these typologies to produce a simplified one with four broad categories of outcome or impact:

(1) Awareness raising: including building public awareness, changing perspectives, shifting the framing of a problem, or the setting of new agendas or priorities
(2) Building coalitions for change: building networks and partnerships for change
(3) Shaping policy development: developing understanding of an issue, capacity building for this, influencing the way policy is formulated, changing the way decisions are made, changing policy content
(4) Influencing practice: changing the way institutions work including their structures and resourcing, changing the way policy is implemented and programmes are delivered, changing monitoring and evaluation systems

When we look at the twelve case stories, we see outcomes or impact across all these categories:

[18] IDS (2013), Practice Paper, Learning about Theories of Change for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Research Uptake
FINAL REFLECTION

Information flows across the globe in ever increasing quantities and speeds. But it is when a sustained process of exchange and learning happens around organised information, online, in groups, and through seeing and experiencing – of the type promoted by the ELLA programme – that information is more likely to be turned into meaningful knowledge and learning which people can use to address the challenges in their countries.

Some 1800 people participated in the ELLA Learning Alliances during 2012-2013, of whom 70 won places on study tours to Latin America. These twelve stories capture a small proportion of the experiences of all these participants, as an illustration of the way ELLA knowledge has spread and of the types of impact that the programme has had.
Evidence and Lessons from Latin America (ELLA) is a south-south knowledge exchange and learning programme, that seeks to inspire development policies and practices that are grounded in evidence about what works in varied country contexts. This programme is led and managed by Practical Action Consulting (PAC), Latin America and financed by UKAid.

During its first phase (2011-14), the ELLA programme produced and disseminated knowledge on some 21 different topics, and ran six Learning Alliances aimed at south-south learning on a sub-set of these topics. This booklet presents the stories of twelve people who participated in the ELLA programme during these years, the learning they gained, the actions they have taken in the period since then, and some of the outcomes and impacts these actions have had.

This publication has been produced by the ELLA Programme team at Practical Action Consulting, Latin America. To download a digital version of this document or find out more about the project, visit:

ella.practicalaction.org