

Exposure and Dialogue as a Powerful Instrument for Shaping Policy-Making

What is exposure and dialogue and for whom are exposure and dialogue programmes intended?

Exposure and dialogue are the core elements of a method for increasing the capacity of political decision-makers to act. EDP supports the development of instruments with which to design policies for the benefit of those who do not have access within their own society to the resources that are essential for a decent quality of life. This method, the exposure and dialogue programme as it is called, is used primarily to improve the situation of the poor, in particular that of poor women in the countries of the South.

The exposure and dialogue programme is meant for people who have access to important resources such as knowledge, capital, decision-making authority, political power, markets and institutions. These people are invited to participate in an exposure and dialogue programme. The programmes are a way of reaching political decision-makers and getting them to understand better, so that they act for the good of those who lack access to such resources. Exposure and dialogue programmes bring together all those people who wish to understand and improve the living conditions of the poor.

The concept of exposure and dialogue programmes is based on the conviction that there is a chance of realising pro-poor development policies if political decision-makers become *personally* involved and support the self-help efforts of the poor with the political means at their disposal, thus making a structural impact.

Exposure in this context means direct exposure to the reality of somebody else's life. The idea is to be able to understand the situation of these people from their viewpoint, to see it through their eyes. For example, the participant in an exposure and dialogue programme begins by spending a few days with a poor Asian, Latin American or African home worker (a woman), trying to do the same work she does, staying in her house, sharing her meals. The participant learns about the self-help organisation of which she is a member and establishes a personal relationship with her - in spite of the many differences in language and culture. The exposure experience takes place in small groups, consisting of one or two guests, the host family and one other person (known as the "facilitator"), who acts as an interpreter and go-between.

Dialogue in this context means to reflect on and share with others the insights won from an individual experience of direct exposure, in other words the purpose of the dialogue is "inductive learning". The goal is to arrive at well-founded conclusions that orient the participants in the exposure towards action for improving the situation of individuals, such as for example the

situation of people like their hosts. This dialogue includes mutual recounting of what happened during the exposure and joint analysis, deepening and generalising of the individual experiences. The dialogue takes place in several stages following the exposure, in small and medium-sized groups involving all the EDP participants (generally 12 to 16), plus the hosts and facilitators.

Who can use exposure and dialogue and for what purpose?

Individual exposure and dialogue programmes convey not only an in-depth insight into the real-life situation of the poor, but also solid knowledge of the strategies, ways and means they use to improve their situation. They make it possible first and foremost to discover the self-help potential of the poor.

Who can use or commission an exposure and dialogue programme? Exposure and dialogue programmes are for people from the self-help organisations themselves and from any type of support institution. The combined elements of exposure and dialogue are also a powerful instrument with which to reach decision-makers within bilateral and international institutions in the field of development co-operation and to bring together individuals from different social organisations, politicians, academics and practitioners.

The following goals can be achieved with the help of exposure and dialogue programmes:

- developing new strategies, instruments and methods for poverty alleviation and/or testing them;
- building up participatory institutions and pro-poor service institutions;
- expanding feasible, efficient and effective measures to include new groups of poor people or regions that are particularly difficult to reach;
- creating the political and legal framework, for example to realise decentralisation and self-government;
- testing new strategies for building up civil society;
- networking with other local or international organisations, politicians and academics working in the same area.

The individual exposure and dialogue programmes provide access to first-hand experience and innovative know-how in the following areas:

- The situation and living reality of poor people, e.g. with regard to the causes of their poverty, women's economic activities, local politics and local culture, use of educational facilities and social services.
- The functioning and the effectiveness of political decisions and instruments for the people concerned.
- Effective strategies used by self-help organisations to link the micro and macro levels in the implementation of pro-poor policies.
- How institutions must be designed so that they provide sustainable services for the poor.
- Long-term impacts in the local context.

Previous areas of experience with exposure and dialogue programmes

The individual exposure and dialogue programmes have been used for example in connection with the following:

- developing a social insurance scheme for SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association, India) in collaboration with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ);
- training staff from the Grameen Bank, Bangladesh, at rural savings banks in Germany;
- forming firm working links between governmental and non-governmental agencies working in the field of development co-operation in Germany and India for a watershed development programme in the federal state of Maharashtra in India;
- organising exposure field trips for geography students from the University of Bonn on the topic of sustainable and participatory self-help for poverty alleviation in India and Bangladesh;
- preparing and implementing a participatory self-evaluation by Grameen Bank replicators in Asia and official German donors;
- elaborating publications, films and teaching materials on the topics of human development and empowerment;
- training junior staff within the framework of an internal SEWA Exposure and Dialogue Programme;
- training the presidents of Albanian co-operatives and the managers of Albanian savings and credit institutions at co-operatives and self-administration bodies in Western Europe (Switzerland, France and Germany);
- the preparations made by the authors of the World Bank's World Development Report 2000/2001 concerning the form and substance of some central topics in the report (employment, social security, organisation), at SEWA;
- providing members of the German Parliament and the European Parliament with information about successful strategies for participatory poverty alleviation and the design of conducive general conditions by means of exposure visits to innovative self-help organisations such as SEWA (India), the Grameen Bank (Bangladesh), CARD (Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development, the Philippines), WOTR (Watershed Organisation Trust, India) and also ADOPEM (Asociación Dominicana para el Desarrollo de la Mujer) [Dominican Association for the Development of Women], Dominican Republic), CEPROLAI (Centro de Promoción del Laicado – Centre for the Promotion of the Laity, Bolivia), or the social development organisations of the Church in Guatemala and Honduras.

Practical issues

Exposure and dialogue programmes can take many forms - for example ten- to 14-day programmes with up to 16 participants, training programmes in the field, small workshops based on exposure experiences, individual case studies, and so forth. In every case the initiators or commissioners of a programme must get involved in the planning in terms of content and



organisation, in the implementation and in the follow-up process for the programme, i.e. they must make the programme their own. Every exposure and dialogue programme needs the interest and support of a partner organisation which has a working relationship of solidarity with the poor people the participants would like to meet and can facilitate a personal *meeting* with the poor for the participants. An exposure and dialogue programme takes time and is not limited to the stay in the country concerned, it can take up to a year from preparation to conclusion. Before going to the exposure country the participants attend a preparatory meeting, on their return there is an evaluation meeting devoted to the findings and follow-up steps. The costs of an exposure and dialogue programme are similar to those for high-quality training workshops in the field of development co-operation, with the fees also serving to cover the costs incurred by the local hosts.

What the *Exposure and Dialogue Programme e.V.* (registered association) offers

Individual exposure and dialogue programmes are tailored to the respective purpose and needs of the group of participants in each case. The Exposure and Dialogue Programme e.V. offers self-help organisations, development co-operation institutions, groups from civil society and research institutions or individual initiatives its services to develop, accompany, or implement exposure and dialogue programmes with and for all those who are interested in using the exposure and dialogue methods in order to redress disadvantages of an economic, cultural or political nature and to promote integrated human development.

Background to the exposure and dialogue programmes

The idea for *exposure to or immersion in* the lives of poor people comes from Asia, from attempts by the Asian Catholic Church to realise what was called the "*option for the poor*" in the 1960s. The idea was taken up in the early 1980s in the context of the bilateral development co-operation of the Federal Republic of Germany - a move which was triggered by the urgent need to bring development co-operation closer to the poor and to direct German development policy more towards a pro-poor orientation and towards participation. In 1992, the initiative led to the creation of the Association for the Promotion of North-South Dialogue, an NGO which has a policy advisory board with an inter-faith and cross-party membership and an inter-disciplinary advisory council of experts. Since 1985, the Association and its prior platform, the German Commission for Justice and Peace, have implemented and advised on a total of 61 exposure and dialogue programmes of different types and duration, involving about 900 participants and various partner organisations in countries of the South and covering a multitude of topics. The new name of the Association, Exposure- and Dialogue Programme e.V., reflects the intention to intensify dialogue also with partners and communities in the transformation countries of Eastern Europe.

EDP Profile

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Exposure and
Dialogue Programme

Programa de
Inmersión y Diálogo

Programme d'Immersion
et de Dialogue