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LEARNING FROM CHANGE

Issues and Experiences
in Participatory Monitoring
and Evaluation

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Foreword

AS WE EMBARK on the twenty-first century, the words accountability, decentralization, democracy, diversity, ownership, participation and transparency are as common in development rhetoric as they are contravened in practice. *Learning from Change* shows how participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) has the potential to make the rhetoric real. It establishes PM&E as one of the great remaining frontiers and challenges in development, with implications for learning and change which are at once methodological, institutional and personal.

Bringing together and analysing as it does varied experiences of innovators in South and North America, Africa and Asia, this book is a landmark. Its balanced, reflective and critical style cannot suppress the excitement. The discoveries of practitioners in different continents converge to suggest that where PM&E spreads and is sustained, much else can come to change: in the project cycle and activities; in the cultures and procedures of organizations; in professional norms and practices; in interpersonal relationships; and in gains to poor people. We have here seeds of a revolution in the theory and practice of development, with PM&E as both catalyst and clincher in reversing relationships of power, transforming institutions, and enhancing learning and adapting by stakeholders at all levels.

Learning from Change should be read by all development professionals, whether government officials, donors, academics, or others in civil society, who are concerned with improving performance to benefit the poor and powerless. It should inspire them to support pioneers of PM&E and to explore the potentials themselves. Those who ignore the themes and lessons of this book may be secure in their careers in the short term; and those in their fifties may even survive to a safe retirement. But they will be also be losers. For they will have missed not just the risks, but also the exhilaration and fulfilments of surfing a wave of the future.

Robert Chambers
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