PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT
FROM
ADVOCACY
TO ACTION

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ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Foreword

This volume was produced under the Development Centre's 1993-95 research programme entitled "The Human Factor in Development". It was specifically prepared as part of the short-term study on Promoting Participatory Development Through Local Institutions.

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Preface

Participatory development has been on the development agenda since the 1950s and 1960s, mostly in the guise of community development, but the concepts underlying the terminology have changed radically in recent years. This change is mainly due to a better understanding of the driving forces of the socio-economic and political processes of development and to innovative approaches introduced by some progressive practitioners and academics. Participatory development has definitely gained a new topicality, since it has been recognised that it can help in meeting the conventional development objectives of growth and equity as well as more recent concerns for sustainability, good governance and democratisation. Many evaluations have shown that projects and programmes following participatory approaches produce higher and more sustainable returns.

There is, nonetheless, no room for complacency. Participatory development is no "quick fix" but a learning process which takes time, resources, imagination and sometimes courage to implement. It requires behavioural change on the part of many actors, calls into question old habits and often reveals conflicts of interest because of the need for power sharing. The novelty in participatory development, as the authors (and others) see it, lies in a new, people-centred vision of development, which replaces top-down procedures with approaches based on joint learning and negotiation. Another new feature is that participatory development can no longer be seen as an exclusively local issue, but has strong national and international dimensions. The creation earlier this year of a Working Group on Participatory Development and Good Governance, under the aegis of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, provides evidence of recognition of these new dimensions.

Although new concepts of participatory development are increasingly gaining acceptance, their implementation remains problematic. It is therefore timely for the Development Centre to show how these new concepts have been translated into practice in different settings. The editors are to be commended for having drawn on a wide variety of experience from around the world, which can inspire those who are setting out to apply participatory approaches in developing countries, aid agencies and non-governmental organisations. This publication also illustrates how the Development Centre can play a catalytic role by bringing together ideas, experiences and actors from different areas in a field of interest both within and outside the OECD, and which is still in need of analytical and political support to allow further progress to be made in practice.

Jean Bonvin
President
OECD Development Centre
May 1995

Introduction and Summary

This book brings together the major results of the Development Centre's research project on "Promoting Participatory Development through Local Institutions", carried out under the Centre's research programme for 1993-95. As part of this project, a joint seminar of the Centre and the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) was held in February 1994. A summary record of the seminar is also included in this volume.

Papers prepared for the project and submitted to the seminar have been revised (and shortened in most cases) for inclusion in this volume. The papers reflect the authors' wide range of experience in non-governmental organisations (NGOs), bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, and other organisations. Although the Development Centre provided conceptual clarification and guidance at the outset of the project (see the overview paper by Schneider), the diversity of the authors' experience gave rise to some variety in the way they used the concept of participation. Given the basic tenet that participation requires not a single "blueprint" approach but a learning approach tailored to each specific situation, these conceptual differences are viewed as complementary rather than conflicting.

We have aimed above all to show how, under different circumstances, progress has been made in practice towards more genuine participation, i.e. participation in decision making within a new partnership, where the conventional top-down relationship is considerably modified, if not completely reversed. Most authors draw on their field experiences with NGOs and grassroots organisations. In the projects that they have initiated or followed, popular participation has been considered either an essential condition for sustainability or an end in itself. Although not all of the projects have shown the expected results, they offer worthwhile lessons for future initiatives.

Part I begins with the summary record of the seminar, which presents the main lines of research and discussion as well as the conclusions drawn at the end of the two days. This may help the reader to identify the general ideas (or ideologies), practices and problems of participation. Also included in Part I are two more general papers. Schneider deals with conceptual issues and with ways of closing the gap between the theory and practice of participation, both at the local and national levels and in certain aid agencies. Weekes-Vagliani focuses on the need to pay special attention to women if participation is to be enhanced effectively.

The three other parts of this volume present a variety of case studies. Part II groups papers on specific issues: enterprise development, rural workers' organisations and farmer participation in extension. The papers in Part III analyse experiences in specific countries. Part IV consists of two papers written from an aid-agency perspective. (This may seem a very small number, but there are specific references to aid-agency experiences virtually throughout the book.) The papers affirm that participation should be supported as a matter of priority, first and foremost for the sake of sustainability, but also because participation is a "school for democracy". They also make suggestions concerning instruments and methods.

Clearly, our project was neither exhaustive nor even representative in a quantitative sense. Rather, it was intended to contribute to a process of critical analysis and innovation, which has been initiated mainly by academics and progressive practitioners in NGOs and aid agencies. If participation is to move into the mainstream of development thinking, more analytical and political support will be needed. Recent initiatives by the World Bank and by DAC, as well as the 1993 *Human Development Report* of UNDP, may be seen as the harbingers of such major change. The great variety of experience analysed in this project may improve understanding of the need for and the practical ways of promoting participation, not only in specific projects but in development generally.

The concept of participation

Although the need for more popular participation in the development process is generally acknowledged, the concept of participation has been given different meanings in different situations. Increasingly, however, it is accepted that genuine participation should embody some form of empowerment of the population, especially participation in decision making. This conception thus has political connotations, since it views participation as linked to democratisation. O'Gorman, for example, sees participation at the local level as the very base of democracy.

Genuine participation means that people should be involved throughout the project or programme cycle, from the design stage through monitoring and evaluation. Mere consultation of the people should no longer be considered as sufficient, nor should participation be limited to the implementation of activities previously defined from the outside.

Even genuine participation may not be effective if it is limited to the local level. Beaulieu and Manoukian argue that initiatives at the regional and national levels (e.g. support for decentralisation and for the electoral process) should be conducted in parallel with local development efforts. The same authors affirm that participation should indeed be at the centre of all development efforts. This implies rethinking conventional approaches and methodologies in aid agencies and elsewhere, and establishing new relationships among the stakeholders. Instead of mere beneficiaries of a project or programme, people should be viewed as partners and actors. People must become actors of their own development.

The rationale for participation has often been formulated in social terms, as a potential source of greater equity. More recently, other justifications have been added.

It is now widely agreed that participation enhances efficiency and effectiveness —
for example, in agricultural research and extension (see Flores Saenz and Rouse) —
as well as sustainability, and that it contributes to democratisation and to "good
governance" in general.

Participatory approaches and instruments

The most successful participatory approaches described in this volume do not
define precise rules, but two essential common ideas clearly emerge. First, a careful
and often lengthy process of observation, analysis and consultation must precede the
definition of projects and programmes in a participatory mode (Mathur; de Rham and
Lecomte). This initial phase must offer opportunities for the population to put
forward its views of problems and priorities (Njonga). Particular attention must be
paid to differences in the positions and power constellations of the various groups or
categories of the population (e.g. women; see Weekes-Vagliani) and to possible
conflicts of interest (Talbot). Furthermore, study of the cultural dimension is needed
to assess possible impacts on social structure and organisation. This process amounts
to a quasi-permanent exchange and consultation, which quite naturally will lead into
participatory monitoring and evaluation as projects are undertaken.

The second essential idea concerns the need for flexibility in planning and
organisation of a project or programme, so as to offer people and their organisations
(as well as other stakeholders) the opportunity to participate effectively in the
different phases. The mode of action most suitable for this is that of experimentation
and action research, conducted as a learning process for all involved (de Rham and
Lecomte; Beaulieu and Manoukian).

As to the instruments of participation, many authors emphasise the important
role played by local organisations. Such organisations are often called
community-based organisations even though they do not necessarily encompass the
entire community, which is often not sufficiently homogeneous to support such an
all-inclusive organisation. By forming local organisations, people gain in strength and
benefit from economies of scale (Fernando). Furthermore, as local organisations
facilitate communication between projects and people, they should be treated as
partners, or perhaps even be integrated into projects. Mathur sees them as the key to
the success of participatory approaches. At times, people have to be stimulated to
organise themselves in local groups and create the necessary social momentum (de
Rham and Lecomte). Support for such groups should aim at building sustainability
through a minimum degree of local autonomy. Through networking, such groups
gain influence over policy and legal issues at the local and higher levels (Beaulieu
and Manoukian).

More generally, the issue is to favour the creation of local capacities of various
kinds — especially organisational and management capacities — to strengthen the
potential for popular participation. Training is the instrument preferred by NGOs and
aid agencies to build such capacities. If training is to be effective, it must use a
participatory approach rather than conventional lecturing of pre-determined lessons
delivered in a top-down mode. Many authors commend the virtues of informal

exchanges of knowledge within and between groups, but also with those outsiders who accompany them in their efforts (O'Gorman). To this end, mutual visits have been organised (Andrianasolo, Njonga) with the help of existing networks, and neutral places of encounter and exchange have been created (de Rham and Lecomte).

Obstacles to participation

Highly centralised and authoritarian political regimes tend to thwart the emergence of participatory approaches. People who are exposed to administrative arbitrariness or violence usually prefer to avoid the risks involved in organising themselves (Flores Saenz). Under a centralised government, the distance between decision-making centres and the population often prevents the latter from participation in decision making (Mathur), but under some such regimes the administration is weak, especially in rural areas, and thus leaves ample space in practice for the development of local initiatives and NGOs. In any case, it is preferable to institute by law the people's right to create organisations of their own. Freedom of association is recognised as a basic human right in international law and has long been supported by the International Labour Organisation (Egger treats this issue in detail).

Democratisation and decentralisation can go hand in hand to improve the prospects for participation. Although these processes are in general necessary conditions for participation, they tend not to be sufficient. They must be accompanied by conditions that are characteristic of participatory approaches, such as the building up of confidence among the various actors through dialogue and responsiveness, and readiness to share power and to combine local resources with administrative resources and procedures.

Participation also depends on access to certain assets and rights. For reasons of law or custom, certain categories of the population are often deprived of such assets and rights. Unequal access to land, to the formal financial system and to certain services severely limits these groups' possibilities for participation. Women are often particularly disadvantaged, owing to social organisation and cultural values (Mathur; Weekes-Vagliani). Even in activities intended to be participatory, special measures are needed in favour of the groups that suffer discriminatory treatment. Without such measures, such groups will very likely be marginalised *de facto*, because they will lack voice and autonomy.

Poor or non-existent formal education, lack of knowledge and skills (e.g. management skills) can be obstacles to popular participation in certain activities. It is essential to strengthen the capacities of people and their organisations through training in a participatory mode which integrates traditional knowledge as much as possible.

Some analysts view passivity on the part of the local population as an obstacle to participation, to be overcome through a variety of awareness-raising techniques. Fernando rejects this view for the case of Sri Lanka by distinguishing two situations. First, in matters internal to the village, with which the people are familiar, creative energies are by no means dormant. Second, in relations with external forces about

which villagers have little knowledge, the so-called passive mentality is simply an appropriate strategy aimed at establishing clientelistic relations with the external "patron".

Other obstacles to enhanced participation include the bureaucratic rigidities and conventional operating modes of aid agencies. Agency staff members tend to be guided by incentives that reward short-term effectiveness, often at the expense of genuine participation by the population (Mathur). In addition, staff members who have strong technical qualifications often lack the skills needed in relating to people at the local level and their organisations. Disbursement pressures related to budgetary rules are often incompatible with the pace at which participation proceeds. Rouse finds the structure of his organisation (FAO) inadequate to cope with innovative projects in a participatory mode. Several aid agencies, both multilateral and bilateral, have acknowledged problems on their side in pursuing participatory development. Some have started sensitisation and training programmes and made changes in recruitment, to facilitate the adoption of participatory approaches by their staffs. To give guidance to its staff, the World Bank is preparing a handbook on participation (to appear in 1995). Much remains to be done, however, to bring participatory approaches into the mainstream of aid-agency operations.

Sustainability and replicability of participatory development

Sustainability is an important component of our definition of participatory development. The concern for sustainability must be present in the promoter's mind from the very outset in the process of approaching individuals and groups with a view to enhancing their participation. In a similar vein, early concern for replicability is important, since activities that are not replicable are condemned to remain quantitatively insignificant.

In the context of participatory development, sustainability does not imply that a given activity can be continued indefinitely without change. Rather, it means that people (individually or collectively) reach a stage of self-reliance that enables them to pursue their current activities and to cope with changing circumstances with a relatively high degree of autonomy. Sustainability therefore requires resources, know-how, skills, vision, self-confidence and enabling socio-political and economic relationships (Bullard).

Participatory appraisal can help to examine and fulfil certain conditions for sustainability that should be met before external financial inputs are considered: (1) sound technical information, (2) clear integration of the community's experience and information, (3) well-organised and capable community institutions and (4) full community ownership of choices. External support must be carefully dosed so as not to create dependencies that would jeopardise sustainability.

The ability of individuals and groups to mobilise resources can be a test of one dimension of sustainability. The economic interest of individuals and groups is the strongest motivation for mobilising resources and people (Njonga; Fernando; Mathur). People have to see that they will be able to reap economic benefits from their financial and other inputs.

The sustainability of local groups can be enhanced through linkages with various partners and networks: other local groups and their federations, support NGOs, local and central government, and economic actors such as banks and traders. Such linkages play a variety of roles as sources of knowledge, administrative support, political power and economic opportunities.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation can contribute to sustainability by building local capacities and local ownership. These mechanisms are needed to keep up the momentum of a project and to steer activities into the future. They can also help in finding the appropriate pace for the withdrawal of external assistance, which must be prepared for explicitly from the outset.

Projects will be easier to replicate if internal resources can be mobilised and a sense of local ownership built up, but a warning against an oversimplistic view of replication is in order. One should not assume that a participatory pilot project developed during an "orientation phase" can serve as a blueprint for rapid replication in a larger area. Although groups can certainly learn from the mistakes and successes of others — e.g. through networking about organisational frameworks, concepts and instruments — participation is an individual and collective learning process, and the experiences that it provides must be gained individually, again and again.

Conclusion

Participatory development is a political and social process as much as an economic one. It is in the very nature of this process that there are no definitive and universal answers and no blueprints for quick application. Participatory approaches require imagination and sometimes courage in the face of resistance, but also genuine respect for others, willingness to see matters through their eyes and to abandon old patterns of behaviour and injustice. Vigorously pursued, these processes may lead to radical changes which might even amount to a change in the development paradigm. The times seem to be favourable to innovations in this field, in particular because of its interrelations with good governance and democratisation. Participatory approaches are both a means to widely shared development objectives and an end in themselves, especially where they are perceived as fostering human dignity and human rights. They therefore deserve further analytical, political and practical support, to give them a proper place in the mainstream of development strategies.

PART ONE

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Towards a New Partnership

Summary Record of the Seminar Held on 21 and 22 February 1994 in Paris

Introduction

The OECD Development Centre and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) jointly organised a seminar on participatory development. This seminar brought together representatives of aid agencies and international organisations, representatives of NGOs from both North and South, and academics, all interested in questions of participatory development. The main aim of the seminar was to define practical ways of encouraging participatory development. The urgent need for the population to participate was recognised by all present. Since as early as the 1960s and 1970s, certain institutions involved in development have been supporting efforts to increase participation. More recently, in a strategic declaration on "Development Co-operation in the 1990s", the DAC singled out "broader participation of all the people" as one of the major pillars to be strengthened in development co-operation. Subsequently, the concern for participation received further impetus in the *DAC Orientations on Participatory Development and Good Governance* in late 1993, and in the creation of the DAC *ad hoc* Working Group on Participatory Development and Good Governance.

In academic discussions and innovative practices around the world, the concept of participation has evolved over time to embrace more demand-driven processes, power sharing and the aim of socio-economic sustainability. Although there is no single concept of participation, the trend is clearly in this direction. This broad agreement on certain principles, however, leads only in rare cases to the actual diffusion of participatory processes on a larger scale.

This seminar was therefore an occasion for those present to make proposals for future action. Three levels of action to favour participatory development were identified: the local level, the national level and the aid agencies. Half a day of the seminar was devoted to each of these three levels. This disaggregation of the analysis

served mainly organisational purposes; the possible relationships and interactions between the three levels were also addressed.

The aim was to identify problems encountered in past or ongoing actions and to try to find ways of overcoming them. It was not a matter of drawing up a list of ready-made solutions, but rather of advancing our knowledge and helping the actors to initiate changes.

Promoting participation at the local level

The widespread tendency to reason in terms of local projects is reflected in this section, but it is to be understood that the issue is broader and concerns a great variety of public and private actions. In terms of basic principles and logical steps, there is a good deal of common ground no matter which actors (or stakeholders) and levels are considered. The relatively strong emphasis on projects is therefore more apparent than real. It is maintained for the sake of brevity, but the ideas apply *mutatis mutandis* to non-project activities, programmes and policies.

Listen, observe and endeavour to understand

The vital role of preparatory work before launching the project

— A preliminary study of the milieu, its history, the networks of authority and the existing institutions is essential; the project proper will depend on the findings of this analysis.

— Working along with the population in a preliminary analysis allows people to become the subject rather than the object of their own development, and gives them a sense of belonging to, or appropriation of the project.

— External actors must explain to the population what they are capable of and must also state their limits. They must have the courage not to start a project if the time, money and skills available will not suffice to make it durable and to allow full appropriation by the community.

— Support by flexible and open approaches ("process approach") is to be preferred. Trying to forecast the behaviour and methods of participation of poor populations with no control over their own situation is futile.

— Any course of action is to be negotiated with the various stakeholders. It can be corrected and even constructed as it proceeds. The principles of work and the criteria for choice and evaluation are also to be defined together with the local actors.

— Long-term goals must be set to avoid blocking the process of development.

The permanent risk of exclusion

Even participatory intervention runs the risk of excluding certain people. Participatory structures may be manipulated (see Fernando's paper in this volume). Some groups, such as ethnic minorities or women, dare not speak up or undertake action for fear of reprisals. Well-informed or powerful individuals, such as the aid negotiator at village level, may influence the allocation and distribution of aid and may even appropriate aid for themselves, especially if the amount of available funds is very small.

It is therefore necessary to be vigilant and to ensure that agency staff (or those who act on their behalf) understand the composition of the community by class, income, gender, age and so on, as well as the underlying power relations. Aid agencies must make a special effort to reach groups that might otherwise be excluded. To make it easier for minorities to express their views it is sometimes desirable to consult the people individually rather than in groups.

Stimulate local actors and reinforce their action through intermediaries

Support action: from reflection to organisation

— Sub-groups can benefit most from support in the exploration and analytic work. They need to be given confidence and helped in identifying obstacles and the ways to remove them.

— On this basis, the population can organise itself and regroup in various ways. The sub-groups are more or less homogeneous. It is important to have a good understanding of the social relationships, conflicts and alliances, and not to be too naïve with respect to these basic groupings.

— If this support work is to be successful, and a sound base built in collaboration with the local population, the duration of most projects must exceed two or three years. In addition, the pace of the project must not be too fast.

Extension of links beyond the local level

— To contribute to a real grassroots movement at local level, and then at the regional or national levels, the base organisations need to emerge from their isolation and group together.

— Federations provide an institutional reinforcement for each of the base organisations. Through them, these organisations can exert pressure in order to be recognised as actors.

— The institutions in place do not gladly hand power to others; the population may have to fight to participate, not least in order to force government institutions to play their role as public services. Support NGOs can help them to organise themselves.

Institutional obstacles to greater power for grassroots organisations and local authorities

— Implementation of decentralisation by the state is complex (see "Creating a favourable context" below).

— The aid agencies, until very recently, took little interest in the local level.

— Agencies determined to work with decentralised structures at times meet difficulties when the central government interposes itself.

Aid agencies do not always know which "interfaces" to work with at local level, nor how to establish a dialogue between public and private actors (many of them are familiar only with "state to state" co-operation). Some of them also point out that if the aid agencies move closer to local actors the latter may become more dependent.

Lastly, the NGOs often multiply their interventions at local level in an anarchic fashion. The competition between NGOs can divide populations and help maintain existing power structures.

Promoting durability and replicability

The potential role of the state and the aid agencies

— The state can favour participation by decentralising the decisions concerning programmes of local interest. It is nevertheless necessary to ensure that power at this level is not monopolised by the local administration or notables.

— In organising meetings between public and private actors, the aid agencies have the opportunity to initiate new relationships and thus stimulate a participatory process.

— The participation of NGOs and grassroots organisations in public institutions should be an objective (it is already a reality in some cases; see "Creating a favourable context" below).

National and international networks of NGOs and grassroots organisations

— The creation of networks between grassroots organisations and NGOs can enable the former to make their voices heard and to negotiate with the state and with aid agencies.

— These networks will be all the more effective if they are formed to achieve precise aims.

The instruments: communication and evaluation

— Communication among peasant organisations, exchanges with the NGOs that support them and exchanges with the government are essential to

strengthen the organisations and their networks. To this end, visits and seminars should be organised, documentation distributed, etc.

— The practice of self-evaluation is the basis for accepting responsibility. It can favour the establishment of true dialogue between the partners and can strengthen the capacities of the people. To this end, an evaluation model is needed that takes more account of qualitative aspects, notably the progress achieved in strengthening groups' capacities. It must also take into consideration all the goals of the population concerned.

Aid policies and instruments need to be changed

The aim is not to favour the participation of the population in aid programmes by all possible means, but to contribute more to a form of development designed by local actors. Local actors therefore must be able and willing to take responsibility. Participation in itself is not enough, and may even dissimulate the local population's true goals. Instruments must be modified so as to bring these goals openly into the dialogue and into the actions undertaken with these populations.

It is also necessary to attenuate the sometimes harmful power and influence of external aid. Too high a volume of aid may discourage the mobilisation of local resources and increase dependence. Conversely, if the financial contribution is insufficient, the conditions for participation imposed by the project leaders will be too demanding, thus compromising the mobilisation of the resources of the population and of the environment.

Lastly, are aid agencies capable of participating in a development process driven by their partners, supporting it without trying to control everything? Do they indeed wish to engage themselves along these lines?

Gearing up aid agencies for participatory development

Agencies have come to see participation as a constituent element in development. Although their adoption of this view facilitates the introduction of the necessary changes, it must be recognised that agencies differ according to their specific natures. Some participants even thought that aid agencies should be regarded above all as money managers, without necessarily trying to convince them of the merits of the participatory development approach.

Rethinking the approach

From the project approach to experimentation and a learning process

The limits and constraints of the project approach have been recognised, but no generally applicable alternative has emerged. This approach should therefore be made more malleable and hence more open to participation throughout the project cycle, from the preliminary studies through evaluation.

Traditionally, the project approach implies establishment of a strict timetable, planning of expenditure and rapid achievement of measurable results. All these characteristics oppose the institution of a true participatory process, which requires time for the necessary collective learning and interactions, and a degree of flexibility in management. Only an experimentation process, offering the populations the possibility of negotiating project contents, the methodology and the pace of implementation can guarantee their participation and ability to accept responsibility. Aid agencies therefore need to be able to identify and create the places and methods for negotiating with the different actors of the associative sector and the public sector.

Aid programmes based more on popular demand

The aid agencies generally provide aid without considering in advance and in great detail the demand of the local population for such aid. From now on, aid should be led by a more in-depth and participatory analysis of demand, in the framework of a dialogue with all stakeholders. It would therefore be desirable to draw up national or international agendas so as to co-ordinate the efforts of the government, NGOs and the other actors (as was done in the Gambia under the Strategy for Poverty Alleviation).

Abandoning sectoral programmes in favour of multi-sectoral programmes

Conventional sectoral programmes result from a prior choice made with little regard for the priorities of the local populations. This approach should be replaced by one which responds to the aspirations of a pluralist society. This opening may lead an agency lacking adequate capacities to refer the targeted populations to other agencies or to join with more competent partners, rather than trying to impose its sectoral orientation. It is also necessary to link the micro, meso and macro levels instead of remaining at one level only.

Reorientation of the aid-agency bureaucracy as a prerequisite

Recognising that bureaucratic practices constitute an obstacle to a participatory approach, certain aid agencies have introduced reforms. The creation of a focal point within the administration responsible for supervising these reforms is a good way of ensuring that they are implemented.

The reforms required

— The system of motivation and incentives for the personnel should be reviewed both on the material level and through information and training work.
— The management style needs to be made more participatory, for example, through permitting decision making at the lowest possible level.

Flanking measures

— It is necessary to develop an institutional learning process, embracing staff training and recruitment, and to promote an organisational memory.

— Information and know-how in the participatory field should be disseminated and used within the aid agencies and transmitted in the course of contacts with other agencies or partners.

The main instruments for participation

Drafting of a "single text"

— The aim is to permit the partners to share all the information and to start from well-understood and transparent bases, reflecting an effective and realistic commitment on all sides.

— Participatory monitoring and evaluation can help to develop the responsibility and transparency that make it possible to keep all actors informed.

The contractual culture

Contractual commitments can be envisaged at different levels: at local or national level, with administrations, NGOs, aid agencies or economic agents. Such contracts depend on the existence of local capacities for listening and dialogue, which may first have to be constituted or strengthened. Framework agreements allowing a certain flexibility are to be preferred.

Some basic principles to be respected

Participants referred several times to the seven following principles, presented by Edward Bullard of TechnoServe and drawn from long experience with enterprise development:

— Be certain you have the commitment of participants: do not push a group of participants into a project (they must "own" it themselves). It was suggested during the discussion that the aid agencies should adopt the principle of seeking the formal agreement of the populations before any project is started.

— Expect a long engagement, i.e. do not have a short time constraint, and be patient.

— Utilise host-country nationals to provide services, but NGOs and projects must take care not to weaken the public service by recruiting its best people.

— Choose projects that involve the greatest practical participation within a community.

- Attend to formal organisational and financial issues from the outset.
- Draw up contracts detailing the respective obligations of the aid agency and the populations.
- Never lead with money; give priority to reinforcing capacities over building new infrastructures.

For some participants, however, these principles were still too close to an approach driven from outside, while a genuinely participatory approach would seek to "accompany" people in developing and consolidating their own strategies and activities.

Creating a favourable context for participatory development

In addition to the initiatives seen at local level, strategies need to be defined at national level. It is necessary to create a favourable context for participation at the local and national levels. All the development actors can be involved in this effort. Various papers submitted to the seminar illustrate this point in different contexts, and oral presentations of experiences in the Gambia, Senegal and the Philippines indicate progress towards creating a favourable context for participatory development.

Relations between state and public, and the essential role of the government

The Gambia: the state plays a vital role

Following the multiplication of productive projects during the 1970s and the beginnings of an economic revival, the Gambian government wished to lay the foundations for sustainable development by formulating a strategy for poverty alleviation. This strategy was intended to provide a national framework for the establishment and co-ordination of policies where the poor would be directly involved in designing and managing the development process. A national debate led to the definition of a process based on four essential points:

- increasing productive capacities;
- improving access to social services and raising the quality of these services;
- improving the quality of information, education and communication;
- developing local capacities.

A new type of partnership was established between the government and the governed, bringing many advantages with it. In particular, it is very favourable to democratisation. Some analysts, however, consider the Gambia to to be an exception. The country has in fact reached a certain level of maturity, a multi-party system having been introduced at independence. It remains to be seen how it will be affected by the *coup d'état* of August 1994.

Senegal: The public wish to participate and the government "plays the game"

Under the structural adjustment programme of the early 1980s, the government of Senegal introduced a new agricultural policy without informing the peasants. This policy was a failure. The farmers, no longer receiving any support from the government, started to organise themselves. Regional federations, created between 1973 and 1990, had been building up a national federation since 1978. At the initiative of this federation a round-table meeting was held in 1991, bringing together the ministries concerned, the providers of funds, the aid agencies and the farmers' organisations. At this meeting, new rules for partnership were established and the main forms of support for farmers were decided. In 1993, a forum on the future of Senegalese farmers was held three months before the presidential elections, giving the farmers the opportunity to express their grievances. They brought up the necessity of reforming the rural credit system and expressed their wish to be consulted when rural development policy is defined. This advance towards the participatory process resulted from the will of the farmers themselves. They benefited from the complicity of the NGOs and the support of certain international organisations (especially FAO) and Northern governments (especially that of Switzerland).

The Philippines: changes are initiated by the people without the prior support of the government

Very powerful grassroots movements gradually extended their field of action from the community to the district level. Subsequently, the creation of networks and coalitions made it possible to carry the fight to national level. The people were thus able to establish a dialogue with the government and negotiate new partnership terms.

The role of the external partners

Possible and necessary external support

Creating democratic conditions is the responsibility of national governments, but the providers of funds, the governments of the North and NGOs can help create an environment favourable to participatory development by supporting grassroots initiatives and local government efforts.

— Support for grassroots groups and organisations: the aim is not to support all mass movements (not all are participatory). A realistic attitude must be maintained *vis-à-vis* these movements, but care must be taken not to discourage participation; excessive demands on the population and the imposition of ready-made or inappropriate interventions may stifle local initiatives.

— Support for the constitution of national capacities: the providers of funds may, for example, work with the governments to analyse the causes of poverty (on the basis of which a strategy can subsequently be defined).

— Support for decentralisation: aid agencies can support effective decentralisation of decision making, which provides a base for the participatory process (for example, by offering possibilities for co-management).

The constraints imposed by external actors

In the view of some seminar participants, international organisations and governments of the North have sometimes "demanded" that policies or measures largely incompatible with a participatory development process be applied in the developing countries. In the context of structural adjustment programmes, for example, certain developing countries had to adopt a "real prices" policy (no soft loans, no price subsidies for exportable agricultural products, etc.). More generally, the globalisation of trade and the need for the DCs to compete on world markets has sometimes compromised, or at least delayed, the establishment of conditions favourable to participatory development.

Under these circumstances, the various support measures listed above may prove insufficient to ensure sustainable development. Participatory development approaches may have to be accompanied by macroeconomic reforms, which should, however, be designed with participatory concerns in mind. There may thus be an opportunity to face broader economic constraints in a way that involves the population rather than by decreeing policies in a top-down fashion.

How can real progress be made?

The key words

After two days of discussions, four key words qualifying the attitude to adopt in promoting participatory development had emerged: understanding, humility, flexibility and patience.

Practical suggestions

By way of conclusion, participants wished to establish a few basic principles and suggest a number of practical measures that would help the aid agencies to overcome certain obstacles to the participatory process.

Changes in operating methods

— Identify and eliminate rigidities in procedures. The time constraint in particular should be made more flexible. The pace at which a project will evolve can not be forecast. A rigid framework that imposes deadlines and predetermined objectives leaves little room for taking account of local realities. On the contrary, it is necessary to develop a flexible management

system and demonstrate administrative imagination. Obviously, projects should not be unduly prolonged in the pursuit of specific donor (staff) interests.

— Decentralise decision-making. The populations and technicians in the field should be consulted and listened to more when priorities for action and for allocation of funds are being decided. To this end, local management centres could be set up for participatory decision making and training.

— More attention should be paid to existing experiences in the field. It is even desirable to seek ideas in them, for they indicate how local communities work and what their main concerns are.

— Define appropriate financial instruments. The aim is not necessarily to obtain new funding for participatory development projects, but rather to improve the way in which the available funds are used; this can be done by proposing financing mechanisms adapted to the different local situations and to the participatory approach; such mechanisms should be more flexible, more direct (aid may be managed by NGOs or grassroots organisations), longer-term and less conditional.

The methodology of intervention: desirable orientations

— Identify opportunities to support participatory development and seek social innovators. To identify and possibilities for promoting participation, it is necessary to pay attention to initiatives taken by grassroots organisations. It is also necessary to support social innovators, from both South and North, in their struggle against the "guardians" of the old, non -participatory order, and to facilitate negotiation between these innovators and those who hold power.

— Establish a partnership with local actors, respecting their values and opinions and involving them in the definition of development methods.

— Adapt the language and the terminology of development. Some participants wished no longer to speak of "donors" and "beneficiaries" but of the "contribution" made by aid agencies in support of development driven from within. In addition, the people more easily appropriate participatory institutions and mechanisms when the formulations and concepts adopted are familiar to them (as a first step, documents relating to a project should be translated into the local language).

— Limit subsidies and other financing. Premature and excessive allocation of funds may discourage the effective and sincere engagement of the population. To promote a truly participatory process, it is sometimes preferable to require a local financial contribution. If access to external sources of funding is too easy, certain participants are tempted to divert the aid system to their own profit. In addition, non-financial support is vital to strengthen capacities.

The types of support to be preferred

— Institutional support: institutional support may be envisaged at different levels. NGOs of the North may aid the organisations of the South. In the context of decentralised co-operation, support may be given to decentralised state structures.

— Strengthening of capacities, training: to help populations to realise their potential, it is essential to develop their capacities for analysis, organisation and self-management. It is also necessary to enable them to improve their earnings by strengthening their entrepreneurial and management capacity.

A parallel effort must be made to improve the macroeconomic environment, as participatory approaches should not be considered as providing a panacea for all economic woes.

Looking ahead

Participants expressed the desire to see research and other work on participatory development continue within the DAC and the Development Centre. The future research programme of the Development Centre will include work on financial mechanisms in support of participation. Discussions on participatory development could also be placed on the agenda of the various world conferences planned for coming months and years (Cairo conference on "Population and Development", the Copenhagen "Social Development Summit", the Beijing "Fourth World Conference on Women", etc.).

Some participants called for the drafting of practical guidelines on questions such as how to improve the functioning of the aid agencies, and what programming tools they should adopt. In order for aid agencies to internalise these new practices and to change their behaviour, there should be awareness and training programmes for their staff members.

Concepts, Issues and Experiences for Building up Participation

Hartmut Schneider with the assistance of Marie-Hélène Libercier

Introduction

The Development Centre's work on participatory development started with the perception that despite virtually universal acceptance of the rhetoric of participatory development, there is a wide gap between rhetoric and action. This gap is particularly wide if one uses a comprehensive definition of participation. Our concern has therefore been, first, to clarify conceptually the meaning of participatory development in a forward-looking perspective, which aims at sustainable development, and second, to distil lessons from recent experience as to how the gap between rhetoric and action can be bridged.

It is clear from the recent literature that the meaning of participatory development has changed — especially in academic and NGO circles, but also among the more committed and self-critical people in aid agencies — but this change is much more visible in the rhetoric than in day-to-day operations on the ground. If this gap cannot be bridged, participatory development will remain largely in the realm of wishful thinking, where pessimists see it in any case (e.g. Martius-von Harder, 1993).

This chapter sets out briefly the main conceptual issues and shows how new concepts have been put into action in different contexts. While the concepts may have an air of "idealisation of participatory action" (Lazarev, 1993), we are aware that the harsh realities of human life put obstacles of many kinds in the way of participatory development. The challenge is to seek ways of overcoming these obstacles rather than giving up in resignation.

To explain what we mean by participatory development and what is new about it, we review briefly the meanings of participation most commonly encountered, as well as the context and motivations associated with them.

Basic concepts and rationale

Development assistance activities have long sought broader **participation in benefits** of projects or programmes and access to resources, although projects have often been limited to specific target groups. Even where these goals have been achieved, progress was rarely made towards sustainable development and sometimes the operation simply created dependence, since the beneficiaries tended to be passively rather than actively associated with the development effort, which was mainly driven by and dependent on external support. Even if laudable concerns for equity stand behind the idea, the benefits are frequently not sustainable.

Budgetary constraints and increasing frustration with the narrowness of this concept of "beneficiary participation" led to the idea of **participation in cost sharing**. The motivation here was to overcome financial constraints to the scaling up of programmes, and at the same time to induce participants (beneficiaries) to act more responsibly by making them cover part of the costs. Again, the underlying reasoning seems perfectly logical, but its implicit assumptions about the interests of the participants often appeared to be flawed.

Participation in decision making is viewed as a necessary complement to participation in cost sharing. People who have a voice in decision making are more likely to be willing to pay part of the cost. Furthermore, the efficiency and effectiveness of projects and programmes are often enhanced if "beneficiaries" participate in decision making. This is probably why the learning group of the World Bank uses participation in decision making as the main criterion in its definition of participatory development (see Bhatnagar and Williams, 1992).

While participation in decision making may be considered an advanced form of participation, it is not genuinely participatory if it is part of the supply-driven process of conventional projects or programmes. Typically, the project cycle, or even the project concept, is dominated by outsiders' perceptions, planning from the top down, concerns for rapid disbursement, efficiency, budget periods, personal promotion and so on. These are all valid concerns in some sense, but they may conflict with the perceptions, interests and motivations of the people directly affected (the "primary stakeholders").

A more satisfactory conception places participation in a people-centred development process which is demand-driven, in the sense of being ultimately based on the dynamics, perceptions, priorities, capabilities and resources of the people. This term does not mean, of course, that everything will be supplied from outside on demand, thus creating dependency; rather, it is used in opposition to the conventional project approach, which is usually supply-driven in the context of an aid relationship dominated by financial considerations. Participatory development in this sense may come close to the concept of "endogenous development". In any case, it can not be achieved by imposing a blueprint from the outside.

In our definition, participatory development stands for a partnership built upon the basis of a dialogue among the various actors (stakeholders), during which the agenda is set jointly, and local views and indigenous knowledge are deliberately sought and respected. This implies negotiation rather than the dominance of an externally set project agenda. Thus people become actors instead of being simply

beneficiaries. By the same token, our definition has among its objectives the empowerment of the local actors (individuals, groups or institutions) in order to make participation sustainable[1].

Trends in the perception of participatory development today can be summed up as follows:

— it is holistic rather than sectoral;
— it is more people-centred than community-centred (avoiding the assumption that communities are homogeneous);
— it is more a learning process than an institutional "fix";
— it is less an instrument than an end in itself, but there need be no conflict between these two characteristics.

The rationale for participatory development can be both utilitarian (instrumental) and moral (final). Beyond the gains in effectiveness and efficiency that derive from people's participation in decision making, the utilitarian argument can be formulated in more general terms: the state and the market have their limits as mechanisms for organising society and the economy. Giving people and their groups a stronger role and rights can help to make up for market and government failures.

The moral rationale is that one must not exclude those who are directly affected. Genuine participation in everyday economic and social activities is a major dimension of human, legal and political rights.

This dual rationale for participatory development corresponds to the view that participation is both a means and an end in itself. Those who do not care about moral concerns can be satisfied with the utilitarian function, which, at the same time, should reassure those on the moral high ground because it provides a potential means of achieving their end (see also Tandon, 1991). If participation is used as an instrument only, however, the chances are that development will remain driven from the outside, not "owned" by the people, and therefore will have a low likelihood of sustainability.

Participatory development as defined above represents a major qualitative change rather than a change at the margin of conventional "beneficiary participation". This approach has fundamental implications, which are reflected in the three tenets that follow. Again, there are no blueprints to be applied in implementing participatory approaches, but participation will have more chance of becoming a reality if these tenets are respected and implemented at all three levels of action: the local level, the political and administrative environment, and aid agencies.

A new vision of development and of its objectives

Participatory development is development from within rather than from outside or above. "Top-down planning leads to coercion, which in turn results either in local passivity or even active resistance to the development envisaged" (Müller-Glodde, 1991).

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Participatory development calls for changes in the attitudes and behaviour of all involved, both individuals and organisations of various kinds. In some experiences, transcendental values based on Christian solidarity (e.g. in the Philippines; see Ledesma and Osner, 1988) or on Buddhist principles (e.g. the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka; see Manoukian, 1989) are instrumental in this change. In other experiences, "enlightened utilitarianism" or claims for social justice and human rights provide the underlying values.

Objectives should be negotiated with all concerned rather than set from the outside or above. In this process of negotiation, empowerment of the people concerned and the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the objectives and activities should serve as major criteria. Special attention is to be paid to the diversity of the population and to the participation of its poorer sections.

A high degree of interpersonal and intercultural respect

Individuals, groups and local institutions in developing countries are to be considered as actors in their own right, and as equal partners in negotiations. This implies respecting traditional (local) knowledge, values and perceptions; seeking to understand and use them; and possibly integrating them with modern (outsiders') knowledge and values.

Pre-eminence of local dynamics

Local initiatives may need to be stimulated from the outside ("awakened", in the Sarvodaya approach), but they should not be subject to the schedules and constraints of outsiders. External actors should be patient and flexible, possibly "do nothing" for some time (see Voigt-Moritz, 1991), rather than impose any activity from outside. The process of development should be driven by internal concerns and follow an internally determined rhythm, accompanied by outsiders who are ready to be involved over a long period. In fact, participatory development calls for a continuous effort; it is a process and can never be considered to be accomplished once and for all.

These tenets call for a new professionalism and a new institutional culture[2] in aid agencies and other external actors. The concept of new professionalism embodies a more holistic approach than the narrow specialisation of conventional professionals. It implies broader knowledge, increased sensitivity and commitment to the values mentioned above (see also Chambers, 1993). The new institutional culture involves changes in the mix of skills of institutional staffs and in the incentive system which determines their behaviour.

Why should we promote participatory development?

There are at least three good reasons for promoting participatory development on a larger scale, for considering it as more than a marginal issue that affects only the social sphere at the local level. First, many evaluation studies have found that

participation serves a range of general development objectives, such as efficiency, equity, capacity building and sustainability. Sustainability in particular depends on the people's being in charge. FAO (1991) puts it succinctly thus: "Without participation, rural development initiatives are unlikely to be sustainable in the long run and rural inequities are unlikely to be redressed."

Second, participatory development is part and parcel of the broad set of issues covered by the term "good governance". Participatory development covers one dimension of good governance, and it overlaps with the political, judicial and administrative dimensions. The complex relationships among these dimensions are specific to time and place, but there should always be scope for positive synergies. These need to be explored and put into action; an example is the need to create an enabling environment for participatory development.

Third, dissatisfaction with the poor achievements of aid (the "crisis of aid") is expressed more openly with the post-Cold War geopolitical situation and tighter budgets in OECD countries. This may offer an opportunity to introduce the qualitative change that participatory development represents, since the participatory approach holds the potential to achieve more with less. Participatory development does not call for massive new transfers of aid funds; it calls for new methods, which require more time and care (e.g. for joint analysis) but not necessarily more money. In other words, participatory development provides a new hope for the aid community, comforted by a better understanding of what works and what does not.

At this point, two sets of questions may be in order:

— To what extent is this shift in the meaning of participatory development accepted? What criticisms does it face?

— If participatory development as outlined seems desirable, why do we not see more of it in everyday operations? How can it be given broader exposure and stronger support in practice at the local, national and international levels?

The shift in the meaning of participatory development is visible in the statements and analyses emanating from an increasing number of bilateral and multilateral agencies, although nuances of difference can be identified. Criticisms, which are more often implicit than explicit, seem mainly to bear on the practical difficulties resulting from conflicts of interest, incomplete understanding of specific contexts, time pressure, administrative rules and additional costs[3]. Obviously, where participatory development is touted as a panacea it faces serious criticisms.

The DAC *Orientations on Participatory Development and Good Governance* (1993) spells out both the benefits of the participatory approach and the reservations of aid agencies. The document thus constitutes clear progress over earlier statements, but it falls short of acknowledging explicitly the qualitative change in the aid relationship that genuine participatory development implies, and the need for new instruments, particularly financial ones, to make that change possible.

While arguing for major changes in the system, well beyond aid agencies, we do not think in terms of universally applicable principles. Rather, it seems useful to distinguish kinds of participation according to the type of activity considered (see Lazarev, 1993).

1.   Activities that are clearly in the domain of the public sector (e.g. infrastructure investment) call for political participation according to the type of representation in place and the level of government involved (national, regional or local). This precludes neither consultation and negotiation with those directly concerned, nor lobbying efforts like those observed in many countries (e.g. when large dams are being built). In the last instance, however, public authorities retain control of these kinds of activities.

2.   Activities undertaken jointly by the public sector and other partners clearly call for joint decision making and joint management. This is the case, for example, where government asks individuals, communities and other groups to contribute to agricultural services, local water-supply projects and so on.

3.   Community activities of a socio-political and economic nature vary greatly in scope, from the attribution of land to the establishment of local health posts and market infrastructures. These activities are usually the exclusive domain of community decision making, but this is not necessarily tantamount to general participation and harmony of interests. Varying degrees of exclusion according to age, gender, caste and other criteria can be observed in many places. Of particular interest in our context are the occasions when communities call on outside resources to carry out such activities, or when government wants to interfere in them. Then the more difficult issues of support to local participatory development must be faced: diverging interests, perceptions and knowledge, and the balance of power between different actors.

4.   Activities of individuals or interest groups are the subject of individual decision making within the existing socio-political, legal and economic framework. From our point of view, this framework must permit freedom of association and enterprise (autonomous decision making), as well as access to resources. A high degree of individual or group autonomy may indeed be conducive to sustainable participation, although it does not guarantee the lasting success of specific initiatives. Issues referred to in the preceding paragraph may still be relevant in this context.

Participatory development in practice

Genuine participatory development calls for unconventional approaches and procedures. A number of new approaches are reported in the literature; others are documented in the case studies commissioned by the Development Centre and included in this volume. These experiences highlight major issues, promising avenues and possible solutions. Our purpose here is to raise awareness about problems and solutions that show the feasibility of the new approaches. It is hoped that these examples will stimulate the various actors to change their practice so as to reap the benefits of participatory development.

Box 1: A participatory approach to training

The Centres de formation professionnelle agricole (CFPA) in Chad (and in 25 other countries, mostly in Africa and Latin America) use the pedagogical approach of the Maisons familiales rurales of France, which emphasises active participation by the rural population. The procedure is as follows:

Before a CFPA is created, two experienced development workers, one man and one woman, spend about a year animating the region. They explain the role of a CFPA in the main villages and try to identify prospective leaders capable of forming the grassroots association that will manage the centre. At the same time, they carry out a "participatory survey" to improve their knowledge of the region and to understand the problems of its peoples.

The farmers' association is composed of village delegates, men and women, who keep the villagers informed and receive their requests. After examining the villagers' motives, the association's directors and the development workers make a first selection of six villages; after visits and interviews, three of these are definitively chosen. In each village, 10 to 15 married couples are then chosen according to precise criteria to form a support group. For the appraisal of training needs, young people, women and working adult men are interviewed separately, so that each sub-group can express its concerns freely.

At the CFPA, the training team prepares a summary of the needs expressed in the three villages. The directors of the association and the development workers draw from this a dozen or so training themes. This method, which involves the people in the conception of the programme, requires animation over a long period.

The training cycle for each theme involves alternating periods at the CFPA and in the village, getting villagers involved in surveys and attempting to acquire a better understanding of their knowledge. Pooling the contributions of each village at the CFPA is one basis of the training, complemented by technical courses that also touch on social, ecological, economic and political questions. The leader then carries out various motivating activities in the villages, using the local language. Shortly after, the trainees often ask the CFPA for help in starting up a development project, generally at the instigation of the association's directors.

This approach is thus participative at two levels: that of conception and that of implementation, with permanent feedback between the training centre and the farmers' association. Instruction is based on the farmers' experience and follows the evolution of their needs. The quality of the team of animators is crucial. To succeed in inducing the village to assume responsibility for itself, the leader should be of rural origin, should be a good field worker and should have both technical and pedagogic training. Difficulties encountered in implementing this approach in Chad include "cohabitation" with other training methods that enjoy large financial resources, conflicts with the approach used by the supervising ministry and co-ordination problems with the agencies involved in development actions.

Source: Radaï and Planchenault (1991).

On the assumption that no quick fix or blueprint is available, we focus on the **process** of participatory development and on the various **actors** involved in it, among whom we distinguish insiders, outsiders and intermediaries of various kinds. Moreover, experience has shown that participation at the local level is often impeded by obstacles at other levels. These two concerns have led us to conduct our enquiry on three levels of action: the local level, the level of aid agencies and the political and administrative setting in developing countries.

Promoting participation at the local level

The body of experience concerning participation at the local level is sufficiently wide and coherent to offer lessons that may be relevant elsewhere. Further systematic analysis and dissemination are needed, however, to encourage widespread acceptance and practice of genuinely participatory approaches.

Attitudes and approaches

Whatever the local situation, it is essential for the "outsider" (who is not necessarily a foreigner, but someone from outside the specific location and society) to shed pre-conceived ideas (including those conditioned by a specific professional background), to listen and to try to understand local perspectives. As one farmers' leader has put it: "make a strong attempt to put yourself in our position, in the position of the poor, and look at the reality as we see it" (Menike, 1993). This implies respect for traditional knowledge, putting aside what is perceived by some as professional arrogance and the belief in the superiority of modern scientific knowledge.

The approach followed by the Centres de formation professionnelle agricole in Chad (see Box 1) starts out with this attitude and includes "participatory surveys", which lay the foundations for people to assume responsibility and to become actors of their own development.

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA), a practice developed under the leadership of Robert Chambers (see Mascarenhas *et al.*, 1991), is gaining acceptance and exposure. Its aim is to enable people to initiate their own development. PRA lets people investigate, present and analyse information and identify priorities. It may not produce final answers, but it is a process that involves people and thus creates opportunities for them to participate[4].

PRAs in India have shown the value of outsiders' being supervised and taught by villagers. This reversal of roles prompts changes in attitudes, and villagers become more self-confident. As PRA requires more time than the usual four weeks of an appraisal mission, Müller-Glodde (1991) recommends sending a small "pre-mission" team three to four months in advance of the appraisal team. The early team, which preferably consists of one local and one foreign consultant with particular sensitivity to people and their problems, establishes contact with the intended beneficiary population and prepares the PRA. The appraisal team should

include a woman so that the appraisal can pay special attention to the problems affecting rural women, who otherwise tend to be subsumed under "poor farmers", regardless of their special concerns and potential. When meetings are called for appraisal or planning purposes, the time and place should be decided by the local population.

The information furnished by PRAs is qualitatively different from that provided by conventional, non-participatory surveys. The results of the latter are not appropriated by the local population, whereas the methods used by PRA (shared preparation of maps, diagrams and so on) ensure that the information is visible and public, owned and verified by participants.

Much time may be required between the contact and observation period and people's participation in new activities of their own. In Mali, for example, four years elapsed before farmers played an active role in action research (see Talbot, in this volume). Patience therefore ranks high among the qualities requested of those who want to promote participatory development, which by definition proceeds at the speed chosen by the people and not at that set or desired by outsiders. Menike (1993) puts it thus:

> We the poor are in no hurry to launch upon an accelerated pace of empowerment. We know that in the social, economic and political conditions in which we are placed, an accelerated pace of empowerment is not only unrealistic but self-destructive.

Nevertheless, the local population often expects to receive some benefits quickly. If quick results are obtained from a participatory and sustainable activity, they can indeed be very invigorating, but experience also shows that sustainability is put at risk where early benefits are granted as a lure or a concession to pressure exerted by those interested.

A remarkable example of resistance to such pressure, for the sake of achieving genuine and sustainable participation, has been given by Voigt-Moritz (1991) in the case of slum rehabilitation in Senegal. Through negotiation at the outset with all involved, he established the principle that the project would do nothing against, nothing without and nothing for the inhabitants. Obviously, this "do nothing" principle is not easily accepted by the host country's administration or the local population, but it drives home the message that the project is not the main actor, but a partner in efforts to be driven from inside. In this way, the outside partner cannot be pressured into acting and should feel free to retreat if participation does not materialise. Moreover, the scene is set for negotiation from the beginning.

Stimulating and strengthening local actors

Institutions far removed from the local level (national governments, external aid agencies or national and international NGOs) need strong local partners to support participatory development approaches. Finding such partners requires familiarity with the local situation and therefore will take time. Precipitation into a partnership carries with it a high risk of failure. If government partners have failed to meet expectations, a quick switch to NGO partners is normally ill-advised. Experience has shown that some people are quick to spot the spending pressure and

the preference for NGOs. They have exploited this tendency by setting up fake NGOs to collect money for purposes other than participatory development.

For reasons of efficiency, one will normally look for groups rather than individuals as partners, and possibly for existing institutions that could play the role of intermediaries. Mutual confidence and respect among all of them have to be built up in a joint learning process about motivations, skills, resources and social interaction. Initially, activities may have to be designed mainly to get such a learning process under way and keep it going, without any detailed further commitment to specific future activities. Even at this preliminary stage, the process must not be driven completely from outside but must be based on people's views and interests. It must also be open, in particular with regard to potential intermediaries. Outside organisations should not envisage an exclusive relationship with a single intermediary or partner group. A multiplicity of partners reduces the risks, may increase efficiency through competition and avoids dependence on a partner, who could use that situation to obtain advantages contrary to the principles of participatory development.

The preferred means of strengthening local actors is to accompany them in their search for ways of overcoming their problems. This means first of all an exchange of information, possibly action research and training, to be conducted without imposing a pace, method or perspective. Adopting the (often holistic) perspective of the people should also warn against the tendency of aid-agency administrations to follow narrow sectoral approaches in projects that people subsequently refuse to adopt as their own.

On the basis of considerable experience, mainly in West Africa, Lecomte (1991) proposes a schema of "stages of maturity" to describe the reality lived through by local groups. (Similar reasoning can be found in Uphoff, 1986, and in the practice of the Sarvodaya movement.) He labels the four stages of maturity of groups as "gestation", "birth", "adolescence" and "adulthood"; each has its corresponding form of support (see Table 1). While this schematic view is analytically helpful, Lecomte stresses that practice should be guided by "trial and error" (*tâtonnements constructifs*) rather than by fixed programmes, which cannot anticipate the rhythm of growth and consolidation of local groups. The strengthening of people's organisations and of their members' capabilities is a necessary condition if development assistance is to fall on fertile ground and to meet with partners who are not driven exclusively by the aid contributions.

The Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka covers 8 000 villages (more than one-third of Sri Lanka's territory) and counts over 77 000 members (UNDP, 1993).

It uses a five-stage approach (see Manoukian, 1989):

1. On request of a village, contacts with a Sarvodaya field worker begin; village needs are surveyed and a "shramadana camp" organised (*shramadana* means sharing one's time, thought and energy). Shramadana camps have two main purposes: to carry out a specific task communally, such as cleaning water tanks, and to re-awaken in the participants a mode of thought, speech and action that favours openness, respect, equality and co-operation. The camps also provide an opportunity to identify potential

leaders who are later sent for formal training to Sarvodaya's development education institutes.

2.   Training and social infrastructure building, such as setting up groups of children, adolescents and mothers, each meeting specific community needs at their level.

3.   Strengthening the institutional framework by establishing a village Shramadana Society, or Samithi, whose members are usually the elected officers of the functional groups. The Samithi takes responsibility for the village development plan based on the "ten basic needs" identified by the movement and the village survey. When a Samithi comprises five functional village groups, it is encouraged to join the movement's Gramodaya network, which gives it access to development assistance at the divisional and district levels. Such assistance may come from Sarvodaya, government sources or local banks. Gramodaya rules require regular meetings and a procedural discipline to enhance the efficiency of Samithis with a view to getting them involved in activities that generate income and employment.

4.   If previous stages have been completed successfully, the village will have increased its self-reliance and be considered sufficiently mature to receive rural credit.

5.   At this final stage the village produces a surplus and begins to share its resources and to support other communities by extending experience and guidance, training, capital, material and labour.

Stages	1	2	3	4
Type of direct support	**Gestation**	**Birth**	**Adolescence**	**Adulthood**
1. Enhance self-reliance	Breaking of tutelage relations	Meeting with other organisations	Comparative analysis of organisations	Access to bank
2. Improve know-how and skills	Horizontal information	self-evaluation	Technicians' reinsertion	Management advice
	Communication tools and study visits			
3. Carry out applied research	knowledge of cultures and legislations	Analysis of own potential resources	Technology design	Connection: association and enterprise
		Co-operation between farmers and researchers		
			Cofinancing of programmes	
4. Cofinance activities	(least possible amount)	Funds non-allocated in advance	Own saving	Bank credits and guarantees
5. Cofinance operating expenses	(least possible amount)	Only training and communication	Financing of federations' activities	(least possible amount)

Source: B. Lecomte in Kwan K.H. *et al.*, 1991

Another example of a step-wise approach is provided by the Brazilian-German project PRORENDA. This project attempts to stimulate farmers to raise their living standards by organising themselves in groups and by following a process which includes many possibilities for iterative loops to ensure genuine participation (see Box 2). The principle is to accompany farmers but not to make decisions for them. The project started with an open "orientation phase" in 1990 and is envisaged to run in stages over a period of ten years.

The task of the outside project staff is described by the German advisor of the project team (Schmidt-Burr, 1992) in the following way: to stimulate processes in a professional manner that starts out by listening and observing, and goes on to responding and provoking. A progress review in late 1992 found that a self-help dynamics had already developed and that farmers acted increasingly as "citizens". By mid-1993, however, attempts by the farmer groups to change the behaviour of government extension agents had not met with success.

PRORENDA grants for community funds are allocated on the basis of not only economic and technical feasibility but also the expected ability of a group to solve problems, to make decisions, to negotiate and fulfil a contract, to be accountable and to gain access to other actors in public administration and in the economy at large.

Delbos (1993) shows how careful dialogue and analysis over a period of three years succeeded in reversing the dynamics of a project aimed at improved salt production in Benin. Women producers have taken over responsibility for the aid project from foreign technical assistants and made it economically and socially sustainable through their "ownership".

Box 2: The process used by the PRORENDA groups and team

The purpose of PRORENDA is to raise the living standard of the farmers' families. The description of the ten steps below is only a guideline. Communities are selected on the initiative of technicians or at the request of organised farmers.

1. Visits to selected communities and sections: representatives of the PRORENDA team visit the community to broaden contact with farmers and local officials and to achieve mutual understanding. They look, listen, talk and ask questions.

2. Assessment of visits: step 1 is assessed by the farmers' families and by the PRORENDA team. If there are any doubts about the assessment, the PRORENDA team must return to the community for explanatory discussion.

3. Co-operation proposal: the PRORENDA team draws up a co-operation proposal according to the situation assessed and presents it to the smallholder farmers. The proposal outlines PRORENDA's offer of technical assistance and training, and explains the terms of co-operation. The PRORENDA team provides the following four questions to stimulate discussion within the families and group

— What was it like in the past, what is it like now and what are the opportunities and prospects for the future?
— What should be changed, what can be changed and through what activities?
— Who could help with activities to bring about change?
— What can be done by the farmers themselves and their group to change the situation?

4. The families decide whether to participate in the group. The group establishes its initial rules, discusses the four questions and the PRORENDA proposal, and indicates its decision to the PRORENDA team in a letter or minutes.

5. Assessment of the reply and token of confidence: if the group's understanding of the PRORENDA process is considered to be insufficient, the PRORENDA team begins new rounds of explanation, questions and encouragements. Otherwise, the terms of the token of confidence are drafted, with the following objectives:

—   to show confidence and enhance co-operation between PRORENDA and the group,

—   to encourage and give priority to group activities and the mobilisation of the group's resources,

—   to enhance the group's energies and response.

The token of confidence is a small sum of money dispensed as funding for each family. These resources will constitute a community fund administered by the group, in agreement with the PRORENDA co-ordinators.

6. Use of the token of confidence: the token of confidence ensures that group activities and requests are given priority. The group must communicate in writing — and according to PRORENDA team priority decisions — information about payment period, counterpart, group savings.

7. Assessment of group priorities: if the group response is considered inadequate, the PRORENDA team seeks to encourage further debate and reformulated decisions. If the reply is regarded as satisfactory, the PRORENDA team sends a letter of acceptance containing a draft contract.

8. Planning of group activities: the group holds a seminar to plan the use of the community fund resources and the families' own resources, as well as other activities deemed essential.

There is a need to define activities, practical steps, participants, time scales and resources. At the beginning, an outside moderator could facilitate the proceedings.

9. Drawing up the contract: the PRORENDA team drafts a contract to formalise the allocation of the agreed resources. The purpose of the contract is as follows:

—   to induce the group to evolve from a collaborator to a contractual partner,

—   to encourage it to take on responsibility,

—   to encourage group organisation.

10. Signing of the contract: all the key representatives operating in the community sign the contract at a public ceremony witnessed by the authorities in attendance.

The PRORENDA group explains the activities planned at a forum which offers an opportunity to negotiate co-operation with other participants.

To ensure the continuity of the process, the team follows the progress of work and responds to new challenges with new proposals and training. The PRORENDA groups decide on the reinvestment of their funds. They carry on the process by re-entering at step 6, with the difference that the token of confidence is replaced by the full PRORENDA group fund. Thus a group dynamics is being developed.

Source: Schmidt-Burr (1992).

While there is no standard sequence for the learning process at the local level, one can identify components that in many situations have proved essential for stimulating and strengthening local actors. These are:

—   dialogue and information, in a perspective of "animation";

—   learning by doing;

— training that responds to the people's perceived needs, wherever feasible provided by peers rather than outside technicians,

— "participatory action research", to discover and test the most effective ways of bringing about desired change, which will thus be determined locally.

Barbedette (1991) reports on farmers' disappointment with the "imposed" and "useless" training provided by specialised training institutes, with standard contents that do not respond to the needs of the local population. Farmers of the Naam groups in West Africa are often able to define their training requirements and insist on determining the period of training, the language in which it takes place, the participants and the recruitment of the trainers. The latter are often found among the members of other farmers' groups. Over the years, certain groups have become "nurseries" of trainers.

Groups setting out to undertake collective activities should do so under their own responsibility. Outsiders who would like to support group action ought to examine whether the chances for success exist before making their contribution. This is a question of the degree to which group members are psychologically and materially prepared, which depends on the following conditions:

a. Self-confidence of the individuals and of the group. This is necessary if the group is to design and implement an activity of its own, with its own resources (material, financial and manpower); the idea thus implies assuming the risk of failure, or reaping the benefits of success. Growing self-confidence is a pre-condition for increased self-reliance. Learning by doing demonstrates the people's capabilities to themselves and to others. An indicator of increased self-confidence might be the decision of a group to continue working together after a first collective activity (see Müller-Glodde, 1991).

b. Mutual trust. Evidence of this condition would be the emergence of leaders who are considered legitimate and motivated, and who work on a voluntary basis (at least at the beginning). Another indication is that these leaders or sub-groups are trusted to assume responsibilities delegated by the group. Mutual trust is the basis of a partnership between the population and support institutions, in which the partners accept each other as they are, and communicate openly.

c. Agreement on the objectives that emerge from discussions and negotiations.

d. A sense of belonging to a group and readiness to share tasks within it, which will determine the sense of ownership regarding the activities and their results.

e. Knowledge and skills necessary for implementing the collective action envisaged, possibly built on earlier training.

Power sharing is an important way of strengthening local actors. In an aid context, power sharing means making the project cycle participatory: the project is not planned and implemented in a linear fashion but goes through successive rounds of interaction and negotiation with the social actors. In other words, technocratic

management of project and programmes is replaced by negotiated management. Power can be shared with local groups and other partners, such as private intermediaries and governmental bodies. (Sharing of power between support institutions and some local actors may not suffice to achieve full participation if inequality among local actors or within groups continues to exclude certain people from the process.)

Negotiations centre on the resolution of problems perceived by the local population, rather than on the project as a system of aid implementation. In this way, the dynamics of the process are reversed: the outside partners play a low-key role, facilitating a process driven by insiders rather than directing it from outside and above.

Power sharing and the presence of support institutions evolve over time, with the objective of withdrawal and complete "handing over" of power. Opinions may differ about the proper speed of withdrawal, and conflicts of interest may appear. Support institutions tend to stay on longer than would be in the interest of local groups, who are thus barred from gaining their full autonomy and self-help capacity by looking for partners other than those institutions (Lecomte, 1991).

Government technical and administrative staff at the local level and elsewhere often find it difficult to share power (see the case of PRORENDA above). They may require special training and incentives to accept the principle and to adjust their behaviour accordingly. An indicator of power sharing can be whether negotiation meetings take place in government offices or in more neutral settings conducive to non-directive relationships.

Promoting sustainability and replicability

Sustainability is an important component of our definition of participatory development. In approaching individuals and groups with a view to enhancing their participation, the promoter must keep in mind a concern for sustainability and replicability from the very outset. Attitudes and measures to strengthen local actors must take sustainability into account.

In our context, sustainability does not mean a guarantee that a given activity can go on unchanged forever. Rather, it means that individuals and groups reach a stage of self-reliance that enables them, first, to carry on given activities under present circumstances (including redistributive mechanisms that are likely to persist), and second, to face up to changing circumstances with a high degree of autonomy. Sustainability thus requires resources, know-how, skills and "enabling" socio-political and economic relationships. Some of these aspects go well beyond the local level, so we will not deal with all of them to the same extent.

We should distinguish two types of situations. First, where people have been permanently excluded from providing for themselves adequately in terms of real income, health and education, special provisions of local, national and international solidarity may be necessary to alleviate deprivation. While some individuals may be able to "stand on their own two feet" after temporarily benefiting from such solidarity, others (especially old people and the physically and mentally handicapped)

may need permanent support. It is our view that development can be called participatory only if at least a minimum of such support is sustained.

In the second type of situation, people can take charge of their own economic and social destiny if the most flagrant socio-political and economic obstacles to their fuller participation have been removed. In this case, sustainability means that a point will be reached where support is no longer necessary. The earlier this point can be reached the better, in terms of an individual's (or a group's) autonomy, and also in terms of the replicability of the process, since the resources thus freed can be used to support increasing participation elsewhere.

The chances of reaching sustainability will be enhanced if existing capacities and those to be created are assessed realistically from the outset. Participatory appraisal can help to meet certain conditions for sustainability which should be examined (and preferably fulfilled) before external inputs are considered:

1. sound technical information,
2. clear involvement of the community's experience and knowledge,
3. well-organised and capable community institutions, and
4. full community ownership of choices.

Special care in financial matters is needed in the early stages of support (see Table 1 above), so as not to smother the community's efforts and to avoid raising expectations to unsustainable levels. Provision of small amounts of money by NGOs for new activities may stimulate groups and serve to test their capacities and maturity (Lecomte, 1991). PRORENDA applies a similar idea with the "token of confidence" (see Box 2).

In the longer run, sustainability entails a phasing out of financial support. Although the date can not be fixed in advance, the principle should be known to and accepted by all actors from the beginning.

Internal resource mobilisation and entrepreneurial development

The ability of individuals and groups to mobilise resources can be a test of one dimension of sustainability. Economic interest of individuals and groups is the strongest motivator for the mobilisation of resources and people. Njonga (in this volume) makes the point that it is difficult to "mobilise by hope" over a prolonged period. SAILD is therefore planning to increase its support to economic activities initiated by farmers' groups. People have to see that they will be able to reap economic benefits from their financial and other inputs. Mathur (in this volume) notes that economic returns tend to favour the sustainability of projects, whereas the absence of immediate economic returns jeopardises sustainability unless the sponsors make special provisions to ensure maintenance and resource flows.

Community-based enterprises promoted by TechnoServe are requested to supply part of the capital needed, and agree to pay a management fee for the services provided. This requirement constitutes a test of the community's commitment and a building block for genuine participation. It has proved its validity in many cases (Bullard, in this volume). While enterprise development depends on profitability, the

pre-eminence of the economic goal does not exclude social goals, which TechnoServe pursues under the "shield" of economic performance.

Mobilising the human resources and entrepreneurial energy of very poor people through conventional bank loans tends to be impossible because the poor lack collateral. Following the pioneering experience of Professor Yunus with the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, many cases in other countries have demonstrated that the principle of solidarity in small groups can replace collateral and provide the poor with access to loans. Repayment rates have been very high (over 97 per cent in the case of the "bank of the poor" in Chile[5]). Further research may be needed, however, as to the participatory features of such financial institutions and their longer-term sustainability.

Many poor people are active or potential entrepreneurs in the rural and urban informal sectors, but they face severe constraints to full participation in the creation of wealth. The exact nature of these constraints and the entrepreneurial opportunities must be identified by and with the poor in each case. The purpose is to find ways of meeting their needs that take into account their capacities and limited financial means and will give them a sense of ownership and responsibility. Even in a group approach, the central issue is to harness economic self-interest and reject dependence.

Remenyi (1991) has analysed 26 "credit-based income-generating programmes" (CIGPs) that have succeeded in lifting the credit constraint. He found that "individual self-interest plus community and peer group pressure are used to achieve economic discipline, such as meeting saving targets and repayment schedules, by the individual entrepreneur". Drawing also on 30 independent studies carried out in the 1980s, he cites examples in which CIGPs raised average annual income by 25 to 160 per cent in seven Asian and Latin American countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Peru). In individual cases, these income increases have been even more spectacular. Annual return on investment has been found to be equally high (up to 400 per cent in one case), and on-time repayment rates exceeded 90 per cent in all cases.

Remenyi distinguishes among CIGPs based on "pure credit", "savings-linked credit" and "welfare-oriented credit". He further singles out nine sub-categories according to the role played by solidarity groups or community development concerns, and by mechanisms of intermediation. This typology helps in understanding the functioning of CIGPs but does not identify any specific model that would be superior to others. Interest-rate subsidies have not been essential to the success of CIGPs; on the contrary, such subsidies tend to endanger the sustainability of the programmes. What really matters for success and sustainability is that the programme respond perfectly to the needs of the poor, that it be geared to their skills and resource constraints, and that the participants gradually increase their control and ownership of the programme.

Economic policies and administrative practices often jeopardise the sustainability of entrepreneurial initiatives by the poor. These areas of concern provide opportunities for positive government intervention. Lobbying may be necessary to convince governments that it lies in their own interest to introduce policies tap the vitality and potential of the small entrepreneurs. Aid agencies could help strengthen entrepreneurship by offering increased financial assistance, most likely through NGOs, to set up CIGPs.

Local groups can draw strength from linkages with various partners: other local groups (informally or through a federation), higher-level (support) NGOs, local government, central administration and economic actors such as banks and traders. Co-operation with government and with strong economic actors has at times been considered undesirable because of the fear of losing the group's original purpose and grounding in solidarity. This view is now giving way to a more positive stance that underlines the opportunities provided by various types of co-operation. Tandon (1991) found that collaboration with various partners provided additional ways of exerting influence, which people's organisations and NGOs can use to pursue long-term sustainability.

Co-operation can be narrowly defined in time and space to solve a specific problem, or can aim at building up capacities and development partnerships based on a shared vision of the local situation and prospects. Governments should not consider links with local groups simply as channels for the delivery of development services. This would be contradictory to the very spirit of participatory development. Rather, these links should also be used to facilitate effective participation in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development activities (see FAO, 1991).

At the national level, associations of NGOs have existed for over a decade. Their functions usually go beyond information exchange to support for members or representation of their joint interests. The Association of NGOs in the Gambia (TANGO), created in 1982, sees itself as a catalyser of co-ordination and collaboration among NGOs, government and donors (TANGO, 1993).

Where there has been a history of suspicion and conflict it is usually difficult to build and sustain linkages and partnerships, but given their potential for promoting participation in many instances, they are worth a serious effort. The following principles distilled from experience in Asia can offer inspiration, particularly in seeking collaboration from government and public bodies (based on Tandon, 1991):

Box 3: Potential for partnerships

The Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) started working in Karachi with poor urban slum dwellers to improve the sanitation systems. Working closely with the residents and helping them form local committees and neighbourhood organisations, OPP demonstrated the role and capacity of local people in solving their own problems. Initial efforts to bring the government into collaboration proved rather difficult. Since the recent recognition of this approach by the World Bank, however, OPP has found it easier to collaborate with the government around a common vision of strengthening the involvement and capacities of the community groups to solve their sanitation and related problems.

Source: Tandon (1991).

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1. Make use of macro conditions or global trends. Poverty alleviation and collaboration with NGOs have increasingly been written on the banners of aid agencies which advise governments to take initiatives involving the poor. In another vein, governments face increasing constraints in fulfilling their tasks. Local organisations and other NGOs may therefore be welcome partners, reducing the burden on the administration and at the same time introducing their own views and priorities.

2. Find a catalyst — an event, an idea or a person — that can stimulate collaboration among different parties.

3. Acknowledge differences in interest, perspective, information and style instead of considering them as obstacles. Open recognition of these differences can clear the air for negotiations.

4. Strengthen people's organisations and their leadership. One relatively powerful party may block effective collaboration. In this case, a weaker party can seek alliances with other parties to tip the balance in its favour and may exert influence through new information and the use of the media.

5. Count on collaboration to shift the attitudes and perspectives of actors.

A growing number of partnerships are being built between local and international NGOs. For example, Catholic Relief Services the Gambia launched in 1993 a "Partnership Development Initiative Project" under which 25 per cent of the funds provided may be used to cover the partner's institutional costs and 75 per cent to cover project costs.

Projects will be easier to replicate if they mobilise internal resources in a framework of entrepreneurial development, which is associated with the building up of a sense of ownership. Networking about organisational frameworks, concepts and instruments can allow groups to learn from and imitate the experiences of others. It is dangerous to assume, however, that a successful participatory pilot project can be "scaled up" or replicated quickly in a larger area. "Participation is a process to be formed and gone through by individuals. Such personal experiences are difficult to convey to other people, they have to be gained individually, anew, again and again: there are no recipes" (Müller-Glodde, 1991).

Participatory monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are essential functions of the management of development activities. In a participatory approach, these functions must be shared by all actors. To make this possible, one has to start by acknowledging that regardless of their level of formal education, people are able to evaluate from their own perspective the results of an activity in which they are involved. This perspective is often not taken into account in conventional evaluation.

Conventional evaluation is a pre-structured exercise with prescribed procedures: it reviews the current situation in relation to the original objectives, measures and explains deviations, checks the use of resources, leads to a judgement and

recommendations by an external evaluator, is commented upon by the project manager, and provides the basis for decisions by the commissioning agency.

A participatory evaluation includes the same logical steps, but follows different rules, since it is conceived of as a learning process for all involved. Criteria and indicators are not prescribed in advance by the commissioning agency or external evaluator, who are "outsiders" to the local setting, but fixed in co-operation with the people concerned. Participatory evaluation thus serves not only to check and improve a project, but to promote the participants' ability to review critically their own practices. It should also be noted that participatory evaluation may not be worthwhile if the overall approach of the project has not been participatory, since people may simply not feel concerned by the whole exercise.

Only a few participatory evaluations have been undertaken, mainly by NGOs and the International Labour Organisation (see Oakley, 1991). These experiences has shown at least two advantages of this approach. First, their results are more complete because they are based on a comparison of several interpretations of the information gathered. Second, their impact goes beyond the project team and may thus provoke quick and broad reactions to improve the activities concerned. Participatory evaluations have the disadvantage of requiring more time than conventional ones. This is part of the price to be paid for the learning process embodied in participation; one can expect enhanced sustainability in return. A detailed conceptual and methodological framework for participatory assessment, monitoring and evaluation in the area of community forestry has been prepared by Davis-Case (1989).

Gearing up aid agencies for participatory development

Aid agencies bear a degree of responsibility for the persistent problem of limited participation. Their ways of operation and staffing often make genuinely participatory approaches difficult if not impossible to apply[6].

Certain staff members have become aware that change in their practices is required. This perception is well documented for the case of the World Bank by Bhatnagar and Williams (1992) and increasingly supported by management[7]. The Learning Group on Participatory Development (which is internal to the Bank) has been spearheading the effort, and recent official statements (World Bank 1994a and 1994b; see Box 4) clearly show a new emphasis on participation. A number of United Nations organisations have moved in the same direction (e.g. FAO, 1991; UNDP, 1993), as have certain bilateral aid agencies[8].

By way of illustration, we quote in Box 5 a very recent and forceful statement of USAID principles on participatory development. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Capital Development Fund has put it in more general terms: "In promoting the reinforcement of indigenous capabilities and directing investment resources towards the most disadvantaged groups ... a multilateral Fund such as UNCDF must now, even more than in the past, have the courage to innovate" (Preface to Lazaref, 1993).

The following **obstacles** to widespread acceptance and pursuit of participatory approaches by aid agencies have been identified both from within and from without:

Box 4: The World Bank and participation

A key requirement for strengthening results is to encourage greater participation in the design and implementation of Bank Group-supported projects and programmes by the people who are most affected by them. Toward this end, the Bank Group will do more to experiment with and introduce new approaches in participatory development, to identify practices that can be applied widely in its operations, and to promote systematic use of approaches that work.

Source: World Bank (1994b).

Immediate Recommendations of the Learning Group on Participatory Development

1. Support an enabling environment for participatory development within client countries, by addressing participation in policy dialogue, capacity-building programmes, and other lending operations.

2. Improve the quality and breadth of participation in the Bank's own practices by:

— sharing responsibility for non-lending economic and sector work (ESW) with a wider range of stakeholders;

— ensuring that all projects under preparation include a provision for systematically identifying and seeking the participation of relevant stakeholders throughout the project; and recording in project documents how this was done. Screening of all projects to identify those which need particular attention to participation;

— adjusting the skill mix throughout the Bank to redress the current lack of expertise in participatory approaches and the social and organisational aspects of development; strengthening capacity in Resident Missions and increasing participation-related learning opportunities for management and all operational staff;

— providing added incentives to staff to pursue participatory approaches, through appropriate use of the proposed Fund for Innovative Approaches in Human and Social Development.

Source: Fourth Draft Report, 28 April 1994.

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1. the incentive structure guiding the behaviour of aid-agency staff;

2. the fact that some agency staff members do not clearly understand the rationale for participatory strategies in projects;

3. time pressure;

4. disbursement pressure;

5. lack of a clear mandate from top management;

6. product orientation rather than process orientation;

7. lack of staff continuity for participatory projects, which often require more time to prepare and to implement.

Box 5: USAID principles on participatory development

There is nothing more basic to the development process than participation. We have to appreciate fully the implications of this statement. First, broad access by people to their country's economy and participation in their society's decision-making processes are results we seek to support. Second, participation by people in defining development priorities and approaches must be enhanced in order that programmes be relevant to people's needs.

Participation, therefore, describes both the kind of results we seek and the way that we must nurture those results. To pursue the goal of sustainable development, the development approaches themselves must be sustainable. At the local or national level, the projects and policy reforms must be supported by affected groups. For this, we must build opportunities for participation into development processes at all levels (from community level projects to the design of USAID's country strategies). Development assistance fails if we forget that it is their country, not ours. Democratising the development process will be the cornerstone of our approach which will be oriented by these guiding principles:

1. We will listen to the voices of ordinary people — especially to people whose voices tend to be stifled by more powerful groups in their societies — as we try to discern national and local priorities.

2. In defining our strategies at country level and in pursuit of our global objectives, we will aim to support the initiatives of indigenous communities and organisations. Our assistance will complement the social energies and commitments shown by the recipient society. This approach makes it possible to ensure that the new idea is fully owned by legitimate indigenous institutions. This means that we will seek to understand local priorities independently of our own priorities, capabilities and resources.

3. We will cast widely for expertise. We will open our technical analysis to debate by a range of experts in the universities and research institutions of the recipient country and by other qualified experts in donor agencies. Moreover, we will test our expert analysis against the reality experienced by affected populations. There is competition among a plethora of interests lying at the heart of the democratic process. We will strive to make that competition more open.

4. We will assure that USAID projects and programmes are accountable to the end user. People receiving services should be able to tell whether this support meets their needs.

5. We will ensure that projects strengthen the capacity of the poor to take the next steps in their own and their community's development. In all our efforts, we will seek to empower the poor to sustain the development process.

6. To overcome the tendency of projects to benefit only local elites, we will use gender analysis and techniques for data collection and consensus building such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).

7. We will find ways to streamline our procedures for approving and amending projects so as to allow the local reality to drive our programmes, rather than to have our procedures drive our definition of local reality.

We will keep our focus on the results experienced by real people in the recipient societies rather than merely on tracking the material inputs to projects and our adherence to our own procedures. However, we must satisfy our need for accountability in ways that do not prevent us from achieving the results that will affect people.

9. We will practice a respectful partnership with indigenous and international private organisations. We will work especially with organisations that are committed to strengthening indigenous institutions and capacities. We will share our experience and expertise.

10. We will equip ourselves to make good on these principles. Their implementation will need changes in the behaviour and the practices of the staff. More time must be spent in the field, so as to discuss with local groups and enhance participation. We will seek ways to empower USAID's own personnel, unleashing their innovation and creativity in finding better ways to serve our "clients" in the recipient societies. We will strengthen relevant skills and aptitudes in our staff and contractors.

These principles will place USAID squarely on the cutting edge of change.

Source: J. Brian Atwood, USAID Administrator, Forum on Participatory Development, November 1993.

Measures suggested to overcome obstacles

To translate participation objectives into reality, the DAC *Orientations* call for "changes in attitudes and practices concerning the way activities are conceived, designed, financed, and timed" (DAC, 1993, para. 18). While the paper also contains useful examples of how participatory approaches can be assisted, there is a need for still more specific new instruments and rules at the agency level. Suggestions have been made in this regard at the World Bank workshops held in 1992 and 1994, and by various authors (e.g. Lazarev, 1993). The following list provides a summary version of these suggestions:

1. Make the project cycle participatory, especially for projects with environmental and/or social impacts. This could be facilitated by a clear policy statement accompanied by staff directives.

2. Approach each project as a learning process instead of using a blueprint approach, thus taking account of uncertainties and nurturing communication with all stakeholders throughout the project cycle.

3. Give staff members more flexibility in setting and revising schedules and budgets.

4. Change the institutional culture from mono-dimensional development economics to concepts of multi-dimensional human development. Staff members should be "partners in learning rather than pundits with superior attitudes".

5. Create a more appropriate staff mix through recruitment, training and sensitisation (*inter alia* through exposure programmes and participatory appraisal).

6. Revise the personnel review process to reward quality of output over the whole project period, rather than just for the period up to Board

presentation. Give recognition to staff members who have demonstrated commitment to participation.

A practical example of institutional change in a bilateral aid agency is afforded by the experience of the German Ministry of Co-operation (BMZ)[9]. In 1983, BMZ created a working group to elaborate proposals for stronger promotion of self-help efforts. In 1989 the group was replaced by a division charged with translating the group's findings into project policy. This proved difficult since reorientation towards self-help requires radical rethinking in many areas. By 1993, the following measures had been taken to apply the principles of greater participation and self-help in the context of bilateral co-operation:

1. Creation of independent divisions in BMZ and its executing agencies to promote implementation of the principles.

2. Allocation of at least 10 per cent of total annual aid funds for self-help efforts.

3. A new classification of projects for self-help efforts.

4. Increased staff training to enhance understanding of the concept of self-help, and staff sensitisation through exposure and dialogue programmes.

5. Intensified co-operation with NGOs.

6. Modification of development co-operation instruments:
   — grants for self-help projects accorded to countries not otherwise eligible for grants;
   — introduction of an orientation phase before the drafting of a formal project agreement;
   — revision of the obligatory project planning procedures to facilitate increased participation in the initial stages (this modification was not completed in 1993);
   — special targets to introduce more participation in priority sectors, and new financial instruments (open funds, guarantee funds, etc.);
   — in the framework of policy dialogue, strengthening of requests for project sustainability through participation;
   — promotion of participatory development through multilateral co-operation;
   — introduction of a new type of technical assistants, "partnership assistants" (*Partnerschaftshelfer*), within the German Volunteer Service.

Although these measures do not amount to a change in the project paradigm, they have led to a growing number of success stories and the prospect of more.

Gearing up aid agencies for participatory development goes beyond procedural changes. It implies a shift towards people-centred development, and consequently towards people-oriented aid. Kaul (1993) requests support for self-help approaches but also suggests that "more aid must be made available to people, not just to governments". This may amount to a shift in the development co-operation paradigm, where some of the initiative and decision-making power is shared with the

civil society. This shift should not be seen as an anti-government stance. Rather, it is a way to strengthen local and national development by acknowledging that civil society and government are "joint stakeholders in development" (Mooney, 1993) and by giving government a new role of enabling and arbitration.

Building an enabling political and administrative environment

Although some participatory initiatives have flourished despite a hostile environment, the call for an enabling environment is gaining strength. "In implementing ... people-centred development strategies, an enabling environment must be created to facilitate broadbased participation, on a decentralised basis, in the development process" (African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation; in Nagle, 1992). A similar call was made by NGO leaders from all continents in the Manila Declaration on People's Participation in 1989 (in ANGOC, 1990). This document states that it is the legitimate role of government "to enable the people to set and pursue their own agenda".

Although efforts limited to addressing specific local obstacles can be useful, an enabling environment should ideally be built as part of a comprehensive country strategy. The Gambia seems to be at the forefront in pursuing this comprehensive approach. Its Poverty Alleviation Strategy was developed in a participatory mode and perspective, with support from a number of aid agencies led by UNDP. At a conference held in April 1994, the international community (including NGOs) committed itself to continue support for implementation. The strategy rests on four "pillars":

1. enhancing the productive capacity of the poor,
2. improving access to and performance of social services;
3. building capacity at the local level;
4. promoting participatory communication processes.

It draws strength from seven "guiding principles", three of which specifically embody the concern for participation in implementation of the strategy:

1. "the empowerment of men and women, their groups and communities;
2. the realisation that sustainable development requires responsiveness to the perceptions and aspirations of the poor;
3. the recognition that a continuous dialogue in a spirit of equal partnership and mutual feedback among all actors is essential".

These principles "are grounded on a firm belief in the need to strike the right balance between centralised macroeconomic policies and programmes and decentralised, community-inspired, sustainable human development activities" (the Gambia, 1994).

Basic ideas for enhanced popular participation were explicitly stated and used from the outset, in the National Dialogue on Poverty initiated to help in formulating the Poverty Alleviation Strategy, The participatory approach, which permeates the

entire process, is particularly visible in the pillars concerning the building of local capacity and the promotion of participatory communication processes.

The aim of **building local capacity** addresses individuals, their communities and community-based organisations (CBOs).

They will be encouraged to assume greater responsabilities in the design, implementation and monitoring of development activities which affect their lives. As they gain self-confidence in this participatory process, they will be more assertive and will be supported to determine their own priorities as well as increase their control over development activities. A New Partnership will emerge, based on mutual confidence and active co-operation between grassroots organisations, Government agencies and other development partners. (the Gambia, 1994)

The strategy foresees a step-by-step approach to the introduction of the participatory process, from planning and managing of resources under local control, to the management of projects jointly funded by the community and an outside agency, to "a more complex process of dialogue, consultation and negotiation between the communities and public sector agencies on programmes and activities which because of their nature will remain under the control of these agencies"[10].

The **information, education and communication** activities of various departments (livestock, agriculture etc.), which follow the usual one-way information model, are to be reformed and integrated. The National Dialogue on Poverty "provided local communities with the opportunity of speaking openly about their needs and their constraints and obtain recognition that people's perceptions, particularly those coming from the weakest group in the society, are valued". This dialogue will be given institutional form — the "National Dialogue Team" is to be maintained permanently — with the main objective of generating new attitudes among all actors. More specifically, government officials and the country's development partners will be requested to be "more attentive to perceptions, suggestions and criticisms originating from the local communities, particularly the poor" (see also Box 6).

In a study of rural Indonesia, Thorbecke and van der Pluijm (1993) found a more favourable attitude of government towards co-operation with NGOs and grassroots organisations. Instead of reversing the focus of decision making as a consequence of this change in attitude, the authors argue "for a more rational division of labour by which the highest echelons are primarily dealing with the broader issues and long-term planning, the middle echelons with translating these concepts into specific policies and provincial and district-level managers with adjusting these broadly formulated policies into location-specific measures and development plans". This approach might bring more technocratic rationality but hardly more genuine participation by the farmers, unless a deliberate effort is made along the lines recommended by FAO.

To create an enabling environment for participation, FAO (1991) suggests the following measures:

1. raising awareness among government officials of the benefits of adopting participatory approaches;

2. training government officials in the principles and practice of people's participation;

Box 6: Information, education and communication (IEC) strategy in the Gambia

The role of the IEC strategy will be to initiate a participatory communication system aimed at creating an environment favourable to the success of the National Dialogue:

— At the beginning of implementation of the Strategy for Poverty Alleviation (SPA), a nationwide campaign co-ordinated by the IEC Working Committee in close association with the SPA Co-ordinating Office, will share with the rural and urban people the objectives and implementation modalities of the SPA: what they can expect and how they can get involved. This initial campaign should be seen as one of the very first steps in the local capacity building effort of SPA. It will stress the message that local communities are to assume responsibility for the management of their own programmes and invited to play a major role in the design and implementation of regional development activities.

— The main purpose of all subsequent IEC activities will be to involve the local communities in the communication system. Innovation and imagination would be the key words of IEC activities at the community level. Popular theatre is an excellent communication medium which should be developed. The radio has enormous potential to foster the development dialogue. Considerable efforts will be made to organise exchange of views and experiences among the different partners. Community workshops, talk shows, interviews of small groups will report the progress of consensus-building exercises undertaken by the communities. These activities will encourage other communities to undertake similar initiatives.

— Three main capacities will be developed: (i) production and delivery by the people of IEC messages viewed as important for the community; (ii) establishment of a continued dialogue within the community, involving all segments of the population, on the various aspects of SPA implementation; and (iii) establishment of an effective dialogue on ongoing or planned development activities between neighbouring communities, with the Divisional Co-ordinating Committee (DCC), and through the national media.

At the village level, NGO and government field workers will assist the community progressively to build its participation in the national dialogue. This process should result in the constitution of a small group of individuals within each community who would progressively take over the responsibility of facilitating the village's input into the development dialogue.

Additional technical support will be required from back-up teams. To that effect a small IEC divisional structure will be established. This low structure will comprise a small number of IEC specialists who will be equipped with simple communication equipment, including desktop publishing units and recording and filming equipment. The IEC team would be joined by a film production team to develop community-based video production and Radio Gambia personnel to develop a community broadcasting programme which would be relayed nation-wide.

At the divisional level, the DCC will use the views of local communities as a monitoring tool for the SPA programmes. It will relay these views to the national agencies concerned and to the National Steering Committee.

The gradual implementation of this pillar will give the opportunity to test mechanisms of communication between the communities, the divisions, the national agencies and the external contributors. The experience will be evaluated and adjusted as required. The modalities of such a system will greatly depend on the pace of the decentralisation process during the next year.

Source:: The Gambia, 1994.

3. providing for free association of rural people in organisations of their choice;

4. enacting and amending laws to ensure equal rights and full membership for women and other disadvantaged groups in people's organisations;

5. decentralisation: change administrative and budgetary procedures to facilitate the delegation to local levels of responsibility for decision making, revenue raising and spending; establish local consulting and planning bodies composed of people's organisations, NGOs and government representatives to assist government in the decentralisation of decision making.

This list implies much good will and government capacities which do not always exist. In many cases, the co-operation and prodding of NGOs and professional organisations is required (see Flores-Saenz in this volume). Donors can help through policy dialogue, which should aim at convincing governments that increased participation is in their interest, and through assistance of many kinds, on condition that it follows the basic ideas of participatory development presented in this paper. De Rham and Lecomte (in this volume) provide a good example of how institutional change can be built on the synergies among different actors.

Conclusion: strategic issues and ways forward

UNDP (1993) describes participation as "a plant that does not grow easily in the human environment", but concludes that "greater people's participation is no longer a vague ideology based on the wishful thinking of a few idealists. It has become an imperative — a condition of survival." These two statements may provide a sense of both realism and urgency for efforts to translate participatory rhetoric into practice.

This chapter has examined actors at three different levels: the local level, aid agencies and developing-country governments. How should one deal with conflicts of interest among them? How can increased synergies among them be mobilised to enhance participation? Clearly, there are no universally valid answers, but the growing body of experience provides valuable points of reference and basic principles to be kept in mind while specific solutions are being tailored to specific circumstances.

Participatory development requires the enhanced and sustained attention of all stakeholders. Genuine commitment and practical steps are required to overcome the obstacles to participation. This process is to be based on greater understanding, flexibility, patience (to accommodate time requirements) and more power sharing. The last item implies the need for a new and enlarged system of accountability among all actors. New and more diversified partnerships among them will be both the result of and an ingredient of this process of change.

Can this be achieved through gradual change, or does it call for fundamental change in the aid relationship and in the development paradigm towards more people-centred development? We do not have all the answers, and it is probable that

nobody ever will. This is the very nature of political and social processes, whether in developing countries or elsewhere. For the same reason, any models or blueprints would quickly come up against their limits. Participatory development furthers an array of development objectives, including good governance and democratisation. Surely this role justifies granting it higher status and means in practice, and giving it a proper place in the mainstream of development strategies.

Participatory approaches require imagination and sometimes courage in the face of resistance, but also genuine respect for others, willingness to see matters through their eyes and to abandon old patterns of behaviour and injustice. Vigorously pursued, these processes may lead to radical changes, perhaps even to a change in the development paradigm. Whether or not such changes will be achieved in a foreseeable future, the times seem favourable to innovations in this field. Participatory approaches deserve further analytical, political and practical support because they are both a means to a variety of widely shared development objectives, and an end in themselves, especially where they are perceived as a reflection of human dignity and human rights.

Notes

1. Definitions of participation found in the literature are more often implicit than explicit. A noteworthy exception is Bhatnagar and Williams (1992), which contains a "Common Vocabulary Paper" as an annex. This annex defines "popular participation as a process by which people, especially disadvantaged people, influence decisions that affect them". It further elaborates objectives (including empowerment), units, levels, intensity and instruments of participation. The authors acknowledge that their definition of participation has been criticised as being too passive and reflecting a "top-down" approach. In other words, it is less "participatory" than the definition proposed for the Development Centre's project. Our definition is close to what emerges from the conceptual review by Hayfa (1992). To reach the objective of empowerment, Hayfa suggests to seek entry points both from below and from the top, i.e. through co-operation with NGOs and through policy dialogue. See also UNDP (1993) and Lazarev (1993) for recent detailed treatments of participatory issues. Lazarev uses a conceptual approach very close to ours, and he provides a concise overview of the historical evolution of the concept of participation (pp. 27-33). World Bank (1994a) introduces further distinctions by identifying six "participatory mechanisms" (from information sharing to empowering mechanisms) and three categories of stakeholders: borrowing stakeholders (governments and their staffs), primary and secondary stakeholders.

2. See Ward's chapter on "Staffing" in Bhatnagar and Williams (1992).

3. According to an unpublished paper submitted to the Workshop on Participatory Development in May 1994, additional costs of 10-15 per cent, mainly for Bank staff members and consultants, have been incurred in World Bank-supported projects. Since most of these costs fall at the beginning of the project cycle, and administrative provisions are not routinely made for them, they may appear as a deterrent, but gains in effectiveness and efficiency should largely justify them.

4. On the limits of participatory rural appraisal see Mosse (1994).

5. *Histoires de Développement*, No. 13.

6. For example, see Bhatnagar and Williams (1992); DAC (1993); Lazarev (1993); Lele and Jain, in Lele (1992); Beaulieu and Manoukian (in this volume).

7. This was clearly expressed by Sven Sandström, Managing Director, at the Workshop on Participatory Development organised by the World Bank in May 1994.

8. See Lazarev (1993) for the UN Capital Development Fund; Andrianasolo (in this volume) for the UN Volunteers; Beaulieu and Manoukian (in this volume) for CIDA; and Nagle (1992) for USAID. Nagle (1993) contains a compilation of relevant documents from several bilateral and multilateral agencies.

9.   Unpublished communication received by the Development Centre in 1993.
10. These steps are elaborated upon in the Gambia (1994). It remains to be seen whether the government which came to power after a *coup d'état* in August 1994 will maintain and implement the Poverty Alleviation Strategy.

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Participatory Development and Gender

*Winifred Weekes-Vagliani**

Introduction

Research on participatory development and gender was undertaken at the Development Centre as part of the research project on "Promoting Participatory Development through Local Institutions"[1]. This chapter focuses on the importance of gender differentiation in the effort to strengthen participatory development. Identification of social actors is a critical element in determining which institutional mechanisms and social processes are appropriate for sustaining programmes founded on local initiatives and for increasing local involvement. A correct appreciation of gender-related questions is therefore essential if genuine participatory development is to take place.

The chapter presents numerous examples, derived from the literature and interviews with agencies, experts and practitioners, to illustrate how practical progress can be made towards building and strengthening local institutions and actors, and to indicate ways in which the goals of participatory development — efficiency, empowerment and sustainability — can be achieved.

There are many reasons why participatory development requires a special focus on gender issues. The main rationale is the dearth of gender differentiation in the literature. A number of authors and practitioners acknowledge the "gender-blindness" in this field (Uphoff, 1986, pp. 152-53). Robert Chambers of IDS Sussex points out that "the gender dimensions of Participatory Rural Appraisal are crying out for more work and its dissemination"[2]. Personal communication with both gender specialists and practitioners of participatory development indicates that the lack of gender representation may have serious consequences for the way poverty issues are addressed. It is increasingly recognised, for example, that women's contributions to family livelihoods are most crucial in the poorest rural and urban households.

* This is the last paper written by Winifred Weekes-Vagliani before her death in December 1994.

Values and practices relating to the different conditions of women and men need to be analysed. Without this analysis, the discrepancy between the values of equality and democracy, and the gender-based inequality characteristic of most societies, will be neither understood nor adequately addressed. Analysis can indicate practical ways of narrowing this gap and heightening the visibility of women in participatory development efforts.

Afshar (1991) maintains that if women's interests are not specifically addressed by policy makers, women will not benefit from prosperity. The development process is not inherently liberating for women, but "greater relative prosperity" may provide "room for negotiation for better terms" (p.1). Explicit attention to women's interests faces serious obstacles, however, as it affects relationships within the household and the sexual division of labour.

Recognition of the importance of gender differentiation implies a need to plan accordingly, to provide training and to envisage ways of dealing with gender resistance and male domination. Leadership goals can be developed for local women, with training in skills that complement women's basic knowledge. Gender issues must be linked to the effectiveness of development actions.

Given the emphasis on empowerment in the participatory development literature (see Schneider, in this volume), it is evident that economic roles for women, especially as farmers and entrepreneurs, must be stressed. Opportunities and resources for poor women should be envisaged.

Reducing poverty requires the efforts of both men and women. In fact, the same factors that exclude women from projects prevent those projects from being participatory in a wider sense. "Participation cannot by nature trickle down" (Lahiri 1992, pp.158-59). Therefore, human capacity building must be the result of direct involvement of women in decisions that affect them. Skills must be included in any initiative to empower women, whether it be scaling up grassroots movements or strengthening local government. Participation should be acknowledged as a political process, and mechanisms created to accommodate popular feedback into project designs. Attention to gender-sensitive participation in any project can help to solve problems faced by disadvantaged groups. This more holistic, or systemic, approach can avoid the negative synergies that arise from exclusion and failure to spell out a gender perspective.

The neglect of women's roles in the literature indicates that not enough information is provided for analysis and, especially in regions such as West Africa, that socially incompatible assumptions about women's roles and activities are being made (Kottak, 1991). For example, in a cultural tradition that expects women to produce and sell, production and marketing units will not function effectively if women are excluded. Furthermore, neglect of women's roles reflects a generalised lack of a socially informed design and implementation strategy. Talbot (in this volume) mentions that in Mali, village associations were depriving women and other traditionally disadvantaged groups of access to resources.

The so-called community sector, which is dominated by unpaid or low-paid women, needs to be studied from women's perceptions of effectiveness and efficiency. It is no longer enough to consider women as "hidden resources" (Apelqvist, 1993).

Sustainable development actions have lasting effects on the next generation. There is evidence that improving the economic position of adult women can have positive effects on their daughters, more of whom will be able to stay in school.

Objectives and mechanisms

To achieve the objectives of empowerment, efficiency and sustainability, rhetoric will not suffice. Mechanisms must be devised to give impetus to participatory development. Beaulieu and Manoukian (in this volume) describe the efforts of the Canadian International Development Agency in this field. Many intermediary NGOs aim to increase the productivity of the poor through mechanisms such as training, capital and job creation (Carroll, 1992).

To obtain access to resources, disadvantaged categories of the population need receiving mechanisms. One such mechanism, group formation, is an essential prerequisite for the reception and effective utilisation of sectoral programmes for women (Das, 1992, p. 5). Group formation is promoted by the Women's Development Programme in Rajasthan, which began work in 1984 with six districts and now covers nine districts. Njonga (in this volume) describes a systematic and comprehensive experience of supporting group formation in Cameroon. He refers explicitly to one group of women, although he makes no systematic distinction between groups of men and groups of women.

In Africa, a mechanism is needed to make policy makers recognise the important role of women in agriculture. Draft proposals for the Communal Lands Development Plan in Zimbabwe, for example, do not reflect Zimbabwean women's demands for some control over land, their own labour and its products. The power to allocate land in communal areas is in the hands of local councils, who still allocate land to men on "behalf of their families". Men therefore control women and farms (Akeroyd, 1991, p. 157).

The work of SARTHI (Social Action for Rural and Tribal Inhabitants of India) in wasteland development provides another example of a mechanism to strengthen women's political voice within local institutions and to obtain tenurial rights to common land for women's groups (Sarin, 1993, pp. 7-18). Short-term wage employment had to be generated so that the wastelands could be developed as a long-term asset. Furthermore, group formation gave the women a power base to challenge the gender division of labour at home and in society. As a result, husbands started taking on some household chores to free the women for work on the wastelands. Realistic expectations were formulated and field staff trained. This facilitated the creation of a "women's space" within the community. These groups were models of democratic participation and fairness. (Such fairness is not always characteristic of women's groups; see Fernando's analysis of a Sri Lankan experience, in this volume.)

The SARTHI experience also illustrates the need for forethought in linking participatory development objectives to gender. Women are unlikely to derive lasting benefit from land rehabilitation efforts unless these projects allow women to gain greater control over the use and management of local resources. In helping women to

meet their needs for biomass in a more efficient and ecologically sound way, SARTHI has empowered these women to start assessing themselves how they can deal with a broader range of problems.

MUDE, a women's organisation in the Dominican Republic, has created more public awareness of the economic roles and contributions of women, but extension services and government credit are still not generally available to women farmers. MUDE remains the only women's development organisation in the country that provides credit and technical assistance to peasant women for productive projects.

Separate but equal?

The need for institutional reform and/or development is a recurrent theme in both the literature and the personal communications received by the author. The specific question is whether separate institutions should be developed for men and women. Uphoff (1986, pp. 153-54) argues that separate organisations for women are desirable to build and enhance solidarity, since the energy generated in these groups can be rallied and can give women a voice in their communities and elsewhere. Where such separate organisations would not be viable, integration may be the only alternative, even though this would mean placing women's participation under the control of men.

> The optimum [local institutional development] strategy appears to be some combination of women's, men's and mixed groups to tap the ideas and efforts of different sets of persons working on varied development tasks... Unless special circumstances require it, women's organisations should not operate in isolation from all contact with men. (Uphoff, 1986, pp. 153-54)

Furthermore, Uphoff doubts that governments will have sufficient resources to fund separate extension units in the local administration. It therefore does not seem advisable to insist on such units as part of local institutional development. A better course would be to increase the number and proportion of women staff members in local administration.

Cultural context

Women's participation in development may face cultural obstacles. In Rajasthan, problems arose in organising women into groups because the men in their families felt uncomfortable with women's joining group action (Das, 1992). Donor policies can try to overcome such obstacles. The World Bank, for example, has established a set of rules to ensure that even if the traditional culture excludes women, financial flows will not start until some provision is made for them[3]. In Benin, the United Nations Volunteers have given priority to supporting women's groups and their access to a broad range of assets (see Andrianasolo, in this volume).

In China, traditional values have persisted and even gained strength with decollectivisation. While peasant households remained patriarchal even under collectivisation, with its end men became more adamant in their attitudes. Under collectivisation, women had regular contact with peasants from other families in work teams, but in the new household responsibility system (under decollectivisation) women work only with members of their own families. They therefore lack opportunities to establish relationships outside the family, which places severe limits on personal identity and autonomy. Membership in a collective conferred rights to use the means of production, but in the post-collectivisation era, women's access to resources is dependent on men (Davin, 1991). The household head has always controlled earnings, but previously, women's contribution to family income, under the work-point system, did at least measure women's work outside the home and give it a clear value. The population policy, however, may have an indirect benefit for women. When each family is allowed only one child, families that have a daughter will invest a great deal in her, so women in the next generation may see a change in these cultural attitudes.

Culture may also encourage participatory development initiatives. In many West African societies, the social education of women is oriented towards autonomy and independence. In Yoruba society, for example, women are expected to provide materially for themselves and their children, supplemented by contributions from their husbands. In order to fulfill these expectations women need independent and regular sources of income (in contrast to the "pin money" notion present in Latin America and elsewhere). A daughter is taught to earn her own income. It is therefore helpful to view the stages of a Yoruba women's personal and working life as the construction of a "career". This example indicates a link between the availability of material resources and the "ideological definitions" of woman's responsibilities (Dennis, 1991).

In India, through official surveys such as the family budget survey, the state has imposed the concept of the nuclear family — an ideological construction in a country where the traditional culture and the reality are based on the extended family. In doing so, the state not only contradicts customary law but denies women's roles in production. Westwood (1991) argues that this sort of ideological construction, that makes patriarchal assumptions representing women as home-based wives and mothers, encourages the exploitation of women. The cultural conditioning which dictates that women defer to men hampers women's confidence and ability to speak out in mixed fora. For this reason, the groups of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India are composed exclusively of women. Increases in women's income benefit the entire family because women plough most of their earnings back into the household. Therefore SEWA channels resources through women's hands. The all-female membership of the association provides strong female role models (Rose, 1992, p. 18). The chapter by Mathur (in this volume) elaborates further on SEWA's experience.

Gender and the social organisation of work

The social organisation of work is culturally defined, but even persistent cultural patterns can change. For example, one result of a textile revival programme in Bolivia, which includes innovative work with women, has been the reorganisation of jobs within the household. Men are doing the women's jobs to let women devote more time to the programme. Powerful economic incentives are overriding the traditional social organisation of work[4].

The way extension services are delivered may limit the participation of women and reinforce existing patterns. Rouse (in this volume) singles out women among the disadvantaged groups in rural areas who were neglected by the "training and visit" extension system, and who must be organised in groups "on their own terms, not on those of outsiders". Dealing with the similar subject of "research and extension" in Peru, Flores Saenz (in this volume) does not distinguish between men and women, apart from mentioning the prejudice of men against unmarried women in the case of Cajamarca. Farmers' organisations in southern Africa often exclude women and smallholders for various reasons. The official view that farmers' organisations are an appropriate vehicle for the delivery of extension services hinders women's full participation in agricultural development. Existing patterns of gender inequality in agricultural production are thus reinforced. A gender-based division between domestic crops (produced by women) and cash crops (produced by men) is maintained, but if home gardens prove successful economically, experience suggests that men may usurp control (Akeroyd, 1991, pp. 155-56).

In building an enabling environment for participatory development, the issue of solidarity between men and women is important. Usually, enabling measures are aimed at helping women assume the "double day" instead of relieving them of part of their responsibilities. Moreover, participatory development methods such as participatory rural appraisal are unlikely to resolve local conflicts equitably if the overall social and political context works against solidarity between men and women.

Highlighting and increasing the visibility of gender relations in resolving conflicts is essential to achieve participatory development. March and Taqqu (1986, p. 70) suggest starting with a "detailed grasp" of the types of economic resources women may control and a sense of the obligations they are expected to meet with these resources. With this knowledge, groups of women can go on to appropriate a legitimate space for themselves. This was done in the SARTHI experience, as we have seen.

Guggenheim and Spears (1991) have found that the failure of many forestry projects is due to ignorance of the basic social organisation of production. People have no grasp of the resource management patterns on which behavioural change depends.

It can be argued that the project approach, if used with flexibility, offers a number of advantages for a gender-related organisation of work. The project cycle starts with the identification of particular areas for intervention; this stage is an opportunity to establish from the outset whether particular enabling components, or pre-conditions for integrating women, should be included. A reformulation of the

identification procedure can bring out the fact that problems sometimes are seen differently by men and women.

Participatory development beyond the project paradigm

Some concepts of participatory development are embodied in positions taken against the project paradigm. De Rham and Lecomte (in this volume) give an interesting example of how the project paradigm has been transformed in their case in Madagascar, but they do not distinguish between the roles of men and women. Two main points emerge in the literature at large: that participatory development should be holistic instead of sector-driven, and that groups should be empowered to put pressure on their own governments instead of substituting for government services.

In a similar vein, Ela Bhatt expresses her conception of participatory development thus: "We not only want a piece of the pie, we also want to choose the flavour, and know how to make it ourselves" (quoted in Rose, 1992). This position is a call for justice, for self-help and for self-reliance. The importance of women's ownership of assets is recognised and the fact that women can become owners more readily collectively than as individuals. The idea is to affect change at the local, national and international levels. In her view, women are pivotal in India's struggle against poverty, but in order to be effective, they must have access to resources, take part in decision making and planning, and be empowered to carry out their own programmes.

Other experience points in the same direction. Organising women around their specific economic problems can be the beginning of empowering them to assess for themselves and deal with a broader range of problems. In Honduras, women who got together started asking difficult questions that went beyond the charitable intentions of those who provided help. "They [the Church] wanted us to give food out to malnourished mothers and children, but they didn't want us to question why we were malnourished to begin with. They wanted us to grow vegetables on the tiny plots around our houses, but they didn't want us to question why we didn't have enough land to feed ourselves" (Benjamin, 1987, p. 87).

Communities versus social actors

The lack of homogeneity in local communities is at the heart of the debate over two approaches, one focused on social actors, the other viewing the community as an entity. Michael Cernea[5] maintains that communities can not act collectively. There is no sociological basis for a community woodlot, so we must focus on social actors. Communities are not considered as units of social action. A counter-example is provided by O'Gorman (in this volume), who describes how *favela* women in Rio de Janeiro succeeded in organising a community group within a difficult local environment, despite internal tensions.

According to William Partridge[6], institutional analysis and social actors are neglected. There is a need for a more sophisticated recognition of divergent interests in communities, according to power relationships, level of education, access to resources and so on. Social analysis is needed to set up a social strategy that takes these factors into account. For example, if poverty alleviation is the objective, then set up ways of reaching the poor.

Another issue in this debate is the notion of targeting, which is viewed as contrary to the spirit of participatory development. Targeting is considered too close to military strategy[7]. As the following example shows, however, targeting can have a positive impact when there has been communication with local men and women to identify their needs. In Nepal, the extension staff learned that women and men treat the issues related to the use of forest products differently. Their estimates of the particular mix of fuel, fodder, and timber-producing trees, and the amount of wood that should be cut over a single season to meet household needs, might not be the same. The extension agents began to realise that if the plan did not provide for adequate fuel and fodder, the women would inevitably break the rules (Molnar, 1989). Targeting in this case could also mean involving women directly as project staff, village workers and decision makers.

Conclusions

The examples of participatory development concepts presented here are intended to heighten the visibility of the gender variable in this field. It was necessary to spell out the implications for local communities and various donors so that funding will provide for action and research that take into account the phenomena described.

Perceptions of local reality must be based on penetrating social analysis that includes the experience and aspirations of local men and women. Several reasons were given for making gender an explicit concern of work on participatory development:

— Gender sensitivity in participatory development endeavours has implications for the way we address poverty.

— If participatory development initiatives are to work, the incentive structure will have to take into account the stark contrasts in the contributions and benefits of women and men, and therefore their separate incentives to respond to policies.

— Gender-differentiated knowledge is necessary to deal with resistance to participatory development initiatives; for example, the planning of initiatives will include training. This knowledge will stress women's economic roles.

— Exclusion of women makes initiatives less participatory in the wider sense and indicates a general lack of socially informed design and implementation strategies.

— A lack of gender analysis wastes scarce resources. This is especially true of the "community sector", which will need special attention to guard against the marginalisation of women into unpaid or low-paid work.

— Formation of women's groups is a pre-condition for women's obtaining access to resources that are not accessible to individuals.

— To reach poor men and women, analysis of language, thought processes and underlying assumptions may be needed.

Developing an agenda for change must be based on socio-cultural analysis. A detailed grasp is needed of the resource management patterns on which behavioural change depends.

The funding issues should be addressed by donors. In view of the importance of socio-cultural variables for the success of local initiatives, flexible funding arrangements are needed. Donors can play a crucial role by showing their willingness to address socio-cultural issues in the initial negotiations with governments. At the project identification stage, possible conflict between local cultural values and the change to be brought about by the programmes envisaged can be pointed out.

The debate over the social actors approach versus the homogeneous communities approach indicates that a focus on social actors provides the needed fine tuning. A gender perspective does not, however, exclude a flexible project paradigm using the notion of target groups. Interestingly, practitioners who oppose the project paradigm frequently do not indicate whether they are sufficiently aware of diversity at the local level. In much of the participatory development literature, the idea of the spontaneous evolution of community organisations blunts the analysis of social reality; local gender and class hierarchies do not emerge clearly.

If experimentation and flexibility are to succeed in eliciting participation at the initial phases of projects, there must be a supportive network of committed personnel in key positions at various levels to provide continuity and institutional memory. This corps of practitioners can also head off the danger of reinforcing existing inequalities through "autonomous" participatory development. In this sense, targeting can reflect the need to differentiate local social actors and to deal with conflicting interests. It can mean mechanisms to reach the most needy with appropriate messages, interaction, involvement and dialogue. It can mean grasping the many differences at the local level and perceiving possibilities for self-help development initiatives. In this view, targeting implies finding out who the people are in all their converging dimensions.

Although the gender-blindness of the participatory development field and the need to integrate gender throughout are widely acknowledged, the evidence reviewed here indicates that much more work is needed. Empirical evidence should be collected which demonstrates how gender and generational conflicts have been resolved at the local level. If sustainability implies lasting effects on future generations, special attention must be given to women's economic roles, so that these generational effects can be identified. For example, does mothers' improved economic status indeed ensure that girls will remain in school, in a variety of settings? In two of our examples (SARTHI in India and the textile revival programme in Bolivia), economic factors overrode cultural patterns and the traditional social organisation of work. What have been the implications of other

initiatives for women's economic status and for the objectives of participatory development? A typology of endeavours could be developed to show how these objectives and the type of initiative undertaken are related to women's economic status. Some relevant questions would be: Are the initiatives directly or indirectly productive? Are they carried out by communities as a whole or by other social actors?

Group formation is essential for both men and women. Here too many questions remain to be answered: Should these groups been separate or mixed, and for what kind of local initiative should they be formed? Is it possible to foster solidarity between men and women more often in a variety of situations? What can be done by local people and outsiders to enhance solidarity at the local level?

The identification, expression and resolution of conflicts of interest remains a frontier for participatory methods. A major problem in tackling this research is the lack of information in accounts of gender relations at the household, village and community levels. There is evidence that changing gender relations at the local level can exacerbate conflict between men and women. "Consciousness raising" can also increase conflicts. This possibility cannot be dismissed, as experience with participatory appraisal has shown. Under what conditions should preference be given to strategies of confrontation or negotiation, at the household, village or community levels? This is related to a major concern in the women's movement: domestic violence stemming from conflict over women's use of their time on the activities of women's groups rather than, for example, on their husbands' land. Have men internalised the participatory development ethos sufficiently to become more accepting of women's autonomous participation in their own activities?

Notes and References

1. For a more detailed presentation of this research, see Weekes-Vagliani (1994).
2. Personal communication, December 1992.
3. Personal communication from William Partridge, Senior Anthropologist, member of the Bank's Core Learning Group on Participatory Development.
4. Personal communication from Kevin Healy, Inter-American Foundaton, February 1993.
5. Sociologist and member of the World Bank's Core Learning Group on Participatory Development, personal communication, February 1993.
6. Personal communication from William Partridge (see note 3).
7. Communication by David Marsden at informal Development Centre seminar, Paris, 1993.

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Part Two

SPECIFIC-ISSUE PERSPECTIVES

Participatory Enterprise Development:
The Experience of TechnoServe

Edward P. Bullard

Introduction

Through trial and error over a 25-year period, TechnoServe has developed a successful participatory approach to creating locally owned agribusinesses in the developing world. These agribusinesses do not fit well with the classic definition of agribusiness as used in Western developed economies. Rather, they are owned and operated by farmers, and frequently combine the elements of primary agricultural production, processing and marketing. These businesses are located in rural areas, close to the supply of raw materials, but not always within easy access of the local modern infrastructure.

This chapter seeks to demonstrate how TechnoServe undertakes participatory development and how we determine that these efforts can be cost-effective. Instead of confining ourselves to generalities regarding our methodology, we present our intervention in the palm-oil sector in Ghana as a case history. This specific example will provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of our approach to enterprise development and the application of our cost-effectiveness methodology to these interventions.

TechnoServe's approach and its programme in Ghana

TechnoServe helps rural farmers create their own viable community-based enterprises. We believe that unless indigenous people acquire the know-how, vision and self-confidence to take charge of their own affairs, manage their own resources and participate in the building of institutions, lasting progress is impossible.

TechnoServe's goal is to improve the economic and social well-being of low-income people in developing countries by fostering the development of small to medium-sized enterprises. This is accomplished by providing management, technical assistance and training to both private enterprises and local development institutions

through a network of local "country programme offices", which are staffed and operated, with few exceptions, by local professionals. These offices work with rural, farmer-owned and -operated enterprises to increase farm productivity, raise rural employment levels and increase family incomes. It is locally generated wealth that gives poor people the means to choose and implement desired social outcomes. Enterprises and institutions assisted by TechnoServe directly benefit rural communities, promote local self-reliance, build stronger regional and national economies and contribute to economic and social well-being.

TechnoServe/Ghana, the field office located in Accra, has been operating for nearly 20 years. During that period the Ghana programme has seen good times and bad times, but throughout it has focused on helping poor farmers to establish rural agricultural enterprises dealing with a number of commodities such as sugarcane, rice, charcoal, rabbits and vegetables. Since 1986 the Ghana programme has concentrated its efforts on the development of two types of rural agricultural enterprises: palm-oil processing enterprises and farmers' service co-operatives.

Choosing the palm-oil sector

The initial objective was to identify a commodity sector offering good prospects for the development of medium-scale rural agricultural industries that could be replicated in many areas of the country. A review of common Ghanaian agricultural commodities showed that palm-oil processing, a very common village-based cottage industry in Ghana, seemed to fit TechnoServe's capabilities and criteria for assistance. Moreover, the internal and regional markets for palm oil were strong and expanding, the long-term world outlook for the commodity was good and Ghana had a comparative advantage in the product.

In late 1985, two TechnoServe/Ghana staff members undertook a detailed analysis of the palm-oil sector as a potential new point of intervention for the Ghana programme. The information gathered would help us determine whether the sector was appropriate for a programme of non-financial assistance.

The sector study began with a thorough literature search within government agencies and development organisations in Ghana. General and technical documents from a variety of sources — the Ghanaian government, the World Bank, FAO, the Tropical Development Research Institute, assorted local universities and technical centres — were reviewed and appropriate information was gathered.

The next step entailed interviews with knowledgeable sources in the palm-oil industry ("key informants"): technical and business consultants to the industry, palm-oil mill owners and managers, palm-oil equipment manufacturers. Each interview produced referrals to other local experts in both the public and private sectors. A consistent yet flexible (rapid appraisal) interview format was employed, with all sessions revolving around the following issues:

— industry trends, overall and local;
— profitability;
— key factors of success;

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- barriers to entry;
- technical requirements of the industry.

Related questions inevitably led into more in-depth discussions with these informants regarding:

- sector-related policy considerations: national balance of trade, tariffs, currency exchange rates, subsidies, price supports, taxes, import substitution, etc.;
- production issues: tree varieties, agronomic inputs, environmental impact, managerial and technical skill requirements, financing channels, oil-processing technologies, use of by-products, etc.;
- marketing opportunities and constraints: demand, pricing, oil quality standards, distribution channels, storage, transport, etc.;
- competition: substitute products, local production, food imports, etc.;
- consumption trends: palm oil, kernel oil.

The study concluded that the palm-oil sector offered significant opportunities for rural small enterprise development and was appropriate for the type of intervention TechnoServe was seeking to develop. There was substantial unsatisfied demand for palm oil, potential to increase local efficiency and productivity through improved management, and potential for profitability, local income enhancement and job creation. Processing equipment was available locally at a cost within the community's reach. Another positive factor was the prospect of having a significant impact on women in terms of jobs, income and quality of life. The type of plant we envisaged offered good potential for replication, and an expanded programme of assistance could have significant potential to influence national policy.

Choosing an intervention

The commodity sector analysis helped us identify a variety of bottlenecks to the smooth functioning of the palm-oil industry. Many of these constraints were felt by nearly all industries in Ghana at the time: inconsistent government policies concerning imports, taxes, etc.; a focus on government-owned plantations and processing facilities; and insufficient credit, agronomic inputs and managerial expertise.

TechnoServe chose to direct its initial efforts toward our traditional client, the community-based enterprise. In line with our strategic thinking at the time, we felt that if we could work with several such enterprises over the coming years, we could learn more about critical constraints to their development and then focus on these constraining factors. Assistance to community-based enterprises producing palm oil would entail an integrated approach: concurrent work in the areas of community organisation, business formation, general management, financial management, technical management and marketing. This training would take two forms: short-term technical advice from staff consultants with specific expertise, and long-term management assistance from an on-site TechnoServe management advisor.

Identification of "clients"

Over the course of five months, TechnoServe/Ghana staff members visited more than 30 villages in the Ashanti, Western and Central regions. Our goals were to develop our understanding of local community groups, local production techniques, market demand and many other facets of the palm-oil industry. We also sought to identify and cultivate "client" community groups. Spending long hours in the homes and fields in these communities, TechnoServe staff members met with local farmers and traditional oil processors (predominantly women) to observe their activities and describe how our assistance could help them improve their businesses.

Another objective of our visits was to present our operating methodology to prospective groups. They needed to be aware beforehand that our approach was highly participatory and would involve a real commitment on their part. We were interested in setting up community-owned and -operated processing plants, not TechnoServe processing plants. The relationship between TechnoServe and the community would not be one of donor to beneficiary. Rather, it would be structured as a business relationship with a management assistance contract clearly laying out the responsibilities of TechnoServe and the community group. TechnoServe would also require that the group pay a management fee. The community enterprise would have to register officially with the government, thereby obtaining legal standing and legitimising its status as a signatory to a business contract.

Many groups expressed their willingness and commitment to work with us. We asked for a tangible expression of that commitment — in this case, 25 per cent of the capital required for the venture, in cash, up front. As expected, this request clearly identified the groups that were serious about undertaking such a venture. The first community that came up with the required investment was Ntinanko, a village of smallholder farmers on the southern outskirts of Kumasi. Shortly thereafter, another community in Ghana's Western region, Prestea, also came up with the investment required. Since both communities met our criteria for assistance, we decided to proceed with both — but in a staggered sequence.

Establishment of a pilot project

Full-time, on-site assistance to the Ntinanko Oil Palm Farmers' Co-operative Society — our pilot community-based enterprise project — began in early 1987. TechnoServe worked closely with the group to develop operational by-laws and to register it as a legal entity. Simultaneously, we worked together to establish a plan for the start-up phase — defining the management team, organising the fruit supply, assembling the financial package, sourcing equipment and planning construction of the processing plant. An accounting system was developed and training in its use was begun.

Ntinanko's processing operations began in the communally built plant in October 1987. Operations were undertaken on a "buy-sell" basis: the plant would buy palm-oil fruit from the farmers, process them and then market the oil. After only a few months, we determined that this model was not working. Two problems were

evident: the scale of the technology chosen was not adequate for commercial viability, and the management demands and operating costs of the "buy-sell" operation were simply too great for this business. In addition, a new and unanticipated tax had been imposed on the sale of palm oil.

TechnoServe's project advisors met with representatives of the group at Ntinanko to discuss these problems and to determine jointly how Ntinanko could overcome them. This was a critical juncture in the development of Ntinanko, as its original course would have led to certain failure. These discussions led to two important decisions. First, Ntinanko decided to abandon its hand-operated screw press, the capacity of which was too low to be economically viable on a commercial basis, and adopt a higher-capacity hydraulic press. Second, and more important, Ntinanko decided to shift to a "custom processing" or "service" mode, in which Ntinanko would essentially rent its equipment, on a batch basis, to local producers and processors. These clients would assume responsibility for transporting the fruit to the processing plant and for marketing the oil.

These changes made the difference between success and failure for Ntinanko. By the end of the first year of operations:

— The plant was processing all of the available fruit from the village and attracting fruit from neighbouring villages as well.
— The eight women in the village who previously produced palm oil by traditional methods had all adopted mill processing. As a result, they had doubled their volume, increased their paid labour and increased their net profits.
— More than 20 other women in the village had also adopted processing as a means of supplementing their incomes.
— Farmers were able to sell all of their production, and at prices higher than previously anticipated. Several were rehabilitating neglected farms; many were planning to increase their acreage.
— The co-operative had established a nursery to produce improved oil-palm seedlings for sale to members.
— Dealers from Kumasi were driving past a larger parastatal plant to purchase Ntinanko oil at a higher price.

By late 1988, Ntinanko was solidly on its feet. Full-time management of the processing facility was turned over to a local manager, who had received a full year of on-the-job training in general management and financial accounting from the resident TechnoServe management advisor. In 1989, the Ntinanko mill processed 680 tons of fresh fruit as against a projected 527 tons, realising a net surplus of 500 000 cedis. A dividend was paid out to community shareholders, and a new community-owned profit centre, an oil-palm nursery, was turning out additional funds for community use. A fledgling community credit union was also established as a place to safeguard, and productively to recycle, cash flow from the mill.

Replication of the Ntinanko model

In October 1988, long-term assistance began at the Prestea site, the first palm-oil mill to follow the Ntinanko model. The Prestea Co-operative Oil Palm Farmers' Society, a group of 85 oil-palm farmers in the Western region of Ghana, had raised the 825 000 cedis in equity (25 per cent of the total capital needed for start-up) required by TechnoServe as a pre-condition of assistance. Next, TechnoServe assisted Prestea in obtaining bank financing, building the mill, hiring managers and employees, and establishing general and financial management systems. The financial and management systems would ensure that all of the owner/members could evaluate their plant's performance and profitability.

Prestea spent the year 1989 working out its own kinks, and along the way processed 977 tons of raw fruit. In 1990, with the Ntinanko pilot model successfully spun off, Prestea was well on its way to self-sufficiency, and TechnoServe/Ghana began a phase of aggressive replication. This phase included direct and indirect promotion (via the media and development organisations) of the Ntinanko-Prestea model.

Scaling up to achieve national impact

Perhaps the most exciting development within the palm-oil programme has been the recognition of the Ntinanko model as a viable and highly desirable model for replication by the Ghanaian Ministry of Agriculture, the FAO and the World Bank. In June 1989, in an effort to explore innovative means of assisting the Ghanaian government, the World Bank hired TechnoServe to prepare a feasibility study on the establishment of a Regional Community-Based Palm Oil Processing Training and Service Centre at Ntinanko — a centre capable of handling the replication of the Ntinanko model 45 times in the subsequent five years.

After the study was issued in July 1989, the World Bank and the government of Ghana began to discuss the merits of focussing on small-scale palm-oil processing by private, independent farmers, as opposed to (or in conjunction with) the original thinking — i.e. expanding the acreage of small-scale outgrowers of the Ghana Oil Palm Development Corporation. TechnoServe/Ghana participated in that policy dialogue and promoted the Ntinanko model of small-scale, private, independent palm-oil processing as the most promising model for development within the sector. In July 1990, the government and the World Bank signed an agreement to establish 60 small-scale, privately owned palm-oil processing facilities under the Agricultural Diversification Project; thereafter, the government signed a grant agreement with TechnoServe/Ghana for the management and implementation of this programme.

TechnoServe/Ghana established a special team of project advisors, headed by a Ghanaian engineer who was hired specifically for the palm-oil programme. Following the steps taken in the development of Ntinanko and Prestea, the team first had to identify the areas where palm fruits were plentiful and then identify community groups that could undertake a small-scale rural industry. The difficult and

time-consuming process of identification and equity collection has proceeded more slowly than expected.

By mid-1993, 50 community groups had expressed an interest in owning and operating palm-oil plants. A dozen or so of these groups established operating plants by the end of 1993. Another dozen or so are right behind them and were to establish plants during 1994. The rest of the group is coming along more slowly and most likely will not establish plants before 1995 at the earliest.

TechnoServe's cost-effectiveness methodology

TechnoServe attempts to measure the expected and actual cost-effectiveness of its interventions in selected projects. This discipline is essential to ensure long-term project viability and cost-effective allocation of scarce donor resources over time.

The focus of TechnoServe's work is to transfer managerial, technical and administrative skills to enterprise owners and members and to help other local institutions positioned to assist them. As we emphasize enterprise development, the core of our model includes a measure of enterprise profits (the accepted indicator of business success) and financial returns to project participants. Our goals are social as well as economic, however, so we have also developed a means of encompassing non-quantifiable factors in our process.

The resulting system combines two complementary, but distinct, methods of analysis. The first part of the analysis, the financial component, calculates a basic cost-effectiveness ratio (using relatively standard practices of cost-benefit and net present value analysis). A detailed spreadsheet is constructed to compare the expected financial gains for project participants to TechnoServe's cost of providing services. The second part, the non-quantifiable benefits rating, is a system of weighted values reflecting other development benefits, which cannot be easily evaluated in monetary terms. Each of these components can stand independently to determine project effectiveness. When interpreted together, they present a multi-dimensional view of our impact and our ability to deliver services to the communities in which we work.

The financial component

Our model captures all easily identifiable direct financial benefits derived from the enterprise under study and compares them to the amount of money and time TechnoServe must expend to deliver the services necessary to achieve these benefits. This information is compiled over time because, while TechnoServe incurs costs at the beginning of the intervention, the enterprise usually provides increasing benefits to the participants as they learn to become more self-sufficient.

The financial component of the model comprises three distinct elements, which constitute our definition of financial return to beneficiaries: (1) increased incomes for farmers, suppliers and owners; (2) increased enterprise profits (before dividend payments, mandated reserves, reinvestment or taxes); and (3) increased aggregate salaries, wages and benefits to enterprise or farm employees. Each must be calculated

as a net incremental return, i.e. the difference between the return attributable to the project and the return that would have been obtained without assistance from TechnoServe. This calculation results in what economists call net value added. Projections are made for two scenarios: with TechnoServe assistance and without it. These figures are projected ten years beyond the expected or actual termination of TechnoServe assistance.

To make the costs and benefits comparable, they are discounted to a single date and thus expressed in "net present value" terms. Projects are cost-effective if their benefits exceed their costs expressed in these terms. Data for each project analysed are entered into a cost-effectiveness financial spreadsheet that is individually tailored to that project. To keep the financial measurement consistent and "in check", only direct benefits to project participants are included. By restricting our financial analysis to direct and measurable returns, we produce conservative benefit estimates[1].

In our model, financial benefits are more difficult to calculate than are costs. Standard methods for estimating financial and economic returns are rigid and complex, and they include such concepts as shadow pricing, foreign-exchange components and taxes, which will probably not affect the management decisions of small enterprises. We chose to trade off precision for simplicity. Our analysis estimates only the financial benefits (value added) to the owners of the projects. We do not attempt to estimate the broader benefits that accrue to the economy as a whole. For example, the salary and wage component of financial returns in our model measures funds injected into the local economy from new project employment. In rural areas, we assume that any new local jobs created by the project are drawing new people into the wage-earning labour force, and thus represent new production.

The non-quantifiable component

The financial component tells only part of the story. Failure to look at non-quantifiable benefits can distort the reality of a project, both positively and negatively. To address the remaining criteria in our definition of a cost-effective project, we developed the non-quantifiable benefits rating sheet[2].

The rating sheet covers a range of non-quantifiable benefits, divided into three categories: social, economic and policy. As TechnoServe has overarching goals that affect each country programme, we established standard sub-categories within the three headings for the entire organisation. Social benefits include "increased access to public services" and "greater participation for marginalised groups". Economic benefits include "increased employment" and "improved backward/forward linkages". Policy benefits include "improved national policy environment for rural enterprises" and "institutional policy impact".

The non-quantifiable evaluation weights each of these benefits. The weights reflect our organisational aims of extending benefits by targeting the beneficiaries we originally intended to assist, keeping national and regional economic goals in mind and having a policy impact. The relative importance of each sub-category has been determined through discussions with field staff to bring the categories in line with the strategic goals of our country programmes.

Once the weights are complete for each country, the individual projects are rated independently by three persons. To keep a balanced perspective, one of these is a designated TechnoServe staff member, such as the project manager or the country director; one is involved in the project as an owner, member or other type of direct beneficiary; and one is an independent observer who has no vested interest but is knowledgeable about the project and the local environment (e.g. an extension agent or loan officer who knows the ownership group well and has followed its progress closely).

The three ratings are averaged, and comments or discrepancies among them are noted on the final rating sheet. The averaged rating sheet identifies, at a glance, the level of non-financial benefits resulting from the project. Furthermore, the comments accompanying each rating sheet give specific examples of the impact of TechnoServe's assistance in each category.

Determining the cost-effectiveness of our interventions

TechnoServe defines cost-effectiveness as the ability to achieve project objectives at a reasonable cost. A cost-effective project should yield total benefits for the target group that are greater than our cost of delivering assistance. In the case of economic development assistance, these benefits can often be difficult to measure and monitor. They typically involve cultural, social, political and economic factors. For TechnoServe, this means comparing project costs to the expected economic impact of the assisted enterprises on the surrounding communities and regions.

Our efforts to develop rural, medium-scale palm-oil enterprises in Ghana have been cost-effective. Assistance to the first enterprise, in Ntinanko, must be considered an experimental effort, and as such we did not expect the benefits to exceed our costs. Our measurement of the cost-effectiveness ratio for Ntinanko came out at 0.71, meaning that we expect $0.71 in benefits to the community for every $1.00 of TechnoServe assistance costs. Our second project, the Prestea Co-operative, had a cost-effectiveness ratio of 5.10, reflecting the much lower level of effort required for this first replication. We expect the cost-effectiveness ratios for future projects to continue to climb as more and more enterprises become operational.

Conclusion and Summary

TechnoServe has developed a highly participatory approach to rural agricultural enterprise development. This approach, which has demonstrated its ability to foster the creation of community-owned and -operated businesses, relies extensively on the active participation and involvement of the group assisted, including the commitment of cash resources for the creation of the enterprise.

TechnoServe has also developed an internal method of cost-effectiveness analysis, which it applies to projects on a regular basis. These project analyses have demonstrated that the financial benefits to the communities assisted greatly exceed the costs incurred in providing the services.

Notes

1. Editors' note: The cost-effectiveness rate calculated by TechnoServe is an unconventional measure, which must be distinguished from the usual calculations of the economic profitability of projects. The latter would include the total resource costs of the projects, not only those of the technical assistance, TechnoServe in this case. The resulting rate would consequently tend to be lower than that resulting from the method presented above.
2. Editors' note: These benefits are in fact quantifiable to a variable extent but include also a degree of subjective judgement.

Farmer Participation in Extension through Small Groups: Recent FAO Experience

John Rouse

Introduction

One often hears that participation is much easier to talk about than to put into practice. This phrase seems even more appropriate when one is talking about the participation of the rural disadvantaged — small farmers, tenants, landless labourers and women — in the development process.

In recent years, the need for more participatory and cost-effective (cost-sharing) methods of providing development services to disadvantaged rural groups in developing countries has become steadily more urgent. At a time when governments are struggling to reverse ever-declining trends in domestic per capita food production, uncontrollable rural-to-urban migration rates and increased urban and rural violence, their capacity to address these problems is falling: diminishing government revenues and structural adjustment efforts have forced them to reduce staff and operating budgets.

This chapter reviews FAO's experience in testing and introducing new methods of small-farmer development. These methods are based on a participatory approach using small informal groups, which shows some promise for resolving the problem.

The training and visit system: it looked good on paper but ...

The need to reach this "silent majority" of rural poor in developing countries has been felt for some time, at least since the early years of the green revolution. Many believed that broad diffusion of improved wheat and rice technologies could be best promoted through radical changes in the way existing agricultural extension systems were managed, based on a scientific management approach and rapid expansion.

Popularised in the mid-1970s, the "training and visit" system was introduced in many developing countries with the help of massive donor funding. Although it was input-intensive, requiring both significant increases in the number of extension staff and their re-training, its systematic, managed and disciplined approach seemed to offer considerable improvements over traditional extension methods. Furthermore, it provided a mechanism for involving farmers in the extension process, something that traditional approaches lacked.

The dramatic increases in per capita cereal output achieved in countries like the Philippines, India and Pakistan seemed to confirm the effectiveness of the training and visit system, but doubts soon arose: follow-up studies indicated that it was much better at channelling extension to large and medium-sized farmers than at reaching small-scale and tenant farmers. Although the system allowed for more participation by farmers than did other extension methods, critics argued that its focus was too narrow since it involved only a "contact farmer", not the wider community.

The system was also criticised for encouraging a uni-directional type of "participation" — from the top down. While reasonably effective in inducing farmers to test and adopt the new technologies developed at research stations, it was not particularly good at getting extension agents to listen to and learn from the farmers, particularly the small farmers. The latter were not involved directly in identifying research problems, setting research priorities and formulating extension strategies and methods.

In search of effective small-farmer organisations

By the late 1970s, it had become increasingly clear that the green revolution was widening the gap between rural rich and poor. Large-scale commercial farmers were rapidly taking advantage of productivity gains, while small farmers and other rural poor were being left behind.

For many at FAO, this was a signal that the green revolution had reached its institutional limits, i.e. that bureaucratic, socio-political and economic factors had prevented extension and related development services from reaching small and marginalised farmers, who constitute the vast majority of agricultural producers. To benefit from green revolution advances, they argued, small farmers and the rural disadvantaged had to be organised so as to obtain economies of scale, in both an economic and a socio-political sense. To make themselves heard in the market place as well as the parliament, they had to be organised on their own terms, not on those of outsiders, and this could be done only through collective self-help action in autonomous farmers' organisations.

Unfortunately, most farmers' organisations in the Third World were not suitable vehicles for small-farmer participation. Statistics from the International Co-operative Alliance indicated that there were hundreds of thousands of officially recognised co-operatives in developing countries, but officials of the Alliance privately confessed that many of these co-operatives existed only on paper — and even those really operating were likely to be dominated either by rural elites or by government officials.

The failure of government-sponsored agricultural co-operatives to provide representation and protection of the small farmers' economic interests had its roots in the colonial period, when many of these co-operatives were established. Colonial administrators tended to see co-operatives as instruments for achieving certain economic and political objectives set by government — such as generating increased export-crop earnings and tax revenues or maintaining local political control — rather than as organisations managed and financed by members to serve their own interests. After independence, many nationalist leaders saw these "inherited" co-operative structures in much the same way. Committed to ambitious nation-building programmes, leaders often believed that government should play an active role in promoting these farmers' organisations, and if necessary even harness them to those national objectives that the largely urban-based leadership regarded as of utmost priority.

As a consequence, co-operatives were treated in much the same top-down manner after independence as they had been during the colonial period, with government often heavily involved in their management and financing. Owing to that top-down bias, which generally favoured the interests of large farmers, small farmers frequently viewed themselves as belonging to the "government co-operative" or the "landlord's co-operative", rather than to their own. Not surprisingly, small farmers participated very little in the running of these co-operatives, and the potential of these organisations to function as partners of government extension systems and more effectively to channel services to small farmers was hopelessly limited.

Since the early 1980s, FAO efforts to develop agricultural co-operatives have therefore focused on improving the level and quality of small farmers' participation and strengthening the financial self-reliance of co-operatives. An integrated management approach called "Appropriate Management Systems for Small Farmers' Agricultural Co-operatives" (AMSAC), introduced in Africa and Asia, has been instrumental in this work. The AMSAC approach stresses an integrated "systems approach" to agricultural co-operative management, diversification of co-operative economic activities and greater emphasis on small farmers' participation and on satisfying members' needs. FAO has made complementary efforts to encourage the gradual "privatisation" of government-dominated co-operative structures and to strengthen co-operatives' auto-financing capacities. The latter efforts has largely focused on co-operative movements in transitional economies in Eastern Europe, Ethiopia and Tanzania.

FAO's early work with small-farmer groups

Not all FAO technicians were convinced that the training and visit approach could get the job done, given the limited capacities of existing farmer co-operative organisations and the rural elite's control of traditional organisations such as the village council. Aware that existing farmers' organisations were a weak link in the chain of technology transfer to small and marginalised farmers, a small cadre of sociologists, extensionists and co-operative specialists at FAO began in the early 1970s to seek organisational strategies that promote the active participation of small farmers in rural development.

The findings of their research highlighted four main characteristics of autonomous and sustainable small-farmer organisations: first, the most successful farmer organisations tended to be based on informal groups of eight to fifteen members, much smaller than the typical village-wide co-operative; second, groups whose members had similar backgrounds, common interests and similar resource bases tended to have fewer internal conflicts and functioned better than those with a more heterogeneous membership; third, groups that focused on solving problems common to all members of the group, instead of problems identified by outsiders, tended to have higher success rates; fourth, in cases where outside promoters had assisted in a group's development, better results were obtained when the promoter took a low-key, participatory approach that encouraged members to learn by doing.

In 1973, two pioneering extensionists at the FAO regional office in Bangkok decided to test a methodology for building sustainable small-farmer organisations, using the approaches described above. The result was the Small Farmers' Development Programme (SFDP), which was launched in Nepal in 1975 in collaboration with that country's Agricultural Development Bank. It soon became a model for small-farmer development throughout Asia. By 1980, SFDP pilot projects were under way in Nepal, Bangladesh and the Philippines, and in Nepal alone 4 554 groups had been formed, serving nearly 42 000 small farmers.

While the SFDP approach was not considered to be a participatory agricultural extension approach *per se,* it had all the elements of one. Indeed, a recent evaluation found that one of the programme's major achievements was linking the small-farmer groups to delivery systems for extension, agricultural inputs, credit and other services.

From SFDP to PPP: learning by trial and error

Participatory approaches to rural development received a further boost at the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, held in Rome in 1979. A major aim of the conference was to review progress in the field of rural development. The overall findings were quite critical of technology-based strategies for rural development, which not only seemed to have ignored the participation of rural people (especially the rural poor) but were aggravating rural-urban imbalances and widening the income and equity gap between the rural rich and poor. This, in turn, was restricting balanced growth of domestic markets and creation of urban and rural employment opportunities, thus leading to social and political discontent. To close these gaps, the conference concluded, rural people had to be encouraged to participate actively, through their own organisations, in the formulation and implementation of programmes designed to assist them.

Donors responded promptly to the conference mandate, and FAO soon found itself implementing a number of follow-up programmes. One of these, the People's Participation Programme (PPP), took as its major objective the application of the SFDP methodology on a much larger scale, with a special focus on Africa. The PPP programme in Africa got off to a slow start. Many governments expressed keen interest, but they were often nervous about the potential political consequences of

introducing participatory approaches in rural areas long accustomed to "top-down" political rule from the capital cities. Projects that did obtain approval tended to be located in remote places, far from the critical eyes of politicians and government officials.

This remoteness proved to be not such a bad thing. The early years of PPP witnessed much trial-and-error work, both in the field and at FAO headquarters. Unlike traditional FAO projects, which have pre-determined objectives and rigid time frames, PPP projects provided only a loose participatory framework for promoting group-based initiatives. Objectives were determined by the groups themselves, with help from specially trained "group promoters" who lived and worked in the action areas. These innovative projects, which had relatively small budgets of less than $200 000, emphasised training over equipment and made heavy use of local staff. They were implemented through a variety of agencies, including government ministries, semi-autonomous co-operative organisations and NGOs. These features disturbed many FAO administrators, who felt more comfortable with projects that had well-defined objectives and time frames.

This led to "teething problems" both within FAO and at country level. Many mistakes were made, but the emphasis was always on learning from those errors and improving. For example, frequent problem-focused workshops of PPP project staff from neighbouring countries were held (in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1985; in Mbabane, Swaziland, in 1987; and in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1989) to reflect on these mistakes and develop improved approaches. New contractual procedures were developed to facilitate decentralised project management, and guidelines were prepared to assist local project staff in such areas as training of group promoters, group-based credit and savings arrangements, and participatory monitoring and evaluation.

During the 1980s, PPP projects were launched in seven African countries (Ghana, Lesotho, Kenya, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and three Asian countries (Thailand, Sri Lanka and Pakistan). By the end of the 1980s, PPP projects worldwide had succeeded in organising 900 groups and 120 inter-group associations, serving more than 11 000 farmer households. PPP group structures helped these farmers and their household members not only to solve their own problems more effectively, but also to mobilise their savings for investment purposes and to make better use of existing government and NGO service systems. By mid-1991, PPP groups had mobilised $185 000 in savings and had obtained more than $500 000 in group loans.

While these figures may seem lightweight when compared to food aid projects that benefit hundreds of thousands, or agricultural credit projects that deal in millions of dollars, they are significant because they reflect the action of autonomous self-help organisations, formed and run by the rural poor.

Participatory extension in practice

All PPP projects have sought to link small farmers more effectively with rural development support services, but only three — in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Zambia

— have been directly implemented by agricultural extension agencies. Interestingly, these three seem to have been the most successful.

The SFDP/PPP project for Thailand, for example, was implemented through the Thai Department of Agricultural Extension and completed in 1987. It was instrumental in a major shift in the department's national extension policy towards the use of more participatory, group-based approaches to reach small farmers.

In Zambia, the Women's Extension Service of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Development is the implementing agency for a PPP project located in the country's remote Western Province. Through careful work over a period of eight years, the project has built a network of 155 small-farmer groups and 69 inter-group associations, which serves as a vehicle for the delivery of agricultural extension information to 1 800 farmers (77 per cent of them women). Access to credit has played a minor role in the project, but most groups are self-sustaining thanks to their high rate of savings — a unique achievement in rural Zambia. Much of the savings mobilised has been invested in new activities such as ploughing with oxen, mango drying, cashew production and fruit production. Scheduled to begin expansion to all districts of Western Province in November 1993, the project is beginning to attract international attention.

The Sri Lanka project is our most articulated and developed PPP intervention to date and appears to have come closest to reaching long-term sustainability. Implemented by a team of extensionists seconded from the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Research, it has developed a three-tier, self-governing network of more than 200 small-farmer groups, 24 village-based inter-group associations and two inter-group federations. The network has made it possible for the ministry's grossly understaffed extension service to involve and assist more than 2 000 marginal farmers in central Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lanka case also illustrates how participatory approaches to extension can improve the cost-effectiveness of extension services by promoting more cost sharing between extension agencies and farmers. Thanks to this project, extension agents have been able to work through a self-supporting network of small-farmer groups and higher-level associations to deliver their messages. Instead of going directly to the small farmers, which would be very costly, they now delegate to the network many tasks and responsibilities — such as organising technology demonstrations, distributing inputs, monitoring and evaluating results — thus considerably reducing extension delivery costs while broadening coverage.

Some lessons learned

Over the past ten years, experiences such as those described above have taught FAO a lot about what works and what does not in developing small-farmer groups and in promoting small-farmer participation in extension. The following paragraphs briefly summarise our findings.

Developing sustainable groups of small farmers requires a minimum of three to four years. The best way to start is with the creation of small informal groups (five to fifteen members), organised around a common need or interest. This environment

provides optimal conditions for group learning of organisational, problem-solving and technical skills. Homogeneity of membership reduces the likelihood of conflict between members, which would detract from group performance.

The soundest and safest starting point for group activities is co-operation to increase members' potential for income generation. The cash surplus generated then becomes the basis for savings growth, local capital formation and the self-financing of the group's future development activities and investments.

In our experience, the use of low-interest credit as an incentive for group formation is not advisable; it is better to adopt a "savings first" approach. Regular cash deposits (the size of the deposit is less important than its regularity) by members into a group savings fund will build financial strength and mobilise working capital essential for the development of the group activity. The fund provides members with a source of "innovation risk insurance" (in case of a crop failure or other emergency), promotes financial discipline and helps to unify the group.

In the financing of group income-generating activities, recourse to formal rural banking institutions does not always work well. This is especially true under inflationary conditions, when interest rates for loans and savings do not reflect market conditions, or when access to financial services is based on non-economic grounds. In those cases, as we have seen in our Ghana and Tanzania PPP projects, it is preferable to encourage groups to set up their own savings, credit or emergency funds in which members' savings can be quickly mobilised and lent out to the group's members (usually at relatively high rates of interest, so as to maintain the purchasing power of the group fund) or to encourage rapid re-investment of surpluses earned.

The use of trained, resident group promoters to facilitate group formation is usually fundamental to success. Among the most important skills that these development workers can teach groups are collective problem solving and decision making, both of which enhance the groups' learning capacities. In the technique of "shared leadership", for example, every group member is encouraged to assume a leadership role on a rotating basis so that all can exercise organisational and leadership skills.

Finally, the formation of small informal groups should never be seen as an end in itself, but rather as the first step in a longer-term process of linking small groups into inter-group associations and farmers' organisations. The latter, which can evolve into effective co-operatives, will help group members to obtain additional economies of scale which are not available to small groups (e.g. through bulk purchase of inputs), to link up with extension agencies and other development services, and to assume some of the support functions previously performed by the group promoter. In this way, the promoter can gradually withdraw support as the group becomes self-reliant.

"But is it cost-effective and sustainable?"

This question was raised by the representative of a large donor agency at a regional workshop on PPP project replication held in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1989. His point was that while participatory approaches do channel services to marginalised groups that would otherwise be ignored, the costs might exceed the economic benefits.

FAO had never adequately answered this question, partly because the benefits of PPP were slow in emerging. We therefore launched a series of long-term evaluation studies of some PPP interventions two to three years after FAO assistance had ceased. Former PPP projects in Sierra Leone, Ghana, Lesotho, Sri Lanka, Thailand and elsewhere have been studied to assess the cost-effectiveness of the approaches used and the post-project sustainability of the groups formed. These studies show that the average cost per beneficiary tended to fall sharply in the second and third year of FAO assistance, when group promoters began gradually to withdraw. For example, the average cost per beneficiary of providing promoters' services was about $24, and this figure continued to decline as time went on.

The acid test of cost-effectiveness was to see how many of the groups formed under the above projects had survived the two or three years since FAO assistance had been withdrawn. Surprisingly, we found that, in four of the five countries mentioned, 30 to 60 per cent of the PPP groups continued to function effectively without external technical support.

We conclude that genuinely autonomous farmers' organisations can become key partners of government in improving the cost-effectiveness of rural development services. This cost-effectiveness argument in favour of using participatory small-group approaches to reach small farmers is now slowly gaining the attention of agricultural extension agencies, already weakened by the budget and personnel cuts caused by global recession, falling government revenues and structural adjustment policies. Many of them realise that they now have to do an even better job than before but with fewer resources. In this regard, the participatory small-group approach used in PPP is a very promising avenue to pursue.

Building democracy at the grassroots level

Governments can also derive non-economic benefits from such approaches. The democratically governed and self-financed organisations that result from this process permit their members to participate more actively in local politics and government. This aspect is important because, ultimately, it is the political participation of small farmers in rural development policy making that makes extension systems more accountable and responsive to farmers' needs.

FAO and its member governments have not always been strong supporters of participatory approaches to extension. Such methods have acquired isolated but expanding support in both camps, but much remains to be done. At FAO, progress towards that end is stifled by the Organisation's technology-oriented and compartmentalised structure and the familiar problem of top-down management

(some professionals, due to their social and academic backgrounds, do not feel comfortable with participatory approaches).

Developing countries have similar problems, further complicated by political considerations. In some governments, political decisions are still made by a very small group of elites, just as in the colonial past. Regrettably, broad-based participation — and hence socio-economic development itself — is often regarded as a threat to political stability.

We nevertheless predict that the logic of rural participation will become more compelling during these current and future hard economic times. To understand why, one need only look back in history at the astonishing growth of autonomous farmers' organisations and co-operatives in Europe and North America during the economic depressions of the mid-19th century and the 1930s. In view of that, we are optimistic.

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Freedom of Association, Rural Workers' Organisations and Participatory Development

Philippe Egger

Introduction

Freedom of association is recognised as a basic human right in international law, notably in the ILO convention on freedom of association and protection of the right to organise (No. 87), adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1948, and in the 1966 Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 8) to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The ILO actively promotes freedom of association and monitors it through a special supervisory procedure that examines alleged violations of trade-union rights. Freedom of association is also recognised as essential to social justice and economic progress. The right of workers to organise themselves and to negotiate in defence of their interests is a dynamic element of social progress.

This view has long been disputed (see Caire, 1976). It is increasingly argued that there may be a trade-off between labour standards and development, since labour standards imply unwarranted forms of government intervention in markets. At the Asia and Pacific Labour Ministers' Conference (Teheran, Iran, April 1993), calls were heard for more flexible implementation of international labour standards to take account of prevailing national conditions. Others have argued that a limited number of basic standards, including freedom of association, should be applied to all countries, regardless of their levels of development. In this view, the adoption of other standards should be left to the labour market and collective bargaining (see Herzenberg and Perez Lopez, 1990). Wide support for market-based policies need not alter the role of labour standards, particularly when social progress is actively pursued through higher levels of productivity and growth.

This paper examines the linkages between freedom of association, as exercised by rural workers' organisations, and participatory development. Two questions are addressed: Is freedom of association conducive to balanced and efficient rural development that leads to higher levels of productivity, wages and growth, or is it an impediment to such development? Is freedom of association a condition for successful participatory development?

Principles of freedom of association and rural workers' organisations

The extent of trade-union power, the liberty of unions to defend members' interests and their ability to negotiate with government over economic and social policy are increasingly called to question. It is argued that strong unions tend to push wages above so-called market-clearing levels, and therefore hamper growth by reducing the share of profits and savings. This is an old argument, which seems to have regained some strength with the current emphasis on liberalisation and privatisation. Although the economic progress of some countries may have been stifled through excessive state interference based on alliances with trade-union centres, trade-union organisations are generally too weak to defend the interests of workers effectively. A recent review of adjustment and labour-market institutions found little evidence of real wage inflexibility (Horton, Kanbur and Mazumdar, 1991). Conversely, there is ample evidence that efficient systems of collective bargaining and labour standards contribute to worker welfare, occupational safety and health, productivity, and overall economic progress.

Concern over the developmental implications of freedom of association led in 1975 to adoption of a new instrument, the rural workers' organisations convention (No. 141). The convention states that it is incumbent on governments to facilitate the growth and development of strong rural workers' organisations.

Few governments nowadays would dispute the principles of freedom of association, but the application of these principles suffers from numerous shortcomings. In its latest annual survey, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU, 1993) cites some 87 countries in all regions of the world for abuses of fundamental trade-union rights.

The application of freedom of association for rural workers

Although legal obstacles continue in some countries to deprive rural workers of the rights of association accorded to workers in other sectors, such situations are now less frequent. Two recent cases are South Africa and Namibia, where the ILO is assisting in the redrafting of parts of the labour code which specifically excluded farmworkers from the benefits of freedom of association.

Immense problems remain, however, with the practical application of the principles of convention No. 141. An ILO review of the state of ratification and implementation of this convention observed that "the difficulties facing rural workers in setting up and promoting organisations are often more practical than legal in nature, and relate to the actual exercise of the right of association" (ILO, 1983, p. 118). It referred to illiteracy, geographical isolation, labour mobility, poverty and the like as obstacles to the establishment and operation of rural workers' organisations.

Organising rural workers

It is generally estimated that in developing countries, no more than 5 to 10 per cent of rural workers are active members of a trade union organisation. The obstacles are numerous. Political violence is pervasive in some countries, particularly against rural workers' organisations. The ICFTU reports that 260 trade unionists were killed and 2 500 imprisoned in the course of their duties in 1992. Latin America is cited as the most dangerous region for trade union officers. The conflicts are all the more violent when land ownership and distribution are at stake.

Other persistent obstacles are poverty, ignorance and dependence. For lack of information and training, rural workers often remain ignorant of their rights. They have little time for trade-union activities, their ability to pay dues regularly is severely constrained and organising work is deterred by the relations of dependence between the poor and local traders, landlords and people of influence. At times, the government itself, eager to see rural workers organised, tries its hand at organising labour, but the bodies it sets up are of questionable independence.

Types of rural workers' organisations

The type of organisation to be promoted is a critical issue. Although the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations recognises the trade union as the most advanced form of organisation and the one best able to defend its members, rural workers are now represented by a broad variety of organisations. The trade-union type of organisation is most frequently encountered on plantations, where its development is facilitated by the quasi-industrial organisation of work. In fact, plantation workers are often the more successfully organised rural workers. Examples include tea-estate workers in Sri Lanka, the rubber tappers of the Malaysian National Union of Plantation Workers, the cotton pickers of the Agricultural Workers' Union in Egypt, the sugar-cane cutters of the Plantation Workers' Union in Mauritius and unions of sugar-cane workers in the Caribbean, to name but a few. In most countries, however, the condition of these workers remains generally poor, although export earnings from plantation commodities are often essential, and although there is a comprehensive labour standard for plantation workers.

As employment patterns are becoming more casual, many plantation workers' unions are facing difficult times. In Malaysia, immigrant labour mostly from Indonesia is steadily replacing local labour on the plantations, which is moving on to better-paid jobs. As a result, the membership of the National Union of Plantation Workers has over the last few years shrunk by half. In many agro-exporting sectors such as Colombia's flower exports or Chile's fruit exports, levels of unionisation are very low. The seasonal nature of the work, the short-term nature of the jobs offered and the migration of labour from work site to work site render organising all the more difficult. Trade unions are finding it more and more difficult to provide adequate representation and defense for workers on such sites, despite the need for union representation and articulation of workers' concerns. The changing nature of

the workforce is posing new challenges to the trade unions, here as in other economic sectors.

Amongst small farmers, landless workers and small fisherfolk, the establishment of an organisation depends very much on the services to be rendered to members. Over the last ten years, a large number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have sprung up in rural development work. The 1993 UNDP *Human Development Report* introduces a useful distinction between people's organisations, which represent and are presumably accountable to a group of people with common origins and aspirations, and non-governmental organisations, which operate for, or on behalf of, the people they serve.

People's organisations range from community groups to farm associations, women's clubs, youth groups and peasant organisations. No worldwide or regional surveys are available, but a number of common characteristics can be cited. Such groups are usually of local origin, fostered by the emergence of a new leader or group of leaders who seek to redress some element of their current situation. Common issues include land grievances, pricing and marketing of produce, drought and water problems. The link between organisation and development action is very close. Many groups build their initial cohesion through local development activities and move on to tackle larger issues, eventually addressing national policy matters. Organisations of rural workers are often a combination of trade-union organisations, producers' associations, co-operatives and local development groups.

The task of organising is most problematic amongst small farmers, peasants, fisherfolk and small artisans. For these categories of the population, it is more difficult to identify common interests to be tackled through group action.

Enlarging the boundaries of bargaining

The basic purpose of trade unions is to defend and advance workers' interests through collective bargaining. This practice is widely used in the case of established agricultural workers, including plantation workers. Collective-bargaining agreements bear essentially on wages, but they also generally include provisions on leave, injury and sickness benefits, and possibly occupational safety and health.

The issue here is twofold. First, organised workers protected by a collective-bargaining agreement are a minority; most agricultural wage workers hold seasonal or casual forms of employment and thus fall outside the scope of such agreements. Lacking organisation and working for several employers during any one season, they are subject to some of the worst working conditions to be found nowadays. The sugar-cane workers in Gujarat, India, for example, migrate to sugar-cane areas during the harvest season (see Breman, 1991). Their plight seems to lie beyond the reach of existing legislation, and no serious organising work has ever been carried out among them. The case of migrant agricultural workers in Mexico, Brazil and Chile is much the same.

Second, many newly formed agricultural unions are pushing the frontiers of collective bargaining to new limits. As governments adopt more liberal policies and retreat from direct intervention, notably by dismantling state marketing boards, many of these functions are being turned over to the private sector. Owing to the weakness

of the private sector or the dominant position of local monopoly powers, however, peasant associations are increasingly seeking to take over marketing and supply functions. Producers' organisations are moving into the marketing of cocoa in Ghana, of cotton and coffee in Côte d'Ivoire and of cotton in Mali. In doing so, they find that the government still largely controls commodity pricing, export channels, credit facilities and the like. In Côte d'Ivoire, newly organised independent co-operative organisations have recently negotiated with the government full responsibility for the primary-level marketing of cocoa and coffee, leaving private traders to deal only with established co-operative organisations.

In many similar cases, incipient local organisations have been pushed to take on larger functions as a result of liberalisation and reduced direct government intervention. In some countries, like Mali, the change has been very rapid, over two years at most. The new peasant associations have been forced to take up new issues and to find solutions. In others, such as Senegal, the peasant associations have been gradually building up, expanding their membership, consolidating the local organisations and preparing themselves over many years to tackle the wider national issues. Now, through the establishment of the Conseil National des Ruraux, which groups some of the main rural organisations, rural workers have a means of negotiating with government and taking up larger economic policy issues such as the delivery of credit, import duties and licences, transport and storage, and government investments in rural infrastructure. Here again, the boundaries of bargaining in the traditional sense have been considerably enlarged.

In the Philippines, a coalition of peasant associations, NGOs and workers' organisations called the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform was formed to supervise the implementation of the agrarian reform law adopted in 1988. The coalition monitors the implementation of the law and plays an important advocacy and information role for its member organisations.

In Mexico, the Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas, formed in 1985, has emerged as an important defender of the interests of small farmers. In particular, it has effectively campaigned for stronger national policy support for small farmers in the areas of credit, marketing, prices, land tenure and food subsidies. It has also made policy proposals to soften the likely effects of the NAFTA agreement on small Mexican producers. The national policy role of this organisation is increasingly stressed, as are its demands for greater peasant involvement in policy deliberations and policy implementation (see Plant, 1993).

Development initiatives

Over the last ten years, participation by the people has become a key word for development practitioners and policy makers. The failure of past development efforts was largely attributed to the lack of participation. Development was carried out for the people, but not by them. In response, the emphasis shifted to local development efforts and involvement of the people in development activities. Participatory development was widely adopted and pursued. The NGO movement took the lead in this shift of emphasis, followed by most major aid agencies. Research showed that development programmes were far more sustainable when local responsibility lay

with an organised people's entity. Strong local organisations were recognised as a necessary, though perhaps not a sufficient, condition for broad-based rural development.

Many short-lived experiences showed that genuine local organisations are not easily created. Too often, aid programmes offered their support in exchange for a group's taking some responsibility, which was supposed to lead to some form of organisation that would take over part or all of the project activities. A large number of users' committees, local management groups and development associations were formed in the context of savings and credit schemes, water and irrigation programmes, training and extension activities, marketing services and the like. Basic elements of group dynamics were ignored, however: groups were established as a means within an activity defined elsewhere (see Egger, 1992). The artificiality of this basis became manifest as soon as the outside support dried up. These hastily and artificially formed groups often proved to be unsustainable, with no internal resources and little legitimacy to speak on behalf of fellow members. Large aid programmes and haste in delivery were the most frequent symptoms of failed attempts at participatory development.

A policy of active encouragement to rural workers' organisations, as called for in Article 5 of Convention No. 141, does not imply that outside intervention should establish organisations in place of the workers. Rather, it calls on aid agencies and governments to see that conditions conducive to the establishment of rural workers' organisations are created. These conditions would necessarily differ from area to area, but would comprise some of the following elements: working with existing groups instead of creating new ones tailored to the task on hand; giving priority to training and educational investments, including exchanges with similar groups; accepting trial and error on the part of incipient groups, which might at first use their own resources; working with the designated leaders of the group instead of selecting leaders from the outside; and beginning by funding small-scale activities decided upon by the group (Lecomte, 1986). These are but a few rules of thumb that can be drawn from recent experience.

Groups may go through a protracted period of incubation during which they evolve outside of any development aid programme, and may not appear to be doing much. The Naam groups in Burkina Faso are examples. The few activities carried out during this phase are essentially geared towards building up the groups' internal confidence and cultural identity. Exchanges among groups feature prominently, as well as time-consuming meetings spent debating organisational and leadership issues that could be disposed of more expediently. Local development issues are taken up first, such as water supply, consumer shops and firewood collection. Larger issues, such as marketing, are taken up much later (Egger, 1988). There are a number of such organisations whose present strength can be linked to a long and largely invisible formative period: the Self-Employed Women's Organisation (SEWA) in India, now a recognised trade union, the Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP) in Zimbabwe and many more.

Development needs such as credit, water, input supply and marketing can be tackled on a sustained basis only by strong local organisations that respect the principles of Convention No. 141. Strong, vocal and independent rural workers' organisations are indispensable partners in rural development. As the issue of

people's participation in rural development is bound to retain its prominence, and as rural development issues are increasingly entangled with larger economic policy issues, rural workers must be able to rely on organisations that can negotiate on their behalf.

Workers' organisations and rural labour markets

There is little evidence of interactions between rural workers' organisations and labour markets. The traditional assumption is that any outside interference with market-determined outcomes would reduce efficiency. In particular, trade-union strength and minimum-wage legislation are often seen as impeding a desirable wage flexibility. There is some evidence from India that trade unions have played a role in maintaining and even improving rural wage levels. In the absence of more decisive structural reforms affecting tenancy or land distribution, wage levels are a critical determinant of the livelihood of agricultural labourers. In the states of Kerala and West Bengal the wages of agricultural labourers have been upheld through strong union pressure (see Harriss, 1993). Higher minimum wages have had far more effect on income levels of agricultural labourers than any state-administered anti-poverty programme or land-redistribution policies. The possible employment implications of higher wages have been offset by investments in technological change, mainly based on irrigation, which have also raised labour requirements. A somewhat similar lesson can be derived from the case of Bangladesh, where groups of agricultural labourers have benefited from NGO assistance in credit and training to operate minor irrigation services. Groups of these "water sellers" negotiate their services with the farmers, providing both water and labour. Expansion of area under cultivation has increased labour inputs and led to upward pressure on wages (see Wood *et al.*, 1991).

Trade-union strength cannot always be equated with higher wages. For example, the National Union of Plantation Workers in Malaysia has had no decisive influence on plantation wage levels despite its extensive presence and centralised collective-bargaining mechanisms. Rural labour markets are generally known for their flexibility, as trade union presence is usually too weak to influence outcomes in any significant way. Depending on local circumstances and political alliances, the outcomes may be different and not necessarily detrimental to employment.

Collective action and development

The notion that rural workers' organisations can be sustainable has met with much scepticism. Many writers on collective action have doubted the viability of movements that pursue public goods, as opposed to the economic rationality of people seeking the individual achievement of private goods. The cost of public goods to an individual will nearly always exceed the expected benefit if those who do not bear the cost can enjoy it freely.

To some extent, the multiplication of collective initiatives and organisations in the Third World, particularly but by no means exclusively within the rural sector, contradicts this reasoning. One author has recently attempted a different formulation

of the logic of collective action, by suggesting that the mere act of participation in an organisation or movement striving towards an objective can entail benefits: "the benefit of collective action for an individual is not the difference between the hoped-for result and the effort furnished by him or her, but the sum of these two magnitudes" (Hirschman, 1982, p. 86).

This interpretation of collective action seems to apply superbly to the participatory development ventures discussed here. Although many collective initiatives do not lead to immediate results, and many more can not hope to modify structural conditions overnight, such initiatives can be sustainable because a string of benefits are derived from addressing collectively a commonly experienced problem. In contrast to the poverty of individual solutions (e.g. migration), the act of coming together to work out solutions and to be identified as contributing to these solutions can develop powerful values: solidarity, a recovered dignity, respect from other parts of the community, the ability to search collectively for alternatives, self-reliance. Many new initiatives are based on such values and sustained by them, whether or not public and individual benefits can eventually be enjoyed.

Policy implications

Three interlinked policy lessons can be derived from the preceding discussion. The first concerns development policy in general, particularly under conditions of structural adjustment. The second relates to the principles of promoting participation. The third rests on the linkages between participation and equitable growth.

Over the last decade, the policy agenda in most developing countries has been dominated by structural adjustment. One important objective of adjustment has been to reverse the relative neglect of agriculture and rural areas, in view of their importance for incomes, employment and future growth. Little attention was paid to the role of rural workers' organisations, however, and little support provided for organising rural workers. Initial reforms have rested mainly on stabilisation and liberalisation whilst neglecting more structural weaknesses. Many important functions carried out, albeit poorly, by the state, such as rural credit, marketing and training, have simply been curtailed. The haste of the reforms has not allowed sufficient forewarning to enable rural workers' organisations and other rural institutions to fill the vacuum.

With the benefit of hindsight and much debate, some adjustments to the reforms are being introduced. Structural adjustment is now regarded less as a short-term stabilisation measure (although the need for such stabilisation can hardly be questioned) and increasingly as longer-term structural development. A central concern lies with a growth pattern conducive to sustained increases in the productivity and income levels of the poor, particularly in rural areas. The case for state minimalism is being reassessed (Streeten, 1993). Paradoxically, strong markets require considerable state intervention, particularly in rural areas. Investments in rural infrastructure (roads, irrigation, storage and marketplaces) have been shown to be critical to agricultural growth. The same holds for services such as credit banks, marketing channels, extension services, research and development. The state need not

control all these services but must take the lead where they are lacking. In parallel to these supporting services, the state needs to create the conditions in which rural workers' organisations can take on a greater role. Ineffective representation of the poor has been seen as central to clumsy implementation, poor results and popular refusal to accept adjustment policies (see Weissman, 1990). A supportive role for rural workers' organisations is needed, allowing them to represent their members and defend their interests. The opening of spaces for representative democracy to function is critical. Consultative mechanisms have usually been weak in this respect, but reforms seem to be on the way.

In Côte d'Ivoire, rural organisations have recently obtained representation on the governing council of the commodity price stabilisation board. In Senegal, rural workers' organisations are represented on the board of the rural credit bank. In the Philippines, trade unions are members of the regional wage-determination boards. India, Mexico and Colombia offer many instances of rural union representation. The fora for representation and negotiation need to be extended at every level. Some important lessons can be derived from the experience of the East Asian countries that initially based their development on a strong agricultural sector. These countries have established and supported a dense network of institutions that enable rural producers to be organised into and represented on co-operatives, marketing boards, workers' organisations and the like. This practice corresponds precisely to the principles of Convention No. 141 on the role of the state in fostering the growth of strong rural workers' organisations. This lesson needs to be incorporated more explicitly into reform agendas under structural adjustment.

If participation is to be given more prominence in development policy, then the principles of Convention No. 141 should be fully adhered to. Too many participatory initiatives are based on flawed principles that do not encourage the growth of strong and independent representation of rural workers. Numerous development experiments have applied an instrumental and textbook perception of participation that bears little resemblance to the principles of freedom of association. Some standards need to be introduced that can guide the work of development workers, and these standards can be partly or wholly derived from ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 141. The reasons for this are obvious. Weak and dependent participation cannot sustain development. The view that development programmes perform better with the people's participation is now amply documented, although the extent of this participation varies greatly, and is often not decided by the people concerned. This could be termed development with participation. The merits of the converse, i.e. participation with development, have also begun to be recognised. The more successful participatory experiences have not striven to incorporate participation into a development programme; rather, they have supported development initiatives that strengthened a participatory base, in which the activities, whatever they may be, serve the principle of building a strong organisation managed and controlled by the people.

Lastly, broad-based development in which benefits are distributed equitably through direct participation in growth is now recognised as the best route for combining rapid growth and rapid poverty alleviation. This is the experience of the East Asian countries in which agrarian reform and agriculture-led growth played a critical role. Rapid growth can be stimulated not only by greater equity in initial

conditions, such as the pattern of land tenure, but also by active state policies to broaden the base of the growth process through investment in primary education, accessible health care and rural infrastructure. Such a pattern of growth also rests on strong organisation and representation of rural workers, and ultimately on observance of the principles of freedom of association.

If policy reforms are to address poverty alleviation, equity and growth seriously, they must have built-in consultative mechanisms to associate workers in the process. The contribution of labour standards such as Convention No. 141 to the development priorities of today warrants renewed attention. The development implications of freedom of association for rural workers are immense. Development is an exercise in harnessing resources, and freedom of association is one such resource.

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Part Three

COUNTRY PERSPECTIVES

The Role of an "Intermediary" NGO in Establishing a More Participatory Development Process: The Case of SAILD in Cameroon

Bernard Njonga

Introduction

In Cameroon, a country of great geographic, social and economic diversity, the state has for many years been the principal instigator of economic and social measures. All forms of people's organisations, apart from the existing politico-administrative framework, were more or less strongly repressed, being considered as an attack on the government's monopoly.

The current period of economic crisis, liberalisation and redefinition of the role of the state has created a favourable socio-political context for the birth of new social forces. There are indications of a new awareness in Cameroonian civil society, although it remains selective and marginal, and this awakening is especially noticeable in rural areas.

One can hardly speak of a real farmers' movement in Cameroon before 1988. Until then, Cameroonian farmers tried to confront their problems through groups, associations and co-operatives that were small and geographically isolated, and that did not consult among themselves.

Exchange visits with their Senegalese and Burkina counterparts allowed them to see other experiences and motivated them to organise themselves to defend their interests better, find solutions to their problems and improve their living conditions.

To help the farmers' leaders realise these ambitions, a group of researchers — which had already monitored them in action research on the problems of rural development — decided to create the Service d'Appui aux Initiatives Locales de Développment (SAILD). This non profit NGO was founded as early as 1988, and its evolution has been closely linked to that of the Cameroonian farmers' movement. Today, there are a number of farmers' organisations, scattered in the three major regions of Cameroon: the Sudan-Sahel border zone, the forest and the high plateau zone.

What are these farmers' organisations? Who are the actors? How did the organisations come into being? What is their real capacity for mobilisation? Are they capable of being an effective opposition force?

These are some of the questions to which we will try to respond, taking into account the support provided by SAILD and several ONGs over the last five years.

First, however, we will emphasise the history of SAILD in order to point up the farmers' determining role in the creation of this support institution, as well as the complicity that underlay the relations between animators and the farmers' leaders in the implementation of more participatory development in Cameroon.

SAILD

History

In 1984, meetings organised by a group of NGOs[1] were supposed to give farmers themselves the chance to present the problems and responsibilities that confronted them. Among other things, the farmers were supposed to pass judgement on initiatives taken in their favour by development organisations.

At the end of these meetings, it was established that the brakes on rural development were:

— lack of training,
— lack of technical support,
— lack of financial and material means,
— social problems (witchcraft, jealousy, mistrust, etc.),
— problems related to isolation.

On the theme of the farmers' responsibility for coping with these difficulties, we noted their waiting attitude[2]. They had justified their lack of enthusiasm for the projects initiated by the outside agencies by the fact that they had on no occasion been involved in the conception and management of those projects.

Four major centres of interest emerged from the debates:

— agro-pastoral development,
— the structuring of the rural world,
— village social life,
— development aid.

The Centre pour le Développement Auto-Centré (CeDAC) took the initiative of an action centring on problems noted in the meetings, with a view to reorienting its approach and its interventions. Thus in 1985 the CeDAC created SAILD as a specialised department. CeDAC/SAILD's programme of action, extending over three years, focused mainly on problems of financing, training, technical support and isolation.

The financial problem: A "rotating credit" system was set up. Beneficiary groups, or their members, had to sign a contractual agreement with the CeDAC. Credit was accorded for cultural and social activities as well as for economic ones. This experimental credit scheme benefited groups from all three socio-ecological regions, and observations were made of the creation and use of credit, the impact of credit on economic activity and on the social life of beneficiaries, their level of indebtedness and their repayment behaviour.

The problem of training: An annual cycle of three seven-day training sessions was introduced, on the themes of animation, management and organisation. Of the 180 beneficiary farmers, nine were subject to follow-up observation (in addition to the observations made during the training sessions) of their adaptive capacity and the impact of training in their milieu.

The problem of technical support: Three agricultural activities were accepted: raising chickens for meat and eggs, market gardening and fruit orchards. Specialised technicians gave priority to supporting groups or farmers who had received loans. Observations centred on the operating mode of the technicians and the receptiveness of beneficiaries, as well as on the latter's capacity to attain technical autonomy while training other farmers.

The problem of isolation: Twelve exchange trips were organised for some leaders from each of the three main socio-economic divisions of Cameroon, and two trips abroad were made: to Burkina Faso (the NAAM groups) and to Senegal (Fédération des Organisations Non Gouvernementales du Sénégal).

At the end of the three years of experimentation, a network of constructive relations had been established among the farmers' leaders and between these leaders and CeDAC/SAILD. The team had also acquired experience of the farmers' attitudes and behaviour (in relation to credit, technical support and so on). Finally, it was noted that the services offered by CeDAC/SAILD were badly needed.

Owing to various legal and material constraints, however, CeDAC/SAILD could not pursue its activities under good conditions. The idea of an autonomously functioning NGO with the means for country-wide action was then adopted. Thus as early as 1988, SAILD was granted the provisional status of an NGO.

The legal and fiscal discrimination against local NGOs in Cameroon explains the decision to make SAILD an international NGO, having its legal headquarters in Geneva and its secretariat in Yaoundé. This example shows the necessity of defining a clear legal framework for NGOs that operate in this country. Switzerland was chosen for the new NGO headquarters site because of the legal facilities available there.

Objectives

SAILD's initial objectives in 1988 had aimed at fostering the emergence of farmers' organisations. Once encouraging results had been obtained, SAILD's position evolved: it now endeavours to reinforce the autonomy of existing organisations, while continuing to promote the creation of new ones.

In both cases, SAILD has used a participatory approach, based on the farmers' assuming responsibility for themselves. To achieve this end, each division of SAILD covers one of the major regions of Cameroon.

Activities

Initial actions

A determining factor in the definition of SAILD's objective was incontestably the reactions of farmers who benefited from exchange trips abroad. Particularly impressed by the degree of organisation and the accomplishments of the farmers of the Fédération des Unions des Groupements NAAM in Burkina Faso, they agreed as soon as they returned home to create farmers' organisations in their regions of origin. Two equally important events, the exchange visit of twelve other leaders to Senegal and the national meeting in Yaoundé, lie behind the inception of some farmers' organisations in Cameroon.

Among other resolutions taken at the national meeting, the participants unanimously recognised that a development action can succeed only if it is addressed to an organisation of beneficiaries. The basic problem for rural development, however, is the lack of farmers' organisations capable of defining a theory of development and of ensuring that all the external actors work within the framework of this theory. At the end of the meeting, each delegate undertook to work for the creation of farmers' organisations in his region. Only a few of the participants kept their promises, but these "exceptions" strengthened SAILD in its objective of promoting farmers' organisations, based on the farmers' assumption of responsibility for their own development problems.

At first, SAILD helped the leaders who were engaged in an information and awareness-raising campaign to overcome various difficulties (travel, organising meetings and so on). This type of material and logistic aid is appropriate if offered at a precise moment in time: when leaders have the will to do something and seek the means needed to take action.

This led SAILD to divide its functions among several structures, while still keeping a certain flexibility. Four services were created:
— training,
— technical support,
— savings and credit,
— communication.

Support for the founding of farmers' organisations

At this stage, attention was given to three key elements: SAILD's strategies, the role of its leaders and relations with other development partners.

To catalyse the creation of farmers' organisations, SAILD put together a 12-stage strategy, as follows:

1. Be capable. As a farmers' organisation reflects in one way or another the image of the supporting institution, the latter should practice all the virtues that it expects of the farmers' organisation or of its leaders (transparence, honesty, organisation and so on). The supporting structure should try to gain a wider audience in government circles so as to become a solid springboard for the farmers' organisation. It should also develop effective means of meeting the needs and expectations of the farmers' organisation.

2. Make contact with isolated groups. A monographic study should be carried out to define the realities of a given region and to evaluate community spirit through existing groups and associations. The study is to be conducted by SAILD agents, who collect the necessary information during meetings that they organise. This is done in the following steps:

   — the existing supervisory organisations and other potential sources are surveyed for information on the existence of farmers' groups;

   — exchange meetings are organised with the members of each group and with all the groups in the area covered;

   — the promoter summarises the information obtained, emphasising aspects that favour the emergence of a farmers' organisation in the region.

   SAILD also gives special attention to the participation of women.

3. Identify individuals who have a following in the region and proven qualities as leaders.

4. Broaden the vision of these leaders. After having encouraged them to study and know their own milieu, it is a question of giving them the opportunity — through exchange trips both within the country and abroad — to see and become involved in several experiences of organising.

5. Gauge the dynamics that emerges from the new experiences of these individuals.

6. Train leaders in animation and consciousness raising. The training should allow leaders to adapt what they have learned through exchange visits to the realities of their milieu, to improve their ability as animators and to develop their critical faculties.

7. Launch the leaders in a consciousness-raising campaign in their regions. The support institution helps the leaders by providing the means needed to pursue their actions, but the initiative must lie entirely with the farmers.

8. Attend and participate at meetings organised by the farmers' leaders.

9. Respect the farmers and give them responsibility. Relations between the farmers' organisation and the supporting agency should evolve towards mutual respect and open dialogue, which will constitute the basis of partnership.

10. Help with growth and training. To increase the autonomy of the farmers' organisation, the supporting agency should facilitate its access to all the domestic and foreign partners that would be useful to it, and should emphasise the training of leaders and members of the nascent federation.

11. Sponsor numerous exchanges and provide information through trips and seminars.

12. Evolve towards a balanced partnership.

Two types of approach emerge from this strategy: a grassroots approach based on the persuasive power of the leaders, and an institutional approach through farmers' organisations.

An interesting example is the case of the Promotion des Groupements Economiques de Mengueme (PROGREM), a federation founded in 1990.

The story of PROGREM begins with a training course on the animation and direction of groups. Mrs Elise Atekoa was chosen by her women's group to attend the course, and thus became aware of the existence of farmers' federations in other parts of the country. She spoke of this to her group and rapidly called meetings at which some 15 groups were represented.

Another meeting, to which SAILD and four leaders of other farmers' federations were invited, provided the opportunity to define more precisely the relations between SAILD and the future organisation. In substance, the representative of SAILD said: "Work by yourselves at first, then we will come to your aid." The Constituent Assembly then proceeded to hold elections for the officers of the association, and Mrs Atekoa was elected to the directorship.

Shortly thereafter, however, it appeared that PROGREM might have been constructed too rapidly. The SAILD team then suggested that the directors of PROGEM return to the base level by organising a round of visits to the groups in order to "get acquainted". After these visits, a summing-up meeting, in which SAILD participated, identified the following essential points:

— many groups had no objective;
— there were no internal rules, and accounts were kept in haphazard fashion;
— there were many turf conflicts within the groups;
— numerous bottlenecks hampered the groups' operations;
— most of the groups asked for training.

At the end of the meeting, two decisions were taken: to invest in training and to organise a seminar on savings and credit to seek a better utilisation of savings.

The role of the leaders

Some farmers are endowed with more charisma than others and with a greater ability to see the need for change and to take risks. As soon as a farmers' organisation is conceived and created, these individuals inevitably become the leaders of farmers' movements. In contrast, some leaders seem to sterilise or block the emergence of a farmers' movement by appropriating it or by using it as a springboard for personal aims. Leaders can therefore be both assets and obstacles.

SAILD's efforts have followed a case-by-case approach. All internal and external relations are used to induce these leaders to call themselves into question. In certain cases, SAILD plays the role of consciousness raiser. It helps the members of the farmers' organisation to analyse their situation, to define the type of authority they are facing. It organises meetings to reflect on the positive role or the prerogatives of a federation's various directors.

The directors may react, however, feeling that they are being targeted. Some are able to back up their authority with forces and relations that are difficult to detect and to shake. Others accuse SAILD of interfering with the internal affairs of the federation.

In fact, it is up to the farmers themselves to choose the representative who best suits them, who is most likely to defend their cause and their interests. Everything possible should be done, however, to ensure that the actions undertaken benefit as many people as possible.

Relations with the other partners

Owing to the complexity of self-help movements and that of their micro- and macroeconomic environments, reinforcing such a movement requires complicity among several partners, all devoted to the cause, and each operating at its own level, through direct, alternating or concerted support. Among the external partners of a farmers' movement, we distinguish five groups: national elites outside the rural milieu, local NGOs, the administrative authorities, consultants and financial backers.

Favoured by the socio-economic and political context, farmers' organisations and their representatives are proliferating. The groups in power react either by repression, or by sabotaging the farmers' organisations or, finally, by seeking ways of subjugating the farmers' leaders and/or the organisations. SAILD provides moral support to the farmers' organisations and their representatives while at the same time trying to convince those in power of the necessity of sharing the decision-making space in future.

Attempts to collaborate with local NGOs have not always brought the expected results. In contrast, several consultants have been associated with SAILD's work through periodic reflection and self-evaluation missions. The policy used today consists of negotiating with the consultants over protocols for collaboration in areas where external intervention seems necessary. Studies are conducted on the general evolution of the farmers' movement, the support strategies and methods of SAILD, the self-evaluation strategies and tools of the farmers' organisations and SAILD, and so on. The consultants provide indirect training to SAILD officers.

The financial partners have been deeply involved in the interplay with other actors. The nature and quality of relations with these partners, notably the Direction de la Coopération au Développement et de l'Aide Humanitaire (Berne, Switzerland) and the Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe (Bonn, Germany), have been decisive in the action of SAILD and the evolution of the farmers' movement. Indeed, the flexibility and openness of the financing they provide have made it possible to take risks according to the opportunities that arise and to adapt support according to the context and the development stage of the farmers' organisations. Moreover, this has favoured the provision of institutional support to these organisations.

This form of financing strengthens the independence of SAILD in defining its strategies and also allows it to pursue the objective of longer-term autonomy.

Support for the action of farmers' organisations

In five years, the face of rural Cameroon has fundamentally changed, as some 30 federations had been formed throughout the country. The most striking signs of the evolution of the farmers' movement are the following:

People: The number and quality of farmers engaged in the self-development effort have grown through the reinvigoration of the base-level groups and the reinforcement of solidarity within and between groups. Leaders are asserting themselves, their motivation is stronger, their visions of the movement's identity are more sharply defined and their representativeness is being confirmed.

Links and exchanges: Groups are emerging from their isolation, which allows them to recognise their complementarity and to widen their network of solidarity.

Actions and ideas: The idea of self-help is becoming more credible. Farmers are acquiring more confidence in themselves and in the possibility of asserting themselves in society.

Acquired experience: Farmers are taking initiatives which, even when the results are modest, allow them to acquire experience in various fields.

Growth: The growing number of groups has strengthened the mobilising capacity of the farmers' movement.

An original feature of the Cameroonian farmers' movement lies in the creation and management of two organisms, the Conseil des Fédérations Paysannes du Cameroun (CFPC) and the Fonds Commun d'Appui aux Organisations Paysannes (FOCAOP).

The CFPC, created in July 1991, comprises 25 member federations. Its aim is to promote exchanges of ideas and experience among the farmers' federations, to encourage the creation of new federations, to manage conflicts and to develop the spirit of solidarity, mutual help and productive saving at the level of both the federations and the CFPC itself. To this end, the CFPC has created seven specialised cells, which are supposed to be permanent centres for reflection on the major problems of the rural world. Two years after the creation of the CFPC, few concrete actions have been undertaken.

The FOCAOP was created in 1990 with the aim of promoting a savings and credit system among its members, optimising women's participation in economic activities, increasing the capitalisation potential of the rural milieu and engaging in any activity likely to increase its capacity to provide credit. The sources of FOCAOP funds are both internal (dues and savings) and external (subsidies and grants).

To accomplish these missions, the FOCAOP set up a delegates' headquarters and a department of research and credit allocation at the central level, as well as committees for the management of savings and credit at the level of each member federation. With varying success, it has conducted sensitisation and training campaigns, mobilised savings and granted some loans. Owing to the difficulties encountered (linked to the institutional framework and the FOCAOP's mode of operation) and cyclical constraints, this institution today is being completely restructured.

SAILD contributed to the emergence of farmers' organisations, to the maturing of their forms and objectives, and to the affirmation of the farmers' new strength by the following means:

— rural meetings and exchange visits broke the isolation of the groups;

— training empowered leaders, suggested working models and helped the organisations give meaning and direction to their actions;

— direct technical and financial support, the establishment of contact with technical and financial organisms, follow-up in the field and management help have given the farmers' organisations the means of overcoming obstacles and have thus enhanced and complemented the efforts of the organisations themselves;

— the system of information and documentation instituted, notably *La Voix du Paysan*, has continually fueled the thinking, the mutual understanding and the know-how of farmers' organisations.

The process of rural mobilisation set in motion by these means is not completely irreversible, but the nature and the quality of the relations among the members rule out certain types of regression.

If factors such as culture shock, resistance to a supervisory structure or the effect of "novelties" serve to bond members together at the inception of a farmers' organisation, the subsequent development of such an organisation essentially depends on its ability to serve the economic interests of its members. What incites men and women to mobilise themselves in a lasting way is the advantages that they obtain by joining federations. If it fails to provide solutions to current problems, the farmers' movement, which today is expanding rapidly, may run out of steam, as long-term mobilisation is not possible without concrete accomplishments.

Support for the consolidation and autonomy of the farmers' movement

The current efforts of SAILD take into account certain obstacles to the flourishing of the farmers' movement: insufficiently developed farmers' organisations, the risk of losing members who tire of waiting for concrete results and the limited nature of analyses conducted within the organisations.

The energies supported by SAILD are being reoriented towards useful action, and this effort will be pursued. In parallel, the support institution will have to help farmers and their organisations to curb the perverse effects of aid and to overcome the temptation to take unconsidered short-term action.

The perverse effects of aid: many farmers associate farmers' organisations with a system of "assisted development", i.e. in a more colourful phrase, with a system under which they receive fish without bothering to learn how to fish for themselves. SAILD is therefore working to develop the farmers' taste for fishing along with their taste for fish. The farmers' organisation should not be limited to the role of an aid recipient; it must become a source of initiatives.

To give farmers the means of taking themselves in hand, of effecting their changes by themselves, SAILD organises training sessions and meetings for reflection. Moreover, allocation of aid to productive sectors, thanks to the expected multiplier effect, makes it possible to constitute a guarantee fund; aid thus loses its character of temporary relief.

Easy short-term effects and activism can also tempt the farmers' representatives, whose actions must lead to concrete results, but despite the various pressures, decisions must be made with a clear head. SAILD prepares farmers and their leaders, psychologically and technically, to take rational and effective decisions, with short-term results to be sure, but above all with lasting effects for the farmer, thus setting off a real dynamics of development.

SAILD encourages and will further stimulate farmers' organisations in the following areas:

Strengthening the institutional autonomy of farmers' organisations

The development of autonomy is essential to the sustainability of farmers' organisations. SAILD is developing an approach to autonomy that integrates the institutional, economic and conceptual levels. In its present and future support actions, SAILD thus emphasises the definition of an appropriate institutional framework for the realisation of economic actions (the only ones likely to have transmission effects) conceived independently by the farmers or their organisations.

Strengthening the farmers' capacity for orientation and negotiation of development strategies

Current analytical procedures, based either on needs or on problems, are weak and of limited scope; a capacity for overall and forward-looking analysis should be developed within the farmers' organisation. Only an analysis of natural and human resources will make it possible to identify perspectives for long-term development.

Development of an orientation capacity should allow organisations to make choices the quality and relevance of which will lead to success and to an increase in the economic activities chosen for stimulation. Self-evaluation of activities, as well as diagnoses of the environmental situation, are appropriate elements for improving this orientation capacity.

Finally, negotiating capacity should be developed so as to allow farmers' organisations effectively to represent rural interests in high-level decision making.

Promotion of and support for the economic actions of farmers' organisations

The savings and credit system should be an effective tool in the service of rural interests. SAILD has neglected no opportunity of supporting economic activities initiated by the farmers' organisations, because the economy is the nerve of all social organisations. The support institution followed with great interest the progressive risk taking by the farmers' leaders. After some initial results that were not always convincing, SAILD judged that the moment had come to encourage not only more risk taking but also, and above all, economic actions that are linked among themselves and that can have transmission effects. Moreover, SAILD increasingly encourages activities that put two or more farmers' organisations into contact.

Development of the evaluation, follow-up and programming capacities of farmers' organisations

Teaching farmers' organisations to evaluate their strengths, to enhance their potential and to know their limits is a priority of SAILD. To this end, SAILD organises annual sessions on participatory self-evaluation for the officers of farmers' organisations. Moreover, general assemblies of farmers' organisations are veritable fora for evaluation and self-evaluation in which SAILD very often participates.

Conclusion

Whatever its intentions, the actions of an institution supporting development are limited by factors of the socio-political and economic environment. By involving farmers, international consultants, financial organisms and NGOs that share SAILD's worldview in thinking about the future of the rural world, SAILD induces a synergy that makes it possible:

— to update data about rural assets;
— to integrate diverse experiences in the analysis;
— to anticipate the amount of financial support that could be available;
— to evaluate the impact of the actions of all NGOs operating in the sector;
— to define a realistic approach to problems.

Thinking on these subjects should be permanent, as upon it depends the survival of the rural world, of farmers' organisations and of support organisms.

In an ecological, economic and socio-political environment that is less and less under control, it is in the interest not only of the farmers but of the whole society to defend and believe in participatory development through farmers' organisations.

Self-help by farmers, a principle of SAILD, is a form of "return to the roots" that is not at all nostalgic. Rather, it testifies to a certain realism, as no one can deny that the weight of our economy, of our democratic system, of our values and our

identity rests on the rural milieu, which accounts for 74 per cent of Cameroon's population.

Notes

1. The following NGOs were involved: Centre de Développement Auto-Centré, Association pour la Promotion des Initiatives Communautaires Africaines, Centre Rural d'Appui Technique, Agriculteurs Français pour le Développement International, Association TOKOMBERE.

2. In the face of their problems, the people wait passively for solutions to come from elsewhere. It is necessary to change the attitude of the farmers, who have developed an "aid mentality" and no longer believe in their own abilities.

Promoting Local and Regional Control over Development:
A Participatory Approach in Madagascar

Philippe de Rham and Bernard Lecomte

Introduction: three questions

A team from abroad is assigned to execute an aid programme conceived and organised by a technical ministry. What can the team do to make the programme interest the villagers for whom it is intended? To be sure, they have not chosen to be beneficiaries, and they have not defined the objective, the methods or the duration of the programme. Nonetheless, the team wants them to become the essential actors. Thus a first question is how to get them interested. In the present case, the answer was sought and more or less found during a five-year initial stage, completed at the end of 1989.

At that time, a second question was asked: How can the impact of the programme be extended through the action of the farmers themselves, without reproducing the cumbersomeness and cost of the first programme? Answering this question required the team to find new objectives and other methods, and above all, to establish other institutions. The case study describes how the changes were initiated and how a new mechanism, open to actors who had not participated in the initial project, was established. This stage, begun in 1989, was still under way in 1993.

The success of this process seems to depend, however, on finding a satisfactory response to a third question: How can such a programme be inserted into a regional development system conceived by and negotiated among the various public and private actors?

This chapter analyses the way in which answers to the first two questions were sought and applied.

Initial state of the relation between farmers and the project

In Madagascar, the people have been subjected for generations to a succession of centralising regimes: the monarchy, then the colonial state and lastly the revolutionary state. The farmers of Imerina — a region in the centre of the country, surrounding the capital — have for two centuries been in an abject position, far removed from the image of the autonomous village community.

Since the establishment of the socialist state, the region's farmers have progressively been left to themselves. Few technical services have been maintained in the field. Centralisation and the neglect that followed the extraordinary promises of the revolution have created a climate of distrust.

A project as intermediary

The Projet d'Appui au Reboisement Villageois (PARV), launched in 1984, did not try to intervene directly in the relations between the population and official technical services. Instead, it became a new · actor in the rural milieu, offering to support the inhabitants of "dispersed comunities" (*fokontany*) in reforesting their land and exploiting the state lands that are still free.

Pragmatically, the project thus established itself as an intermediary between the state and the farmers by foreshadowing a new, contractual relationship. Farmers' families would contribute to the protection of the hillside basins and the state, for its part, would agree to guarantee community and individual ownership of the land to those who exploited it. To be sure, the action was conceived, programmed and directed by the project, but the farmers found it to their advantage.

Development professionals are in the habit of automatically criticising projects that have an authoritarian character, but farmers see things differently. For them, it was the first time since 1970 that anyone had proposed well-organised activities, had been present in the field and above all had made operational commitments that were actually kept. Fairly rapidly, the mistrust expressed by some of them was left behind. The population understood that the project team deserved their confidence and that the project itself, although it followed a fairly classical approach, offered them something concrete. In the context of Malagasy history, this experience took on a participatory resonance. If social justice and empowerment of grassroots organisations were not the objectives of the project, at least it did not oppose them.

The relationship between the project and the inhabitants was based on "communal reforestation committees", created at the project's initiative, and on farmers hired by the project as "popularisers". In practice, the composition of the reforestation committee reflected the existing power structure at the level of each community. The committees had few responsibilities, except to distribute among interested families the parcels to be reforested within delimited areas of state property. Their principal function consisted of creating a favourable climate for reforestation among the population and serving as interlocutors with project technicians.

An evaluating commission monitored the progress of the nursery and planting work each year, "grading" achievements according to a precise scale, and prizes were distributed to encourage the best results and to make the popularisation system more effective.

Questions about the sustainability of the gains

After five years, however, this system had come to its logical end, just at the moment when it had to face the two habitual tests: to succeed in diffusing itself and to ensure the continuation of what had already been undertaken.

How could a pioneering operation like this one be replicated outside the initial zones? Extending this action proved difficult indeed, owing to a system that — if only because of the supervisory personnel, on whom the operational dynamics depended — was sophisticated and costly. How could the continued support needed to make this action last in its initial target area be transferred to a national level?

Everyone was more or less aware that if the Swiss development partner pulled out, the project would be in danger. Despite the technical success of the project and the relations of trust established with the population, the results appeared to be precarious. Analysis beyond the short term revealed several contradictions that would handicap long-term action.

The first of these lay between, on one hand, the high level of technical skill acquired by the farmers in forestry and agro-forestry, thanks to the training and follow-up system, and on the other, the low social capacity for organisation and autonomous management of the project. The reforestation committees, accustomed to their role of underlings, had no real experience in conducting a reforestation campaign. In addition, the farmers' families displayed a singular lack of initiative.

A second contradiction arose between the high level of mobilisation among the farmers and the project's inability to satisfy farmers' expectations concerning land security and the productivity of the forest plantations.

At that time, some asked themselves: Would the reforestation make it possible for a process of local development to begin? Had not the farmers been tricked and neatly manipulated into carrying out free of charge — and despite their poverty — environmental protection tasks that the state neither wanted to nor could undertake?

The turning point

The farmers as the central actor?

How could these contradictions be overcome? One key idea underlay all the thinking on this subject: to reduce the role of the project, the farmers' leaders should be given more power and should increase their own capacities for action.

A certain number of people in the administration, in particular the provincial governor, and some NGOs were associated with this thinking and became parties to

the new orientation. It would certainly not be easy to escape from the logic of a relationship in which the farmers were simply underlings, but the farmers' esteem for the project team and good relations with the public administration made it possible to begin making changes.

A first proposal was to decentralise the management and to entrust the farmers' groups directly with a part of the financial resources available, for example by giving responsibility to the reforestation committees. This path did not seem to be sufficiently motivating, however: the communities or committees would have managed only a few francs for seed plus the popularising personnel, and their freedom of initiative would have been limited to reproducing the well-tried methods of the project. Moreover, as the theme of the project was reforestation, its ability to mobilise the farmers' organisations could be doubted.

Starting a new dynamics through participatory evaluation

A second path was taken: to get the commmunities, not just the reforestation committees, interested in participatory reflection and evaluation, in order to give reforestation a place in rural aspirations and priorities. The deterioration of village cohesion and solidarity over the last 15 years is not, however, a favourable condition for open speech and free expression of viewpoints and propositions.

The new orientation therefore could not arise from an ideal protest-based and constructive grassroots movement. It took form, very slowly, from reflection about the ongoing action and its consequences for the milieu. This thinking was done by farmers in new, neutral spaces for the exchange of information and opinions, and, in parallel, by the other categories of actors directly concerned (on one side, the local agents hired to popularise the reforestation effort, and on the other, the project's technical team). The three series of questions that emerged gave rise to a rich and complex process of participatory evaluation, which made it possible to initiate and to negotiate the change in orientation.

An important contribution was made during a daylong session on the theme of "reforestation and the development of local communities". The participation of provincial authorities made it possible to involve this administration in thinking about the community development strategy and the role of technical projects. Moreover, these meetings revealed the disturbing fact that the land problem had not been resolved: it was still not known what procedure should be used to allow farmers to appropriate state land.

These internal debates led to the adoption of the self-evaluation process, which touched off the dynamics of change.

The Swiss partner of the project had acquired in other countries the practice of having evaluations carried out by the beneficiaries of an action. It was not easy, however, for the project team to accept the farmers' examining results and working methods by themselves. For this reason, the first self-evaluation process was implemented within the project team. It was then extended to other types of actors, each carrying out their own self-evaluation, and comparison of the results was left to the end of the nine-month process.

The use of the reforestation committees as fora for expression ran the risk that the results might bear only on the topic of forestry, whereas it seemed necessary that very diverse groups, and even people who had not participated at all in the forestry operations, should take part in this process of reflection. How could the locations and institutional mechanisms that favour this broad expression be found?

Small groups of about ten people were organised, in the hope that they would lead to more widespread meetings among farmers. Indeed, after an effort was made to animate the groups, a fair number of them did meet to consider what the six years of the project had brought. After a few weeks, the project proposed that delegates from these informal groups participate in a meeting lasting several days. The project team limited its participation to opening the meeting; it then left the farmers to discuss matters among themselves for three days, with the help of a Malagasy animator who had not been involved in the project. After several months, the first meeting was held between the farmers and the other categories of actors who had gone through their own self-evaluation processes.

This self-evaluation mechanism was time-consuming, but therein lay its strength. In addition, the unexpectedly high quality of the tables and texts prepared by the farmers was a decisive element. This analysis, written by the farmers in Malagasy and then presented in French translation, described their situation, their problems and their aspirations. It clearly showed the contribution of the project in proportion to the entirety of the farmers' questions and priorities. The analysis was sharp, relevant and direct.

Perhaps the most sensitive issue concerned the 35 farmers employed by the project as popularisers. They feared that the evaluation process, even though it was participatory, would lead to changes and challenge their rather privileged status. To relieve them of this apprehension, the Swiss co-director of the project had to participate in the first meetings and guarantee that participants could express themselves freely with no risk, but that the conclusions drawn from the whole process could lead to modifications in the diffusion system and but not bring their employment as popularisers to an end.

The whole process brought to light some very large differences between the participants at these meetings, but at the same time it proved to be an exceptional means of reflection and adult training.

Adopting an acceptable strategic orientation

From evaluation to reorientation

The reorientation phase went quickly. Less than six months after the end of the self-evaluation, the two governments chose new strategic orientations and a new financial framework. This rapidity is explained by the active participation of the Malagasy and Swiss decision makers at the key moments of the evaluation and reorientation process and by their adherence to the conclusions that emerged. They

laid down the principle of "making one's own path" and leaving the operational details to be defined progressively in the course of the coming action.

Once the various self-evaluations had been synthesised, in the form of a small number of questions to be resolved, five scenarios were drawn up with the help of an outside consultant. After discussions among the actors, one of these scenarios was adopted, because it was acceptable to the great majority of actors and because it respected the option of farmers' assumption of responsibility.

The importance of the institutional setting

This evaluation and reorientation led to the establishment of a new programme, the "Programme de Foresterie et Développement Paysans" (FDP-Antananarivo). This programme is characterised by objectives and operating methods that differ from those of PARV, but also by a more open and adaptable institutional setting, which makes it possible for international partners to assist the directing Malagasy institutions and to support the creation of farmers' organisations.

This method was chosen with the following objectives in view:

— to prepare a place for future organisations;

— to develop the capacities of field NGOs and to offer real support for the structuring of rural areas and for farmers' activities;

— to re-establish the role of the provincial water and forestry service in order to co-ordinate the promotion of farmers' forestry work and to aid the local reforestation committees;

— to facilitate the work of the state land bureau in land-security operations linked to improvements made by farmers;

— to make it possible to adapt the programme to the new regional politico-administrative structures that will accompany the decentralisation planned in the country's new constitution;

— and above all, to create a space for meetings, experimentation and diffusion touching on all aspects of farmers' management of the development of the hills in the Antananarivo region, by supporting the creation and launching of the Fafiala centre.

Why create the Fafiala centre?

The Fafiala centre is a private legal association, an intermediary between the state and the people, financed initially by the FDP and composed of many actors with diverse interests. Its task is to co-ordinate the functions of experimentation, training and diffusion of operating methods and techniques that allow farmers to organise themselves and to undertake productive and protective activities on the hillsides (*tanety*).

The Fafiala centre allows private and public actors to meet, exchange points of view, gain access to many sorts of information and train themselves in new fields. It favours the creation and strengthening of farmers' organisations that are independent

of aid institutions, by offering them a place where they can reflect among themselves and seek their own path, while at the same time providing follow-up and advice in the field.

The status adopted for the Fafiala centre was that of a private, non profit organisation. It has received state approval, which makes it possible for members of the civil service to participate in the centre's administrative bodies, though in the same capacity as any other member. In return, this status authorises the centre to receive subsidies from communities and public services. The governing board is composed of representatives of all three categories of active members (provincial administration, NGOs working for rural development in the region, regional farmers' organisations). Institutions that unite these three categories of actors are not common in Madagascar.

In parallel with the creation of the Fafiala centre, the FDP programme provides other forms of institutional support to the NGO Orimpaka, to the provincial water and forestry service and to the state land bureau.

The operation in support of the provincial forestry administration, called Operation Malaza, is aimed at strengthening the institutional capacities of this service and helping it to carry out a number of priority operations. This part of the FDP programme should help the forestry service to work more closely with the farmers and to develop technical relations with their organisations.

Lastly, the FDP programme has acted in the property sector by supporting the state land bureau and helping in the early stages of a new consulting surveyor's office to lighten the task of the civil service.

In conclusion, the strategic orientations of the FDP programme are carried forward by a group of specialised and autonomous institutions, which are linked to one another when acting in the field. The co-ordinating committee has the delicate task of fostering the development of their creative and collaborative capacities.

Implementing the change

The passage from the PARV project to the FDP programme was negotiated in six months, and it proved to be a challenge: conducting a process of reflection and participatory evaluation in parallel with an agro-forestry and reforestation campaign is already occupation enough, but translating new theoretical orientations into organisational and operational terms demands even more rigour and energy. A new frame of mind must therefore be developed, and the entire implementation process must be characterised by an "experimentation-action" approach.

At the Fafiala centre, a research and development unit provides the means for the various actors periodically to take stock of their practices, to evaluate the effects of those practices and to decide on ways of improving them. In this perspective, operational experiments are accompanied by a mechanism for systematic questioning, data collection and interpretation.

Let us take the example of the local forestry committees. While collaborating with them, the PARV set up a mechanism to observe their operating modes. As these

committees today have total freedom in distributing tasks and managing problems, different systems have emerged in different communities. Observation shows that the various types of problems encountered can be systematised, and the factors that help certain committees, and not others, to overcome certain difficulties can be identified. This documented observation of experiments carried out by the farmers themselves fuels the exchange of experiences among them and makes it possible to draw forth tendencies and recommendations in the prospect of wider diffusion.

Similarly, in the techno-productive field, priority is given today to "participatory trials" in the rural milieu. The farmer is always involved in the conception and the choice of the processes employed. Losses and drops in profits are partly compensated by the research unit. There is continual feedback, since the experiments are carried out with the farmers on their own land and the farmers are the first to receive the conclusions.

As for training, the aim of the FDP programme is to promote an active pedagogy centred on the trainees. A training session is no longer conceived of as a transfer of entirely pre-prepared technical propositions. The participants' own knowledge is valorised, and their analytical capacities are developed to enable them to make choices rather than simply diffusing a stereotyped model. The trainee participates in a first session, on compost, for example, then returns after having put the ideas into practice and having received the opinion of his entourage. His experiences will form the subject of an exchange and comparison with the other participants in the session and with the technicians who act as instructors.

This method of experimentation in action spread throughout the programme via the practice of self-evaluation. These evaluations, which take place at least once a year for each part of the programme, address not only the results obtained but also the pertinence of the working methods used and qualitative aspects.

The programme's support for the strengthening of private and public institutions is also supposed to be experimental.

The weakly structured rural world: a challenge

Inducing the inhabitants of a region to assume responsibility for its development and supporting them without inserting them in a supervisory system is a real challenge when the social milieu is characterised precisely by a low capacity for organisation.

Existing forms of reciprocal aid and community work do not address the larger problems of community development or of organised defence of farmers' interests. Any institutional body that wishes to contribute its services must therefore provide instruction on development to reconstruct an atmosphere of trust that is propitious for establishing contractual relations. Farmers mostly hope for standardised proposals instead of requesting external support for their own initiatives. Given the farmers' destitute situation, these offers are better than nothing.

Escaping from the trap represented by this type of aid relationship was the principal difficulty encountered by the new FDP programme. At its inception, the

FDP programme deployed three types of response: first, to stimulate the emergence of farmers' associations in the zones where the PARV had already worked; second, to identify the existing farmers' organisations in the zones of potential expansion; and third, to reserve space in the new institutions for the expression of rural power.

Stimulating the formation of base-level groups

During the evaluation process, some men and women had gained experience of meetings and exchanges in small informal groups. Some had even participated in the three-day meeting at the micro-regional level, but the groups had not continued their meetings.

To overcome this inertia, the team of the future FDP programme decided to hold meetings for the expression of villagers' opinions in each of the 37 *fokontany*, in order to examine in detail the situation and the problems of the community. None of these meetings resembled any other one, except in terms of the interest raised and the duration. The animators limited themselves to introducing and stimulating the discussion so that a first assessment could begin to emerge, before opening the debate on future perspectives and possibilities for action. The participants questioned the FDP team at times, but the team had decided not to take a direct position.

Such an experience was new to the people, and they spoke out strongly. It is difficult to evaluate the impact of these 37 meetings, but they gave rise to a burst of communication and encouraged some individuals to form informal groups for the conduct of collective activities. Above all, they started a process of disengagement from external assistance, in favour of endogenous activities and the mobilisation of local efforts.

The meetings did not suffice, however, to bring about a social dynamics in a milieu marked by PARV's management, which frowned on local initiative and responsibility. To change this, and thus to respond to the concerns expressed by the villagers, the FDP programme chose to create a credit fund for seed.

Let us take the example of the Ambalavao district, where this system was applied. At first, the credit system was managed by a provisional mixed committee, composed of three elected farmer delegates and two technicians who were working in the area. In October 1992, the fund was officially handed over as an endowment to the nascent union of groups in the area, as was the equipment that the PARV had made available to the communities. The representatives of base-level groups not only appropriated the assets, they also began to speak out. They discussed all the operating methods of the credit fund and the rules for using equipment, and they criticised the management of the committee members, considering it indulgent and insufficiently rigorous.

In May 1993, at the constituent assembly of the union of farmers' groups, the preparatory committee, while presenting a report on the management of the credit fund, suggested that a new extension would have to be granted for delinquent loans. The group delegates strongly opposed the lax attitude of the committee and instead demanded immediate sanctions.

The farmers' assumption of power over their own groups, their committee and their union is perceptible in certain signs that former attitudes are being shed. It is not that easy, however, to escape from a relationship — which is fairly comfortable, all things considered — of dependence on a development agency. The technicians, for their part, sometimes feel that the people are not mature enough to assume such a responsibility. The accession of newcomers to power, contesting those who have acquired a certain experience, arouses ambivalent feelings: satisfaction that the situation is progressing, and at the same time, concern over the new risks that progress entails.

The FDP programme set off a socio-economic dynamics by giving people incentive, through a credit fund for seed, to form groups in order to undertake activities directed to their most immediate concerns. The farmers thus went through a learning process and developed their own capacities. Experience shows, however, that this dynamics does not develop smoothly, but can be suddenly interrupted or even regress.

The prevailing option today for the FDP programme is to:

— phase out its permanent presence in the district, while still remaining available;

— ensure that aid does not have an overly distorting influence on the evolution of the farmers' organisation and its activities;

— accept the risk that the farmers' lack of experience and confidence may render them incapable of managing conflicts and overcoming obstacles, and that this incapacity may throw the social dynamics off course or bring it to a halt.

Extending the action to new sub-regions

In 1993, the FDP programme was extended to new sub-regions in Imerina. Its goal was to induce local actors progressively to assume responsibility for exploitation of the forests and for agro-forestry development, as the support institutions cannot take on the management of community resources over the long term.

In this context, a survey of the social and institutional environment of the new sub-regions is essential. Exploratory studies are therefore conducted, in parallel and in co-ordination with studies of land use in the different areas. The purpose of these studies is to locate and analyse the forms of existing farmers' organisations. They also try to isolate the economic and socio-political factors that may favour or inhibit attempts at organisation, as well as networks for communication and for the diffusion of technical and social innovation. Lastly, they identify those support institutions that are active in rural areas. This information plays a decisive role in establishing initial contacts with base-level organisations that are interested in agro-forestry activities and have reached the level of organisational development needed for co-operative management of natural resources and community appropriation of state land.

Reserving space in the new institutions for future farmers' organisations

In defining new institutional bases, the FDP programme provided space for farmers' organisations so that their empowerment would have an anchor right from the beginning. Although these positions cannot yet be occupied by farmers' unions or federations, which exist today only in an embryonic state, the programme wanted to acknowledge the principle of their right to participate in the direction and administration of the new institutions.

An example is the Fafiala centre, which is managed jointly by the provincial administration, NGOs and farmers' organisations. However, in order not to oblige recently formed farmers' organisations to take part in this venture, provision was made for the directing board to function temporarily even though the various categories of active members had not chosen all of their representatives (as was indeed the case when the centre began to operate).

Towards a synergy among the regional actors

Establishing contact among the different actors

At first, attempts to establish relations among the various institutions that would be working together in the field were rather sporadic. Meetings were organised little by little, in a flexible and informal way; the topics on the agenda determined which institutions were invited and which participated, and the frequency of meetings was determined according to need (approximately every two or three months). These meetings dealt with three issues:

— planning of the framework and the institutional order;

— information on and assessment of actions carried out under the various parts of the programme;

— preparation for the extension of the programme activities into new sub-regions.

The meetings did not take up the programming of operations for the five parts of the programme. For the moment, each institution remained free in the field, subject to its having established precise operating plans that were in conformity with the programme's overall objectives. Within the FDP programme, it is considered that inducing a number of independent institutions to envisage working together will require several years.

The FDP programme enjoyed a favourable conjuncture of political transition and democratisation, as Malagasy and foreign institutions and the NGOs knew that they would have to end their isolation. The civil services, increasingly cut off from rural society, began to recognise the need to collaborate in a new spirit with the organisations working in rural areas. At the same time, the country's leaders became aware of the neglect and the alarming impoverishment of the rural population.

The Swiss development partner probably played a useful role by giving full approval to the FDP programme and by favouring the creation of a space for

meetings and dialogue between different strains of thought, between the public and private spheres, between the farmers and the technical teams.

An experiment in co-ordination

The partners agreed that a joint experiment in co-ordination, conceived in a very pragmatic way, would be preferable to an abstract debate over details and institutions. Participatory evaluation of this experiment would make it possible to draw the initial lessons and then to make a more considered choice for the future programme phase (1995-97).

The driving force in the present phase is the "co-ordination cell", composed of a volunteer worker and a research assistant. In the particularly volatile national context of the programme's transitional phase, it was considered preferable not to attempt to incorporate this cell in a larger structure, and even less to institutionalise it. It is expected to evolve along the lines of genuine regionalisation, and a directing and supervisory authority should be proposed by the FDP members and accepted by the beginning of the next phase.

This co-ordination cell functions today on the basis of two principles: first, not to be afraid to voice ideas and to make proposals to programme members, but to do so in a spirit of transparence and without taking part in the final decision-making process; second, to avoid an excess of bureaucracy, and to that end, to delegate as many operational tasks as possible. This is why the cell has only one office with minimal equipment, and why its staff of two is hired on a limited contract for the duration of the present programme phase.

Regional development study

In working out the orientation for extension of the programme, the idea emerged of making a reconnaissance of the Imerina region with a view to developing the *tanety*. This idea proved to be relatively innovative, as virtually all micro-regional planning had disappeared from Madagascar years before, or was the exclusive domain of foreign research departments.

An attempt was made to divide the region into sub-regions through selection of data that emphasised the diversity of situations. This work took three complementary forms: collection and use of existing data, field visits and thematic studies (history of human occupancy, analysis of land tenancy based on aerial photographs and so on). The studies made it possible to identify and map the geographical spaces in which farmers' productive behaviour runs up against relatively homogeneous systems of constraint.

This regional reference system facilitates the choice of new sub-regions for action and of appropriate forms of intervention for each. In addition, the specific problems of a given area can be placed in a sub-regional context, which provides initial hypotheses and keys to interpretation right from the beginning.

This study was also a formative process for a group of people from different institutions who were called on to work together, for it induced them to study the

strategies of other actors, particularly those of the farmers, and to consider the determining factors before acting. Each sub-region presents a certain number of factors that determine the relationship between the inhabitants and natural resources and that definitively shape the region's contrasting landscapes.

The form of development co-operation

Shared and evolving responsibility

Development agencies working in countries that are undergoing profound change with a background of economic crisis, such as Madagascar, usually hesitate between two attitudes:

— to take the initiative, guide the action and accept the risk of practising a substitute for genuine co-operation;

— to emphasise the establishment of real partnership relations and above all, to have confidence in their partners, to consider them as valid negotiators and the sole initiators of development.

The path followed by the FDP programme is distinct from the preceding two options. All actions are based on Malagasy institutions, without seeking at all costs an initial autonomy for domestic partners, and a considered and progressive sharing of responsibility is accepted. The Swiss development agency (DDA/Intercoopération) works out "programme contracts" with the private and public partners; in addition to setting out the expected results of the operation, these contracts include support for the strengthening and evolution of each institution. Among other things, the agency promotes the diversification of their sources of financing, out of concern for their independence. The partners define the terms of collaboration and of the mutual commitment in the most transparent way.

Diversity in the forms of support

Forms of support are not defined on the basis of a unique standard. The status of the institution (civil service, NGO or other), its needs, its absorptive capacity and what is acceptable for the partner are all taken into account.

The provision of technical personnel is decided according to real need, not as a question of doctrine. Two of the five parts of the programme benefit from technical assistants (three in total), who will gradually be pulled out. In principle, the technical assistant has the status of an advisor, but he can, temporarily and exceptionally, assume co-responsibility for directing an operation when the situation demands it. This was the case in the start-up of the Fafiala centre.

The experience of the FDP programme shows that during a period of profound social transformation, development co-operation with a human face and based on a shared daily experience makes perfect sense. Three factors seem to have been important at the level of foreign development personnel:

— the ascendancy due to experience and commitment;

— the trust inspired by the development worker's wish, not to fulfil himself, but to encourage the country's inhabitants to conceive plans and to act; and

— long residence in the country: according to the Malagasy people, a stay of two or three years does not suffice to forge a relationship of shared responsibility.

The balance between trust and lucidity

When conceived and practiced as a form of committed sharing, co-operation constitutes for both parties a permanent search for balance between, on the one hand, sensing the potential abilities of others and trusting them, and on the other, thwarting abuses and deviations to keep development actions on their underlying course.

The attitude of the partner who supplies aid must necessarily be positive and trusting. Through this attitude, the foreign partner's first concern will be for the future of those with whom he collaborates and who should not be considered as simply executing a preconceived project. Nevertheless, a critical spirit and frank speech are required for the function of accompanying development. There is a serious risk that indulgence, in the name of non-interference and respect for others' values, will allow hypocrisy to set in.

Conclusion: Towards local control of development

Popular participation is not a formal part of the FDP programme, but it is the underlying direction of FDP's entire activity. All of the programme's achievements result from a desire to find solutions and from the organisation of local actors, supported by service institutions. It is not a case, however, of a community development action in support of self-help, but of a programme that, within the framework of managing natural resources and developing the *tanety*, contributes to rural organisation and strengthens the capacities of local communities, thanks to concerted action by private and public services.

It is evident, however, that families, associations and communities have other priorities. Although development of forestry, agriculture and pasture on the hills is essential to preserving and increasing the productive potential of the area, it will have only a limited effect on the living conditions of the inhabitants. The institutional members of the programme are aware of the need to help the inhabitants (through a process of participatory diagnosis) to place the actions proposed by the programme within the larger problems of local development. The farmers will then be able consciously to allocate their strength and their investments.

Technical questions apart, the FDP programme in its first three years of operation has had two main concerns: first, to help in constructing a synergy among regional actors by reducing as much as possible the distorting role of aid in institutional relations; second, to apply a method that enhances local initiative and gives local actors more control over all that is undertaken.

Transitional Societies and Participatory Development: Reflections Based on Malian Realities

Annick Talbot

Introduction

The solicitation of popular participation in Mali, particularly in rural areas, has gone through several stages and various levels. In hindsight, the experiments conducted do not seem to have favoured participatory development and are more akin to "administered rural development".

Not until the 1990s was it realised that the "rural participatory development" experience of the Mali-Sud cotton project, working through the Associations Villageoises (AV), was certainly a success at the economic level but not at the social level. Its numerous flaws and contradictions gave rise to many dangers, such as the marginalisation of certain categories of the population and the weakening of the rural milieu.

Many other projects of the 1980s, like the Mali-Sud venture, gave priority to the economic dimension over the social and cultural dimensions.

It is therefore interesting to analyse this experience, considered by many as a model of local social development, and to emphasise the pitfalls and their consequences, in order to learn from them and to identify on this basis new approaches to participatory development. We also present a few recent initiatives, which are closer to a participatory development ethic. The innovative methods of these initiatives seem, subject to adaptation, to be reproducible.

Past and present

The CMDT/Mali-Sud venture

Presentation

The Compagnie Malienne de Développement du Textile (CMDT) was created in 1974 with the task of developing the cotton-growing zones and improving the farmers' living conditions.

Rapidly, the farmers' desire for autonomy made it possible to create the AV movement. AVs are an original way of grouping and organising village producers; their objectives are to resolve problems and to meet the economic and social needs of the community and of individuals. These associations, which are of a modern type, are supported by traditional organisations; village chiefs and elders hold decision-making power within the AVs.

AVs were requested to undertake and manage cotton production. At first, the CMDT simply responded to their requests for training. As the years went by, however, the CMDT's attitude towards the AVs became increasingly interventionist. It offered them instruments for management, follow-up and self-evaluation. Under its direction, the AVs really became involved in rural development actions by marketing inputs, managing credit, organising agricultural training and providing various other services.

These relatively slight transfers of skills and responsibility did not, however, enable the AVs genuinely to represent the interests of producers and villagers. A "supervised" form of participatory development therefore developed, under the prodding of the cotton company and with the encouragement of the state and the financial backers.

The CMDT/Mali-Sud experience incontestably yielded some positive effects:

— Throughout the CMDT zones, farms were modernised and agricultural techniques progressed thanks to loans from the CMDT or the Banque Nationale de Développement Agricole. As a result, production strongly increased.

— Production was diversified, as the new techniques were also applied to food crops.

— Cotton was the only source of regular cash revenues, and thus inserted the farmers into the market economy.

We should recall that before the cotton crisis, cotton was the pillar of the Malian economy.

Despite this economic success, the system has several flaws and has had some unexpected negative effects. Moreover, it entails profound social changes.

The AVs confronted their first difficulties as early as the middle of the 1980s, when Malian cotton faced severe international competition. Subsequently, the debt-repayment problems of certain AV members, in addition to various political events and the cotton crisis, led producers to challenge the AV system. They organised themselves, created the Syndicat des Cotonniers et Vivriers (SYCOV) and wish henceforth to be considered as full partners.

Community structures (to which the AVs are closely linked) are traditionally based on a spirit of solidarity and mutual aid, and they imply sharing of wealth between individual and collective needs. Farmers today, owing to the intervention of the CMDT and their entry into the market economy, have acquired a logic of production and personal accumulation, while staying very close to their communities. Although behaviour has become more individualised, the farmers are still not in a position to express their will outside the groups to which they belong. One may wonder, then, whether the logic of enterprise and modernity, and the farmers' or the community's logic are compatible. These possible contradictions must be kept in mind if the participatory development effort is not to be invalidated.

Within the AVs, moreover, the rigid rules and strongly hierarchical relations of tradition cohabit with Western formal structures (the usual organisation of an association, management practices and so on). Thus young managers trained to participate in business have acquired a taste for responsibility without acquiring any power. The AVs' accounts, which are merged with those of the villages, become an element of the chiefs' discretionary power. The role of young people is limited to carrying out assigned tasks. The AVs point to their insufficient means as a pretext for the lack of financial and material support to the young and to other categories such as women or blacksmiths. Similarly, resource management at the family level is not transparent, and family heads do not redistribute revenues from production to the young.

Young people are now contesting this community system, but the strategies that they use to oppose their elders are those of circumvention and avoidance, as dialogue seems impossible to them, and confrontation utterly out of the question. Thus it frequently occurs either that young people migrate away from the farm, which entails the break-up of the family, or that the farm is broken up.

The break-up of farms entails a reduction of the total area per farm as well as a drop in the area devoted to cotton. Moreover, this division of landed property can disturb the ecological balance, as certain zones have no arable land left. Finally, the disparities between farms (in terms of equipment, area under cultivation and number of people employed) become more pronounced, and certain groups that can no longer call on family solidarity become marginalised. A process of social exclusion is under way, and it threatens the whole of rural society.

The main lessons of this experience

The principal errors of this type of project were insufficient knowledge of the milieu and the establishment of structures that guaranteed neither the effective

participation of the whole population nor power sharing. Subsequently, matters became still worse because, despite certain warning signals, little attention was given to the serious disparities that were emerging. The failure to evaluate the effects of the AV system made it impossible to make necessary preventive adjustments, and problems and conflicts were not openly expressed. The main stumbling block of the programme was therefore the lack of attention to the social dimension.

Today, the authorities and financial backers are aware of the need to review the approach and to move in new directions. The backers want the CMDT to be simply a cotton enterprise and to leave rural development tasks to the independent services that could work to re-establish solidarity.

New challenges

The challenge that participatory development must meet is the search for a new organisation of solidarity. The principal objectives of participatory development, indeed, are the quest for social justice and the progressive establishment of democratic process by involving an increasing number of people in decision making. All this depends on changes in customs, and thus on consciousness raising — a task that demands reflection, mediation and training.

As the account of the Mali-Sud venture has shown, economic interventions without a social dimension can destroy the existing forms of participatory development. From now on, a cultural and social approach should accompany any economic project. By working within the traditional milieu, participatory development can meet the aspirations of people who want to benefit from certain advantages of modern society while retaining the serenity and safety of older times.

Several initiatives in the recent history of Mali have represented attempts to work within a participatory development ethic, even if they are still partial and do not always reach the poorest people. These initiatives are concerned with the re-establishment of social networks, with collective consciousness raising and participation, beginning with the examination of problems and the search for solutions by the members of one rural area or neighourhood.

New approaches

Initiatives taken in the last few years in Mali respond in part to criticisms of the Mali-Sud project. These experiences, which involve the people collectively in participatory development, are mostly carried out in rural areas. Many of them fall into the domain of social economics, with a mutualist organisation as their dominant trait. Some are particularly geared towards production, others towards the social aspects, but all take tradition into account, as we will see in the presentation of three new approaches: land management, which appears as a new orientation of the Mali-Sud project; farming research focused on intensive cultivation; and an experience with community health centres in deprived urban areas.

Land management

Land management, the ultimate goal of which is the improvement of living conditions, has three more immediate objectives:

— improving productive systems,

— conserving natural productive potential,

— helping populations to become autonomous through control over their own development.

Several organisations, notably the Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès and the Swiss NGO Helvetas, opted for land management a few years ago and have developed a support strategy in this field. In March 1993, the land-management project of Koutiala, financed by the Caisse Française de Développement in the framework of support for the CMDT, introduced a method of village diagnosis. It is too early for results, as the application phase, which follows the research phase, is still under way. This method is interesting because it takes account of other experiences and the mass of information about farms that was accumulated under the Mali-Sud project.

This diagnostic method is a key element of a detailed method of land management under study for the Mali-Sud zone. The goal is to arrive at an overall understanding of a village community and the characteristics of its land. The method has four specific objectives:

— understanding of a village's social cohesion — an objective that clearly affirms that the human milieu, through its capacity to organise itself to manage its land, lies at the centre of all development problems;

— study of the natural environment in order to evaluate its potential and constraints;

— assessment of the village's technical level;

— classification of villages, to allow the adoption of development programmes in accordance with the characteristics of each village community.

The method includes a number of stages:

a. the use of maps showing agricultural land tenancy and of photographs that make it possible to assess the state of the land and to recognise ongoing processes of degradation;

b. the guide to village maintenance, with a specific component for women;

c. field trips in small groups of two to five persons chosen for "their knowledge of the area and their mastery of the land-related and historical issues of the village" — these trips make it possible to verify information obtained in village assemblies and to set forth a first land diagram for the supervisory personnel;

d. the village monograph and land diagram, which provide an overall view of the village and broaden the usual narrow vision of village leaders;

e. the potential for social cohesion, an intermediate stage that allows synthesis of data and comprehension of this potential the questions

addressed concern the village and its history, power structures and collective organising capacity;

f. natural resource potential (surface area of cultivated land, forest potential, pasture potential, availability of water);

g. technical level (equipment and technical training);

h. the village classification, as a function of social cohesion, natural resource potential and technical level.

Thus the villagers and the supervisory personnel can isolate the distinctive features of the situation and choose specific and adequate interventions. Indeed, it was the indiscriminate diffusion of technical plans applicable to all (without taking into account those who could not keep up) that had led to the process of exclusion noted in the original Mali-Sud project. In contrast, the approach outlined here allows the people to compare past and present, to imagine future possibilities and to make the necessary decisions.

Files constituting a veritable data base for the village are built up. The release of these data in the village assembly makes it possible to rank problems, to discuss proposed solutions, to choose courses of action and to formulate programmes. The villagers then think about the means and organisation needed, and they begin to take steps to accomplish their ends. The usual result is recognition of the necessity of bringing villages together to organise environmental protection, better land management and common regulations, which will be co-ordinated with the policy of decentralisation when the latter takes effect.

This approach should lead to planning from the base level, where the people could negotiate in a contractual way with their various partners, and notably with state administrative structures. Thus the goal of land management is to act on causes, whereas technical support has until today been interested only in symptoms. Land management develops the notion of sustainability and the collective approach, an approach that, like traditional society, takes into account the search for consensus and the divergent interests of the people.

A local investment fund, today in the process of being established, would invoke the notion of redistribution and would be integrated into the development programme of the village, and especially that of the rural district (uniting several villages) envisaged in the framework of decentralisation.

Research by farmers

Origin of the approach

At its inception, a quarter of a century ago, the Zura centre (in the San region) was a training centre for rural animators; it trained young couples in agricultural techniques and provided them with equipment (ploughs, carts, donkeys), initially at no charge, then with credit assistance as from 1975. For those who conceived the project, these young people were supposed to be experimental farmers when they returned to their villages, but the village elders did not view matters in the same way: in reality they regarded the Zura centre as a means of obtaining equipment.

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During the 1980s, the Zura centre trained teams capable of supplying useful services to the village (well-diggers, welding workshops, workshops for making dam-building materials) and, during the 1983-86 drought, created contingency grain storage facilities. More specific training was also undertaken, such as breaking oxen, running literacy centres and so on.

As a direct consequence of the drought, the priority objective of the Zura centre since 1988-89 has been to transform the productive system so that clear-and-burn agriculture would evolve towards fixed, permanent agriculture sufficiently productive to ensure a decent life for the people.

A deeply confused human environment

The farmers, overly supervised and assisted for many years, are in a waiting position, incapable of taking initiatives. The "participation" to which they are accustomed is limited to contributions in cash and kind.

The fear of taking initiatives is accompanied by the fear of repression by the authorities, by the Banque Nationale de Développement Agricole and also by the old order. Overcoming these fears will be difficult; it will take time and an enormous effort to gain the people's trust. In reality, the social milieu is in a state of anomy, which entails very serious problems in the short and medium term. The social fabric is in continual degradation, and the people increasingly take refuge in magical practices.

The people are consuming their capital of land, water and other environmental resources in complete disregard for the real situation, which amounts to a suicidal attitude. The society seems to be turned in on itself, and environmental degradation fans the flames of conflicts, power struggles and other difficulties of social interaction. It should also be noted that local technicians and foreign volunteer workers have been neither vigilant enough with regard to environmental degradation, nor sufficiently convincing in their relations with the farmers.

Perspectives

At the Zura centre, the staff (Malian and foreign) is aware of this disorientation. For each issue, there used to be customs, codes adjusted to the needs of the historical period and varying from region to region, sometimes even from village to village. Nothing that corresponds to the culture and the expectations of the villagers has come to replace these customs.

The personnel of the centre views development as a process of transforming society towards a more sustainable, more equitable environment: a new conception of society and new institutions are therefore needed. This implies a thorough going effort to develop structures that could favour a grassroots development process.

In this context, the transformation of the productive system at the Zura centre will be possible only if those concerned — i.e. the farmers — search for solutions themselves. This search demands real commitment from the farmers, healthier and more co-operative relations between farmers and the government, with flexible and appropriate external aid supporting the transformation in all its aspects.

To bring this transformation about, the Zura centre has defined theoretical stages, which in reality can be concomitant.

The first stage concerns the struggle against erosion, in order to retain water and soil. To this end, farmers have been trained as animators to discuss problems of soil degradation. Little by little, action has followed, notably with changes in cultivation practices. This constitutes a farmer's first investment in his land.

The second stage is the farmers' assumption of responsibility for soil fertilisation, which entails integration of stock raising and agriculture. Some actions, mostly centred on farmers' research programmes, have already been taken.

The third stage bears on socio-economic organisation, at the level of the individual farm as well as that of larger entities (farmers' associations, economic interest groups). Action research on agricultural credit, carried out entirely by farmers, is already under way. It addresses the conditions of implementation and takes socio-economic factors into account.

To initiate farmers' research programmes, it is necessary first to provide training and activities in the areas concerned. The Zura centre's 80 hectares of land make it possible to show the actual results in terms of crops and agricultural improvements. The Zura centre has thus become an experimental station that both practises and popularises its techniques.

Today, the centre performs experiments according to protocols with the farmers. It hopes to increase the number of on-site analyses, as has been done for several years, but also and above all to carry out analyses in experimental zones, to meet the demand of villagers. The centre wishes to become a rural people's university, where farmer-researchers, technicians and engineers will formulate their research hypotheses from the reality, the logic and the constraints of farmers. Thus "experts" born in the milieu to be transformed could bring about lasting change in the situation.

Initiatives in favour of the destitute and marginal groups

The Zura centre is located in a region where the population lives at the poverty threshold, but some groups are particularly disadvantaged: poor farmers, women and young people. An "encouragement fund" has been created for impoverished farmers, with the function of accompanying initiatives and facilitating the acquisition of necessary equipment. The equipment acquired serves as collateral for these interest-free loans. For the destitute, this is the only hope of building a future.

Reconsideration of the condition of women, inspired by gender analysis, is under way. Particular attention is being given to the impact of changes in the productive system on the division of labour within the family (and hence on relations between men and women).

It would seem that the situation of children and women has considerably worsened since the disappearance of the traditional environment. The old way of life is disintegrating and no new institution (the nuclear family, for example) has come to replace it; this collapse makes the situation of children and women even more precarious.

For the present, the new productive system is not in a position to stop this trend, which is not directly related to the activities undertaken, even though the latter are conducted by an institution that has every intention of improving matters. Of course, the Zura centre does act directly in some areas (the conditions of childbirth, health, nutrition, economic activity), but it gives increasing importance to indirect intervention, through training addressed to both men and women, and by stimulating reflection about social changes so as to find answers for the future.

The integration of agriculture and stock raising could have positive effects on the condition of women in the medium term but especially in the long term, as it brings men and women together in a common enterprise. This new type of farm could be the starting point for a new relationship between men and women, in which responsibility would be shared.

Such a change would end women's status as outsiders in their husbands' families, because they would become responsible partners in farm, family and village. This requires that their role be enhanced, recognised and appreciated and that they be prepared to participate autonomously in activities.

Innovations in urban areas: the example of community health centres

There have been relatively few collective experiences involving urban or suburban populations in Mali. Young unemployed college graduates sometimes take the initiative of starting systems of social mutualist "enterprises". These innovations often fit in with the social economics destined to play a leading role in the transition to democracy.

The experience with community health centres presented below is radically changing the approach to the health system in Mali. It is being emulated in several secondary towns and even in rural areas.

Origin of the approach and first experiment

The idea of a community health centre came from the national centre for public health research and from the school of medicine, whose graduates could not find jobs. It begins with the realisation that the living standards of the population are so low that only a tiny minority has access to private medical care.

The first experiment was carried out in Bankoni (a suburban neighbourhood of the capital with a population of 60 000) at the initiative of a group of prominent persons, one of whom, a community development technician, held a modest post at the health ministry.

The centre opened its doors in March 1989 with very slender means: a grant to fix up its premises, the equivalent of two months' salary for the doctor and a stock of medicines. It functions as a mutual insurance society (by paying an entrance fee, members obtain services at a lower rate) managing a health centre that is open to all inhabitants, whether they are members or not. The Bankoni centre also accepts people who are not able to pay the fees requested. Here the doctors must cope on a

case-by-case basis, including the treatment of these patients in the overhead costs, as coverage of medical care for the destitute is not provided in Mali.

The success of the centre exceeded all expectations. Today, Bankoni has three doctors, two midwives and four nurses, as well as a maternity clinic, which had not been part of the initial plan.

Bankoni set up a rehabilitation and nutritional education centre for the handicapped children of impoverished families. This activity had to be stopped because the international aid that had launched the project was cut off after a few months. The centre is therefore trying to find means of providing social services permanently in this very poor neighbourhood. It is therefore arranging to provide new services (medical laboratory, sonogram), in the hope that they will generate some resources that will allow the centre to stand by the most disadvantaged.

Replicability and sustainability of this approach

The example of Bankoni has given rise to emulation. Fifteen community health centres have opened in Bamako, and provincial towns (Ségou, Mopti) and even rural areas are following suit.

The Bamako centres have shown excellent results. Today, the 15 centres in Bamako have jointly reached an annual level of 80 000 consultations with doctors, and they handle about 9 300 childbirths, with an equivalent rate of prenatal consultations. These figures amount to 20 per cent of the general-medicine consultations and 30 per cent of the childbirths handled by the public health services.

In financial terms, the centres passed the threshold of 100 million CFA francs (at the time, about 2 million French francs) in receipts, which allowed them to cover all of their operating expenses without resorting to subsidies. In terms of employment, they have made possible the creation of 106 jobs.

The health ministry, aware of the success of the centres, now considers that the national health system includes a public sector, a private profit-making sector and a private non profit sector (called the community sector). The ministry has therefore defined criteria for government authorisation of community health centres. It has also finalised a convention that integrates the centres into the state network so as to link them with the civil service, which enjoys state credits. For the moment, these centres are providing preventive care, which falls under the responsibility of the state, but they do not receive the subsidies connected with this work.

A general approach

The first centres blazed a trail for those who wish to embark in this enterprise. The creation of the health centres shows that a community initiative results not from the spontaneous commitment of an entire community but from one or more individuals who have a project for the community.

A centre is created in several stages:

First, an individual decides to create a community health centre. He gathers information on start-up procedures and drafts the centre's statutes and by-laws. Next,

he contacts half a dozen trusted persons to join him on the first management committee.

Second, the newly created committee makes a radio announcement to recruit a doctor, who should be chosen according to objective criteria, without consideration for any personal relations. The committee then instructs the doctor to make a feasibility study. If the study is approved, it is submitted to development partners with a view to obtaining the financial aid needed to launch the centre (of the order of 5 million CFA francs, or 100 000 French francs at the time of writing).

Third, the health centre begins to operate and to make itself known. Family heads are invited to become members of the association, on the basis of the financial advantages accorded to membership card holders and their families.

Only when the members' association (400 seems to be the minimum) can institute democratic procedures (annual general assembly, election of officers) does the centre really become a participatory development enterprise.

Moreover, possibilities arise for common organisations. Facing difficulties in obtaining a regular supply of essential medicines, the community health centres united to create an interest group called Santé pour Tous, which allows them to obtain supplies permanently at low prices and also offers management advice and the possibility of recourse to accounting audits.

Conclusion

The anomic state of the populations and especially the ongoing process of social exclusion require urgent measures to increase popular participation in development.

Attention to the social dimension of development should be a priority, both at the local level and the national and international levels. One objective is the pursuit of sustainability, which involves the state and also the international community. For example, there is a need for a consistent political framework that gives the people incentives to produce. It is not a matter of subsidising production but of ensuring that production allows the people to survive.

The other imperative is solidarity. Participatory development must be concerned with combatting injustice and inequality, and this can only be done through solidarity, which must be renewed or invented at all levels. Solidarity among neighbours can be developed or strengthened.

New initiatives along participatory development lines have already been taken. In this context, everything must be reinvented and reviewed by the people concerned. This implies, as a prerequisite, that the people must be sensitised to the question.

The policy change must be conducted with prudence both towards the people and by the people, because time for analysis and collective consciousness raising is needed in order to bring the transformation about. In contrast, it should be radical as far as the aid organisations are concerned. The latter must change their attitudes and behaviour to show more respect for the culture of others, for their means of taking responsibility for themselves and building their future. Participatory development

requires patience (since it is a question of the long term), humility, open negotiation and flexible but respected contractual relations. It is first of all a code of ethics that needs to be established, and precautions to be taken according to that code.

Two principles could be accepted as a code of ethics for international co-operation in participatory development:

— helping people to find the answers to problems they face, and

— substituting negotiated and contractual exchange for grants, and replacing charity with information, education and training.

These principles should find expression in the following series of attitudes:

— recognising that a society develops by building on what it already is, and hence that reflection about itself is of capital importance the main thing for development partners is to accompany the people in this search;

— seeking the involvement of all the living strength of the society, in particular the social inferiors (young people and women), while managing conflicts through negotiation and mediation so as not to harm further the social fabric;

— considering that development comes about through exchange (following the principle of reciprocal giving) of information, training, popular knowledge, past and present experience, and scientific knowledge;

— establishing an institutional framework that facilitates the creation of service associations able to accompany grassroots initiatives in socio-cultural matters, economic and social development, democracy and citizenship.

The Role of Social Actors in Promoting Participatory Development at Local Level: A View from India

Hari Mohan Mathur

Recent years have witnessed a phenomenal upsurge in commitment to participatory processes in development. A widely shared view in the development community is that without the commitment, creativity, energy and involvement of the people, the pace of development will not accelerate. The participatory approach is, in fact, being viewed as the most effective way of achieving equitable social and human development.

Participatory development owes its burgeoning popularity to a widespread concern with the shortcomings of past development strategies, which in many cases made little or no difference to the lives of large segments of population, especially the poor, women, tribal peoples and other vulnerable groups. The participatory approach reorients development in favour of the poor and their own view of their needs, their problems and alternatives for resolving these problems. Participatory development is also worthy of support in its own right, as an expression of the rising worldwide tide of concern over the peoples democratic control over their lives and their political, social and economic environment.

The challenge of practice

Proponents of participatory approaches have often been more concerned with what participation can do than with how it can be done. While support for participation is now nearly universal, development of methodological tools and techniques to put it into practice has lagged behind. Knowledge about obstacles to participation and methods of overcoming them remain woefully inadequate. A better understanding of participatory processes must be derived from successful experiences, especially experiences of how, in practice, obstacles to participation can be overcome. Unfortunately, systematically documented cases of successful participatory development are relatively few in number.

Efforts should now be made to identify and mobilise the specific social actors whose participation is sought, and to find practical ways in which they can participate in project design, execution and monitoring. The key issue is a social one: What can be done to generate and sustain the involvement of the social actors, the people who give life to the project (Cernea, 1991)?

Who are these social actors? What constraints and choices do they face in participatory development? How can they become more productive and make development more sustainable? These questions are the particular focus of this discussion of practice-related concerns of participatory development. To understand better the role of social actors, especially in cases where they have been successful in overcoming obstacles to participation, it seems necessary first to have some idea of the nature and the extent of those obstacles.

Obstacles to participation

Field studies indicate that the practice of participation has never been trouble-free in India. Obstacles, encountered at every step, are numerous and often formidable. Broadly, they may be grouped by their origin: some arise within the community, others outside.

Obstacles from within the community

The poor have long been dominated by and dependent upon local elite groups. As a result, a mentality of dependence has overtaken them, rendering them incapable of making their own decisions. Moreover, the people who enjoy positions of prominence oppose by whatever means they can any challenge to their status.

Centuries of poverty and injustice have bred an overwhelming fatalism among the poor. It can be difficult for people to gain confidence enough in their own power to control things for themselves. In no small measure, traditional social structures account for this inertia. The poor live in highly stratified societies, with castes and classes clearly demarcated in a rigid hierarchical order. Religion, language, ethnicity and other socio-cultural forces divide the poor and undermine their chances of making a united challenge to the position of powerful elite groups.

In these circumstances, mere survival is the greatest challenge. If the struggle for existence consumes all the time and energy of the poor, then participation, which also demands time and energy, is a luxury that they can not afford.

Obstacles from the outside

To outside institutions and individuals, the people's beginning to organise themselves for participation appears threatening. Instead of extending support to the participatory effort, they therefore begin opposing it in subtle ways, which often give way to open resistance.

By their very nature, centralised government structures are non-participatory in their outlook as well as their manner of promoting development, especially at the periphery. As far as possible, they tend to keep the people out of decision-making processes, which they zealously guard as their exclusive preserve. For fear of losing power, they do not strengthen their own local agencies. The decentralised structures that can be responsive to local needs and better able to involve people then cease to be effective.

Even for projects that have participatory objectives, administrators in such centralised government structures often devise complicated, dilatory and ambiguous procedures that deter people instead of encouraging them to come forward. Government officials, who often belong to higher caste groups, expect and demand deference from the people whom they are supposed to serve. This difference in social background inhibits the interaction between officials and the people which is so necessary if development is to proceed on a participative basis.

Many participatory efforts do not go far enough because an enabling environment does not exist. The legal system does not take enough action to educate the people about their rights and what they can do legally to form associations to promote their interests. Moreover, such associations must obtain government approval, which would require a level of literacy that the poor clearly lack. The system thus tends to work against participation.

Social actors

A participatory process that aims to move people to the centre stage of development must involve a wide range of social actors, from local to external. It is important that the social actors view participatory development as a partnership venture. Participatory processes entail many opportunities for interaction among them.

Social actors at the local level

The people

The central actors in a participatory process at the community level are, of course, the people themselves, but do people want to participate? Many development workers once viewed the poor in village society as incapable of coming out of their isolation and becoming part of the wider world which is experiencing rapid change and development.

More recent evidence (Bhasin, 1983; Rahman, 1981; Sethi, 1980) is in sharp contrast with this negative characterisation. Widely reported in the literature on participatory development, the Bhoomi Sena ("land army") movement stands out as a convincing illustration of the willingness and the ability of the poor to organise themselves for participation. The struggle by Bhoomi Sena among the tribal people in Palghar, Maharastra, India, initially arose more or less as a spontaneous reaction

against their oppression and exploitation by local moneylenders. Since its beginning in 1970, the movement (now with some outside support) has extended to well over 80 villages, and its agenda has broadened to include several other issues of common interest, such as land alienation, minimum wages and bonded labour.

Nevertheless, many experiences suggest that unless there is something vital at stake, the poor steer away from participation.

If genuine participation is the goal, it is important to know who is or is not involved in the development process. Marginal farmers, landless workers, tribal peoples, women, people living in remote areas and minority groups have remained largely unaffected by previous development strategies. In contrast, there is no dearth of participation by the local elite groups. Not only do these groups often capture development benefits, but the poor even lose leadership roles to them (Bhatt, 1987). A growing concern for participation by previously excluded groups is thus understandable.

Communities

Local communities have long played a major role in participatory development efforts. One of the first attempts to induce communities to participate in their development was India's community development programme, launched in 1952. This programme was based on the assumption that rural communities were closely knit, undifferentiated, harmonious entities, that people would work together on a footing of equality and share equitably in the benefits flowing from participative endeavours.

The fact is that communities are more likely to be a collection of factions, each trying to promote its own interests (Mathur, 1982). People are suspicious of their neighbours, fearing that they will seize all the benefits of participatory projects. For this reason they are not willing to co-operate with others. Moreover, attempts to introduce change often bring dormant factionalism into the open. If a new programme is acceptable to one group, another will automatically resist and reject it, no matter how beneficial it may be for the whole community.

Local self-help groups

In an anthropological sense, human groups are seldom without basic forms of organisation. Kinship networks, religious organisations, youth dormitories, communal labour arrangements, peasant leagues, burial societies and self-help groups form the scaffolding of communities in traditional societies.

Local development organisations have made it possible for people to accomplish as a group what they can not accomplish individually. These organisations owe their popularity to risks that they often take on issues that are vital to the people (Pandey, 1991). They can provide members with greater negotiating leverage and also a platform to air their views on local development issues.

Local organisations are a strategic resource for sustainable participatory development, and they deserve to be strengthened. The group approach has proved its efficacy in several cases, such as that of the Small Farmer Development Agency

in Nepal. Farmers and landless labourers were organised into small groups, the idea being that members of these groups would be in a better position to receive and use benefits from the project. The Peoples Participation Programme of the FAO, mainly concentrated in Africa, also used the group approach to good effect (FAO, 1990), as did the Amul Dairy Co-operative in villages of Gujarat, India.

Local groups also have certain weaknesses. They are site-specific and small in scale, their impact is limited and they are dependent on public policies and other external factors. Nevertheless, they are increasingly identified as critical to the success of participatory development. They can provide better information about local needs, help in adapting programmes to local conditions, provide opportunities for better communication, mobilise local resources, improve the chances that use and maintenance of facilities will be sustained and improve co-operation with local people who can benefit from innovation.

Social actors external to the community

Ideally, participation must arise from within the community; indeed, externally induced participation sounds like a contradiction in terms. In reality, however, participation almost invariably requires stimulation from outside.

Government agencies

In the decades following independence, government agencies and their services, whether in health, education, or agriculture, have multiplied rapidly. The government, rather than the people themselves, has been assumed to be the prime mover of development.

Government agencies in the capital, disdainful of local knowledge, often decide on programmes for the people without any consultation, notifying popular leaders later only in case their labour is needed for some construction activity. Promoting people-centred development is not the task for which government agencies were set up in the first instance. Typically, attempts by government personnel to work with the people have been paternalistic, thus reinforcing dependency and stifling whatever initiative the people may have (Mathur, 1990).

Criticism of government-led development is becoming increasingly strident. The growing consensus favours the transformation of the governmental system into an effective instrument for furthering people-centred development. The effort must begin with a redefinition of the role of government bureaucracies and management systems: government officials who traditionally have seen themselves as controlling development activities must learn to play an enabling role. Power must increasingly pass into the hands of people themselves.

Local governments are powerful participative structures. They can assist the poor in organising themselves, thus giving them a voice in the decision-making structures that determine their lives. It was to devolve power to the people that *panchayati raj* in India was introduced in 1959. In all but two or three states, however, the programme has remained frail and faltering. This recently led to an amendment in the Constitution of India. With reinforced powers under the 73rd

Amendment, the *panchayati raj* institution is expected to play a significant role in bringing the people to centre stage in the development process.

The delegation of central authority to locally elected authorities does not always proceed along anticipated lines. Traditional elites are likely to be most intransigent in their traditional, local settings. If power is passed to them, the repression of the weaker and disadvantaged castes and classes is likely to worsen. An appropriate policy and institutional framework can help to avoid this type of problem.

Government agencies may not all be equally enthusiastic about participation. In India, for example, "The Rural Development and the Home Ministries seem to have adopted contradictory policies — the Rural Development Ministry for promoting education, organisation and mobilisation and the Home Ministry for preventing such action" (Vettivel, 1992). There is room for divergent views and programmes, particularly within the social sectors, but in the end, it is the predispositions, policies and practices of governments that determine whether the people have opportunities to participate.

Non-governmental organisations

It is increasingly recognised that NGOs do a better job than governments not only in promoting participation but also in converting aid money into development that lasts. They are becoming an important resource in the implementation of donor-aided participatory approaches. Consequently, public funding for NGO projects, especially funding from international donors, has increased substantially. The number of NGOs has risen sharply in recent years and shows no sign of slowing (Verma, 1993).

As agents of development for the poor, NGOs have an edge over government agencies. They are closer to the people and therefore understand them better. Proximity to the people makes it possible for NGOs to monitor projects closely and if necessary to make corrections in midstream. Small size and administrative flexibility make it easier for them to try innovative solutions to problems. As NGOs grow bigger, however, they tend to lose some of these advantages.

What about the general belief that NGOs are especially effective in reaching the poor? The evidence suggests that they are more effective with the poor who have some assets but less effective with those who have no assets at all (Jazairy *et al.*, 1992). A study of 75 NGO projects found that what was termed participation was often in practice a form of decentralised decision making dominated by NGO staff and local elites, and that local elites often received a disproportionate share of benefits (Tendler, 1982).

In recent years, the NGO image seems to have lost some of its lustre on other counts as well. The major criticism is directed against their preference for and dependence on external funding assistance, which is held to be in contradiction with a process of self-reliant local development. Moreover, once established at the local level, NGOs seem to be in no hurry to work themselves out of a job. With some exceptions (such as Astha, a small NGO in Rajasthan), they tend not to phase out,

thus hampering the build-up of local capacity. Communities are becoming dependent on them for "doing development" in perpetuity (Best, 1990).

Finally, when there are millions of starving poor and tens of foreign donor agencies out to help them, opportunists may be expected to set up NGOs as fronts for private business ventures, in order to benefit a circle of cronies.

Development workers

In initiating the process of participatory development the key person is the development worker at the village level (Tilakaratna, 1991). Neither government agencies nor NGOs can do without this person, who may be called an animator, facilitator, catalyst, organiser, promoter, activist. Whatever his title, the development worker's role is essentially to encourage people to reflect on their situation, build up their critical awareness of what they might wish to change and how they might go about it. He should help people to think for themselves, not tell them what to think.

Once this process is under way, development workers mobilise people around simple issues that concern them all. People begin to gain self-confidence as they proceed, and success makes them feel capable of facing larger issues. For example, development workers from Astha succeeded in organising tribal women in their struggle against contractors of *tendu* leaves (used in rolling a kind of local cigarette called *bidi*); the local group eventually gained the confidence and skills to negotiate a higher price for their product. A study of this participatory experience found that Astha could help tribal women to overcome their powerlessness mainly by encouraging them to identify, analyse and then take action on issues that affect their lives (Shrivastava, 1993).

The use of para-professionals can enlarge access to project services and give people more opportunity to participate at the same time. In terms of technical competence, para-professionals should not be seen as an alternative to professionals. To be successful they need the help of professionals in many ways. Rather, their strength lies in their social expertise. Female para-professionals, for example, are better placed than male doctors to discuss birth control with village women.

International development institutions

While the use of external resources in initiating and strengthening local participatory capacities appears to be ubiquitous, this can be a delicate matter for external agents (Alamgir, 1989). To promote participation is to empower the people, a concept with which many are still ill at ease. Moreover, there is always the risk that participatory development imposed from outside may lead the poor from one form of dependency to another. Dependence on outside experts may prevent people from acquiring the ability to fend for themselves.

External agencies have begun to invest heavily in projects that seek to promote participatory models of development. The question is whether international institutions with their global concerns and macro approaches can play a meaningful role in building local participation. The job of setting up grassroots participatory groups will necessarily have to be left to the government or local institutions, but

external agencies still have a large role to play in identifying projects that meet their policy requirements, providing funding support, monitoring implementation, evaluating the outcome and so on. The incorporation of participatory components into projects raises a number of complex issues that need to be sorted out.

Funding does not drive the development process, which is basically led by people, but it is true that many worthwhile participatory development projects would not have seen the light of the day without the funding support of external agencies. Some of the best known and most successful projects are associated with international development organisations such as the World Bank and PIDER in Mexico; UNDP and PIDA in Sri Lanka; UNIFEM and Flora Tristan in Peru; IFAD and the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh; the Peoples Participation Programme (PPP) of FAO, which started in Sierra Leone; ILO and Srilakas in the Philippines; and so on.

Most international agencies have begun to establish internal groups to gain greater understanding of the way participation occurs at the grassroots. Participants at a recent UNICEF participatory development seminar made a recommendation to establish a Task Force for Promoting Participatory Development (Ogun and Smith, 1991).

With their resources and clout, international development institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD can play an even more important role in seeing that the development process becomes increasingly participative.

Issues and experience

As development has become increasingly people-oriented, many new issues and experiences have come to the fore. A few of these are reviewed here.

Socio-cultural variables

Evidence from anthropological studies indicates that most failures to involve the people in development activities are due to neglect of their needs, knowledge and initiative. The fact is that planners view things differently from the way the people do. Unless conscious efforts are made to understand the people, their needs and the way they prefer to organise themselves to deal with problems, the externally designed participatory approaches will not yield the expected results. Until recently, development agencies regarded socio-cultural factors as irrelevant to their work, and the constraining influences of these factors led to many failures in reaching the poor. This has now generated an interest in culturally sensitive approaches to participatory development.

Some attempts have been made to provide development agencies and their personnel with guidelines based on knowledge of socio-cultural factors. To indicate the role of these factors, we state here a few of the guidelines and provide illustrative examples.

Understanding the socio-cultural context

Social science analyses caution against launching any participatory development project without a thorough knowledge of the people and their culture. If the programme is to succeed, a preliminary study of relevant socio-cultural aspects is necessary. This sort of study takes time and may delay the start of the project, but it will come in handy for development staff, helping them to pinpoint strategic entry points for intervention and to devise the best methods of involving the community in the development effort.

In 1983, FAO initiated a pilot project to stimulate fisherwomen's activities in Juldia-Shamirpur, a village in Bangladesh, as part of the Bay of Bengal Programme for the Development of Small-Scale Fisheries in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. A deliberate attempt was made first to gain a clear understanding of the mind-set, aspirations, needs, skills and work habits of fisherfolk and others in the community. This SIDA-funded project not only improved the economic condition of the fisherwomen but also helped them to overcome their rather negative self-image. According to Haque (1986), the preliminary investigation of the life and culture of the target groups was a major factor in the project's success.

Consulting the people

Anthropologists and other social scientists now strongly favour the practice of consulting local people for inputs to the project design and implementation. Often, no effort is made to sound out community sentiment even on an informal basis. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the people for whom services are designed do not come forward to use them.

Under the Arenal project in Costa Rica, local people gained considerably because they were consulted in all aspects of planning and implementation. An Office of Resettlement was created to oversee the relocation of families in Arenal and Tronadora, the two villages that were to be submerged by Lake Arenal after construction of a hydroelectric dam in 1978-79. Committees were set up in each village to advise the project team, and the people selected both the relocation site and the design of the new urban centre. This consultative approach led to the completion of the resettlement programme in just two years, before the reservoir filled. In far too many similar projects, resettlement of the people affected has proved to be not only a long, drawn-out process but also a traumatic experience (Hamilton, 1984).

Using the group approach

The importance of group structures is strongly emphasised by social scientists. Small groups are particularly effective in pursuing common interests, as they are more cohesive.

The Arabari experiment in West Bengal, India, demonstrates the value of the group approach. The objective of the project was to stop forest depletion (due to encroachments, thefts and other activities) by providing villagers with employment in forest protection-*cum*-replanting activities, thus giving them income to replace what they had been earning from sale of stolen forest products. The action-research

experiment was started in 1970 by three researchers with support from the State Forest Department. The outcome of the project confirmed the assumptions made by the researchers. The villagers did everything to protect the forest and felled no trees illegally. Employment in replanting generated revenue for the people as well as the project. The once-degraded forests have been largely rehabilitated. A new partnership between forest officials and the participating groups has replaced the old hostilities. Encouraged by success, officials are extending this model to many other areas (Cernea, 1991).

Participation and gender

Women face formidable obstacles to participation. They may be among the poorest and the most illiterate members of society. Cultural values, social systems and legal codes are often biased against women, ensuring that they get few opportunities to participate.

Despite numerous obstacles, some efforts towards empowerment of women have achieved overwhelmingly positive results. One such case is the Self-Employed Womens Association (SEWA) in Ahmadabad, India (in Hindi, *sewa* means "service"). Founded in 1972 and now over 46 000 strong, this organisation is a major source of inspiration for all those who are grappling with development issues as they relate to women. Ideas pioneered by SEWA have even begun to influence development thinking at the global level. The International Labour Organisation and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions have begun to respond to SEWAs demands; there is now an ILO convention (1990) for the recognition and protection of home-based workers.

SEWA is a trade union of poor women. It arose in response to the failure of conventional trade unions to deal with the problems of poor women who are self-employed or who work in the informal sector. The organisation thus provides poor women with a support system not only in the workplace but also in their homes, with the broader aim of improving their standing in their communities (Wignaraja, 1990).

SEWA has fought legal battles for its members' rights to work, wages and access to government services. Encouraged by success, it has widened the scope of its activities. Its welfare component includes a maternal protection scheme, child care and the training of midwives. In 1974, SEWA even opened its own bank when it became abundantly clear that the employees of state-owned banks would be unhelpful. To overcome the problem of illiteracy, the SEWA bank uses women's photographs instead of signatures on their pass-books (Rose, 1992).

The commitment and dedication of Ela Bhatt, the founder of SEWA, is regarded by many to be the secret of this organisation's success. Experience suggests that the rise of a powerful individual often occurs at the expense of institutional development. Essentially, however, SEWA owes its success to the group approach. Members are organised in small groups according to their activities. In numbers they have found voice and strength.

The issue of sustainability

Once a project is completed, donors often cease to be much concerned with subsequent operation and maintenance. Many promising projects wither away when donors pull out or the implementing agency ceases to operate. More attention must be paid to seeing that the benefits of the project prove lasting.

The problem is one of ownership. A lack of attention to strengthening the capacity of the people and their organisations in this regard can nullify otherwise well-conceived development interventions. Sustainability cannot be achieved unless the people are sufficiently involved in project activities to appropriate them as their own. It is also important that the people see the project as offering them substantial benefits. Projects that lay emphasis on economic activity tend to be more sustainable (SEWA is a case in point).

Empowering the poorest

Powerful groups oppose the empowerment of weaker segments, viewing it as a threat to their dominant position. How can such obstacles to participation be overcome?

The groups that have remained at the bottom rung of the social ladder are no longer prepared to accept their situation as unalterable. Such is the case with certain groups in India, which suffer discrimination because of their low position in the caste hierarchy. Some efforts of these communities to empower themselves and influence decision-making processes in their favour have begun to make a perceptible difference to the situation (Vettivel, 1992).

Conflicts in collective action

The rich and the poor of a community live in separate worlds, viewing things from their own perspectives. The seeds of conflicts are thus always present in this characteristic feature of the community.

Threatened by depletion of natural resources, many communities are currently taking responsibility for forest conservation themselves. Singh and Singh (1993), reporting on their extensive work in community forestry in Orissa, India, state that conflicts arise even in forest-protection efforts where different factions and interest groups come together for a common cause, and which offer more or less equal benefits to everybody. Conflicts may erupt when one group feels that the forest products have not been distributed in the manner agreed, when there is a struggle for leadership, when there is too much free riding and so on.

Such intra-village conflicts have been overcome in many cases. For example, in Orissa, where traditional village-level organisations still exist, they have been harnessed to the forest-protection work, and often these arrangements prove even more effective than the institutions set up by the state. Experience has also shown that external intervention in such situations produces particularly wholesome effects.

Bureaucratic reorientation

Transforming bureaucracies from a controlling to an enabling role has not been an easy task, but it is essential if participation is to have a real meaning for disadvantaged groups. Reforming bureaucracies requires organisational restructuring, simplified procedures, training and many other measures (Mathur, 1989b). In addition, bureaucrats must come to view participations as a learning process.

In India, several efforts to make governmental agencies more participative are currently under way. The Joint Forest Management Programme in West Bengal has attracted considerable attention. Traditionally, foresters and communities that live in forests have been sworn enemies: forest officials view the forest dwellers as destroyers of forests, and the forest dwellers view forest officials as their worst exploiters, denying them even the basic right to eke out a meagre living in a harsh environment of dwindling forests. This situation is now beginning to change. Over the past decade, the Forest Department has worked with thousands of tribal and other communities to establish local management systems to protect and regenerate degraded natural forests throughout the south-western corner of the state. Over 200 rural communities currently manage 250 000 hectares of natural *sal* forest, which has produced luxuriant growth since villagers began to control grazing, fuelwood cutting and forest fires. These regenerating forests now provide a wide variety of medicinal, fibre, fodder, fuel and food products for participating rural communities. Joint forest management is a new approach to dealing with agency-community conflicts and deforestation (Poffenberger, 1990). This example contradicts the assumption that government agencies cannot play a constructive role at the local level.

Government-NGO relationships

Nowhere does the interaction between government and NGOs proceed in a totally trouble-free manner. Many NGOs consider themselves the organisations most concerned about the weak and unorganised people at the bottom of the heap. Some NGOs see poverty and inequality as resulting from governmental policies and actions. Their participatory approach, especially their emphasis on empowerment, thus tends to be viewed by dominant groups as subversive or revolutionary ideology.

These NGOs often forget that their rhetoric of development is neither altogether new nor all their own. The NGO language of development is also spoken today by many governments (Pandey, 1991). NGOs that hold views markedly different from those of governments prefer to keep away from the official agencies. They fear that government funds will come with strings attached and that this will jeopardise their autonomy, especially when it comes to tackling structural issues.

Government-NGO relationships are not always so strained. In many cases, NGOs and government agencies have achieved considerable understanding of each others viewpoints and play a mutually supportive role (Paul, 1988). In India the government is liberal in its support for NGOs and their activities (Fernandez, 1987). It has established the Council for Advancement of Peoples Action for Rural Technology, a central agency for channelling funds to NGOs. In many sectors of development activity, government actually encourages NGOs to take an active part.

NGOs are also associated with the policy-making process. Their leaders are often appointed to state policy-making bodies and committees. In principle, these are the opportunities for NGOs to influence government policies, but frequently they are unable to do much (Tandon, 1989). An exception in India was the Commission on Self-Employed Women, set up in 1986 and headed by Ela Bhatt of SEWA. This commission produced a powerful report.

Governments are keen to learn from NGO experiences and already have adopted many NGO ideas in their programmes. In India, the Amul Dairy Co-operative provided the model for the government's National Dairy Development Programme, known as "Operation Flood". The use of part-time village health workers developed at an NGO Rural Health Project in Jamkhed, India, led to a government scheme for community health workers (Hardiman, 1986).

NGOs and donor organisations

NGOs are rich in human resources — their work among the world's poorest communities is made possible only by a group of motivated workers — but they lack money, and hence find the donor organisations attractive. NGOs should be no less attractive for donor organisations, given their wealth of experience in promoting local participation in development.

Nevertheless, the track record of interaction between NGOs and development agencies is not impressive. NGOs feel unable to obtain the kind of collaboration with donors that would help accelerate local involvement in development activities. They confront a number of irritants in seeking funding support:

— Procedures for processing funding requests are complicated and time-consuming. Moreover, donors' procedures (and perhaps their policies) seem to favour the big, established NGOs, which leads to jealousy among local action groups.

— NGOs require long-term commitment of funds, but donors grant funds on a project basis for a limited period.

— Projects funded by donors carry certain conditions. NGOs fear that in carrying out such projects their goals could be submerged in those of the aid agency.

— Owing to changing fashions in development theory and practice, donors' priorities keep changing. It becomes difficult for NGOs to incorporate new interests in their work programme.

— NGO-donor co-operative efforts do not seem to be based on a relationship of equality. The patronising attitude of aid agencies and Northern NGOs creates resentment among Southern NGOs.

— Donors expect NGOs to demonstrate genuine democracy, managerial competence and economic viability. A major condition for funding support is the submission of formal project proposals, which many NGOs are unable to produce.

Supporting NGO initiatives is a new experience for donors as well. It is not easy for them to deal with hundreds of diverse NGOs operating thousands of miles away. The general practice has been to provide funding to NGOs through regular government channels, but donors are now veering round to the view that direct grants would be better. This practice would not only increase speed and flexibility in the use of funds but would help in reaching and supporting innovative approaches to local development. UNDP, through the Partners in Development Programme, is already providing direct support to NGOs for community-based participatory development activities.

Most donor organisations have begun to establish relations with NGOs in a systematic manner. This interest in collaboration has substantially contributed to the rise of NGOs to their present position. Donor support has been vital to the launching of many innovative participatory projects. Nevertheless, the present links between donors and NGOs will need to be strengthened if people at the local level are to be involved in development.

Concluding remarks

Participatory development now has its adherents worldwide. The desirability of this approach is no longer an issue amongst the social actors concerned. Actors may have their own reasons for becoming involved in such efforts, but there is much that is common to their concerns.

More and more successful participatory experiences are coming to light, but most of these interventions result not from any broader policy on participation but from sporadic local action. A more systematic policy and comprehensive programme would be needed at the state level.

Development agencies also need to reinforce their use of socio-cultural inputs that help in inducing participation. Anthropologists and sociologists who could lend a helping hand still remain on the periphery. At a recent World Bank workshop on participatory development, one participant frankly confessed: "Organisational development is not a recognised profession in the Bank; sociologists and other social scientists disguise themselves as economists to earn respect. This is ironic because social scientists are naturally more oriented towards participation" (Lahri and van Wicklin, 1992).

The value system of planning bureaucracies and administrations tends to filter out socio-cultural information from planning and management processes. Without a change in the orientation of bureaucracies, the likelihood that socio-cultural knowledge will influence development decisions remains remote (UNESCAP/UNDP, 1992).

The lack of sufficient operational know-how continues to be a serious obstacle to participation-oriented development. There is no one model or one way of stimulating participatory development. In India, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia has made some efforts to develop manuals and literature on participatory organising, but much more remains to be done. Methodologically,

"participation is still largely in a period of experimentation" (Oakley, 1991), yet the pace of participatory development must not slacken. In many cases, it may be the only means of achieving equitable and sustainable development.

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Theory and Practice of Participatory Development at Grassroots Level: Fact and Fiction in Sri Lanka

Sunimal Fernando

Introduction

This chapter is based on three case studies conducted by the author in Sri Lanka in 1993. As its theoretical conclusions and practical recommendations are drawn entirely from this empirical experience, the author makes no claim that the conclusions are universally relevant. Sri Lankan grassroots communities have a number of advantages that are not common to such communities in most other parts of the developing world. These advantages include:

— very high levels of literacy and education;
— linkage to other communities and to urban centres by a well-developed network of roads and a good public transport system;
— an urban-rural divide that is perhaps the narrowest in the developing world;
— relatively high average levels of social, physical and economic well-being;
— universal adult franchise and regular, relatively honest elections, which have been features of the political landscape since the early 1930s.

A small-scale prawn-farming project

In 1989-90, an NGO designed this activity and set in motion a process of social mobilisation in support of the initiative. Small-scale prawn farming calls for a substantial investment per direct beneficiary. A half-acre prawn farm requires an initial fixed-capital investment of $900. Farming with a relatively low intensity of input requires a working capital of $380 for each four-month harvesting cycle. The net income per year from three farming cycles can average $1 400.

This activity required a much higher level of investment per beneficiary than the international aid system was accustomed to providing for grassroots-level

projects. Although this level of investment per beneficiary would procure a much higher level of income than that accruing to a local beneficiary in the average donor-funded project, it was difficult to convince the international donor community that a narrower spread with a significant impact on living standards is preferable to, and more sustainable than, a wider spread with a marginal impact. The NGO found that most donors would rather see their limited funds spread over a large number of beneficiary families.

The necessary financial resources had not yet been mobilised, so the NGO was not able at that time to present a viable and attractive financial deal as the basis for participation. It had designed a project for 16 potential prawn farmers, whom it had to mobilise on some other basis than that of a hard-headed economic proposition. Apart from this purely pragmatic consideration, the NGO was, at that stage of its evolution, inclined ideologically towards the classical mode of social mobilisation, which worked on the following premises: that the creative energies and collective initiatives of grassroots communities are dormant; that they need to be stimulated by an external social animator; that people in villages have to be helped to understand their own reality through a systematic process of investigation, reflection and analysis stimulated by an animator; and that the people themselves have to work out feasible plans for the solution of their problems. A highly experienced social animator trained in the Paulo Freire tradition was recruited. Ideology was his forte, and since he had no viable economic proposal to offer, it was the only available means of mobilising a group.

Meanwhile, the NGO obtained a revolving loan from a donor to meet the requirements of fixed capital and persuaded a local development bank to provide a line of credit for the working capital, without collateral but supported by an international guarantee from the RAFAD Foundation on the assurance that the NGO would provide all the necessary technical, organisational and funding support for the project. By the middle of 1990 the first farming cycle had commenced. The harvests were so successful that the NGO was able to extend the farm area of the 16 farmers from two to four acres.

Although incomes and living standards showed dramatic improvement, and although the NGO continued to provide technical inputs, marketing support and access to credit with great efficiency and professional competence, by 1991 success began to wane. One by one the farmers began to sell their shares to outsiders, and there was a great deal of disunity and conflict among the farmers themselves. By the middle of 1993, 14 of the 16 farmers had sold their interests to outsiders and left the project. It became clear that the wrong people had been mobilised for the project. The basis of mobilisation had been ideological, while the activity itself required a hard-headed economic interest and focus. People who respond to ideological motivation are generally attracted by long-term goals and visions of change. In contrast, people who do well in hard-headed economic activity are usually those who respond more strongly to prospects of immediate benefits than to prospects of distant goals.

The NGO had been able to demonstrate the success of this new type of rural economic activity to the national banking community, to the international donor community and to agencies that encouraged innovative departures from the project-based funding system. These actors were also convinced of the professional

managerial capacity and institutional strength of the NGO. By 1993, the international guarantee provided by the RAFAD Foundation had been increased to $50 000; the local bank agreed to share the risk and made available a line of credit of $100 000 against this guarantee; and a donor contributed $18 000 to the NGO's revolving-loan fund to meet the cost of fixed capital for those entering the project.

With financial strength and managerial experience, the NGO extended the project to the neighbouring villages. It recruited as its field-level development worker a technical man who had worked in a large prawn-farming company and equipped himself with financial discipline, technical knowledge and a strong business sense. Unlike his predecessor, the new development worker could offer the participants a clear, viable economic project with demonstrable prospects of immediate success. He recruited his participants by attracting them to a hard-headed economic activity. With good economic prospects and ample resources, he found no reason to resort to ideology.

Large numbers of persons from low-income groups began to lobby the NGO to allow them to participate in the project. The NGO found that, without any external animation, the creative energies of the poor had liberated themselves. The NGO did not need to help the poor to understand their reality, because they demonstrated their capacity to understand it and work out their own solutions and plans of action. It was clear that in a favourable resource environment, the basic premises of the classical mode of social mobilisation are repudiated. By the end of 1993, the project included 63 prawn farms in three villages, and 40 more participants in two nearby villages were ready to join in 1994. Farm size now varies from one to two acres.

An important correlate of success was that group organisation followed rather than preceded economic activity. In most development activities, the poor are conceived of as a homogeneous group of persons sharing a common socio-economic background. A micro analysis of such a targeted group will surely reveal, however, that within it are three sub-categories of the poor, defined in terms of access to assets and degree of poverty: the very poor, the middle poor and the not so poor.

In the first prawn-farming initiative, the group of 16 farmers included persons from each sub-category. As soon as the base group was organised, the not so poor assumed the leadership and, fearing a challenge to their higher economic status, tried to manage group affairs so as to deny to the others the same access to project resources that they enjoyed. Since the economic stakes were high, the others fought back instead of resigning themselves to clientele status. This conflict soon began to disrupt the group.

In the extended project, the new development worker was in no hurry to organise the farmers into a base group. Instead, he worked to build up the financial and asset strength of each farmer beyond the threshold at which he can withstand any possible attempt by others to constrain his access to project resources. Only in late 1992 — two years, or six farming cycles, after implementation of the extended project — did he begin to form an association of small-scale prawn farmers. Internal democracy in the association is ensured by the vibrant economic success of each and every member. Today the group negotiates with the authorities about access to land, plans to establish a common feed mill, manages a communal farm where experiments in technology are effected on its behalf and maintains a common capital fund.

The development worker's principal role was to provide the grassroots prawn-farming community with knowledge about the other social spaces with which its economic and social activities are inextricably linked; and using his knowledge of these linked social spaces, to help the group to obtain the best possible deal from the linkage.

These external systems impinge more and more on the grassroots. The development worker's knowledge of their workings motivates the participants to trust in the project and to participate with enthusiasm and confidence in its future. Participation requires such confidence, and the development worker's function is to inspire it. He can do so only if he has professional knowledge of the wider technological, economic and commercial ramifications of an activity that is physically lodged at the grassroots — not if his selling points are compassion, patience or ideology.

A rural savings and credit project

A rural savings and credit project was organised by a national NGO in a relatively isolated village to which no NGO had gone before. The donor had stipulated that the project cover 20 villages or more and benefit over 1 000 families, but the resources provided were slender: on average, each village would get only about $550 and each beneficiary family about $10. In rural Sri Lankan society, where aspirations and average income levels among the poor are relatively high, $10 per beneficiary family was a ludicrous amount.

There is a serious mismatch between the quantum of aid provided and the number of families it is supposed to reach, especially in parts of Asia where abject poverty does not exist and the levels of aspiration of the rural population are high. This mismatch lies at the very foundation of the international aid system.

With few resources to offer and much to obtain in return, the NGO selected its villages with care. One of the villages was fairly isolated and had no other NGO activity. The NGO felt that these characteristics might indicate low levels of both income and aspiration, and a narrower gap between the two that a small resource input from outside might be able to bridge.

By mid-1992, a community-based organisation (CBO) was formed to implement a savings, credit and micro-enterprise development project among village women. The NGO contributed $555 to the revolving fund of the CBO, which had an active membership of 65 women. The village had been considered poor in terms of family income and aspiration, but it was soon clear this was not the case. Within a year the CBO mobilised $577 of savings from its 65 members, who thus outstripped the financial resources provided by the aid system.

To motivate 65 women to expend their time and energy in a CBO, the NGO officers had in fact given the impression that a link with the national NGO would open a channel through which a substantial resource flow would soon reach the village from outside. Research shows that had the NGO officers told the village that all they had to offer for the moment was a meagre $555, it would not have been possible to mobilise members for the CBO.

As time passed and no more external resources were forthcoming, there were signs of frustration among the members. Most did not care to spend their time and energy participating in an activity with such a low financial reward. The NGO therefore began to look for ways of getting a higher response from the CBO than the resources in the project could warrant. Participatory ideology presented itself as the answer. If a package of material resources is too small to allow mobilisation of the people, the only other option that has stood the test of time is to mobilise them around an ideology.

The field staff hitherto recruited by the NGO had neither the flair nor the training needed to engage in quasi-political activity at grassroots level. Recruited on the basis of their tertiary-level training in commerce and accounting, they had received further training in savings and credit management, and later in small-enterprise development as well. Now, however, the NGO needed not professional rural credit managers or specialists in rural micro-enterprise development, but a senior social animator trained in the Paulo Freire school of social mobilisation.

In late 1993, the NGO recruited a man with ten years' experience as a social activist and a flair for mobilising people on ideological grounds. He lost no time in re-activating the CBO around the ideology of participation. At the time the research was being conducted, he was generating a new social energy in the group by applying the conventional techniques of participatory grassroots development, such as awareness building, animation, consultation, building the capacity to reflect and analyse, social activism, helping people to identify their needs and resources, and guiding them to articulate their own plans of action.

The NGO, whose mandate is to support rural economic growth through development of rural enterprises, considers the ideological intervention as at best a holding operation, to be maintained until sufficient resources can be obtained from the international aid system or, better still, from the formal banking system. It has begun to take meaningful steps in this direction.

A rural women's savings, credit and micro-enterprise development project

With the support of a number of international donor agencies, a national NGO designed a rural women's savings, credit and micro-enterprise development project. It concerned a village of over 600 households that had been settled there by the government 34 years ago. A CBO was formed in 1979 by a group of women to mobilise members' savings for loans to the members themselves. The core group of nine gradually expanded into a membership of 36.

In the early years, when the group's activities were more or less confined to mobilising community resources for community purposes, the persons who emerged as community leaders were motivated by a sense of sacrifice and prompted by an inner urge for voluntary action, expecting in return only prestige and recognition from the community. Many groups of villagers forged themselves into grassroots organisations to mobilise community resources for community purposes. In the 1960s one such women's organisation successfully mobilised community resources for the

construction of the Buddhist temple. A year later another grassroots organisation organised the community to build the Catholic church. Another local organisation, with some aid that local government officials obtained from the state, constructed a co-operative store for the village. Yet another grassroots group formed itself for the construction of a school and the recruitment of teachers who would consent to teach the children free of charge, as the community could not afford to pay them salaries.

This evidence makes it abundantly clear that even 30 years ago, participatory processes were present in the village: the community was able to identify its needs and work out its own solutions; there was no passive mentality among the people; external animation was not always needed to release the creative energies of the poor, who were capable of organising themselves on their own.

When the CBO that had organised itself as a women's savings and credit group achieved a reasonable level of institutional stability, some of its members began to search for external sources of funding. The members who took the initiative were individuals whose personalities and experiences were shaped in a different mould from that of the first generation of leaders. They had not responded to an inner urge for voluntary service or found satisfaction in the prestige and recognition they received from the community. On the contrary, they modelled themselves on the local government officials, who in the historical experience of the community had once functioned as brokers, linking the community with external sources from which resources could flow to the grassroots and seeking financial benefits for themselves as befits their role.

The community had showed no lack of initiative in organising itself to respond to internal challenges, but when it came to negotiating resource flows to the village from outside, it turned to brokers familiar with village needs and with the functioning of the external system. These brokers obtain their "fees" by subverting procedure, falsifying accounts or openly demanding kickbacks from beneficiaries.

When a grassroots organisation tries to tap external resources, the brokering function becomes crucial. As the organisation moves into this mode, the dedicated, genuinely voluntary leaders either acquire brokering skills or are replaced by persons who can function better as brokers, whatever their skill as leaders. Although this shift in mode invariably took place at the empirical level, the external system continued to demand not brokerage and clientelism but leadership and social mobilisation from the village in return for resources. In the case under study, the national NGO demanded that its main contact in the village be a leader and not a broker, that she display the qualities of sacrifice, concern and devotion rather than the blend of craft, diplomacy, entrepreneurship and opportunism that makes a good village broker. Whereas social reality required the broker to hold her grassroots organisation together by distributing the external resources in such a way as to make participation worthwhile for the participants, the supporting NGO demanded that the group be held together through a humanistic spirit of caring and sharing among a homogeneous group; that all members participate equally in the planning, implementation and benefits of group activities; and that the persons who are ostensibly its leaders be so intensely devoted to their community as to have offered their time, their energy and even their lives for service to their people. Even if the NGO knew how social processes actually work at grassroots level in Sri Lanka, it could not accept this reality, because the source of its funds — namely, the

international aid system — is not willing to accept anything that departs from the standard ideological line in the field of grassroots participatory development.

In grassroots-level development, two types of persons come to prominence in the village community. Unfortunately, the literature does not distinguish these two types, referring to both as "village leaders". One type consists of those who lead the mobilising of community resources, including human resources, for community purposes. Such persons can rightly be called "village leaders". The other type consists of those who can negotiate a resource flow to the village from outside. Such persons can more appropriately be called "village brokers". The skills of a village leader are very different from those of a village broker. The former is inward-looking and self-sacrificing; displays a sensitive grasp of micro-level formations, processes and dynamics; normally mobilises people around an ideology or a vision of change; and receives respect and recognition from the community in return for service and sacrifice. The latter is outward-looking and entrepreneurial; displays a knowledge of the working of and opportunities in external systems that few others in the village possess; can negotiate aid flows to the village; and can manage the distribution of aid in such a way that the external system is satisfied, the broker receives a satisfactory fee and the grassroots group is partially satisfied and partially silenced. As long as the ideology of the international aid system has no place for village brokers but the system itself requires brokering skills at grassroots level to function smoothly, brokers will inevitably emerge, and it is equally inevitable that they should seek ideological legitimacy by adopting the manner of genuine leaders and pretending to be motivated by an inner urge for voluntary service.

Although the CBO had received small amounts of external aid earlier, the real breakthrough with the external system came in the latter half of 1984. By this time the CBO had clearly understood that the funds obtainable from outside the village through the application of brokering skills far outweighed the resources that could be mobilised from within the village through leadership, dedication and voluntary action. Those leaders of the CBO who were not interested in the brokering function were edged out of their earlier positions; others developed a capacity to work as brokers and survived; and still others, who had never really been interested in functioning within a genuinely voluntary mould, now began to emerge rapidly within the group and take over its official positions of power. The last group were in fact brokers in the garb of leaders.

One woman in particular began to emerge to a position of power within the group. Having gained better connections with the external system, she was soon more powerful than the others. Already a stratification in terms of power relations had begun to occur within this "homogeneous group of persons having the same socio-economic background". During the early period of group consolidation, as homogeneity of socio-economic background was progressively replaced by a system of political and economic inequality within the group, there was latent conflict and disagreement over who would receive how much of what.

Gradually a pattern emerged. The CBO started receiving external resources in 1984. The sharing of benefits and the participation of members in projects varied in relation to the services provided by different members towards maintaining the aid flow. The power structure within the CBO gradually changed to reflect this reality. Studies revealed that throughout the period after 1984, an inner circle known among

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the members as the "gang of seven" was running affairs and taking the plums for themselves. The gang of seven consisted of the main broker, five persons who could mobilise large extended kin groups to provide a crowd whenever representatives of the aid system visited the projects and a maverick who used to create problems (by questioning the accounts and occasionally firing a salvo of obscene words at the main broker and her cohorts) and had therefore to be accommodated inside and placated. A young girl just out of school was brought in to fill the slot of secretary, as the main broker could not trust any of the other women with the secrecy required in writing — and in fact often creating — the accounts and their supporting documents, preparing the minutes of meetings that were often not even held and documenting the decisions of the members that were, more often than not, never made.

Around the gang of seven was an outer circle of six. Their contribution to the aid game was their capacity to demonstrate to the occasional, undiscerning visitor from the NGO or the donor system that the membership was in fact engaged in certain activities. Three of them had small agro-processing outfits in their homes, while the other three could impress the outsider with their handicraft skills, which they could demonstrate instantly when required. Yet another circle was positioned at a slightly greater distance from the epicentre of power. The contribution of these ten persons rested on the capacity of each to show the outsider a group of goats, a herd of cattle, a stock of poultry or a little village shop, depending on whom and what the aid agent wanted to visit by way of seeing project-aided development.

These three concentric circles of beneficiaries were flanked by a rather amorphous mass of 33 members who, though they did not play much of a role in attracting aid to the CBO, had all the same to be primed and kept in reserve just in case new players were needed.

Each group's access to resources and weight in decision making were found to be in strict conformity with its political contribution to the manoeuvres used to attract aid to the village. For example, in the revolving-loan project, the gang of seven had taken for themselves the lion's share of the fund; their loans ranged from $500 to $750, and there was no convincing evidence that any one of them had used these handsome lines of credit to undertake an economic activity. The six women in the outer circle enjoyed loans of $250 to $300. The circle of ten women were shown in the official accounts to have received loans ranging from $25 to $30. The amorphous group of 33 women on the periphery were propitiated with loans of $10 to $15 when required and were given funds for latrine construction or the occasional agricultural well from small grants obtained by the CBO for these purposes.

The management strategy of the CBO was as follows. Fifty-five women shared the resources of the project unequally. All were given loans, some small and others large, but no one was encouraged to repay them. Rescheduling of loans was the norm rather than the exception. Accounts were falsified to show that loans were in fact repaid, and larger loans were issued each year in recognition of the borrowers' "exemplary repayment discipline". The main village broker kept most if not all of her 55 members tied to her in a complex web of debt bondage, which enabled each member to blackmail others and the master broker to blackmail them all into silence and submission. She maintained two sets of books: one for the NGO and donors, which displayed the accounts of an exemplary set of projects, and another set showing the real accounts, which she could use to threaten or blackmail the members

into supporting the *status quo*. She also maintained, for the benefit of the NGO and the donors, a membership roll of 165 names, although the operative membership had never exceeded 55.

Oblivious of what was going on at ground level — or perhaps not really caring to know the truth as it would upset the game — the NGO spent lavishly on leadership training programmes for the officers of the CBO. The beneficiaries were invariably the gang of seven. Some of them were even sent abroad for leadership training. The main broker went to four Asian countries on the NGO's account. Through their participation in these programmes and their exposure to the functioning of external systems both within the country and abroad, the gang of seven further sharpened their brokering skills and equipped themselves better than before to warp a grassroots-level development activity away from a participatory mode in the direction of manipulation and deceit. It seemed to be the consensus of the inarticulate poor interviewed by the researcher that training resources would be better spent on members than on leaders, giving the former an understanding of how the broader systems function and enabling them to trace the manipulations and strategies of the leaders. Such programmes would help members to control their leaders and prevent them from thwarting genuine participation.

Most leadership training programmes are designed to provide a set of persons with managerial skills so that they may lead their flock to greener pastures. Such programme designs assume the desirability of a one-way relationship between leaders and followers for supporting a participatory mode of grassroots development. Experience suggests that participatory development at grassroots level will be better supported by training programmes designed to stimulate a dialectical relationship between the leaders and members of grassroots organisations. Such programmes should target all members, not merely the leaders, who may in fact be village brokers.

When interviewed, many members stated that they did not consider it prudent to denounce the obvious inequities and lack of participation within the group. While the cost of conflict would be high in terms of antagonising a caucus that is obviously powerful with systems external to the village, its benefits would be small, as even the most equitable distribution of the resources of the project will benefit the members in only a marginal way. In their view, there was little to gain and much to lose by challenging the *status quo*, so they had decided to remain silent. Many persons knew that their names were on the official membership list that was being shown to the outside (because the donors and the NGO wanted their projects to benefit more than 150 families), but were neither members nor beneficiaries. They told the researchers that they did not protest because they felt that some day they too might be rewarded by the brokers for their passive co-operation. Moreover, the stakes were very low in relation to their aspirations, and hence not worth fighting for. Had the stakes been high, the members would most certainly have fought to participate. As for the brokers, if they had been obliged to share the benefits equally with the others, it would not have been worth their while to engage in the activity at all.

When interviewed, officers who had worked for the NGO during that period recounted that they had known all the time what was going on in the CBO. Two factors deterred them from taking any corrective action. First, there was rivalry and competition among NGOs working in the area. If the CBO power caucus felt

antagonised by the NGO, there was every chance of their linking up with another. NGOs need track records to show potential donors when they want to attract funding support. It is not uncommon for an NGO to hijack another NGO's field in order to make its track record more impressive. The brokers leading the CBO knew this dynamics well enough to use it as a veiled threat to persuade the NGO to turn a blind eye to the real happenings in the field. Second, the NGO's priority was to attract a second round of funding. To succeed, it had to please the donor, and it knew that success stories are music to the ears of the average donor. If the CBO was ready to provide success stories that confirmed the ideological position and methodological bias of a project, the NGO saw no reason to prevent the flow of false information from reaching the donor.

Senior officials in the donor agency were also interviewed. It transpired that the agency's main concern was to convince the taxpayers of its own country, from whom the foreign aid is ultimately derived, that the aid had benefited a large number of poor Third World families. As long as the official reports coming in from the NGO serve this purpose, the donor is normally happy, as its priority is also to qualify for another round of funds — in this case, from the taxpayer.

The three major actors in this participatory development activity were thus motivated by three different agendas. Each actor defined its agenda in terms of the needs and priorities of the social space in which it functioned. What actually took place at the empirical level was the result of a tacit negotiation between the needs and priorities of the actors operating in these three social spaces. The project design reflected ideological concerns which, though repudiated at the empirical level, had to be endorsed if the intervention was to justify itself to the aid system. As the interests of all three actors converged at this point, they co-operated in editing reality to confirm the underlying ideology of aid.

Conclusions from the case studies

The first case study

Participation is at its highest, axiomatically, when the resource environment of the activity is favourable. When access to the resources of a project can bridge the gap between reality and aspiration, the potential beneficiaries will take initiatives to participate in decision making about project implementation, as a means of ensuring that they share in the benefits of the project. When the economic stakes are high, people struggle to participate, and the internal that which is generated prevents a small group from restraining the participation of the others in order to draw the greater share of the benefits to themselves. Under these circumstances, ideology and rhetoric have no role in the participatory process.

Economic empowerment should precede rather than follow group formation. When members are economically empowered prior to group formation, those who are economically and politically stronger will not be able to force the others into a clientele relationship.

Within a group of persons recruited on the basis of a common socio-economic background, there will exist inequalities in skills, entrepreneurship, connections with the outside and so forth. Failure to take this into account when designing development interventions results in a negation of equitable participation in the development activity.

Recruitment to an economic activity on the basis of ideology can result in the failure of those recruited to participate meaningfully in an activity that requires economic motivation. Participation in an economic activity will be dynamic if the participants have been attracted to the development project on the basis of a hard-headed economic package.

As grassroots systems are being progressively drawn into regional, national and international social spaces, the function of a successful development worker lies in his ability to interpret the possibilities and constraints in the external systems and thereby to provide confidence to the grassroots-level participants.

The second case study

Donors tend to stretch a limited package of aid too far, so that the benefit derived per family is too small to make any meaningful dent in the gap that separates aspiration from reality. In these cases, the potential for participation is negated.

Participatory ideology is often used to induce a stronger response from the beneficiaries than the amount of resources available to the project can elicit from them. While ideology may be used to elicit participation in the short term, it can not sustain participation in the absence of adequate economic resources.

The third case study

Participatory processes are always present in a village, but only in relation to systems about which the communities have adequate information. In such cases, the creative capacities and collective consciousness of grassroots communities need no stimulation by an external animator.

In relations with systems external to the village, however, the village behaves passively and adopts a clientelistic attitude because it lacks information about these systems.

Village brokers, whose orientation, skills and motivation are qualitatively very different from those of village leaders, mediate between the village and external systems of resource flow such as the aid system. In the case of CBOs that depend heavily on external aid flows, brokers assume positions of power and masquerade as village leaders.

The skills of the village broker derive from his/her knowledge of both the workings of the external systems and the micro-level processes and dynamics of the village. The broker uses this knowledge to ensure that the external resources are distributed in such a way as to obtain the results that qualify the village for another round of aid. As the resource flow is small, while the external system's expectations

are great, this means distributing aid in such a way as to make it worthwhile for a small number of beneficiaries to produce or feign the kind of results that the external system wants. The benefits of the development activity are inequitably distributed and participation is controlled by the broker, while the majority remain silent because the costs and risks of protest are high in relation to the economic stakes.

Participation in grassroots development activities that depend on external aid is a function of a political negotiation between the different agendas of the three major actors: the donor, the intermediary NGO and the village brokers who wield power in the CBO.

Conventional approaches to grassroots-level leadership training further strengthen the power of village brokers, equipping them with more tools and information to thwart the participation of the members in development activities. Such resources as are available for leadership training will be put to better use if they are deployed to train members to control their leaders/brokers and to disseminate information about external systems among members.

Towards enhancing people's participation in grassroots-level development

The case studies have served to express and analyse the main constraints on people's participation in grassroots-level development in Sri Lanka. It is now possible to identify factors that should be considered when designing and implementing participatory development activities at grassroots level.

Sri Lankan village communities are hierarchically structured. Generally speaking, social integration is vertical, arranged in terms of patronage and clientele. Even in villages where patron-client ties have broken down, the introduction of new resources into a community tends to induce the emergence of new patrons, who control the resources and re-establish the clientele system. Local social structure, dynamics, processes, institutions, networks of authority, alliances and rivalries, patterns and processes of social mobility and so on should therefore be studied **before** a participatory development activity is designed.

In a hierarchically structured society, the poor will actively participate in a development activity and thereby weaken their dependence on their patrons only if the material benefits of participation are large enough to make it worth their while. Thus the targeted population will appropriate a participatory development project only if a sizable quantum of material resources is provided. If a project does not have sufficient resources to motivate this kind of active participation, its promoters should not start the project at all. If the funds available are very limited, they will be appropriated by the more powerful, who will apply them to strengthening the local patronage system.

Prior to designing a development activity or in the course of monitoring or evaluating it, better information about the local social reality can be obtained by speaking to individuals rather than groups and by maintaining strict confidentiality about the information thus obtained.

If aid agencies are not to institutionalise deception at the various levels of grassroots development projects, they must change their relations with developing-country NGOs and grassroots movements. Instead of the present donor-client relations, these actors should regard one another as partners who share their mistakes and failings in a spirit of trust, friendship, understanding and mutual learning. A true understanding of the way in which participatory structures interact with grassroots-level social reality can emerge only from a process of institutional learning through critical self-evaluation.

The tendency of both NGOs and donor agencies to judge the efficacy of a development project in terms of the number of families reached often results in the spread of limited project resources in small quantities over wide areas. Promoters of participatory development projects should keep their projects to such limits as would ensure that the resources designed to reach the targeted families are large enough to make a meaningful, rather than a mere token, contribution towards bridging the gap between their aspirations and their reality.

Community Experiences of Participatory Development In Brazil: Some Implications for Support Policies

Frances O'Gorman

Introduction

In Brazil, the income gap between the top tenth and the bottom tenth of the population is among the widest in the world: the former controls nearly half of the nation's income, and the latter, less than 1 per cent. The past decade has witnessed an increase in the distance between the minority that shares in the benefits of socio-economic progress, and the masses, who are excluded from access to decent living conditions.

This chapter focuses on three topics: the context of funded community-development projects, as perceived by the local participants and NGO facilitators; the base-level motivation for participation; and participation as a decisive element for the sustainability of base community projects. It concludes by pointing out some policy implications for development projects.

The context of funded community-development projects

The way in which the poor interpret their needs and the root causes of their poverty shapes the meaning that participation will have in their experiences.

Through the eyes of the poor

The poor in community groups point out the immediate causes of their exclusion from society: deficient health and educational facilities; lack of infrastructure such as sanitation, transportation, housing and potable water; and low wages eroded by rampant inflation and a market economy that favours a few to the detriment of the masses of workers. For community project leaders, some causes lie

deeper: the inertia of society, populist political opportunism, the control of decision-making power by a self-serving socio-economic and political elite, and a transnational economy that excludes not only two-thirds of all Brazilians but one-fifth of the entire population of the world.

Santa Marta Favela is a ghetto slum of Rio de Janeiro with a population that varies between 8 000 and 11 000, depending on the number of families expelled after each gang war between the Red Command and Third Command, which vie for control of the drug trade. Wooden shanties and rough brick homes cling to boulders along the narrow hillside strip wedged between the gardens of the mayor's palace and private property extending behind lavish flats. Chronic water shortage obliges the women to use the spring in the rocks beside the sewage ditch. A newly laid cement pathway up the first 20-storey stretch has eased the burden of carrying up beds, stoves, invalids, groceries, babies and bundles of clothes to be laundered for the people who live in the city flats. The second 20-storey stretch and all the side alleys, however, are of slippery stone and flimsy boards thrown across ditches and gullies. Infant mortality is high, the school drop-out rate in the primary years reaches 90 per cent, tuberculosis takes its toll each winter and dengue fever alternates with hepatitis as the summer epidemic. Armed drug traffickers control the residents' access to Santa Marta Favela and maintain a convenient chaos by bribing the military police.

Amid the drab zinc roofs of Santa Marta Favela stands a white two-storey building with large windows and a patio. Inside are four bright classrooms, a day-care centre and kindergarten, an office for a 120-student school perseverance programme, a hall for cultural activities, meetings of the community council and other projects that have arisen to meet different needs over the years.

Resisting stray bullets, co-option by drug-gang leaders, brutal raids by military police, the scepticism of next-door neighbours, the disdain of local authorities, and most of all, their own insecurity and incapacity, a group of the *favela* women organised the UNIDAS Community Group, which owns the big white building and runs all its projects. The process of learning to participate was, and still is, gradual and often full of contradictions.

Contradictions in participatory community development stem from many sources. Sometimes they come from the community leaders, who, while having a common goal and background, do not form a homogeneous group because they had different experiences, or lacked any experience, of participation. For example, the UNIDAS Council is struggling with tensions between the original pioneering leadership and the pragmatic new members of the Council, who do not share the idealistic voluntariness of those who personally built the community projects over the years. History is thus dividing UNIDAS, instead of inspiring unity through appreciation of what the group has achieved. This crisis is being addressed by concentration of more time and energy on bringing out identity, values, social awareness and interpersonal relations among Council members, an aspect that had been overlooked in many projects run by UNIDAS.

Community participation calls for practical organisation along with an ideal that goes beyond individual well-being to encompass that of the neighbours along the alley, that of Santa Marta Favela and, in a small way, that of all the impoverished in Rio de Janeiro. UNIDAS is one of the hundreds of thousands of small community

groups scattered all over Brazil that have come together during the past two decades to organise and take part in projects, boosted by outside aid and technical and socio-educational know-how, to improve basic living conditions for themselves and neighbours.

Evaluation of these projects and of the process that they embody has always been central to the community participatory experience. Much has been learned through formal and informal sharing because of the common commitment to transforming society with, and for the sake of, the impoverished.

In community projects, development is seen as a transformation in justice, sustainability and inclusiveness, within the daily struggle to survive and to live more humanly. It seeks to change society to overcome the exclusion of the impoverished, who are the victims of misdevelopment. This view of development, as furthering the right and means to choose and fulfil conditions that ensure quality of life, encompasses the spiritual dimension, physical and material conditions for savouring life, fair allocation of work tasks and the product of labour, and a voice in deciding society for the common good.

A recycling project in Guaratinguetá, a city on the motorway between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, exemplifies how micro experiences that touch on social needs can be significant for productive development. The project began because the unemployed kept knocking on the church door asking for food. Deciding that work, and not hand-outs, would be the answer, the priest started a paper-recycling project for the jobless. Soon tins were also being collected, pressed and sold. With the help of a German funding agency, bigger machines were purchased and the project began turning discarded plastic into containers for household chloride disinfectant. Today the local government pays for the lorry and personnel to collect recyclable trash throughout the city and deposit it in the shed where project workers sort tin, paper, cardboard and plastic. Some industries send their recyclable waste directly to the shed.

As a productive self-help activity, the recycling project will carry on as long as commercially recyclable trash is available, but its long-term development and autonomy face some limitations: the project is still dependent on church personnel for overall co-ordination, Brazil's monthly inflation of over 30 per cent makes any small business venture a hazard and the machinery purchased with funding will need upgrading if the project is to compete in market production. Still, by demonstrating that self-help involving private agencies, government and commerce is possible, the project may open the way for more significant changes than simply a successful small business.

Base-level motivation for participation

The long involvement of the excluded in community-based projects to improve quality of life has deepened their understanding of the meaning of participation, which had been seen as a kind of conformity, as a strategy to mobilise the masses around a common activity or merely as activities set up by core groups. Today, the excluded are becoming aware of their potential role as subjects in bringing about

social changes, no matter how small, towards a fairer organisation of living and working conditions for all.

Changes in the meaning of participation are the fruit of critical evaluation, by facilitators and social scientists, of self-help development projects in the light of deepening socio-economic analyses. For example, during the early 1970s it became evident to many in Brazilian NGOs that self-help projects implanted with funding, blueprints and timetables were not bringing about the expected development. Projects lasted no more than three to four years, after which they would decline, be abandoned or be taken over by some ambitious and unscrupulous individual (as happened in many agricultural and cottage-industry co-operatives), and nothing would remain of community organisation. Popular education began to be introduced as the lifeline of community projects, shifting the emphasis from product to process, from ready answers to conscientisation, from the poor as objects to the poor as subjects; the facilitators' role shifted from that of technical director to that of co-learner and sharer in a struggle to change the direction of development rather than patching up existing development. Values, whether religious or humanitarian, gave a transcendent scope to popular participation.

By the 1980s, with the end of the military dictatorship, community participation could come out of hiding and move into society. Years of experience of small-scale participation had prepared many to take an active part in setting up labour unions and the workers' political party. Human rights organisations and networks, movements and pressure groups that defend the rights of the excluded gave a new socio-political dimension to development projects. Nevertheless, participatory development through self-help projects is not a mass movement; it is a movement of small, active, visible, committed, practical and reflexive NGOs and community organisations. In the 1990s, new questions have arisen owing to the failure of community-level participatory development to make any meaningful difference to the socio-economic structure of society, which continues to be a pyramid.

The excluded join together in self-help development activities motivated by the reciprocal influence of four facets of participation: values, critical awareness, action and reflection.

As values focus on the dignity of life, they can reveal the forces in society that nurture or destroy life. Base communities analyse their projects and their process of joining together as solidary groups, taking as a point of reference their daily life experiences. They gradually discover the causes of their exclusion from society and begin to discern and live out their roles as potential citizens.

Critical awareness, heightened by values, action and reflection, helps community groups to overcome apathy. The interchange of feelings and insights about their subjection by society, guided by a discerning facilitator, stirs participants out of culturally ingrained inertia. Reactions are channelled towards immediate constructive action, while critical awareness of causes is deepened. Apathy can be overcome by bringing community groups together in assemblies, gatherings, movements, visits and networks to share examples, hope, struggles and enthusiasm. This momentum can be kept alive through popular literature, alternative newspapers, correspondence, audio-visuals and life stories.

A successful example of this process can be seen in Bela Vista do Chibarro, near Araraquara in the state of São Paulo. Amid immense sugarcane plantations and endless orange groves, which supply exporters of orange juice, 165 families have obtained title deeds to tracts of land expropriated from the bankrupt owner of a sugar mill. The ten-year struggle of these landless poor included many painful chapters: land occupations followed by violent expulsions, unfulfilled government promises, years of camping in plastic tents on the fringes of motorways and the insecurity of sowing food crops under threat of eviction from the land.

The motivation to persevere against all odds came from a continually maturing critical awareness that small producers are the ones who feed most of the nation, that untilled land is held by large owners only for real estate speculation, that the social use of land to grow food and provide for one's living is a God-given right and that the Brazilian Land Statute, although not implemented, is on their side. This motivation was nurtured by facilitators and by the Movement of the Landless, which networks supportively all over the country.

Today, visitors to Bela Vista do Chibarro can buy sacks of rice, beans and maize stacked in the homes. Families have organised themselves into co-operatives and associations to obtain bank loans and to purchase tractors, sprayers, rice huskers, graders and tools. Electricity and water are still lacking, but the farmers are already planning to diversify their crops and improve production.

Participation as a decisive element for sustainability

In the context of base community experiences of the excluded, participation — both as a project to improve living conditions, and as a process seeking to redirect misdevelopment — stands out as a decisive element in fostering sustainability. Setting concrete goals and striving to achieve them pushes community groups forward in their initiatives and ideals for social changes and matures the practice of participation, both individually and collectively. Intensified participation around a time-bound issue or task is seen as a key event in the community group's process, which can include steps towards attaining the project objectives, or advancing the community groups relationship to society. Participation is both a means of achieving, and a result of, the base communitys key events.

For example, tired of being exploited by middlemen and losing out in price competition with plantation owners, men and women (especially women) of Japu formed a co-operative to sell their cocoa, obtaining a 30 per cent increase in the price of their product. This key event made life a little more livable and held them on the land, but the neighbourhood community of Japu then had to seek other goals in order to move forward.

Participation as baseline democracy

Local participation builds the foundation for baseline democracy through accountability and empowerment. Democracy exists when it is effectively applied to

all members of society. This means that a truly democratic society can not exclude any members, nor reserve choices concerning the quality of life to self-privileging minorities. Without democracy, progress and modernisation lead to misdevelopment.

The excluded acquire experience of baseline democracy through community action and reflection, centred on key events arising from projects and popular movements. These experiences call for a new way of thinking and acting, often in opposition to dominant social, cultural, economic and political trends. The self-help projects become an impetus to exercising citizenship through accountability to the community and through empowerment of individuals and groups to defend the basic rights of the excluded.

Decision making takes place on two levels: 1) extensively, whenever a specific need arises for broad participation, such as joining forces to carry out a project, mounting street demonstrations, gathering signatures for a petition, electing a committee or taking part in general assemblies to appraise the community work; and 2) intensively and regularly in the leaders' meetings to analyse the situation, plan, assign tasks, evaluate and give an account to the wider community of the group's attitudes, actions and omissions.

In the hamlet of Matinha, in the state of Bahia, participation as baseline democracy led the outlying rural neighbourhoods to empower Maria das Virgens Alves de Almeida as president of the Union of Rural Workers of Feira de Santana, which represents 10 000 subsistence farmers and landless day labourers. They held Maria das Virgens and the team of directors accountable to them and to society for their management.

The Union is poor. It does not even own its headquarters. Maria das Virgens takes no pay for her full-time job, but neighbours plant and harvest her bean and maize crops as a way of participating in the work of the Union. Maria das Virgens and other community leaders are persecuted because of their work of raising awareness and helping the excluded to empower themselves through project organisation and community networking. They believe in their struggle. They feel the Union belongs to the members, not to the directors. The people take their concerns, suggestions and voices in decision making to the assemblies. They discuss problems, evaluate their successes and failures, make plans and continue to build a baseline democracy that is standing out as an example to the municipality of Feira de Santana.

Participation for community self-direction

Self-direction depends on the quality of participation. Participation as mere following results in isolated projects with limited impact and duration. Participation as shared discussions, decision-making and actions, as working towards change for the common good, leads to the organisation of self-directed community groups of the excluded.

Generating self-direction is a slow continual task in community development. Often it must be negotiated in the give and take of surviving as a self-directed group in a hostile environment. Each crisis can either advance or retard the growth in self-direction; the difference lies in how the facilitator helps the group to reflect on, and learn from, the crisis. When analysed as learning experiences, crises help the

group grow in autonomy, both internally and in relation to other organisations and movements. The UNIDAS Community Group of Santa Marta Favela is constantly undergoing crises because it is dynamic, open and growing. The process of social education goes on, and the white building on the slum hillside stands out as a sign that self-direction makes the difference between a mere self-help project, which is an end in itself, and a process of community development.

A community group must learn to direct itself if it is to carry out its citizenship role, gain space in society for the excluded and extend self-help projects beyond the neighbourhood.

Shared learning within participation

Shared learning among members and between members and facilitators is a vital factor in participation. Shared learning regenerates participation through critical and evaluative reflection on activities and on their relation to the social and historical context of the organisation.

Learning from the practices, analysis, values and socio-cultural backgrounds of others can take place in several spheres of interaction. The most intense learning occurs among the participants of the base community group. Learning broadens in the interchange between the group and non-participating neighbours, other community groups, members of the same social class, participants of popular movements, private and governmental agents, supervisors of funding agencies, national and international NGOs, technical and educational advisors, and, above all, the facilitators who accompany the base communitys experience.

One example of learning held in common emerges from the experience of the fruit and nut gatherers and rubber tappers in the Amazon forest, under the inspiration of Chico Mendes, in a state where half the land is owned by ten families. Learning informally through sharing began early in the life of Chico Mendes. As he was a rubber tapper by the age of nine, the forest was his school. He learned to read and write from a political leader in hiding when he was 24. The knowledge he acquired of nature and of social organisation broadened as he interacted with groups and organisations beyond the forest. He shared this learning with the people in two ways. He set up literacy classes for forest dwellers, using Paulo Freires method of socio-political reflection, building up the rubber tappers' and nut harvesters' awareness of exploitation by powerful groups and large landowners. He motivated the people to join together in solidarity and courageous defiance of the destruction of the land that provided their livelihood, and with them set up the *empate*, a peaceful physical resistance to deforestation in which men, and especially women and children, lie down in front of tractors and chainsaws to stop the trees from being cut down. This practice has thrived over the years since his assassination.

Participatory development as partnership

Where the base community groups engage in a self-development process that is participatory and sustainable — tending towards baseline democracy, self-direction,

pursuit of goals as key events and shared learning — the project leadership stands in a relation of partnership with funding-agency representatives. The less these aspects of community process are present, the stronger the tendency is towards patron-client relations, in which agencies or intermediary groups representing them dominate the process.

The people of São João de Meriti, a poverty-stricken town on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, began to organise themselves in the 1970s as base communities of the Catholic Church. In the 1980s, when political rights were partially restored at the end of the military dictatorship, the base communities formed themselves into neighbourhood associations. A federation was set up to co-ordinate the dozens of neighbourhood associations and to obtain more political clout for pressuring a disinterested and incompetent city government to drain canals, put in sewer systems and set up health centres. As a result of the popular movement to denounce corruption, an unscrupulous mayor was eventually removed from office.

The federation appealed in vain to the government to do something about the houses destroyed by the flood in 1988. In dialogue with an experienced Brazilian NGO, the Federation of Organisations for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE), and the Catholic Church, a project was designed to help the people rebuild their homes and also to improve some of the town's infrastructure. The reconstruction project became an instrument for influencing the transformation of society. Instead of simply handing out building materials, the project enabled people to discover their potential for leadership and active citizenship, because the entire experience was carried out in a spirit of partnership among the community federation, the Church, FASE and the project beneficiaries, with joint decision making, accountability to one another and shared learning.

The homes were built, but the social momentum of the project carried on at other levels. Solidarity grew as strangers worked side by side to rebuild each other's homes. New neighbourhood associations strengthened the popular movement in seeking better living conditions for all the excluded. More than 800 assemblies and seminars were held during the project, and through them the people gained an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. As a result, they began to have a voice in society. They elected one of their members to the city council and held him accountable to the neighbourhood associations.

The people gained experience in self-direction by learning to handle an economic project in partnership with other organisations. A new leadership became aware of the social causes of their impoverishment, awakening commitment to bring about a fair society. The people felt better prepared to stand up for the rights of the excluded in São João de Meriti by denouncing injustices and proposing practical solutions from their own experience.

Some policy implications for development projects

Base community experiences in Brazil are showing that participation makes the difference between a project that closes in on itself and a project that generates cultural, social, political and economic sustainability. As project co-ordinators,

implementers and facilitators evaluate their efforts and seek new insights, four aspects of participation stand out: community groups, partnership, self-direction and politics.

Community group participation

Participation is regarded as more than a simple means to an end. It is a way of interacting for reasons and values held in common, rooted in a historical context, to bring about changes in society for the sake of the excluded. Micro-level participatory development projects do not solve the problems for long, if at all, but they can be catalysts for communication and collaboration in a civil society emerging among the excluded.

Local initiatives can and do put pressure on society, when they are organised and accountably involved in projects for the common good, engaged in a base-community process and linked to popular movements. For example, the various service projects for street children headed by NGOs and base-community organisations have made an impact, first, by bringing the problem to the attention of society; second, by invoking values concerning the right to life; and third, by denouncing government negligence and citizens' indifference. As a result, Brazil introduced children's rights into the Constitution, implanted legal protection and set up an agency in charge of children and adolescents. Many commercial and tourist enterprises have adopted programmes to rehabilitate street children. In São Paulo a project to provide shelter, health care and education for street children is being co-ordinated and staffed jointly by NGOs, church groups and government social workers.

Participation implies communal solidarity and commitment, as well as a continual appraisal and renewal of decisions, standpoints and actions. Projects are key events of goal achievement within the community groups process of seeking alternatives to the *status quo*, and as such they have economic, social, cultural and political dimensions. When some dimension is not taken into account, the sustainability of the project is diminished and its impact beyond the group of project beneficiaries is weakened.

Agencies could help make a difference by funding local development projects that can be inserted in community group processes. Priority would have to be given to: 1) identifying and consulting community groups engaged in processes that would allow for the formulation of project goals and guidelines meeting both agency criteria and the needs and potentialities of the communities; and 2) in the absence of community groups, investing in community mobilisation and group formation by facilitators before attempting to implement projects.

Partnership participation

Partnership springs from a down-to-earth conviction that something can be done to build social relations without unjust exclusion of the poor, and that the organisation of society can be compatible with the dignity of human beings.

Shared decision making, assumption of community accountability and joint action take place in very unequal conditions. The participants come from squalid neighbourhoods, community leadership groups, technical NGOs and powerful funding agencies. These contradictions can be overcome by analysing and evaluating every crisis and focusing on the long-range goals of the process, while exchanging information, knowledge, insights, life histories and worldviews.

Funding agencies walk with one foot in the world of donors, governments and organisations, the upper part of the pyramid, and one foot in the world of the excluded at the base of society, whose development activities are being financed. Agencies could greatly enhance partnership participation by investing in socio-educational facilitators to accompany groups in the projects and to share with the top of society what is being learned at the base. Facilitators not only play a key role in building bridges and stimulating the community process, but could contribute greatly to bringing the peak and the base of the pyramid together to seek a new society in which world economics and politics are at the service of human beings.

Self-directed participation

Grassroots participation, with supportive interaction from other social bodies, allows community groups to grow in awareness, to increase their commitment to the common good and better to defend the needs and rights of the excluded. Groups learn to act as subjects in social relations, rather than as objects of the decisions of a controlling minority. To make a difference, development must be for, by, with and of the excluded, who want a different society for all, and not simply a niche in the existing society.

Self-direction requires groups to regulate the use of their power, steered by values, critical awareness of political aptness and unswerving determination to change the situation of the excluded as well as the socio-economic, political and cultural causes of exclusion. Leadership groups must exercise their power, within negotiable social relations, to influence decision making for the common good.

Group empowerment (not individual empowerment) conveys the voice of the excluded to dominant segments of society, where it can help in forming creative, human-centred social forces.

Funding agencies have an underestimated potential to tip the balance of social power struggles in favour of the excluded by supporting their empowerment through self-directed participation.

Political participation

When development projects are divorced from their political context, they can mask underlying reality and perpetuate the false impression that everything is basically all right, that we need only work a little harder to catch up or to straighten out the kinks in the system.

Political participation in the base community process follows two complementary lines: understanding the political implications of exclusion — its

historical causes and mechanisms of perpetuation — and proposing alternatives for a future fair society; and strengthening civil society through the exercise of citizenship in neighbourhood involvement, in popular movement linkages and in positive pressures on governing authorities and economic powers.

Funding agencies could help dispel the myth that change must begin at the bottom. The excluded are not responsible for bringing about their exclusion. The principal causes lie at the peak of the pyramid, not the base. Redistribution of resources could give way to an equitable redirection of all society if agencies dared to foster new social relations on all levels.

Citizenship is one of the clues to change. Instead of investing only in material projects, funding agencies could be investing in education for a different kind of development that defies the exclusionist model, which dominates societies today.

Promoting Participatory Rural Development in Peru: Towards a New Partnership in Agricultural Research and Extension

Otto Flores Saenz

Introduction

During the 1980s, a series of efforts were made in Peru to create a research and extension (R&E) system to raise farm productivity levels, which were very low for most of the main crops. Although the government institution that directed these efforts was well funded and endowed with human and material resources, its technical services scarcely reached the farmers. A final evaluation[1] showed that most of the resources from the central government and international aid agencies were absorbed by a bureaucracy that tried to do a lot in many places, but was not able to build a sustainable institution with and for the small producers who control 85 per cent of agricultural units in Peru[2].

With these weaknesses in mind, and with a major interest in increasing farm production and productivity, the Peruvian government is sponsoring a mechanism to encourage farmers' involvement in the management of experiment stations. Its main objectives are to form a more decentralised and efficient administration, to reduce the costs of administrative services and to transfer demand-driven technological innovations to farmers, thus raising their incomes and productivity.

The implementing agency for this policy is the National Institute for Agricultural Research (INIA), a decentralised quasi-public institution. Since January 1992, INIA has been signing agreements to transfer state experiment stations to local rural associations, which are formed by several private user groups, mainly farmers' organisations. The boards of directors of these associations are made up of representatives from various organisations: groups of commodity producers and traders, universities, irrigation committees, associations of professional researchers and extension agents, exporters' societies and NGOs.

Setting up these associations to carry out R&E services has several advantages. For the first time, their activities are demand-driven, and since their sources of funding are diversified, they are much less prone to instability. The association has

an autonomous management, which is free to decide research projects, investment plans, extension priorities and salary levels.

The main explicit reasons for this new policy were:

a. the lack of farmers' involvement in the direction of R&E services;

b. the government's need to share the high costs of basic and applied research with the private sector;

c. the need to relocate resources and technologies; and

d. the need for efficient management of experiment stations and better salaries for their staffs.

Unfortunately, coastal associations to which the government has already transferred the administration of 16 experiment stations are not satisfactorily benefiting all their members, since channels of communication between leaders and members are deficient. A more participatory approach needs to be taken, and conditions are ripe to do so.

This chapter addresses the question of how to provide a feasible and sustainable agricultural R&E service through these experiment stations, adopting participatory approaches that have proved successful in Peru. How can one build an institutional system capable of bringing useful technologies to all farmers at lower costs than the hitherto prevailing system? It is postulated that benefits can be substantially improved through participatory approaches.

Interactions at the local level

The case studies

The two cases selected for analysis used participatory approaches to R&E with a certain degree of success. The cases are presented in four parts:

a. nature of the participatory programme;

b. participation methodology and the role of promoters;

c. results; and

d. difficulties met by the promoting agencies, organisations and leaders.

Case 1. Agro-forestry and organic farming development in Cajamarca (Northern Sierra)

a. Nature of the participatory programme. Since 1985, this NGO-supported programme[3] has proposed action research in ecological agriculture in an area of small farmsteads, by means of technological experimentation and the promotion of new production methods, commercialisation and irrigation infrastructure.

The participatory process involves agro-ecological work in family parcels, accompanied by a promoter. The work includes the collection

of germ-plasm and useful insects. The dynamics of the participation consists of empowering autonomous work groups, thus democratising decision making.

b. Methodology of participation and the role of promoters. When an agreement is reached, the commitments of both parties are stated and a plan of action is designed. At the beginning, NGOs provide materials and technical assistance, while the community provides manual labour.

The participatory method consists of having the beneficiaries take part in tasks and in the formulation, analysis and evaluation of the process, as shown in the diagram below:
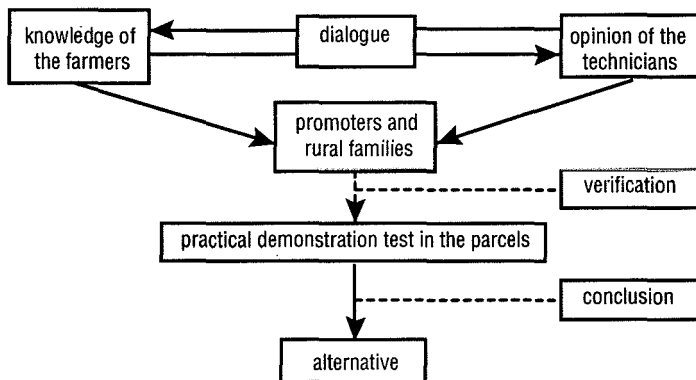
Although the NGOs prefer to support technologies for agro-forestry and organic agriculture, they have also been requested to help in building a school, building a drinking-water system or fighting outbreaks of cholera. These requests were not rejected; on the contrary, these services allow the NGO to gain the confidence of the inhabitants and reinforce integral development attempts.

About 20 groups of six farmers were formed in each community. Each farmer provided a very small parcel of land (0.3 ha). Each group elected a co-ordinator, or promoter, who became the link between the NGO and the group. The tools received from the NGOs are used in common in each of the parcels, except for some daily tasks of individual maintenance. Working this way, the beneficiaries recycle organic matter, rotate and associate crops, build small terraces, dig infiltration trenches and make compost.

The promoters do not receive payment for the work they do, but they are excused from communal tasks, or *mingas*[4], such as repairing bridges and roads, cleaning trenches and building schools. Three days a month, they attend courses in veterinary care, agro-ecology, apiculture and human health. Several NGOs have sponsored an Escuela Rural Andina in Cajamarca to train farmers elected by their communities[5].

c.   *Results.* Institutionalising an agro-forestry development proposal with participatory work in ten communities has been an important achievement. In eight years the farmers have seen substantial achievements: drinking-water systems, latrines and diminution of parasitosis in the livestock; the formation of small dairy firms; fruit and vegetable gardens; forestation of the hillsides with native trees; construction of terraces; organisation of revolving funds. These are real examples of what the farmers see and try to copy in other parcels and communities. The days of *minga* per farmer increased from 25 per year at the beginning of the project to 60 per year in 1993. Many promoters have been trained in the area, and there is now an Asociación de Promotores Agropecuarios with 510 members: 160 cattle breeders, 70 agronomists, 60 apiculturists and 220 health promoters.

Another important achievement was the creation of the Comité Comunal del Censo to diagnose problems in farming and animal husbandry, on the basis of a survey carried out by trained members among the peasants.

d.   *Difficulties in the agencies and organisations.* During the first years, the NGOs experienced difficulty in serving all the farmers without making any distinction among them. Time showed that the farmers should be grouped by products, ecological soil conditions and capacity to produce a surplus, and special programmes were designed for each category. Grants were provided for the poorest farmers (30 per cent) and loans for those who had the capacity to produce a surplus (70 per cent). This reorganisation caused ideological conflicts among the members of the NGOs.

Other difficulties were the fear of some farmers to speak at assemblies, the attempts of some leaders to retain power and the prejudice of men against unmarried women.

Case 2. Participatory research in an experiment station in Cuzco: (Southern Sierra)

a.   *Nature of the participatory programme.* R&E participatory methodology was used in an experiment station based on a model developed in Colombia. The programme carries out research on grain and leguminosae, and promotes their diffusion and consumption among small farmers of neighbouring communities in the Cuzco highlands.

Each community elects a Local Committee for Agricultural Research (CIAL), consisting of 10 to 12 farmers. With technicians from INIA, the members of the CIAL discuss problems, priorities and research solutions; design experiments in farmers' lots; harvest crops; measure volume, weight and size; assess quality; and so on. They hold periodic meetings with the community to present the results. Varieties to be diffused are selected on the basis of community preferences for colour, form, flavour, size and texture. A small start-up fund is provided, as

well as seeds, which farmers return two-fold in kind. As a rule, technologies that have not been tested in the community are not diffused.

b. **Methodology of participation and role of committees.** The methodology is not a substitute for traditional basic research in experiment stations, but a complement that interprets agriculture from the farmer's point of view; permits continual feedback; reduces time and costs of the process, as extension is built into the research model; accelerates diffusion by directing it horizontally from farmer to farmer; and instills confidence in the technology adopted, as farmers have already tested it.

In participatory methodology it is important that the farmers take part in the R&E process from the initial stages and not only at the end of the process, in validation as in traditional research. That way the farmer gets involved with the process, its priorities, advantages and disadvantages.

The members of each CIAL are elected according to the community's criteria, for example, farmers "who like to try new things", "who are not selfish about transmitting their knowledge" or "who are honest about money".

c. *Results.* Farmers recognise that they have internalised the value of technical knowledge: "we know the reason for each thing", one of them said. In addition, the programme makes it possible: *i)* to increase local capacity for research work; *ii)* to institute self-management of communal resources and decision making; *iii)* to improve the economic basis of the family as a way to ensure sustainability; *iv)* to strengthen the organisation of the communities.

d. **Difficulties.** The greatest difficulties lie with the INIA: technicians find it difficult to change old paternalistic habits or fear being displaced in their role as researchers; and co-ordination between the participatory project and the experiment station is inadequate. The private sector will probably be more flexible than the government in using this kind of procedure.

Participation as a dynamic and sustainable process

A common view of participation sees it as a process of gradual incorporation of marginal areas and populations into the larger society[6]. We prefer the conception that underlies our case studies: a shared process of decision making through which group members select ends and means and pursue results[7]. In this sense, participation exists only when decisions are the result of dialogue and negotiations among the interested parties. As it involves diverse actors with different or even conflicting aspirations, participation is essentially a political process.

A participatory process stimulates debates and learning. During the participatory procedures farmers learn about themselves, about others, about sharing

decisions and tasks, and about having a sense of responsibility and commitment to others.

Final decisions depend not only on technical consistency and economic viability but also on their legitimacy for participants. Thus the main products of participation are commitments to carry out decisions. These commitments strengthen the groups' economic base and the participants' self-esteem, which in turn enhances sustainability. The results of traditional research, for example, are frequently difficult and expensive to transfer, but in participatory research like that of Cuzco and Cajamarca, farmers are constantly appropriating research results as a part of the process.

Initiating and strengthening participatory experiences: the role of local promoters

Participatory experiences generally begin with common needs or problems, and aspirations for resolving them. The decision to take part is closely related to the benefits, direct or indirect, that farmers expect to obtain, for example, higher profits, better markets for their products or more permanent jobs. At the beginning, farmers are sceptical and even suspicious, as some have had bad experiences. It is therefore important that the co-operating agency, whether an NGO or the government, create confidence through serious, honest and patient work.

Farmers need adequate opportunities to discuss options and work together in small groups. Without this step, some projects would end up benefiting mainly middle- and upper-income participants who have better education or speak louder than the rest.

A way to accelerate the process is to obtain concrete results, even partial ones, as soon as possible. One of the leaders declared: "when they see things getting ahead, the rest join". In Cajamarca, it was important to begin with activities that served the needs of the majority and could be quickly solved, such as drinking water or latrines to fight against cholera. After that the farmers continued with agro-forestry and soil conservation.

According to NGO officers, comparing experiences with other communities or groups can strengthen local organisations. Visits by groups of promoters and farmers to other, better-organised communities have shown good results. A good example of this is Porcon community in Cajamarca[8].

Rural promoters were very important in mobilising participatory experiences in Cajamarca and Cuzco, working several days a month for the community. Local promoters bring several advantages to a programme: *a)* they understand the people with whom they work and know the priorities of groups; *b)* they know how to motivate their neighbours and what arguments really work; *c)* they can show others what they have accomplished on their own plots; *d)* they live in the area and are accustomed to manual labour and the difficult terrain; *e)* they cost much less than NGO personnel; *f)* they are trusted by the people (indeed, they were elected for that reason).

Service-oriented and lobbying organisations

Farmers' organisations in Peru are diverse: they exist at the local, regional and national levels; they are organised on the basis of territory, crops or commodities (the most common), or on use of or need for a natural resource (water or land); and they receive various names: peasant communities, producer committees, associations, leagues, federations and co-operatives.

The roles, functions and goals of these farmers' organisations vary substantially. While commodity associations are prevalent in the Costa and Selva, almost all remaining peasant communities are found in the Sierra. The latter have not escaped the influence of modern culture, but they still bear the cultural stamp of the pre-Hispanic civilisation. These organisations are oriented either to service or to lobbying.

Service-oriented organisations, which are found throughout Peru, provide agricultural services to their members, who join voluntarily as long as they receive service benefits at reasonable price and quality. Three good examples are the Valley Producer Associations of Cañete, Chincha and Ica in the Central Coast region. They have carried out research to obtain improved varieties of cotton, potatoes, cowpeas, maize and beans. They have also produced or imported seeds for sale and have diffused improved varieties in all Central Coast valleys. A more recent example is the promotion of asparagus for export. INIA has transferred one experiment station to each of these associations.

This category of organisation is usually formed because of the farmers' need for services not provided by the government or by private firms. The great majority lack institutional mechanisms for participation.

Lobbying organisations were prevalent in the past, but most of them are now moribund or in profound institutional crisis. Their principal objective is to lobby the government for resources, services, concessions or privileges.

Lobbying organisations do not require the active participation of most of their members. Leaders speak for the membership, and as long as some benefits (credit, price support and markets) reach the farmers, they are passively supported. The leaders claim, usually exaggerating, large numbers of members. Most farmers in organisations of this category have expected the government to solve their problems. This attitude has been fostered by centralised and bureaucratic governments, which for more than two decades have exercised a large degree of control over agricultural resources and services. Scarce governmental resources have been allocated on political grounds, and services or privileges accorded as rewards for support or for not causing trouble.

Most of these contemporary farmers' organisations are not appropriate for participatory R&E activities unless their structures and procedures are changed so as to reach the poorest farmers in a sustainable way. As in Cajamarca and Cuzco, however, some organisations contain an embryonic participatory-development movement, and these need to be strengthened.

A demanding political and economic environment

The dynamics of micro-level participation also operates at the macro level. Macroeconomic and political changes during the last two decades have influenced the strength, weakness and sustainability of participation.

Assaults by the military government have reduced the activities of farmers' organisations, while the decline in living standards since 1975 has accelerated the dynamics of participation. An increasing number of NGOs in Peru have helped to introduce new participatory methods and increased their activities with funds for international technical co-operation, especially from Europe. New grassroots organisations had appeared among urban and rural marginal groups by the end of the 1970s[9].

The most serious obstacle to Peruvian participatory development came from terrorist violence. The leaders of the base organisations became a target for Sendero Luminoso, as they were an obstacle to its strategy of isolating the rural areas, which supply food for the cities. For example, many co-operative firms in Central Sierra, the main suppliers of food for Lima, were dynamited or burned. As a result, most people were afraid to take part in participatory efforts.

Radical change has been taking place since the application of the current government's liberal policy, which favours participatory development in a number of ways. The urgent need to solve common problems leads the producers to associate among themselves. They realise that they must improve productivity to compete in today's tougher markets. Expectations of economic development have improved as the two major obstacles, hyperinflation and terrorism, have diminished noticeably. Nevertheless, poverty pervades the country (per capita incomes are comparable to those of the early 1960s), and the private sector is still reluctant to invest.

These major changes in the political and economic environment have brought important attitudinal transformations among farmers. Facing high input costs, very high real interest rates and competition from imported food crops, more farmers are realising that they must solve their problems through their own efforts, and that small farmers have little chance of coping with their common problems other than through organisations. Under the new economic rules, however, little can be obtained from traditional organisations. As communications expand, farmers realise that they live in a difficult country, which is rich in possibilities, and they are making up their minds about the benefits of participatory development.

Visits to numerous small rural projects and interviews with many farmers, peasants, local leaders, government agents and NGO specialists reveal a new awareness of and willingness for change. More precise data may be necessary, but it seems to be a propitious moment for participatory development.

Selecting farmers' organisations for transfer of experiment stations

Farmers recognise faults in their organisations and express their willingness to strengthen them. There is an enormous demand for participative support in the 85 organisations that have already received 16 experiment stations. The problem is how

to translate these experiences into policy in transferring the remaining stations, which are located in the Sierra and Selva.

Which criteria should be used in selecting organisations? More specifically, how can the farmers' passivity be overcome, when they are eager for change but have neither the know-how nor the participatory mechanisms for solving their common problems? The case studies suggest that the effective solution of these common problems requires the real participation of small farmers, and that farmers must not resign themselves to delegating decision making to their leaders.

Some of the following criteria are used to select farmers' organisations for transferring the remaining experiment stations:

— organisations should be autonomous, able to subsist through the years with their members' contributions, whether in terms of capital, manual labour, land, or managerial or leadership capacity;

— they should be voluntary organisations, preferably producers' organisations, so that R&E product-oriented technologies become more effective;

— they should promote productive activities, thus helping to improve income distribution;

— participatory mechanisms should be used to manage systems for rendering and receiving agricultural goods and services: seeds, fertilisers, credit, post-harvest technology or marketing;

— there should be a transparent strategy for transferring technology to producers' groups;

— mechanisms to eliminate top-down or paternalistic attitudes are required.

Conclusions

Peru has experienced more than two decades of economic, social and political crisis, characterised by an excessive concentration of state power. Since 1990, market economy rules have been put into practice through a stabilisation programme aimed at controlling inflation and a structural reform programme to improve economic efficiency. Some of these measures have drastically hurt farmers by making credit unobtainable.

As the productive sector is re-activated under the new economic rules, it will be possible to complete the transfer of experiment stations to producers' organisations. If the programme is to succeed, it is essential to start from the local level, and not, as has frequently been done in Peru, from a bureaucratic institutional structure. The axis of the strategy is the improvement of the farmers' capacity to organise their own R&E services, and to that end, participatory and distributive strategies are needed.

Sixteen experiment stations have already been transferred in the Costa, where the programme was well received by farmers. Although not enough time has passed for an exhaustive evaluation, it seems that farmers exercise very little

decision-making power regarding the activities and benefits of the transferred stations.

As the programme moves ahead to transfer stations in the Sierra and Selva regions, lessons from past experiences of participation, positive or negative, can be capitalised to shorten the process. Many participatory experiences in Peru have proved viable and sustainable at the local level, but little advantage has been derived from them.

The two case studies showed that participatory development will be effective as long as solutions to problems are generated and implemented by the organised producers at the local level. Participatory research informs and facilitates decision making. This strengthens the farmers' economic basis and self-esteem, which in turn ensures the sustainability of the project.

From the case studies we can conclude that a participatory R&E system in the experiment stations can be strengthened by:

— creating an R&E service with low operating costs and high potential for replication;
— maximising the use of local resources — human, material and financial;
— giving priority to demand-driven technologies, that is, technologies that respond to the producers' needs and not to the profitability of input and equipment suppliers;
— developing ecological farming and agro-forestry as a way to achieve sustainability, especially in the Sierra;
— using process technologies rather than commercial product technologies.

The strategy can be summarised as leaving to the producers the responsibility (and, to the extent possible, the costs) of operating the local R&E system. This approach would simplify the bureaucratic apparatus of the system, reduce operating costs and increase the efficiency of the service at the local level. It would have the further effect of eliminating paternalistic relations and generating confidence and self-esteem among the small farmers.

Notes

1. J. Malaga and O. Flores Saenz, *Final Evaluation of the Agricultural Research, Extension and Education Project* (USAID/PERU, Lima, 1989).

2. Instituto Nacional de Estadística, *Encuesta nacional de hogares rurales* (Lima, 1986). Of 1 574 000 farm households, 22 per cent have less than 1 ha, 72 per cent less than 5 ha and 85 per cent less than 10 ha.

3. The supporting NGOs are Centro IDEAS, Centro Ecuménico de Promoción y Acción Social and Centro de Investigación, Educación y Desarrollo.

4. *Minga* is an Inca form of labour that involves mass lending of services to accomplish projects of benefit to the entire community. When promoters render veterinary services (parasitosis treatment, injections) individually they receive some commodity payment (eggs, guinea pigs, potatoes, etc.).

5. The curriculum includes alternative study periods: a stay at school for basic courses, practice in their community and another period at school for practical work evaluation.

6. P. Oakley and B. Dillon, *Strengthening People's Participation in Rural Development* (German Foundation for International Development, Feldafing, 1985).

7. L. Gonzaga, "¿Que es la planificación participativa?", in R. Moncayo, ed., *Lecturas de extension* (Quito, 1991).

8. Some NGO field supervisors interviewed consider that the success in Porcon is due to participatory discipline associated with their religious discipline, because 95 per cent of them are evangelic: "the manager's authority is the priest's authority", they said. Porcon was not considered as a case study because it did not have an important R&E component.

9. In such a context of unmet needs, the number of NGOs increased from 30 by the middle of the 1970s to more than 700 in 1990. Nowadays, 41 per cent of them work in urban areas, 27 per cent in rural areas and the rest in both. M. Beaumont and M.A. Rossel, "Las ONGs en el Perú: elementos para un balance crítico", in M. Zolezzi, ed., *La promoción al desarrollo en el Perú, balances y perspectivas* (DESCO, Lima, 1992).

Part Four

AID-AGENCY PERSPECTIVES

Participatory Development: A Brief Review of CIDA's Experience and Potential[1]

Rémy C. Beaulieu and Violeta S. Manoukian

Introduction

This chapter briefly reviews the experience of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in the area of participatory development. The first section presents a conceptual framework for participatory development, identifying criteria and components to be taken into consideration when looking at CIDA's experience in this field.

The second section describes the macro implications at the policy level, placing participatory development within the context of democratic development, human rights and good governance. The third section explores the meso, or intermediary, level of participatory development, presenting concepts such as capacity development and institutional development. The fourth section presents the micro-level implications of participatory development. This breakdown into different spheres of activities is offered only as an ordering principle, not as an encouragement to further compartmentalisation of development efforts. To the contrary, it shows how crucial is the synergy that must take place among these different levels, how a dynamic nexus must be established, if participatory development is to become a reality.

The fifth section describes methodologies useful to participatory development efforts, and the concluding section suggests a few ways of improving participatory development in CIDA's future interventions.

Conceptual framework

The concept of participatory development has evolved as a result of discontent with top-down bureaucratic approaches to development. Among the problems encountered by these approaches are flawed design, less-than-satisfactory delivery and an inability to adapt projects and programmes to uncertainties and to diverse local situations. Top-down approaches are also costly, as external firms or executing

agencies are called upon to implement projects and programmes designed by government bodies. Apart from the financial cost, this practice yields poor results. Needs as perceived by external experts may not match the needs and expectations of those whose lives are directly affected by development efforts.

Bottom-up approaches have therefore been devised to ensure that development partners — through people's organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) — identify their own needs and attempt to find support for project and programme implementation.

This chapter suggests a more balanced and collaborative approach, between top-down and bottom-up efforts. In this approach, all entities — governmental, private or non-governmental — form partnerships and pool their resources to design, plan, implement and evaluate development programmes.

CIDA's involvement in participatory development

In the 1960s, participation in the development process was seen as the responsibility of the developing countries themselves. CIDA therefore did not formally include participation in the design and implementation of its programmes. By the 1970s, the problems encountered by the previous approach had engendered an intent to consult local people and eventually to involve them in implementing programmes designed by the administration. The goal was to increase the absorptive capacity of local communities, who were viewed as having a limited capacity to adapt to new technologies. Good examples of this approach were the integrated rural development projects.

Not until the 1980s did CIDA start to foster more participatory approaches by supporting local initiatives and micro-realisation projects. During this period, CIDA implemented flexible mechanisms to support local initiatives through bilateral funding and the country-focus approach, and created the Social Dimensions Unit to provide social and technical advice to project teams. Not much was done, however, to modify the scale and orientation of traditional infrastructure and economic development projects.

In the late 1980s, CIDA began to review lessons from its experiences at the community level and to integrate participatory development as a component of its developmental framework[2].

The present document summarises CIDA's experience and potential by presenting a new framework in which participatory development is not limited to the micro level but encompasses all stages and levels of the development process.

CIDA's emphasis on sustainable development

In 1987, the objectives of Canada's official development assistance were revised because of dissatisfaction with former aid strategies, their limited ability to reach the neediest and the transience of many of their effects. The principles and priorities of the new charter are:

— putting poverty first;

— helping people to help themselves;

— development priorities must prevail in setting objectives for the aid programme;

— partnership is the key to fostering and strengthening the links between Canada's people and institutions and those of the Third World (CIDA, 1987, p. 23).

In 1991, CIDA formulated a conceptual framework of sustainable development, positing that for sustainable development to begin, let alone be accepted, people must be involved in decision making. This result is best secured by democratisation and by giving communities an effective say over the use of the resources upon which they depend.

CIDA's current understanding of development rests on five "pillars of sustainability": cultural, political, social, economic and environmental sustainability. To achieve sustainable development, development efforts must respect all five pillars, which rely on participation in various ways.

The dimensions of participation

Actors

In the past, development professionals tended to suggest that government bodies could best influence the development process. This approach is now being reconsidered. People themselves must be considered as the primary actors, and ideally, the participation of all institutional actors affected by development efforts should be sought. International organisations must recognise that they are external actors whose role is to support endogenous organisations so that the latter may take the lead in processes of societal change.

This understanding leads to a stronger focus on community-based organisations and social movements (e.g. the women's movement, the environmental movement, the co-operative movement, the labour movement), which are the expression of people's aspirations and are perceived as key actors in participatory development. NGOs and the private sector are also considered as playing an important role in development efforts.

The gender dimension of development activities warrants special attention. Factors such as the cultural milieu, traditions, social structures, access to education and resources, and legal codes are all relevant to the role of women in participatory development (see Box 1).

Levels and types of participation

Partners must be involved not only in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects, but also in the design of programmes and strategies and in the development of policies, since these levels constitute the framework of the development process.

Box 1: Participation of women in development — CIDA's experience

CIDA's involvement with women in development (WID) provided an excellent vehicle to emphasise the importance of people's participation in development efforts, using women's participation as a specific instance of a participatory approach. WID efforts have been one of the Agency's most serious attempts at integrating groups of those hitherto excluded.

According to the instructions of CIDA's action plan, WID considerations must be included as an integral part of any development policy or strategy established on an Agency-wide scale. Training programmes must be offered for all members of the Agency's professional staff to show how to analyse development projects in terms of the role of women.

The 1992 Interim Policy Statement describes WID as a strategic, cross-cutting development issue, emphasising an integrated approach, the use of proactive measures and policy dialogue, and the important role of the Agency's partners. This policy targets four objectives:

1. To encourage, respond to and support initiatives in and among developing countries in order to:

   — increase women's participation in economic, political and social processes,
   — improve women's income levels and economic conditions,
   — improve women's access to basic health and family planning services,
   — improve women's levels of educational achievement, and
   — protect and promote the human rights of women.

2. To promote the elimination of discriminatory barriers against women.
3. To promote and support policies and activities among CIDA's partners, in Canada and overseas, that enable them effectively to integrate gender considerations into their development work.
4. To build the institutional capacities of CIDA so that gender considerations are fully integrated into its policies, projects and activities.

Past efforts have laid a good foundation for the future, but researchers caution that CIDA cannot "declare victory" in its efforts to incorporate gender perspectives in its work. To this effect, the following recommendations were put forth:

1. Refine WID policy in order to improve its scope and performance.
2. Allocate appropriate resources to undertake all of the functions of the WID mandate.
3. Concentrate WID efforts on some key priorities, while continuing to integrate a gender perspective in all of CIDA's work.
4. Improve the WID skills of CIDA staff and partners.
5. Improve WID in CIDA's human resource development programmes, such as scholarships and training programmes.
6. Strengthen WID accountability and incentives by defining gender-related objectives in a measurable way.
7. Review CIDA's internal WID organisation in order to strengthen its cross-cutting dimension within the Agency.

Source: CIDA (1992).

There are various types of participation, embodying different degrees of power sharing. They range from consultation to concerted action, decision making, sharing of responsibilities, sharing of risk, partnership and self-management. Clearly, however, the term participatory development does not mean simply consulting people and then letting government authorities handle planning, implementation and evaluation. If development is to be participatory, it must take into consideration all possible types of participation. Only then will empowerment be considered a corollary of participatory development.

Scope

Traditionally, participation was considered an important element at the local level. It is now increasingly understood that participatory development has regional, national and international dimensions.

The concept of partnership is central. It involves exchange among equals working towards a mutual goal, the sharing of fundamental values, mutual respect, mutual responsibility and risk sharing. It works most effectively when partner organisations are of similar size and nature, as it implies a sustained eye-to-eye relationship rather than a short-lived donor-recipient approach. If this fundamental change in the relationships among development actors goes beyond rhetoric and is fully implemented, it will involve a paradigm shift.

We therefore suggest ways to understand and carry out this transition. An example would be reconsidering the concept of project as the main mechanism for delivering aid. Instead, institutional partners whose programme activities are viewed as valuable could be sought and supported.

CIDA's definitions of participatory development

Evolution of the concept

The concept of participatory development emerged in the late 1970s with an emphasis on the inclusion of hitherto excluded groups and movements. It then expanded to encompass the creation of an environment to foster the realisation of individually defined human potential within socially defined limits. It was found to be a central component of development efforts aimed at objectives that the participants themselves wanted to achieve.

In the 1980s, participation began to be viewed as crucial for equity-enhancing and self-reliant development. This approach has political implications, since it requires considerable decentralisation of decision making and can thus lead to empowerment. It not only provides the driving force for collective development, but also reaffirms the fundamental right to self-determination, whether of communities, regions or nations.

This people-centred approach, as opposed to former production-centred approaches, signals the emergence of a paradigm shift in development thinking and

implementation. Momentum for this change has been building up slowly over more than 30 years of development efforts. If the need and the will persist, we may be approaching a "watershed system", in which relatively small changes now will cumulate into much larger changes later on.

CIDA's definitions

CIDA (1991) describes participatory development as "a process whereby individuals and the community are actively involved in all phases of development". It therefore implies greater equity in economic and political power, more democracy, a greater role for local organisations and self-government, respect for human rights, the full participation of women in political and economic decision making, competitive markets and dynamic private enterprise.

Efforts should be made to enable the poor to organise themselves and to contribute to the decision-making process so that their needs, preferences and wants are reflected in development policies and programmes. Emphasising participation of the beneficiaries enhances the notion of ownership of the development process. Without a sense of ownership in projects, gains made are likely to be short-lived. (CIDA, 1991, pp. 17-18)

The far-reaching implications of the participatory development paradigm include:

— expansion of the pool of actors to include social movements and the private sector;
— participation beyond the project cycle, at the levels of policy formulation and programme design, where NGOs, executing agencies and consultants with proved competence in participatory development could be instrumental;
— the need to change the organisational culture towards a more participative management mode;
— the synergy that exists between self-management and sustainability, and the linkages to governance, human rights and democratic values;
— new partnerships in development efforts, where North and South work towards improving the well-being of both, rather than perpetuating donor-recipient relations.

Participation at the macro level

Within the sustainable development framework, CIDA has identified three political components as fundamental: democratic processes, human rights and good governance. Increasingly, these objectives are becoming prime strategic considerations in Canada's quest for effective international development.

In the past, the Agency supported local democratic initiatives, but more recently, some countries (e.g. Nicaragua and Niger) have called upon Canadian

expertise to help put in place an electoral process and national elections. CIDA has funded assistance of this type either through Canadian channels, such as Elections Canada and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, or through multilateral organisations such as the UN or the OAS.

In the area of human rights, CIDA supports local NGOs involved in defending women's rights, indigenous people's rights, workers' associations or religious groups. CIDA has supported limited bilateral activities through government-to-government mechanisms, but over the last decade numerous initiatives have been channelled through non-governmental organisations, the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives and/or country-focus activities. In some instances, local NGOs asked international organisations to pressure governments to modify programmes and laws in their country. In the absence of a legal framework that guarantees human rights, the possibilities for participatory development are seriously limited.

From the standpoint of development, good governance presupposes not only the reform of the state but the inclusion of the private sector, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations in the management of development processes. Therefore, increasing the capacity of any given country to establish principles of good governance will further participatory development processes (see Box 2 for Ghana).

CIDA is becoming increasingly involved in this area. In Thailand and the Philippines, the Agency has supported national development institutions in the areas of research, policy development and training (see Box 3 for Thailand), and a unit of the Policy Branch is working on policies in the fields of democratic development, human rights and good governance.

Without an enabling political environment at the national and international levels, local gains may not be sustainable. A sustainable, democratic political process that goes beyond a false consensus manufactured by costly electoral campaigns, the mass media, and election polls is vital to participatory development.

Participation at the meso level

This section presents concepts and activities related to the empowerment of individuals, groups and organisations.

Capacity development is "a process by which systems operating within a dynamic context learn to develop and implement development processes in pursuit of their objectives for increased performance in a sustainable development way" (CIDA, 1993a). The capacity development approach recognises that development is the result of people's actions through various types of organisations. As the process works through them, people in organisations must be involved at all stages.

The importance of capacity development is underlined by a recent evaluation (Rideau Research Associates, 1992) of CIDA-supported activities related to women in development. This report found that CIDA had perhaps over-emphasised short-term improvements in the living conditions of women in developing countries, at the expense of efforts to increase the capacities of local institutions dedicated to

Box 2: CIDA's support for participatory development in Ghana

Over the past two decades CIDA has been involved in a variety of water-supply projects in Ghana. These projects have had in common a strong participatory orientation, a learning-by-doing approach and long-term commitment. Using hand pumps as an entry point, they gradually evolved into community development efforts with broader and broader repercussions. To illustrate, we present some highlights of the spiralling effects of one of these projects, the Water Utilisation Project (WUP).

In the early 1970s the Upper Region Water Supply Project had installed 2 700 pumps over the course of eight years, but it was quickly realised that project goals were at risk because the direct users of the facilities had hardly been consulted. The appropriate location of pumps, the users' ignorance of the potential benefits of clean water or the local responsibility for pump maintenance had not been taken into account. These crucial oversights had to be addressed.

To this end, a community education programme and a community-based maintenance system were incorporated and a social dimension was added to what had been until then a technical project. These changes marked the inception of WUP I in 1978 and, later, the launching of WUP II.

By the time WUP II came into effect it was acknowledged that the main focus of the project was social change. This was accomplished through a substantial education component based on participatory interactive teaching methods. The use of radio as a teaching tool led to the formation of a network of radio learning groups. These two approaches culminated in mass learning campaigns, which made possible the attainment of project goals.

Recognising the importance of inter-agency collaboration was a key factor in the success of the mass campaigns. The findings of a participatory "think tank" recommended placing more emphasis on training and developing Ghanaian staff, handing over leadership positions to Ghanaians and strengthening the inter-agency network to give it more say in project decisions.

These efforts have now led to the Community Water Project (WUP III), a complex project with a heavy responsibility: to maintain and expand the benefits derived from safe, accessible water supplies, and to develop the confidence and capability of people so that they can take care of their own resources and services. It will require creativity, flexibility and experimentation. Some of the project's major components include:

— introducing the concept of community ownership and management of hand pumps and water services to communities, officials, and others; adapting it to the social and economic context of the Upper Regions and promoting it among approximately 1 000 communities;

— a new role for the Water and Sewage Corporation (promotion, training, contracting, technical services and co-ordination) and establishment of new, substantially autonomous Community Water Supply and Sanitation Divisions within the corporation;

— a new role for district assemblies: to publicise opportunities for communities to own, maintain and upgrade their water services, and to co-ordinate activities by Ghanaian and external agencies;

— new opportunities for the private sector and NGOs to provide a wide range of goods and services on a contractual basis;

— a continued high level of involvement of women in all aspects of the project;

— continued emphasis upon maximising the health benefits of improved water supply; and

the cause of women's rights so that they could influence the political and legal system within which activities took place.

The lesson for future initiatives would be to pay increased attention to projects that respond to women's strategic interests, such as the need to live without fear, to have equal access to employment and to obtain land-holding and reproductive rights. What is being sought at the meso level is the strengthening of technical and managerial capacities of key development organisations to intervene at the micro and macro levels. Within this framework, the intermediary level is key.

Another illustration of the need for capacity development is the environmental issue. The 1992 Rio de Janeiro conference stressed the need to help developing countries take into account the environmental considerations of their development activities. As a result, industrialised countries and international organisations are requested less often to implement environmental protection activities themselves and more often to support groups and organisations in developing countries that can implement those activities.

At present, the environmental and development communities function in two different spheres of activity. They do not view themselves as sharing a common vision and aiming towards common goals. The creation of opportunities for networking and co-operation between environmental activists and development practitioners is essential. In Canada, a first step in this direction was taken with the creation of CIDA's Environment and Development Support Programme (EDSP). The mission of EDSP is to strengthen the capacity of Canadian environmental NGOs, Southern NGOs and communities to work together to instigate change towards more ecologically sound ways of life. To this end, EDSP promotes projects involving partnership between Canadian environmental NGOs, Canadian development NGOs and Southern NGOs. The programme seeks to support initiatives that integrate environmental, economic, social, cultural and gender issues in attempting to build a sustainable future.

Box 3: CIDA's support for participatory development in Thailand

During the period 1981-87 CIDA funded 13 projects in community and rural development in Thailand, with a total allocation of $50 million. These projects pioneered, tested, refined and replicated a wide range of innovative participatory methods and approaches:

— Effective methods to mobilise people's organisations, especially around economic activities. Leadership training was provided at the local level, as well as support for networking across districts and regions via study tours, exchanges and media presentations.

— Innovative methods of decentralised project management, such as co-operative project management by a group of local NGOs, the placement of field workers in villages after substantial training in development skills and local cultures, and the establishment of a system of project zones and sub-zones, each with field supervisors who have significant independence in decision making.

— Support for what is known in Thailand as integrated farming.

— Promotion of non-farm income-generating activities through such mechanisms as revolving credit funds, provision of credit, rice banks, fertiliser banks and buffalo banks.

— Support for "indigenous resource persons" who act as key local contacts for the diffusion of ideas and knowledge.

— Promotion of the theory and practice of participatory action-oriented evaluation and monitoring. These activities have pooled the creativity and resources of government, NGOs, people's organisations, indigenous resource persons and other key actors.

— Support for the institutionalisation of project activities. For example, the Local Development Foundation was created to decentralise project management and assume the responsibilities formerly carried out by another CIDA project, the Local Development Assistance Programme. The mandate of the foundation included promotion of the financial self-sufficiency of the NGO movement in Thailand by means of capacity building, training and technical assistance.

— Instigate and foster co-operation between governmental and non-governmental organisations at the local, district and regional levels.

Project documents and evaluation reports pointed to the following lessons:

— After the important early stages of awareness-building and community organising, it is vital that the focus of activities change towards technical support and improved economic alternatives.

— Good communication and mutual trust must be fostered after establishing initial contact; this is best accomplished by a project worker living in close proximity to the beneficiaries for a considerable amount of time.

— Natural tensions that might arise between technical support staff and community development workers should be eased, if possible, by project management before they cause detrimental effects.

— In order to facilitate understanding of gender differentials, all data gathered by projects should be gender-segregated.

— Projects that look at communities as a whole without specifically designing activities aimed at reaching the poorest will not be successful in reaching them.

— Co-ordination and co-operation among government, NGOs and people's organisations are easier to achieve close to the implementation level, where results are quicker and more easily perceived and where personal rapport is greatest.

Capacity development and institutional development are new ways of establishing partnerships between organisations from the North and from the South so that they can jointly implement projects and programmes. Two examples of this type of CIDA funding are the support it provides to MATCH International and to the Canadian Co-operative Association. Both organisations work on furthering partnerships between Northern and Southern social movements, the former with partners in the women's movement and the latter with partners in the co-operative movement.

Increasingly, the task of development officers is to identify potential partners rather than to target specific development objectives and activities. Which institutions have the leadership, the credibility and the openness to ensure that people play a key role in solving problems in developing countries? These are the institutions that CIDA could support.

The same emphasis on capacity development applies in the area of infrastructure. CIDA no longer intends to implement the construction of airports, roads or other types of economic infrastructure in developing countries, but is in favour of supporting those local administrations, institutions or businesses that are willing to do so.

CIDA has had a long experience of training technical assistance staff before their appointments overseas. The briefing centre responsible for such training has developed new approaches, in which sensitisation and follow-up are provided in the field upon arrival in developing countries. This allows for more appropriate training in the socio-cultural context.

Participation at the micro level

Sectoral projects

CIDA has supported projects in areas such as rural development, agricultural development, social forestry, fishing, industry, water and sanitation (for an example, see Box 2), some of which included activities related to participatory development.

Several manuals were produced in recent years to summarise those experiences and to suggest social indicators that must be taken into account to ensure that these types of projects are designed properly.

For many of the projects, however, the favoured method has been to develop the programme first, detail the activities and then see how they could be implemented at the local level. Social engineering technologies were then used to sell the projects to local communities. In this regard, contrasting lessons were learned from two similar water projects in Niger and in Togo. The Niger project had been planned and developed in an "engineering style": all technical elements were designed and planned in detail first, and the social components left for later. The engineering firm arrived on site and started to install water pumps, making sure that they worked properly from a technical standpoint. Organisers were then called in to ensure that people used the new technology. The third concern was to make sure that the mechanical components of the water pumps would be maintained and repaired if needed and that the community was ready to assume the costs of this maintenance.

In Togo, social considerations and community participation were put first, and technical considerations were looked at and implemented later. The first step was to ascertain which communities displayed a strong will to improve water access and quality. If such a will existed, a number of questions had to be raised and solved before a single technical action or decision was taken: Where would the pumps be located? Was there water available there? How would specific communities be served by this or another location? Who would sit on the water committee? Who would pay for spare parts? Who would be responsible for the long-term sustainability of the project? Communities were then rated according to their capacity, will and interest, and contracts were signed with interested communities.

It would be interesting to conduct a comparative impact analysis of the two projects; preliminary evaluations show a much greater level of success in the Togo project.

Community development projects

In the late 1970s and 1980s CIDA started to establish flexible mechanisms to support local initiatives in Africa, the Americas and Asia. All of these mechanisms worked with similar principles and systems: small management units, a demand-driven process, community participation, limited scope and duration of initiatives, low level of technology, self-management of resources at the local level and selection of non-governmental partners.

A team of technicians, social scientists and managers is usually hired. A secretariat is set up in an institution that will ensure a certain independence of the decision-making and management processes. The secretariat receives and analyses requests from local communities, and work starts with consultations and steps to ensure full local participation in revision, planning and implementation. Implementation of these projects is responsive and reactive rather than proactive. Projects are demand-driven. In some cases, they are implemented by local NGOs or by the community organisation itself, depending on the capacity of the organisation.

An organiser from the secretariat handles the monetary aspects of the whole process and ensures that the resources are used for the agreed purposes.

These micro-realisation projects truly respond to local initiatives, i.e. to the needs of local people as expressed by these people. Their light management framework allows them to identify, approve and implement activities over a few months. This type of project secures the participation of many actors: local leaders mobilise the community, community organisations manage and implement the project and leaders of community organisations monitor and evaluate project activities.

Nevertheless, projects of this type have several shortcomings. Not being sectorally driven, they cannot easily build technical expertise, either at the local or at the secretariat level. For the same reason, the projects have no serious impact on specific activities in specific areas, such as health, water availability, agricultural production and education. Another problem is their short time horizon, which makes it difficult for them to have long-term effects. In such a short time frame, the possibilities for developing capacities and strengthening these local organisations are limited. Moreover, activities are spread over a number of sectors in a number of communities in any given country, so that there is hardly any possibility of influence at the policy level. For instance, if a micro-realisation project took place in a context of structural adjustment, the adjustment plan would have much more long-term impact on the well-being of the local community.

This absence of a link between the meso and the macro levels is considered an important weakness of these projects. The strengths of the micro-realisation implementation philosophy are the possibility of quick response to local communities, ensuring local participation and lower costs than in top-down approaches. In conclusion, we may have to find new ways to implement development activities, based perhaps on supply and demand, but capable of providing a better balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Methodologies

This section explores a few of the methodologies that are being proposed to bring about a paradigm shift in participatory development. The aim is to highlight the need for changing methodologies at various loci of the development process.

Self-development

In 1988, CIDA's Policy Branch issued a document for "self-development programmes or projects" designed to increase the ability of the poorest groups to participate in their own development (CIDA, 1988). The intervention principles arising from this approach apply to each of the three decision-making levels of the Agency: programme heads, project managers and implementing agencies. At these three levels, methodology is truly critical. Partial commitment — a few ideas grafted onto a traditional approach — can not be considered as fulfilling the requirements of the self-development approach. The first level (programming) is concerned with how

to design a programme conducive to the growing participation of the partners; the second level, with how to plan a self-development project; and the third, with how to carry out this type of project.

Programme priorities

— The country's situation must be accurately assessed.
— The authorities must provide the local political will.
— Programmes should be based on themes rather than on sectoral priorities.

Managing participatory projects

— Simple, medium-term intervention, beginning at a reduced scale.
— Constant interaction between planning, implementation and evaluation.
— Identification should take place in the field over a period of at least six months, with direct collaboration of the true partners.
— Planning is oriented towards learning through pilot projects, to be scaled up over several years, that include elements of research and experimentation in the field.
— Planning officer responsible for both planning and implementation.
— Long-term commitment to the partners.
— Field supervisors must have sufficient authority to adapt the project to the ever-changing reality without having to obtain approval from higher up.

Management of these projects requires a decentralised approach that emphasises consultation, experimentation and the learning process in the field, as opposed to rigid planning and timetables. The approach must respect local limitations and abilities, rather than merely reflecting the donor's economic and social priorities. It is necessary to rethink the actual conception of self-development projects in terms of the partners' participation.

Implementing agencies

— The primary goal is to strengthen credible institutions.
— Training, which should encourage the involvement of the country's institutional and human resources, must be an integral part of the project.
— National, regional and provincial authorities must be involved in all phases of the project.
— Sectoral ministries must be ready to adapt their roles and responsibilities as communities are ready to assume theirs.
— The community's social, economic, and physical environment must be well understood.

- The local partners should give priority to their own basic needs and choose solutions according to their own criteria, taking into consideration their obligation to be involved in project implementation.
- Limitations that result from the partners' lack of political and economic power must be taken into account.

The greatest limitation of these projects is that they are not easily integrated into the Agency's current management methods. The outputs cannot be fully known at the beginning, and detailed planning by means of brief, isolated missions is not advisable. Planning must take place in the field over a relatively long period of time, and it must emphasise study and experimentation in close collaboration with the development partners. Planning and implementation must serve as laboratories for learning, both for the implementing agency and for its partners.

Integration of the self-development approach into the Agency's activities similarly depends on a learning process. The following is a summary of the organisational changes necessary to arouse active participation by the most disadvantaged in the decisions that concern them:

- Give priority to the learning process over tangible realisations.
- Agree to delegate significant decision-making power to local partners.
- Seek aid delivery mechanisms which are not dependent on the project cycle and which respect the partners' needs.
- Learn to work with new local partners.
- Sensitise sectoral specialists in the professional services to the importance of the social and human dimensions in their fields of expertise.
- Strengthen the role of humanities and social sciences specialists within the project team.
- Make sure that the Agency's planning and implementation agents are aware of the new methodological elements required to bring about self-development.

Expenditures in the first years of the project should be minimal, growing exponentially if the project succeeds in taking root. The proportion of the total budget assigned to planning, action research, management and follow-up is much greater under the participatory approach than under the traditional approach.

CIDA's social and gender analysis

Social and gender analysis is a methodology developed by CIDA's Social Dimensions Unit to ensure participation at the local level (CIDA, 1989). A training programme has been put in place to familiarise CIDA officers with this methodology. Its most important characteristics may be summarised as follows:

- Social and gender analysis provides for the inclusion of participatory elements at all stages of the project.
- To ensure the proper participation of various actors at different steps, the method tries to determine which individuals, government agencies, private

sector enterprises, NGOs or community-based organisations could have an impact on the problems addressed. All actors need not be consulted or involved at every step, but it is important to involve them according to their responsibilities, and the methodology provides some of the tools and criteria to do so.

— There is explicit focus on gender issues. In other methodologies, when no specific questions or indicators exist to ensure that gender issues are raised, they are often forgotten.

— This approach takes into consideration the differences between the rich and the poor, and favours involving the poor in the participatory process.

This methodology applies mainly to local projects. It is not the right tool for long-term programmes and strategies at the policy level, nor has it been designed to ensure participation in the design of these policies and strategies. Such methodologies will have to be developed in the future.

Additional innovative approaches

CIDA is interested in using other new methodological approaches, since we believe they offer great potential, not only to CIDA but to other donors. Starting in the late 1960s and early 1970s, "families" of participatory methodologies have been emerging from a variety of fields. They may be applicable to one or more participatory tasks (such as strategic planning, implementation and evaluation). In some cases, these methodologies may give rise to hybrids, depending on the needs of each particular application and the training of the development practitioners involved in the exercise. Three of these methodological "families" are "technology of participation", participatory action research and participatory rural appraisal[3].

Professional facilitators trained in these methodologies play a very important role. Whenever possible, they set up training sessions to train others as well. Their responsibility is to ensure that decisions are taken through truly participatory processes. This is a difficult task, since in most social settings today, strong non-participatory climates are the norm. At the same time, individuals and groups feel a growing sense of urgency and a yearning for more participation. Whether in boardrooms or in the field, trained facilitators are catalytic agents of the transitions now taking place.

Conclusions

First, CIDA must better define what it means by participatory development, how this concept fits into the sustainable development framework and what importance should be given to such an approach in programmes and projects. The Policy Branch should develop an orientation document and some guidelines for its implementation within the framework of human development.

CIDA has gained relevant experience in participatory development at the micro level, and there have been some interesting experiences at the macro and meso

levels. A key lesson to be drawn from this review of CIDA's experience, however, is that the development process may not be sustainable without a proper mix of intervention at the macro, meso and micro levels, and unless participatory development components are included at each level, thus creating synergy linkages. It is therefore recommended that the Agency adopt a systems approach to policy and implementation.

CIDA has recently updated its strategy for women in development to ensure that gender perspectives are included in projects and programmes. Nevertheless, many factors could impede women's participation, whether at the policy, the institutional or the micro level. Policy designs and methodologies should give special attention to gender issues. In some cases, women's participation needs specific support to ensure that in the long run, a proper balance is achieved between men and women. Equality of access is not sufficient; this is an area where we have to be proactive. Social and gender analysis already ensures gender sensitivity at the micro level; we must now develop equally gender-sensitive methods at the macro and meso levels.

In the area of capacity development, CIDA is developing policy documents on democratic development, human rights and good governance. We already have a methodology for social and gender analysis. These elements can all be used, but they should be placed in an integrated framework to ensure that development officers can use them easily. The Technical Unit and Policy Branch should work in co-operation with other branches to develop such guidelines so that CIDA officers can apply these methodologies effectively.

A focal point for participatory development should be established within the Agency, so that lessons drawn from our experience and that of others can be made available throughout the Agency and to other donors. This could take the form of organising workshops or seminars to improve our capacity in that area and to maintain our expertise at the level that is needed to ensure the success of our development projects and programmes. Other important areas are research and disseminating information about participatory development.

There is still work to be done with regard to environmental concerns, especially environmental assessment methods. A consultation process of public hearings is needed. Canada already has a participatory process for public hearings, but how effective is it? Is it applicable to developing countries? Should we design a new approach and methodology for this purpose?

In the area of economic development, which innovative approaches can be fostered to increase participation in market activities or facilitate access to credit? Do Canada and other industrialised nations need to re-examine their lifestyles before attempting to replicate these values in less industrialised societies?

We should reinforce the capacity of development officers to incorporate participatory considerations in the design, planning and implementation of development strategies. Most CIDA officers and most consultants working with the Agency have a management or technical background. Not all of them would adopt a participatory development approach even if it were established policy. Any social development training designed for the Agency should include participatory

development as a basic component. Sensitising consultants to a participatory development approach and offering some basic training should also be considered.

It is recommended that CIDA vigorously pursue its research activities in order to keep its corporate memory up to date and to monitor the participatory development strategies implemented by various programme branches. The Technical Professional Unit in the Policy Branch should assume this responsibility.

In the forging of participatory development strategies, CIDA must not work in isolation. The Agency has joined the joint OECD Development Assistance Committee/Development Centre project on participatory development to share its experience in this area with other aid agencies and a wider interested audience. We have also contacted the World Bank Working Group and UNDP on the same subject. We should not forget that certain organisations in Canada, NGOs particularly, have relevant experience in this area. They should take part in the consultation process and in the proposed information network.

We should envisage further research, particularly in the following areas: participation at the strategic and policy levels; assessment and quantification of participatory activities, projects and programmes; women and participatory development; and environment and participatory development. Research in these areas should be conducted in a participatory manner. For best results, this research should not be conducted only by Canadians but should involve local people and research institutions from developing countries.

In conclusion, we stress the importance of adopting a systems approach to participatory development, rather than linear or segmented approaches. This broader approach is needed as the 20th century draws to a close, for the complexity of issues and the impermanence of conditions that development practitioners face are on the rise, and no sign of decline is perceived or expected.

Notes

1. Abridged version of a paper prepared for the OECD Development Centre. The unabridged version is available upon request from:

   Canadian International Development Agency
   Social Dimensions, Policy Branch
   200 Promenade du Portage
   Hull, Quebec K1A OG7, Canada.

2. The unabridged version of this paper contains 30 examples of CIDA projects with a participatory dimension in Africa, Asia and Latin America, referring to the period 1982-92.

3. These methodologies are presented in more detail in the original paper.

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Promoting Participatory Development through Domestic Development Services of the United Nations Volunteers

William Andrianasolo

Context

Historical background

The mandate for the Domestic Development Services (DDS) of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) was established by the resolution 31/166 of the UN General Assembly. The resolution requests the UNV programme actively to promote the formation of groups and to co-operate with these groups to the fullest extent possible. Both the activities and the groups involved — i.e. activities related to the development process and their initiators — must be indigenous. The mandate aimed to induce greater participation of the people in development activities, as well as overall co-operation between private and voluntary organisations and between the latter and governmental development services. After consultations with prospective partners, UNV realised that the innovative aspects of the approach would require experimentation and advocacy efforts. To facilitate the diffusion of this approach, especially through the sharing of countries' experiences and thinking, regional projects were considered.

The first DDS regional project, funded by UNDP and executed by UNV, started activities in 1980 in Asia. Projects based on the Asian experience were set up in 1986 for the Pacific islands and Africa. All the regional projects completed their activities in 1992-93, and approximately 20 countries have decided to develop national projects to carry on and expand the DDS activities.

DDS objectives and strategy

DDS tries to facilitate the establishment of a self-sustaining and fully participatory development process. Its focuses on the people as both the *raison d'être* and the driving force of development. Three basic principles underlie DDS activities:

A bottom-upwards approach. Community-based initiatives are considered the building blocks of the development process. These initiatives reflect the population's felt needs and embody the people's direct leadership of development activities. The approach assumes that people are willing and able to expand and improve their initiatives and that further progress can be built upon them. Another important implication of this approach is the possibility of integration and synergy among community-based initiatives and higher-level development initiatives and instances.

Networking horizontally and vertically. This implies inter-group co-operation at the grassroots level, but also linking up with development agencies to improve their better responsiveness to and anticipation of local development efforts. DDS field workers are major actors in networking. Having moved to the local community from another (and usually from another country), they are two-way vehicles of experience exchanges and thus a factor of cross-fertilisation. During the assignment, they stimulate community-based initiatives and facilitate horizontal and vertical networking. Inter-country networking is considered very important, as it helps to create the feeling of a global concern, orientation and challenge.

A participatory action research (PAR) approach. All the parties involved (local populations, private voluntary organisations, government services, outside supporters) are viewed as participating in a mutual learning process. This implies the need for continual dialogue among them and for a long-term arrangement and programming to enable the process gradually to build upon its own momentum.

Application of the DDS approach: the case of Benin

Benin was one of the first countries in West Africa to host DDS activities. The first batch of DDS field workers arrived in the country during 1989 and 1990. By the end of 1991, there were 28 of them scattered in local communities throughout the country. A DDS country co-ordinator was in place early in 1990. Selection of partners was one of the first tasks, as it was to affect the application of the planned approach. Government and NGO partners in particular were considered essential: they would be used as channels for DDS field workers' placement and backstopping facility, but also as potential major actors in later replication and scaling up. The suitability of potential partners was thus assessed against their operational capacity (technical backing and physical presence in the field), as well as their will to promote participatory processes.

Once suitable partners were identified and secured, the process focussed on three main issues:

i)   building and strengthening local capacity for development initiatives, with particular attention to:

— how local people will organise themselves to tackle their development problems;

— continued access to key development assets such as practical skills, technology and financial resources, which would help them to sustain and expand their own initiatives;

— promoting community-wide co-operation and social cohesiveness to facilitate a comprehensive approach to local development;

ii) creating a favourable environment for community-based initiatives through advocacy and networking activities;

iii) ensuring an internalisation and scaling-up process at the local, intermediate and national levels; this requires identification of the actors to be involved and the roles they would play in the process.

Ensuring proper partnership

From the beginning, it was considered necessary to secure an agreement among the main players (government, private voluntary organisations or NGOs, and local communities) as to the learning character of the DDS approach. The local communities needed to understand fully and agree with this principle, for two main reasons. First, external intervention at their level, particularly in the case of partners from abroad, has traditionally been expected to provide something — a message they need to know, skills they need to learn or a donation that can benefit them. They therefore need to understand that the DDS approach wants to help them come up with their own ideas and initiatives, and to implement them at first using their own resources. Second, while late realisation of misunderstanding would be fatal to the process, and people might be unwilling to take "risks", it is necessary to make them understand that the decision will always be theirs.

NGOs and government services needed to agree to three elements of commitment: *(i)* they would monitor the activities of field workers placed under their programmes, including their progress and the lessons to be drawn from it; *(ii)* they would openly review, with the local communities and the field workers concerned, their interventions related to the DDS activities; *(iii)* as major players, they would share their practical experience of this process with other participants in periodic fora and brainstorming sessions, which should facilitate the replication and scaling up of such a process. While these principles might create (and have actually created) embarrassment with some partners, they are obviously necessary to the proper unfolding of the DDS approach and methodology.

The suitability of communities, NGOs and government services as potential partners was also assessed. The communities were identified through the NGOs and government services. When the principles noted above had been understood and accepted, those willing to participate were asked to secure local accommodation for the field workers, which was considered a sign of their commitment. In 1993, 30 local communities were involved in DDS activities.

NGOs have usually been evaluated by their track records and/or their ongoing practice, as seen in their ongoing field interventions. DDS is now co-operating with a

number of NGOs in Benin (e.g. IRIBONSE, APRODEC, APRETECTRA, OSSD, CIRAPIP), but has been obliged to part from some which proved unsuitable for the moment. It should be added that the NGO community in Benin emerged only recently and still lacks experience. Likewise, DDS has had to move field workers away from some communities to maximise the demonstration effect of the process.

Selection of the government services was particularly important, as it had to concentrate on the few most meaningful ones. DDS in Benin tried from the beginning to involve departments in charge of field extension services and of overall development co-ordination. The reason is twofold: *(i)* support for and replication of DDS will be handled by the technical government services most widely present at the field level; *(ii)* allocation of resources will largely depend upon the co-ordinating government department. Consequently, DDS in Benin has opted to work under the Ministry of Planning, co-operating closely with its decentralised offices. In addition, DDS has placed a substantial proportion of its field workers under the decentralised services of the Centre d'Action Régionale de Développement Rural (CARDER) and of the Centres Sociaux.

Building and strengthening local capacity

Group formation was considered an important expression of the population's self-mobilisation. The CARDER has always tried to promote the formation of community groups in rural areas, as they facilitate extension work and enhance mutual motivation, co-operation and subsequent joint initiatives and commitment. Owing to staff constraints, the CARDER extension workers could not be deployed everywhere, and they concentrated on cash crops. As a result, they left out a range of potential economic activities, as well as a sizable portion of the population, especially women.

In the traditional division of labour in Benin, women are supposed to be in charge of food production. This activity usually is limited to subsistence farming, confined to small traditional family plots; women do not normally have access to individual land property. Largely illiterate and with limited practical skills, women in rural Benin had little hope of improvement without special support from the existing extension services. The DDS personnel was then advised to give priority to the women's groups. So far, DDS in Benin has provided support to about 300 local groups, 75 per cent of which have an exclusively or primarily female membership.

Around 100 of these local groups existed before the arrival of the DDS field workers in their duty stations. Some groups were active enough at this time, but a number of them had to be re-activated. This was one of the first tasks of the field worker, as the existing groups were a good starting point: they made it unnecessary to start from scratch; and since they were well known in the area, any impact on them would be visible and would thus induce imitation.

The formation of local groups relied on two major motivations during the early 1990s. First, local women, idle young people and under-employed men felt revalued and proud of standing up for new initiatives. This has created in most communities a sort of social competition as to who would live up to expectations. Second, group formation conveyed some kind of hope, especially during the difficult period of the

political and socio-economic crisis. At this time, civil servants, unpaid for months, sharply decreased their activities. Rural financial institutions (CRCAM and others) went bankrupt, leaving many farmers bitter about their lost personal funds. With no settlement of the national crisis in view, self-help was considered worthwhile.

In addition to the unfavourable environment, lack of proper internal organisation had been a major problem for local groups. DDS field workers had to help each group to strengthen its organisational, leadership and managerial capability. This included drafting of internal regulations and on-the-job training in a number of areas: group dynamics, simple book-keeping and accounting for the group's funds and other assets, planning activities, organising working arrangements among the members, monitoring and assessing initiatives. From time to time, more formal training workshops were organised, involving a number of extension services and several groups from different communities.

Access to development assets was another preoccupation. Availability of additional land and technical advice from extension services were considered critical to improvement and expansion of groups' usual production and to exploration of new sorts of production. These were facilitated by the official partnership between DDS and the CARDER. Collaboration with rural extension services and local development authorities (chiefs, committees, etc.) was usually satisfactory. Many groups have decided to reclaim unused land and to start collective farming. In many cases, access to such assets has greatly facilitated the introduction of new crops and technology (particularly when the local groups, citing market limitations, were not convinced of the value of increasing their traditional production). Vegetable gardening (sometimes with varieties from other African countries) and rice production are examples of such innovations in several parts of the country; women's groups were particularly receptive to these crops, as they offered prospects of more and better food for the family and increased income through sales.

Funding was another key asset for the local groups, particularly for women, who usually have only limited access to cash. Pooling local financial resources was not easy for them, and they do not normally have adequate information about other sources of funds and how to tap them. Most DDS field workers used three main sources of funding: the "Trickle-Up Programme" (TUP) grants (two $50 instalments per beneficiary group); the UNDP-FAIB (Fonds d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base) grants, later combined with loans; and the DDS micro-credit (granted to a local revolving fund for loans to local groups). The three offers worked well together. The modest amount proposed in the TUP grants is self-selective: normally, more ambitious or more developed groups will not apply for it. As for the FAIB and the DDS fund, their respective ceilings were in the proportion of 2 to 1. The Selection Committee, which managed both funds, tended to co-ordinate their use implicitly by directing purely income-generating initiatives towards the loan arrangement and requests with some infrastructure component (contruction of bridges or housing, for example) to the FAIB grant. The DDS fund allocation was to revolve locally thereafter, making it attractive for a number of indigenous NGOs and community-based organisations that were hosting the DDS field workers and ready to assist in the local management of the reimbursed funds in the follow-up phase. In five communities, beneficiary groups have reimbursed their loans totally and have started to manage their own local revolving funds.

The DDS experience in Benin makes it clear that access to development assets such as information, technology, land and financial resources is critical for actual participation of the people in the development process.

The third important aspect of local capacity building is the move towards a community-wide vision of development. The existence of a variety of interest groups within a community is a favourable condition for such a move. The DDS field worker, backed by the DDS country co-ordinator, shuttles between the different groups, first, to help them realise that they are all linked to one another and that there are potential areas of complementarity but also of potential conflict; and second, to highlight grounds of common interest. One interesting example was the sinking of a borehole in the village of Modji-Gangan. Although women had to walk long distances to fetch water, and health services had warned long before of the relationship between the local water supply and stomach diseases (affecting especially infants), a borehole in the community was considered out of reach. The DDS field worker informed the community that UNICEF might support such a project, subject to local contribution. Sensitisation in the groups, interaction among group members and a series of general meetings convinced the community of the relevance and feasibility of the project, which finally led to a community-wide commitment and decision to proceed. Other community-wide projects followed in the same locality (communal vegetable gardening, market building, etc.). Such an experience obviously paves the way for larger-scale participation.

Creating a favourable environment

Promotion of horizontal and vertical networking is the key to achieving this goal.

Members of local groups (especially women) have many times recognised the value of horizontal networking: they feel much more confident in their own endeavours after visiting similar groups striving to improve their lot in a comparable way. The inter-group visits create a sense of identity and of implicit mutual support among the group members. Moreover, they create an opportunity for cross-fertilisation, through learning from differences but also through galvanising the determination to do better.

DDS in Benin has tried to provide other opportunities of this type. A newsletter was produced at least twice a year. Articles were drafted by DDS field workers in close collaboration with their local co-workers. The idea was to disseminate news of the most recent initiatives throughout the country in response to specific problems. At the same time, the latest developments in earlier initiatives were reported, together with lessons that could be drawn from them. The periodicity could not be fully respected, owing to staffing and budgetary constraints, but the newsletter was particularly appreciated by the local groups, and the country news was used at the regional level.

As for vertical networking, the main concern is to help national development agencies realise that there are reliable partners at the grassroots. To that end, a two-way traffic was tried. First, the DDS field workers informed local groups about the existence of potential partners for them in various areas: information, training,

funding, etc. The groups were then encouraged to link up with these potential sources of support on the basis of their own needs and to explore directly with them possible areas of co-operation. These partners included a number of bilateral representations (which tapped their embassy micro-funds) and international NGOs, which provided assistance to several local groups once the latter had identified themselves. Second, the DDS country co-ordinator provided information to various national agencies, which thereafter wanted to know and visit such groups and/or requested them to formulate and submit statements of specific needs.

Other *ad hoc* arrangements were used to disseminate information about the local groups. When possible, local groups' activities and achievements were displayed as part of the celebration of International Volunteer Day every 5 December in the capital city. Features of local groups have also been presented through national radio broadcasting.

The main purposes of the networking efforts were to increase public awareness of and moral support for grassroots initiatives in development, in the hope of stimulating similar initiatives in other parts of the country, and to induce responsiveness and policy-level consideration among national development institutions and international agencies. The ultimate results of these efforts will depend on the persistence with which they are pursued, but they have clearly had some effect: sympathetic responses have been obtained from bilateral and NGO partners, as we have seen, and some unemployed young people formerly stationed in Cotonou have decided to move back to their rural home areas because they have heard about grassroots initiatives there.

Process internalisation and scaling up

Internalisation and scaling up of the process DDS has tried to set in motion is considered at three levels: local, intermediate and national.

At the local level, somebody must gradually take over the field worker's functions: animating ongoing activities, stimulating the emergence of new ones and facilitating linkages and partnership. DDS field workers are advised to identify, during their participatory community survey, local people whom they consider as potential co-workers and who could gradually take over from them (e.g. primary school teachers, indigenous NGO field workers, traditional health workers). The DDS field workers would then have to involve such co-workers in their activities with the community and the local groups. Such people exist in nearly every locality, and it might even be risky not to involve them. Moreover, their involvement in many cases has facilitated the social integration of the usually foreign field workers. Another reason for involving nationals from the outset is the fact that once convinced and motivated, they spontaneously speak in favour of the process within their personal network of relatives and acquaintances in other communities; this has resulted in many cases of "ripple effect". People who have heard about the initiative supported by the DDS field workers but who do not live in the village concerned ask the field workers to visit their own communities to talk to their groups and assist similar initiatives there.

At the intermediate level (e.g. district or prefecture), the objective is to create a space for a direct interface between the local group members and leaders, the NGOs concerned, the DDS personnel and the government services involved. Every three to four months, a review and programming session gathers the DDS field workers, their co-workers, representatives of organisations hosting DDS (NGOs and government services) and government authorities. The meeting, which usually lasts two to three days, includes reports from DDS field workers and their co-workers on their activities, achievements, support received, bureaucratic obstacles encountered, new plans and perspectives. The host organisations also comment on what has happened since the previous meeting and their expected future involvement. The review and programming session creates a habit of dialogue among partners. Despite risks of possible arguments among the participants, it is acknowledged from the outset that they will have to reach an agreement before leaving the meeting on what to do next towards further improvement. The review and programming meeting is also an opportunity for each party involved to reflect on past experiences and practices. Representatives from host NGOs and government services usually supervise other extension workers not directly involved in ongoing DDS activities, and they often relay to these colleagues the considerations and conclusions reached during the meeting, thus broadening gradually and spontaneously the application ground of the approach.

At the national level, the main targets are key government ministries and the donor community. The reason is twofold: *(i)* there is a need to introduce the realities of grassroots development initiatives, potentials and concerns into policy-level thinking so that they can be properly taken into consideration in national development strategy; *(ii)* final decisions on scaling up people's participation and on allocating required resources can be taken only at this level. In Benin, efforts along these lines took various forms. The fact that the DDS project was housed in the Ministry of Planning and the DDS country co-ordinator reported directly to one of its divisions facilitated a continuous feedback process. More than once, the country co-ordinator was requested to meet the Minister of Planning to brief him on the status of the DDS activities in the field. In addition, senior officials from both the CARDER and the Ministry of Planning made periodic monitoring visits in the field and had the chance to interact directly with local community members and groups.

Apart from the networking effort mentioned earlier, the donor community has been reached through mechanisms such as the FAIB selection committee, which includes a number of donors' representatives. There they hear and discuss reports on local groups' initiatives, potential, limitations and concerns. In fact, the FAIB has specifically requested the services of DDS field workers in some of its areas of operation. Since December 1991, the country co-ordinator has been requested to produce an annual country report on DDS activities, to be distributed to government ministries and representatives of development agencies from bilateral, multilateral and NGO programmes.

Probably as a result of these efforts, the last tripartite (government, UNDP, UNV) review of DDS activities in Benin recommended the formation of a national advisory group would periodically take stock of these activities and progress, reflect on its approach for increased participation at the local level and make recommendations to the government and UNDP. The same review also recommended

that expansion of DDS activities be proposed in the government document on the social dimension of development to be submitted to a sectoral round-table of donors in 1994.

Concluding remarks

During the last decade, UNV has supported DDS activities in more than 30 countries all over the world. They have not all evolved in the same way as those in Benin. In some countries, they were short-lived and could not go through the process described above; in others, DDS activities have lasted but have not developed satisfactorily. In the spirit of participatory action research, DDS tries to draw lessons from the cases, to adapt them to varying situations and all the while to test them further.

Apart from the DDS approach to grassroots-level intervention, a number of lessons emerge from its DDS experience with participatory development. First, the local and national levels should always be considered together. When supporting participatory procedures, the intermediary organisations should therefore take into consideration not only the requirements at each level but also the need to build linkages between them.

At the grassroots level, building and strengthening local capacity to take development initiatives is paramount. It is here that direct involvement of the populations can be considered. This activity needs close support, as it consists mainly of on-the-job training of leaders and members of community-based organisations. Without a local capacity to understand development issues, explore potential responses, plan, organise, manage and evaluate, there will be no meaningful participation of the people in development. It has been realised that local communities are capable of forming a comprehensive vision of their local development, organising their priorities accordingly and negotiating with their partners. They are capable of continued improvement, provided that new skills and initiatives build upon what they already know. Programmed phasing out of support remains an issue unless the whole process is taken over by an appropriate and efficient national institution.

At the national level, integration of micro and macro considerations is far from being a prevailing tradition. Intermediary organisations can therefore play a major advocacy role while feeding back into policy-level thinking the lessons of local participation in development. Intermediary organisations will need to play this "shuttle" role for a long time to come, in order to support national-level negotiation over issues pertaining to grassroots initiatives and participation in development. In most countries, it is not possible for local groups to interact directly with national institutions. It is therefore crucial for local groups to have a direct interface, at the intermediate level, with decentralised government services and NGOs, as this interface provides the only opportunity for direct communication among entities on all three levels.

Annex

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PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS A NEW PARTNERSHIP

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Participatory development is a process by which people, communities and countries gain voice and move towards enhanced autonomy, going from passiveness or submission to negotiated action. This is an integral part of the process of sustainable development.

These case studies and reflections were presented to a seminar on the subject of participatory development organised by the OECD Development Centre. This publication is intended to contribute to a better understanding of these issues and to encourage further efforts in participatory development throughout the developing world.

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