chapter 1

STRENGTHENING RURAL POOR ORGANIZATIONS IN ASIA

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This Chapter is based mainly on the case presentations and discussions at the "SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia" organized by ANGOC and CIRDAP on 25-28 November 2005 in Bangkok, Thailand. Additional sources include related literature from publications and websites as listed here.

THEME 1:
A RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT
A Rights–based Approach to Empowerment of the Poor

According to a rights-based approach, the objectives of development are matters of entitlement, not charity. Thus, development interventions are undertaken not because a particular group of persons has a pressing, if time-based, need, but because people—everywhere—have equal rights—all the time—to the resources and processes required for material betterment and social inclusion.

In the last few years, rights-based approaches have become a staple of many pro-poor interventions. Agencies of all kinds claim to be close adherents. Activists campaigning for ancestral domain claims invoke its underlying principles. Microfinance providers declare it as the cornerstone of their work.

While there is no precise definition of a rights-based approach, its foundations are clear: the universal, inalienable rights of persons enshrined in national and international human rights instruments.

Because the *right to development*—indispensable and non-negotiable—inheres in each person, it is not subject to the vagaries of politics or donor agendas. Agencies and organizations that adopt a rights-based approach therefore commit not only to secure the full range of rights that are guaranteed to each individual but also to ensure their continued expression. In practical terms, this implies that development agencies would have to embrace a more strategic vision not only of what people are entitled to, but perhaps more importantly, of what they require for further development.[1]

Furthermore, by focusing on persons as owners of rights, rights-based approaches aim

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[1] Molyneux, Maxine and Sian Lazar. 2003. *Doing the Rights Thing: Rights-based development and Latin American NGOs*. ITDG Publishing, London.

to put beneficiaries at the center of the development process and to give them full control over their own development. As such, rights-based approaches can become a powerful tool for genuine empowerment.

ELEMENTS OF AN EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY

Empowerment refers to "the capacity of poor people and other excluded groups to participate, negotiate, change and hold accountable the institutions that affect their well-being".[2]

An empowerment strategy calls for "[modification] of the present unequal power relations that contribute to generating poverty" as well as "a conscious effort to enable historically excluded people to exercise their full potential".[3]

This strategy is contingent on a number of elements/factors, as follows:

➢ Guaranteed social and political rights;
➢ Decentralization and participatory governance;
➢ Control of and access to resources;
➢ Accountability;
➢ Non-discrimination and attention to vulnerable groups; and
➢ Link between local organizing work and projects and social policy and institutional reforms.

1. GUARANTEED SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has listed the following[4] as central to its development work, and has thus provided a useful guide to the kind of political and legal framework that would support an empowerment strategy:

➢ Rights of participation (freedom to assemble and speak freely, essential to building civil society);
➢ Rights to food, health, habitat and economic security (obligations rest on States as well as UN agencies);
➢ Rights to education (formal education as well as civic training to facilitate people's awareness and exercise of rights);
➢ Rights to work (includes reducing risks from policies such as structural adjustment programs that create unemployment) and rights of workers (especially collective bargaining and non-discrimination);
➢ Rights of children;
➢ Rights of minorities and indigenous peoples;
➢ Rights to land (including rights grounded on customary law);
➢ Rights to equality, rule of law and administrative due process);
➢ Rights to environmental protection.

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[2] Quizon, Antonio, "Suggested Themes," Concept paper for the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[3] Ibid.

[4] UNDP, 1998, *Integrating Human Rights with Sustainable Human Development: A UNDP Policy Document*, New York: UNDP.

2. DECENTRALIZATION AND PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

The last decades of the 20th century have been described by the World Bank (WB) as the epoch of decentralization.[5] In the mid-1990s, 63 of the 75 transition countries, including large developing ones, whose combined population numbers more than five million, took steps toward decentralization.[6]

Sweeping clear across the former communist and socialist countries, the winds of decentralization have breathed fresh air into the stifled politics in these places, and brought renewed hopes of political liberalism.

However, decentralization by itself does not naturally lead to empowerment, notwithstanding its democratizing potential. In a number of cases, the void in local leadership that sometimes results from some forms of decentralization has been exploited by local elite groups to consolidate their influ-

The Community-Based Rural Development Program (CB-RDP) in Kampong Thom and Kampot provinces in Cambodia is a tacit acknowledgment that some forms of social preparation are necessary if decentralization is to have the desired effect of improving local governance through the promotion of democracy and greater people's participation in local administration.

The Commune Elections in 2002 signalled Cambodia's move towards a decentralized system of governance. Previously, the central government had administered local (i.e., commune) affairs through state-appointed commune chiefs. These local authorities simply enforced decisions and policies made at the top; they were not obliged to address the needs of residents of the commune, and the latter, in turn, were disinclined to interact with their commune leaders.[7]

The rationale for decentralization was first and foremost political: to strengthen the presence and legitimacy of the State at the local level.[8] Nonetheless, it represented a significant departure from the largely unaccountable system lorded over by the commune chiefs. It was also the first time that the Government had deigned to share power and money with the country's 1,621 communes.[9]

Hence, the elections were greeted with general approbation, both domestically and abroad. Analysts took to calling it "a milestone in democracy-building".[10] However, a number of cautious voices were also raised.

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[5] The World Bank. A Report on World Development 1997. State in Changing World.-M.: All the World, 1998. p.144.

[6] Dillinger, William. Decentralization and its Implications for Urban Service Delivery.- Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1994.

[7] Ayres, Dr. David, Arnaldo Pellini, and Dr. Anne Perez-Leroux, "Promoting Participatory Local Governance through Village Networks in Kampong Thom and Kampot, Cambodia," Case Study (Draft). October 18, 2005. Presented at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[8] Romeo, Leonardo G.,and Luc Spyckerelle, Decentralization Reforms and Commune-Level Services Delivery in Cambodia, Case Study submitted at a Workshop on "Local Government Pro-Poor Service Delivery" Manila, 9th-13th February 2004, pp.1-2.

[9] Suy Se and Vong Sopheak, "Cambodia on a long road to decentralization". http://www.ijf-cij.org/folder_file_for_cambodia/2.htm

[10] Political analyst Kao Kim Hourn, cited in Suy Se and Vong Sopheak, "Cambodia on a long road to decentralization". http://www.ijf-cij.org/folder_file_for_cambodia/2.htm

In the run-up to the commune elections, Cambodian writers Suy Se and Vong Sopheak had expressed concern that many voters, as well as many candidates, did not understand what a decentralization policy implies in practice. They were worried about how Cambodians, who had grown "accustomed to taking [their] complaints and requests directly to the prime minister"[11] would fare under decentralized administration.

The CB-RDP jointly supported by GTZ, IFAD, and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) had similar reservations. While it considered decentralization as a "laudable goal" in itself, "the fundamental problem was that participation in governance had traditionally been discouraged, and citizens had been socialized to accept without question the decisions of their leaders"[12]. It thus embarked on the task of preparing commune residents to link up and interact with the commune councils. By forming Village Networks (VNs) and building into them the capacity to work with their commune representatives, the project hoped to "promote associational activity" which it considers as vital to successful decentralization.

ence and entrench their interests. Thus, the political space which is briefly freed up—and which would have fostered greater participation in local administration by traditionally marginalized groups in the community—closes up again, this time more definitively and often with potentially more onerous consequences for the poor.

Another feature of successful decentralization efforts is the extent to which it results in a more participatory form of governance. At the conceptual level, this requires that the notion of decentralization be extricated from the paradigm which confines it to the transfer of administrative functions to local adjuncts of the State. It should then move towards a "reconsideration of the functions and roles of government to enable a realignment of responsibilities, rights, and obligations".[13]

What does this mean in practice? Here too rights-based approaches may point the way forward, specifically by ordering a re-interpretation of the concept of participation. In the 1990s, as "participation" was popularized in the mainstream by institutions such as the World Bank, it lost much of its character as a political process involving advocacy and mobilization and increasingly became a means by which projects and programs are implemented, rather like the way in which notions like "partnership" and

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[11] Suy Se and Vong Sopheak, "Cambodia on a long road to decentralization". http://www.ijf-cij.org/folder_file_for_cambodia/2.htm

[12] Ayres, Dr. David, Arnaldo Pellini, and Dr. Anne Perez-Leroux, "Promoting Participatory Local Governance through Village Networks in Kampong Thom and Kampot, Cambodia," Case Study (Draft). October 18, 2005. Presented at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[13] Mitlin, Diana and Sheela Patel, "Re-interpreting the rights-based approach—a grassroots perspective on rights and development," GPRG-WPS-022, http://www.gprg.org/

"good governance" have recently been instrumentalized. A "turn to rights" would sharpen the political edges of participation and signal a move towards a more genuinely inclusive and democratic process of popular involvement in decision-making over the resources and institutions that affect people's lives.[14]
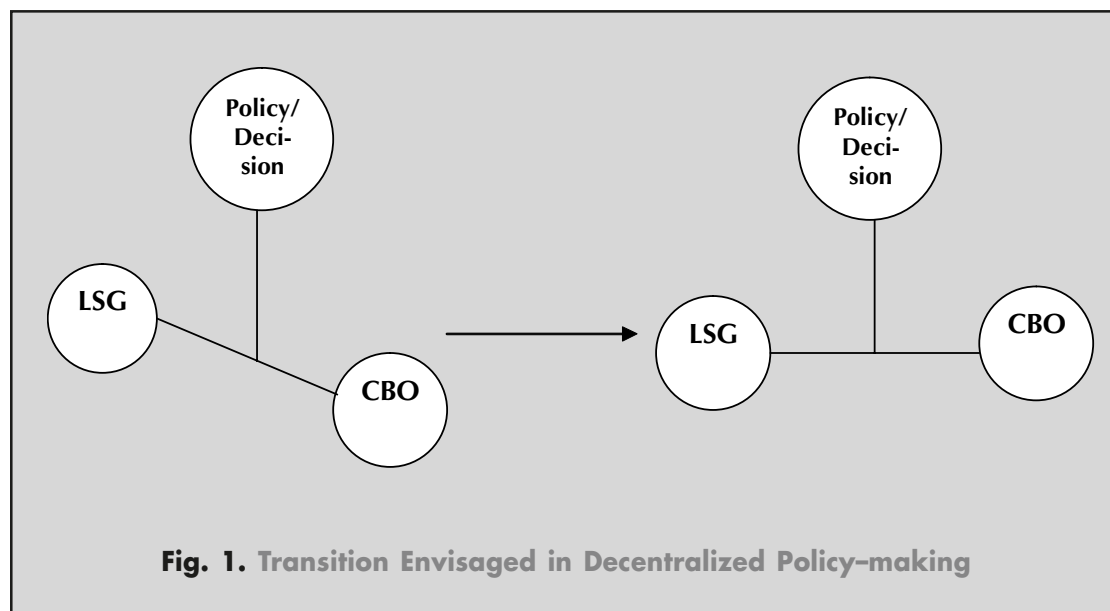
Within a decentralized structure, participatory governance would imply for instance the adoption of a bottom-up approach to decision-making and program implementation to ensure that a pro-poor agenda is consistently reflected in government policies and programs. It necessitates a shift in the current policy-making set-up in which community based organizations (CBOs) defer to their counterparts in local government towards one where they make policy decisions jointly and co-equally. *(See Fig. 1)*

Fig. 1. Transition Envisaged in Decentralized Policy–making

Source: Report of Group 2, Workshop #1, 26 November 2005, SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

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[14] Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine and Andrea Cornwall, "What is the 'rights-based approach' all about? Perspectives from international development agencies," IDS Working Paper 234, November 2004.

A more radical modality for participatory governance would reduce the State and the local government to the role of "facilitator," while giving CBOs the task of implementing programs. NGOs meanwhile would play the role of catalyst in this three-way partnership. *(See Fig. 2)*

Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) projects provide some of the best examples of this partnership mode. CBNRM refers to "the management of natural resources under a plan developed, agreed to and implemented by the relevant local communities. An attempt to find new solutions for the failure of top-down approaches to resource conservation and sustainability, Community Based Management rests on the recognition that local communities should have direct control over the utilization and benefits of local resources…"[15].

Community based management yields particularly good results in fisheries management. A report of a successful fisheries management project in San Salvador in the Philippines explains why co-management works well for this sector[16]:

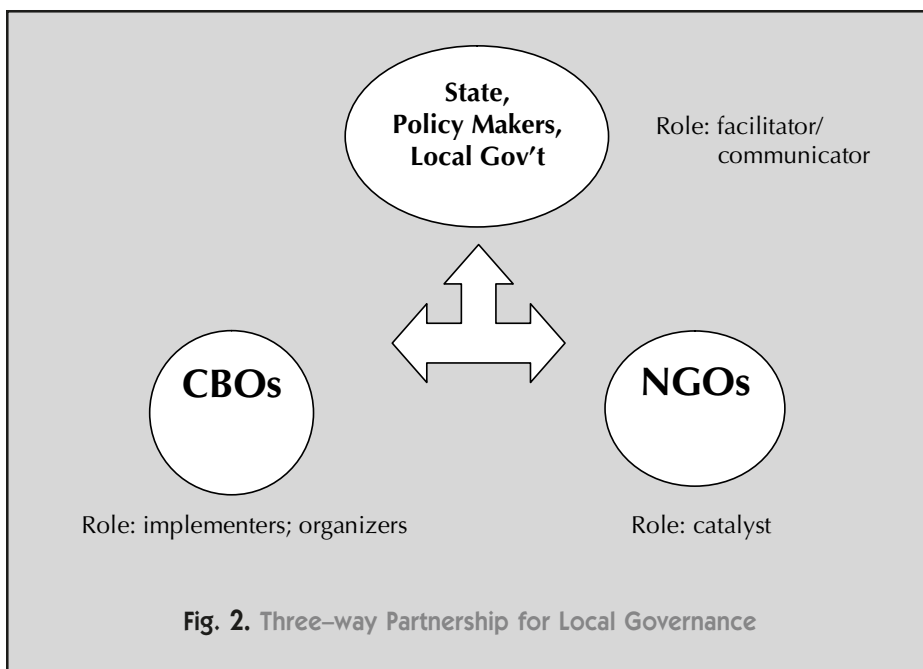> *Private, state, or community control each has its own limitations in fisheries management. Private ownership often has prohibitively expensive enforcement costs and unequal distributional outcomes. Direct state control has high information costs and often lacks monitoring mechanisms, trained personnel, or financial resources. In some cases community control excludes the poorest people from access to a common property resource, increasing inequality. Combining state, private, and community control over fisheries in imaginative ways can offer more efficient, equitable, and sustainable management. This combination is often referred to as co-management. Co-management in fisheries involves the active participation and cooperation of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), organized fishers' groups, and other stakeholders in management decisions. It can help build cross-institutional collective action. It represents a more democratic governance system than state management because users are more involved in determining the rights over the fishery and in sharing decision-making authority. It improves management efficacy by drawing on local knowledge and securing higher compliance with rules.*

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[15] Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership, "Community Based (Natural Resources) Management: Key Lessons", Thematic Lesson Paper Series 3, October 2004.

[16] Mahfuzuddin Ahmed, K. Kuperan Viswanathan, and R.A. Valmonte-Santos, "Collective Action and Property Rights for Sustainable Development: Collective Action and Property Rights in Fisheries Management", *Brief 7 of 16, edited by Ruth S. Meinzen-Dick and Monica Di Gregorio, 2020 Vision Focus 11, International Food Policy Research Institute: Washington, D.C., 2004.*

Fig. 2. Three–way Partnership for Local Governance

State, Policy Makers, Local Gov't — Role: facilitator/ communicator

CBOs — Role: implementers; organizers

NGOs — Role: catalyst

The Community Based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM) project in Bolinao, Pangasinan, Northern Philippines exemplifies some features of this approach.

The Bolinao project was started in 1995 by two academic institutions (the Marine Science Institute of the University of the Philippines (UP), and the UP College of Social Work and Community Development, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and Haribon Foundation for the Conservation of Natural Resources—a Philippine based NGO. The project sought to address the rapid degradation of marine resources in the area through a multi-pronged strategy, which included resource tenure improve-ment, capacity building, environmental conservation and management, and sustainable livelihood development.[17]

The first phase of the project (1995-1997) culminated in the formation of several fisherfolk organizations and their eventual federation into the Union of Organizations for the Environment; the establishment of a marine sanctuary in one of the villages covered by the project; the beginnings of a mangrove re-forestation effort in another village; livelihood projects; and a coastal development plan.

Notwithstanding these gains, Haribon felt that the project had fallen short of its goal of capacitating the local groups to take full control

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[17] Capistrano, Robert Charles G., "Gleaning Lessons Learned in Community-based Coastal Resource Management in Bolinao, Pangasinan, Philippines" (First Draft). Presented at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

of the effort. At the end of Phase I, the fisherfolk organizations were still dependent on the project staff. Instead of taking the backseat—and being limited to playing the role of catalyst—the project staff continued to be perceived as the project implementors.[18] Thus, in Phase II (1999-2002) of the project, Haribon made sure that the federation and its constituent groups took the lead in the following[19]:

➢ Assessment of the organizations;
➢ Establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MAPs) and mangrove reforestation areas;
➢ Strengthening of established organizations and expansion to nearby sites;
➢ Criteria-setting for site and project selection;
➢ Development of monitoring and evaluation tools;
➢ Conceptualization, planning, action taking and reflection on strengths and areas for improvement.

By the end of Phase II, the federation of fisherfolk groups could count on the support of the communities as well as of the local government. It had also started to replicate its initiatives in five other coastal villages with grant support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).[20] At the same time, the federation had linked up with a research institute to train its members in coral reef monitoring and management.[21]

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Specifically, the UNDP-Global Environment Facility-Royal Netherlands Embassy (UNDP-GEF-RNE).

[21] Capistrano, Robert Charles G., "Gleaning Lessons Learned in Community-based Coastal Resource Management in Bolinao, Pangasinan, Philippines" (First Draft). Presented at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

3. CONTROL AND ACCESS

Another important element of an empowerment strategy is securing control by the poor of the resources on which their livelihood depends.

The Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID), a Philippine based NGO working alongside indigenous groups in various efforts to secure the latter's ancestral domain claims, declares that the empowerment of indigenous communities "will happen only if they have control of the land…" [22] To this end, PAFID advocated for a reform of policies and laws in order to secure State recognition of indigenous peoples' customary land rights. In 1997, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) was enacted as a result of lobbying and other advocacy efforts by many organizations in the Philippines, including PAFID. The IPRA is a landmark law which recognizes the rights of ownership of indigenous peoples over their ancestral lands and domains; respects the traditional resource management practices of indigenous communities; and obliges implementors of any project or initiative in traditional territories to secure beforehand the 'free, prior informed consent of the community'. [23]

Following this, PAFID worked to obtain legal titles to lands and domains that traditionally belong to indigenous communities but whose ownership rights to such had yet

tions under the broader framework of market liberalization. This includes the sale/lease of government assets, the dismantling of monopolies, the privatization of public utilities (such as power and water), build-operate-transfer schemes, private sector sub-contracting, and inclusion of the business sector in various government planning and consultative bodies. These have been largely in response to donor conditionalities (i.e., WB-IMF recommendations) and to international agreements (GATT, APEC, ASEAN-EAGA). The assumption here is that market mechanisms will increase overall growth, increase efficiency, and lower the costs of services.

Shift from state to civil society. This refers to the process by which civil society directly participates in government programs and systems of governance, as characterized by: (1) the focus on self-organized sectors of civil society (e.g., NGOs, POs, professional associations, the academe, etc.), and (2) the institution of mechanisms that go beyond traditional norms such as elections. This includes: provisions for the appointment of sectoral representatives to Congress and LGUs, provisions for recall of legislation and public officials, the contracting of public services to NGOs, the conduct of consultations, and sectoral/NGO/PO representation in various planning and consultative bodies. The intention here is to address issues of equity for disadvantaged sectors, and to increase direct participation in governance.

—From Quizon, Antonio B., "NGOs in the Philippines," a study prepared for the Asian Development Bank, 1997 (unpublished).

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[22] Presentation by Dave de Vera, Executive Director, PAFID, at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[23] Ibid.

In the mid-1990s PAFID, a Philippine-based NGO working alongside indigenous communities in the country, facilitated the making of a three-dimensional map showing the extent of the ancestral domain claim of the Tagbanwa clan, an indigenous group found in northern Palawan, a province in the Philippines.

The municipal government had earlier appropriated what had long been considered as the ancestral caves of the Tagbanwa, claiming that these were Government property. The clan leaders initially sought to regain control of the caves by applying for stewardship of the surrounding forest lands (under a Government-sponsored Community Based Forest Management Program). However, the clan realized that a forest stewardship contract would leave out their claim on their fishing grounds (which had begun to be encroached on by outsiders, thus reducing the fish catch in the area).

As traditional small fisherfolk, the Tagbanwa felt that they would be unable to survive on their ancestral lands if their fishing grounds, including the coral reefs therein, were progressively destroyed. As one of their leaders explained, the "indigenous sea" cannot be separated from the ancestral land claim as each sustains the other and neither is viable as a separate entity. The indigenous sea was regarded as a natural, inseparable adjunct of their ancestral land, integral to their survival. Hence, the clan decided to broaden their claim to include all aspects of their ancestral domain.

PAFID and the Tagabanwa used the three-dimensional (3-D) mapping technique to produce a map showing the coverage of their claim.

Three-Dimensional (3-D) Mapping is a technique that PAFID has developed and used through the years in implementing its Land Tenure Improvement Program. Unlike conventional cartographic tools, a 3-D Map indicates

to be reconciled with the formal titling system. *(See box: Formalizing Indigenous Communities' Ancestral Domain Claims)*

Securing access by the poor to common property resources (CPRs)—such as forests, rangelands, fisheries, wildlife, irrigation water, etc.—on which they rely heavily for their livelihood, is just as crucial to an empowerment strategy. IFAD has long recognized this fact and has experimented with a range of approaches aimed at enhancing access of the poor to CPRs and to improving the productivity of these resources. At the same time, IFAD has continued to promote land tenure reform. The following gives proof of IFAD's acknowledgment of the continuing need for land reform and its role in empowerment of the poor:

> *Land reform remains important to poverty reduction in Asia. It helps change village political structure by giving a greater voice to the poor and encourages them to get involved in local self-governing institutions and in common management of local public goods.*[24]

4. ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is another important element of an empowerment strategy. Accountability is premised on the need to identify claim-holders (and their entitlements) and corresponding duty-holders (and their obligations), and thereafter to hold the latter to their obligations and capacitate the former to demand and secure their entitlements.[25]

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[24] IFAD, Regional Strategy Paper: Asia and the Pacific, March 2002, p.6.

[25] UNHCHR. "Rights-based approaches: What is a rights-based approach to development?," http://www.unhchr.ch/development/approaches-04.html/

There are at least two approaches to exacting accountability from the State: the first is "confrontational", the other, "more systematic".

The Confrontational Approach

The Center for Alternative Rural Technology (CART), which has faced off several times with the Philippines' Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), exemplifies the confrontational approach. In an earlier campaign to get the DENR to take action on rampant illegal logging in the watersheds of Cagayan de Oro province in Mindanao, CART had staged barricades along the routes of logging trucks, mobilizing thousands of farmers, fisherfolk, and other grassroots groups in the process. It had organized mass rallies and pickets infront of the provincial DENR. On more than one occasion, verbal jousts between some of CART's leaders and DENR officials had turned ugly, causing the former's physical eviction from DENR premises.

PETAWA's efforts to reclaim the lands seized from its members are also characterized by this confrontational approach. The lands in question had been part of two estates held by the Dutch colonizers in Indonesia. These lands were then ceded by the Dutch to the Japanese occupation forces. Towards the end of World War II, and with the Japanese in retreat, the estate workers fought alongside Indonesian freedom fighter to take over the estates. Following the war, the workers' claim on the land was affirmed and even protected by the Indonesian government, through its Army. That is, until the Communist purge in 1965, when the military government began to seize lands all over the country, including those of PETAWA members. Since 1978 PETAWA has been engaged in various campaigns on behalf of its

the location of resources on which the communities derive their livelihood, as well as features that have a social, cultural and even spiritual significance to the local people. As such, a 3-D map is not only a physical representation of the area but also a record of collective and communal knowledge.

Vetted by Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) technology, the mapping exercise produced a map that was so accurate that the Tagbanwa's claim could not simply be shunted aside by local officials. Six years after the clan filed their application, a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) covering 22,400 hectares of land and waters was granted to the Tagbanwa community by the Philippine Government.

The Tagbanwas' triumph represents the first successful legally binding ancestral waters claim in Asia, and later formed the basis for the inclusion of ancestral waters in the Philippines' "Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997".

members' land claims. While it also has recourse to "law based actions" (i.e., locating lost documentation of land ownership), it has mostly carried out demonstrations to force the Government to take action.

The Systematic Approach

One example of a project that has used a more systematic approach to exacting accountability is SAMARTHAN's program to secure representation for women's issues in the village governing body provides an example of a more systematic approach to promoting State accountability.

SAMARTHAN is primarily engaged in strengthening local governance institutions by making the latter more accountable and by strengthening the bargaining power of the

poor.[26] In the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh (MP), SAMARTHAN wanted to maximize the opportunities that had been opened up by MP's 1993 State Act which devolves planning and decision-making functions to village-level governing institutions.

SAMARTHAN was concerned that, because of corruption and the lack of participation by women, these institutions were squandering their potential to become genuinely representative institutions. Its strategy therefore consisted in forming Self-Help Groups (SHGs) of women in the district of Sehore, federating them into cluster assemblies, and, having ascertained the groups' readiness, securing their participation either as members of the village assembly or of any of its committees, and eventually getting them elected into the village governing body.[27]

Getting the women into the village assembly ensured that their issues got a better hearing among that group. Previously, the village assembly, being preoccupied with the concerns of its largely male leadership, had paid scant attention to women's needs. With the entry of the women's groups, women members were emboldened to speak up at assembly meetings.[28]

As the women grew in self-confidence, they became more assertive of their needs. In the village of Heerapur, the women's SHG demanded and got a women and child care center, to which every village in the State was entitled, after putting sustained pressure on the village leaders. The SHG in Naya Prakash put the village head to task for not providing the mandatory mid-day meal to school children, going so far as to take up the matter with the District Head for Education, until the mid-day feeding program was implemented.[29]

At the last village elections (in December 2004), five women SHG members ran for the post of village head, while some 30 of them were elected as ward members. Actually, even before the elections, many group members had managed to get into various panchayat committees. Hence, whether or not they get voted into the village governing body, SHG members are now able to influence decision-making in the village and to demand accountability from its leaders for their demands.[30]

Nepal-based FECOFUN's program to secure benefits from the Government's Community Forestry (CF) program in favor of poor Community Forestry User Groups (CFUGs) is the second example of this systematic approach. The CF Program was conceived primarily as a poverty alleviation program. CFUGs were deputized to conserve and manage common forestry resources. In exchange, they were given the right to harvest timber and non-tim-

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[26] Shrdha Kumar, "Influence of women self-help groups in grassroot self-governance institutions in the state of Madhya Pradesh in India: SAMARTHAN," Presented at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

ber forest products (NTFPs) for their own benefit. However, FECOFUN was concerned about the operationalization of the CF Program.

For one thing, the CFUGs were early on dominated by the elite. Of 14,000 CFUGs, only a few hundred were observed to practice transparency, good forest governance and participatory and inclusive decision-making. Poor and disadvantaged groups were marginalized from decision-making processes simply because they could not afford to leave off work and devote time instead to CFUG activities—for which they weren't paid—as the wealthier ones could. Within CFUGs themselves, rich and poor, male and female, upper caste and lower caste, got a different hearing; invariably the more powerful drowned out the weaker, and their interests were reflected more prominently in CFUG plans. [31]

FECOFUN thus worked to improve the CFUG selection process in favor of poor and marginalized households. At the same time, it conducted activities to assist and build the organizational capacity of its CFUG members, such as introduction of good governance structures, formation of Community Based Enterprises (CBEs) to manage non-timber forest product (NTFP) based livelihood projects, provision of legal support, awareness raising and training, and extension support. All such interventions were designed to help poor and marginalized groups demand greater account-ability from the Government's forestry program and to maximize their benefits from it.

5. NON-DISCRIMINATION AND ATTENTION TO VULNERABLE GROUPS

An empowerment strategy must pay particular attention to redressing discrimination, inequality, and marginalization of certain sectors. In practical terms, this requires a more accurate targeting of development projects and programs such that groups most in need—and who, ironically, are also the ones most frequently bypassed—such as women and indigenous peoples, are prioritized in the dispensation of services and benefits.

SEWA's approach to identifying the beneficiaries of Jeevika, a relief program anchored on livelihood provision, illustrates this targeting strategy. Tasked to help select beneficiaries from the tens of thousands affected by the earthquake that hit Gujarat, India in January 2001, SEWA fell back on its trademark approach of targeting the poorest of the poor.

For SEWA, "targeting the poorest of the poor refers to the process of identifying the poorest in each community, to ensure that they get the major portion of the benefits."[32] This targeting process is described as follows[33]:

SEWA asks each community to identify which of its members are the poorest.

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[31] Ghan Shyam Pandey and Nabaraj Dahal, "Role of FECOFUN in Promoting the Sustainability and Upscaling of Rural Communities in Nepal," Presented at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[32] Reema Nanavaty, "Case Study on Rebuilding Livelihoods—Poor and Women Lead." Presented at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[33] Ibid.

Village members are asked to ponder questions like: "What is poverty?;" "How would they recognize the poorest of the poor in their village?;" "What indicators would they need to spot families with the greatest need?" In the course of such discussion, SEWA guides the village members in drawing up a list of criteria identifying the poorest of the poor.

Following this exercise, a list of the poorest families within the community is generated. SEWA organizers and Village Development Committee (VDC) members then conduct focused interviews with the identified families to collect profiles of their living conditions, needs and concerns. This not only helps ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed

in the village micro plan, but also provides baseline data for evaluating the impact of the program on the most vulnerable groups in the community.

For the Jeevika program, in particular, SEWA made its selection of partner villages on the basis of four criteria, among which are the severity of earthquake-related damage and the number of households living below the poverty line (i.e., two-thirds of households in the village must belong in this income group). Over 5,300 families were selected thus for Jeevika's livelihood activities.

6. LINK BETWEEN LOCAL ORGANIZING WORK AND PROJECTS AND SOCIAL POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

A sixth element of an empowerment strategy consists of efforts to link local organizing work or community projects to the reform of social policy and institutions. The Bangladesh-based Community Development Association (CDA) believes that poverty results from "many interconnected and interdependent problems (social, cultural, ecological, human rights, economic, gender)," and hence must be addressed through a holistic, programmatic approach that tackles all the related issues simultaneously.[35]

At the center of this approach is Institution Building, CDA's core program. Five support programs correspond to CDA's work in the areas of livelihood promotion, education and

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TARGETING THE POOREST OF THE POOR IN DEGAM VILLAGE [34]

During SEWA's initial poverty assessment in Degam Village, Govindbhai and his family were listed among the poorest of the poor. Govindbhai's neighbor, Rukhiben, vetted Govindbhai's selection, offering the following as evidence of Govindbhai's dire straits:

➢ *Govindbhai has neither agricultural land nor livestock, and does not own the land his home is built on;*

➢ *His home has no facilities nor proper ventilation;*

➢ *Govindbhai's wife is mentally retarded and thus cannot make a living of her own.*

This story shows how the villagers themselves are involved in SEWA's targeting process.

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Community Development Association, "Case Study on the Institution Building Program of Community Development Association (CDA) of Bangladesh." Presented at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

culture, human resource development, health, and environment and sustainable land management.[36] *(See Fig. 3.)*

Thus, in addition to institutionalizing a governance framework, the People's groups act as an instrument for thematic program delivery. Through this support framework people are empowered to make decisions and take actions. To ensure sustainability, the majority of CDA's activities follow a rights-based approach, targeting policy reform and implementation. This necessitates advocacy and linkage with other actors in the development sector as well as with the Government of Bangladesh.[37]
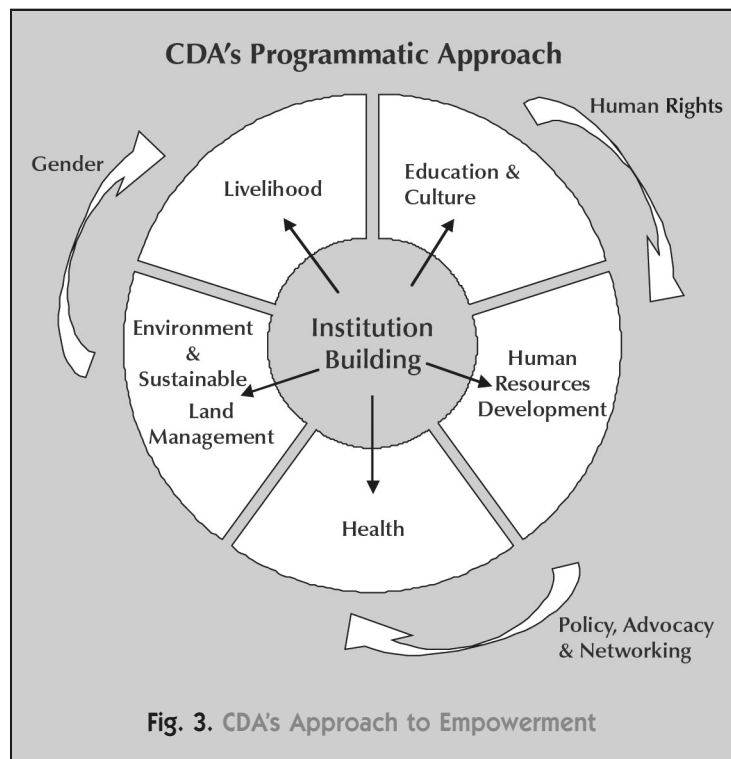

Fig. 3. CDA's Approach to Empowerment

Source: CDA

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

THE GLUE OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
Social Capital and Empowerment of the Poor

For some of those engaged in the study of the social dimensions of development, the link between connectedness and wealth is clear, but for the causality: Do rich people get that way because of their connections? Or are those connections the result or extension of their wealth?

Intuitively, people assume the former. Hence the saying, "It's not *what* you know, but **whom** you know." This aphorism encapsulates what experience confirms to be true. Social upstarts go to great lengths to get into the right clubs. Interest groups spend a fortune in campaign contributions to guarantee a sympathetic ear in government. Influence peddlers trawl the political circuits, ever with an eye to making friends in high places.

Conversely, the absence of connections of the right sort can seriously undermine one's chances for social or material advancement. Thus, adolescents who hang around with a geeky crowd doom themselves to social suicide. Falling out with a favored social set can cut off the financial taps fed by such networks, such as getting first crack at lucrative deals and contracts. Employees that get into a tussle with the boss soon find themselves out-of-the-loop or out-of-a-job.

These and other social ties that people cultivate in order to "get ahead" constitute much of the received wisdom about social capital. Defined as such, its application in regard to advancing the prospects of certain groups is clear. However, some advocates for social capital are less sure-footed about its potential to bring about a more diffuse sort of benefit to society, especially among the poor who have no such connections to leverage. This begs the question, "Would a strategy based on increasing society's stock of social capital be effective in reducing poverty?"

THE SOCIAL CAPITAL OF THE POOR

Social capital refers to a set of assets—mostly intangible and at once multi-dimensional—that results from sustained association among a particular group of people, and which predisposes its members to continue cooperating with one another for mutually beneficial ends.

Else Oyen and Michael Woolcock take a dim view of social capital's relevance to poverty reduction efforts. Woolcock argues that the poor are effectively barred from the right sorts of social networks and institutions—ones that could be used to secure good jobs and decent housing, for instance—and that their exclusion in this sense is what in fact makes them poor.[38] Similarly, Oyen justifies her pes-

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[38] Woolcock, Michael, *Social Capital in Theory and Practice: Reducing Poverty by Building Partnerships between States, Markets and Civil Society,* Report of the Symposium, "Social Capital and Poverty Reduction: Which role for the civil society organizations and the state?" co-organized by UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme and the International Social Science Council's (ISSC) Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), 28 June 2000 in Geneva, Switzerland.

simism on the grounds that, one, the poor do not have the same sort of networks as the non-poor, and two, that poor people are not allowed to enter non-poor networks. She declares that "if a majority of the poor are neither able to develop useful networks for increasing their own social capital on a large scale, nor given entry into those networks where social capital flourishes, then social capital *cannot* be an efficient instrument for poverty reduction".[39]

The trouble with these arguments is that they are based on a rather limited view of social capital and of its sources. For one thing, social capital does not simply consist of having the right connections or being in the right company. Putnam uses the term social capital to refer to "the quality of human relations within some well-defined social group that enables members of this group to act in co-operation with one another for achieving *mutual* benefits."[40]

Uphoff regards it as "an accumulation of various types of social, psychological, cog-nitive, institutional, and related assets that increase the amount (or probability) of *mutually beneficial cooperative behavior*."[41]

Both these definitions suggest a degree of suborning of personal advantage in favor of the group's interests which is completely lacking in the more cynical view of social capital described earlier.

Secondly, while Oyen and Woolcock wholly ascribe society's stock of social capital to networks or associations of the non-poor, implying the lack of it in groups of the poor, other thinkers believe that all communities or groups possess it, albeit to different extents.[42]

MYRADA, which is involved in forming self-help groups (SHGs) among the poor in India, discovered early on in its work that the poor possess "traditional social capital" in the form of "affinity relationships" that "were adequate to support traditional actions like mutual help in times of sickness or childcare".[43]

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[39] Oyen, Else, *Social Capital Formation as a Poverty Reducing Strategy?,* Report of the Symposium, "Social Capital and Poverty Reduction: Which role for the civil society organizations and the state?" co-organized by UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme and the International Social Science Council's (ISSC) Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), 28 June 2000 in Geneva, Switzerland.

[40] Putnam, Robert, as cited in Genge, Cole, "Learning for Social Cohesion," Educ.870(3), May 14, 2001,http://people.umass.edu/educ870/PostConflict/papers/Learning%20for%20Social%20Cohesion.doc

[41] Uphoff, N. (2000). *Understanding social capital: Learning from the analysis and experience of participation*. In P. Dasgupta and I. Serageldin (Eds.) *Social capital: A multifaceted perspective*. Sociological Perspective on Development Series. Washington, D. C.: World Bank, p.216.

[42] Genge, Cole, "Learning for Social Cohesion," Educ.870(3), May 14, 2001, http://people.umass.edu/educ870/PostConflict/papers/Learning%20for%20Social%20Cohesion.doc

[43] Fernandez, Aloysius, "Self-Help Affinity Groups (SAGS): Their Role in Poverty Reduction and Financial Sector Development," Paper presented at the *International Conference on "Micro Finance In the Global Strategy for Meeting The Millennium Development Goals"*, Dublin, Ireland, March 2005, MYRADA *Rural Management Systems Series Paper – 40.*

*MYRADA realized that there was a strong feeling of **"affinity"** which linked the members of each of these small groups together. This affinity was based mainly on **relationships** of trust, relations that were non-exploitative, on certain **social features** (like a degree of homogeneity among the members, of voluntarism and self-reliance and willingness to support one another in need), on certain **structural features** like a common origin (blood or ancestral village) or the same livelihood base (all daily wage earners, landless or marginal farmers, even though from different castes, religions or communities), on **gender bonds** (all women, or all men, though about 5% of the groups were mixed). In a few cases they were based on **similar activities undertaken by each member** (like basket weavers – though caste also had a role to play here; besides a large group of households undertaking a similar activity often decided to break up into smaller groups of 10– 15 on the basis of affinity). Interestingly no groups were formed on the basis of political party affiliations.*[44]

While these bonds of affinity are indispensable as a safety net for the poor, they do not constitute the kind of social capital that could empower them. Part of MYRADA's strategy in fact is to build up this traditional capital to enable the members to cope with the demands of running their organization, to initiate change in society, to secure their interests, and to link up with institutions and service providers. "Given adequate institutional and social space in small affinity groups and with adequate capacity building support to develop organizational skills, traditional social capital has the potential to provide a base on which institutions can build 'social capital' that is adequate to cope with new roles."[45]

Thus, contrary to the observation that the poor have no assets to leverage, MYRADA's strategy starts from the assumption that the poor have inherent strengths which they could use to their advantage—from securing basic needs to enhancing their growth in the human, social, economic and political spheres. This social capital is best harnessed by building organizations of the poor whose structure, systems, and norms altogether work to promote their empowerment.

IFAD's Evolving Empowerment Strategy[46]

IFAD's Strategic Framework for 2002–2006 marks an important shift in the agency's thinking about securing the participation of the rural poor in its development projects. IFAD projects have generally been designed to include the building of organizations of the rural poor (RPOs) who are the projects' target beneficiaries. However, it has been observed that RPOs created within this framework had ended up as being mere conduits for project benefits and resources.

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Liamzon, Cristina M., "A Review of IFAD Project Experiences in Asia in Building Organizations of the Rural Poor," Presented at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

Another tendency—which is discernible not just in IFAD projects but in development programs being implemented by Governments—has been to view groups primarily as project or program implementors, on whom the intervening agency can off-load the responsibility in the name of empowerment. In fact, what this practice amounts to is anything *but* empowerment. It merely "shifts the monkey from their backs to the group often without adequate investment in institutional capacity building".[47] This image of groups as "implementors" is reinforced by the impression—wittingly or unwittingly conveyed by field staff—that no money would be forthcoming unless the people form a group and prove that they are worthy of it. Selecting beneficiaries on the basis of some predetermined criteria further strengthens the groups' perception of themselves as paid hands, thereby precluding the possibility of genuine participation and empowerment.

The importance of group formation as an element of a poverty reduction strategy has been thoroughly examined. Where groups have reached critical mass, as in the case of federations, coalitions, or unions, these have been quite successful at getting agencies to implement policy or program changes in favor of their members. Groups may also themselves bring about a measure of economic improvement, as exemplified by groups engaged in generating income or livelihood.

Groups can provide the mechanism for empowering the poor by enabling them to secure legal entitlements to assets, especially land and water, or linking them with support institutions that help mediate the access of the poor to assets, technologies, markets and rules.

MYRADA has identified the following[48] positive features of SHGs. While these are attributed to a specific type of organization, they are still indicative of the value of RPOs in general:

1. **Facilitate the learning experience** by providing a forum for collective learning which rural people find more "friendly," and which is consequently more effective than the individual or classroom approach that is commonly adopted.
2. **Promote a genuine democratic culture** where rights and responsibilities are equally valued and internalized, and where sanctions are imposed and accepted.
3. **Provide members with opportunities to imbibe norms of behavior** that are based on mutual respect and which can be recognized by the society.
4. **Foster an "intrapreneurial" culture** where members realize that while they need the support of the group to achieve personal objectives, their personal interests cannot be promoted at the ex-

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[47] Fernandez, Aloysius, "Self-Help Affinity Groups (SAGS): Their Role in Poverty Reduction and Financial Sector Development," Paper presented at the *International Conference on "Micro Finance in the Global Strategy for Meeting The Millennium Development Goals", Dublin, Ireland, March 2005,* MYRADA *Rural Management Systems Series Paper – 40.*

[48] Fernandez, Aloysius P., "Self Help Groups – A Credit Plus Institution," *MYRADA Rural Management Systems Series Paper – 28, October 7,* 1997.

pense of the group. This is contrasted to an "entrepreneurial" culture, which promotes competition above all else.

5. **Provide a firm and stable base for dialogue and cooperation** in programs with other institutions like Government departments, cooperatives, financial and village governing bodies. If the groups are functioning well, they have the credibility and the power to ensure their participation in identifying, planning, budgeting, and implementing village programs for the empowerment of the poor.

6. **Provide individual members with the support** required to exercise control over the pace, timing, size and schedules of loans and programs, to broaden the pattern of asset provision, to include a package which would help the individual to cover risk rather than to provide a single asset;

7. **Help to assess individual members' management capacity** which may fall short of what a "viable" investment package requires for optimum returns, but which is manageable by a particular member.

8. **Provide a cost effective credit delivery system,** as the transaction costs of lending decrease sharply both to the banks and the borrowers.

IFAD's subsequent exposure to various participatory approaches to working with the poor and the successful cases it has seen of RPO building by NGOs have apparently tilted its opinion in favor of giving RPOs a more significant role in its projects. In fact, in the current regional strategy of IFAD's Asia-Pacific Division, building coalitions of RPOs is listed as a major project component.

There is a wide variety of RPOs created in the course of IFAD project implementation. However, they can be classified into two broad types: *participatory* organizations, in which all beneficiaries take part; and *representative* organizations, whose members are elected by the beneficiaries to represent them. The Self-Help Groups (SHGs), *gram sabhas*, and various users' associations are the most common participatory organizations, while the Village Implementation Groups and Committees (VICs and VACs) typify representative institutions.

The process of building RPOs however varies across types of RPOs as much as among groups of a type, as the following section will show.

THE SHG: A FORERUNNER OF PARTICIPATORY GROUPS

The self-help group (SHG) is the predominant form of participatory organizations. It is a small group whose members, numbering 15 to 20, are drawn from the same or similar income groups and are bound together by a shared condition, experience, or need which predates their formal association.

SHGs generally take a few years, or even longer, to establish, as they go through a number of growth and development stages. In Phase 1, or the growth stage, the SHG undergoes training, holds reflection sessions and regular meetings, and starts a savings program. At the end of this stage, the SHG is expected to have a fixed membership and the appurtenances of a formal organization, such as organizational books. It should be meeting regularly, have elected its officers, and have started on its savings program.

Phase 2, or the expansion stage, lasts up to 12 months, during which the group keeps up its savings program and begins to provide credit to needy members. Members adopt rules and regulations for availing of

Table 1. Different Types of Rural People's Organizations Established through Interventions of IFAD Projects in Various Countries

COUNTRY	TYPES OF RURAL PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONS/ VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS
Bangladesh	Community Development Groups (CDG); Pond Aquaculture Group (PAG); Lake Fishing Group (LFG); Fingerling Producer Groups; Labor Contracting Society (LCS); Marginal and Landless Group (MLG); Small Farmers Group (SFG); Marginal Farmers Group (MFG); Market Operating Groups (MOG); Savings/Credit Groups (SCG)
Cambodia	Farmer Organizations; Village Animal Health Workers' Association
China	Village Implementation Group (VIG)
India	SHG; Gram Sabhas; Milk Cooperative Societies; Cluster Groups (CG); Association of Cluster Groups (AC); Natural Resource Management Group (NaRMG); Village Development Committee (VDC) = NaRMG + SHG; Watershed Development Committee (WDC); Dairy Cooperatives; District Associations (DA)
Indonesia	SHG, Village Infrastructure Development Association (VIDA); Watershed Management Association (WMA); Farmer-Led Research Groups (FLRG); Federation of SHGs
Laos	Village Development Committee (VDC); Village Administrative Committee (VAC)
Mongolia	Women's Associations (WA); Cooperatives; Rangeland Management and Monitoring Committee (RMMC)
Nepal	Community Organizations (CO)
Pakistan	Village Organizations (VO); Women's Organizations (WO)
Philippines	People's Organizations (POs); Irrigators' Associations (IA); Reforestation Groups; *Barangay* Development Teams
Vietnam	Users' Groups; Village Development Boards (VDB); Savings and Credit Groups; Self-Management Board (SMB)

credit and submit themselves to sanctions when they fail to repay their loans. They undergo a capacity-building program that includes functional literacy and gender sensitivity training, and may collectively engage in activities to improve infrastructure and other facilities in the village. Leaders regularly update the organization's books.

The third phase, or the self-reliance stage, sees the group weaning itself from external support and scaling up its micro-finance and micro-enterprise activities. SHGs involved in production adopt quality control measures and establish links with markets for their products. Training in off-farm livelihood is provided by facilitators, consultants, or skilled members of the community. Also at this stage SHGs are encouraged to federate either within the village (e.g., to purchase raw materials in bulk, or to jointly market products) or with SHGs in other villages.

Mature SHGs are characterized by a high degree of member awareness of the organization's vision, strict compliance with rules and sanctions, regular meetings, and member participation in decision-making. SHGs are assessed after a year of operation and every six months thereafter to determine whether its performance merits an additional grant from project funds to augment its pool of credit.

VICs And VACs: Providing Limited Village–level Representation

The Village Implementation Group (VIG) is a representative organization established in villages in China that are covered by an IFAD project. It is typically composed of the village head, a representative of the All China Women's Federation, farmer technicians involved in the project, the village accountant, and at least three village members elected to represent the interests of the poor.

The VIG spearheads the preparation of the Village Development Plan (VDP), in consultation with households. It makes the initial selection of beneficiaries, mobilizes households for specific project activities, and generally oversees project implementation. Its other tasks include organizing workers for food-for-work programs, getting village members involved in joint investment activities, disbursing loans and supervising collection, and disseminating information.

Meanwhile, the Village Administrative Committee (VAC), which is found in Laos-based projects, is the starting point for all project interventions in the village, including institution-building. It is charged with collecting information on target beneficiaries, identifying proposals and prioritizing them, making preparations to implement the activities prioritized, consolidating village development plans, and ensuring that activities proposed by the village are included in government plans.

A Hybrid of Two Types: CDA's People's Organization[49]

Community Development Association (CDA) of Bangladesh envisions people's organizations (POs) as stand-alone groups that are

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[49] Community Development Association, "Case Study on the Institution Building Program of Community Development Association (CDA) of Bangladesh." Presented at the SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

capable of undertaking activities on their own and on a sustainable basis. These start out as fairly participatory groups and progressively morph into a representative type of organization in the process of federation-building.

The first stage in the development of CDA's PO is the formation of village-level *samitys*—single-gender groups of 25 to 35 members drawn from village clusters formed previously. At this stage (called the "Mobilization phase"), *samity* members discuss socio-economic, cultural, environmental and gender issues, and agree on measures to address their common needs and problems. They also start a savings program.

The second, or "Initial," phase involves consciousness-raising and capacity-building activities. *Samity* members start small income- and employment-generating projects funded out of their credit program.

The "Integration phase" that follows sees the *samitys* federating into a PO. Four *samitys*, two male and two female, are enough to constitute a PO. Capacity- and institution-building are carried on to this stage, alongside new activities such as advocacy and networking, fund-raising, joint project implementation among the constituent *samitys*, etc.

At the "Expansion phase," the PO develops relationships with local and national institutions to tap external resources and to build alliances for advocacy.

The last two stages of PO development—"Separation" to "Partnership"—fulfill CDA's aim of forming self-governed and self-reliant institutions. During the period covered by these two stages, PO members take collective decisions through a democratic process, jointly plan, implement and evaluate their activities, and collaborate with one or more external institutions to undertake socio-economic programs for their benefit as well as that of society in general.

LESSONS IN BUILDING RPOS

The following lessons[50] in building RPOs have been drawn from Myrada's experience in forming SHGs:

1. Group formation must be an integral part of an empowerment strategy. If an agency commits itself to building organizations of the poor that evolve constantly in accordance with human, social, political, and economic imperatives, which are all motivated by the need to support the livelihood base of the poor, then the formation of groups is considered as justified. This mindset results from "the belief that to initiate a process that has the potential to eradicate poverty in a sustainable manner, it is necessary to go beyond awareness to build institutions that people can control right from the start."

2. RPOs that empower or have the potential to empower are those whose structure and rules, functions and supporting systems are designed by the people.

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[50] Fernandez, Aloysius, "Self-Help Affinity Groups (SAGS): Their Role in Poverty Reduction and Financial Sector Development," Paper presented at the *International Conference on "Micro Finance In the Global Strategy for Meeting The Millennium Development Goals", Dublin, Ireland, March 2005,* MYRADA *Rural Management Systems Series Paper – 40.*

On the other hand, their sustainability depends on a proper fit with the resource to be managed and their adaptability to emerging situations and needs.

3. Participatory groups, which are composed wholly of the poor and whose members all participate in decision-making, have a greater potential to empower their members than representative ones. The latter have their uses, but poverty eradication is not one of them, nor is bringing about change in social relations, as they are still heavily influenced by traditional power structures.

4. Organizations, by themselves, do not empower. In fact, they could have the opposite effect if their structure is inappropriate and their systems outdated and ineffective. Likewise, organizations upon whom an external agent imposes a standardized set of organizational and financial systems would also tend to disempower its members. Organizations should thus be allowed to develop their own systems, provided these are accountable and transparent.

5. Despite advice to the contrary, groups will continue to be formed within the context of a "project". However, there are way s to mitigate the negative impact on institutional building that this project context imposes.

"Agencies must ensure that:
1. Groups are formed on the basis of affinity, not on pre-determined criteria for beneficiary selection.
2. At least six to eight months must be devoted to institutional capacity building before the group is asked to prepare plans for investment in infrastructure or to apply for grants for individual assets.

3. During this period a significant investment in capacity building is required; this should focus on helping the group to build a vision and a strategy which is not limited by the "project" on hand but by what the group envisages in the long term.
4. If the project envisages provision of credit, the group should be assessed on the basis of its institutional strengths (not on the viability of each individual loan) and a line of credit provided to the group, leaving the group to decide on the purpose of each loan, on the interest rates, repayment schedules and on sanctions where members fail to conform to agreed schedules or accepted norms of social behaviour."

THE TIES THAT BIND

Beyond the type of organization, or the process involved in building it, a more important concern for agencies such as IFAD is to ensure, at the very least, that beneficiary groups last long enough to serve their purpose.

Experience seems to indicate that beneficiary organizations whose members are bound by affinity are more likely to sustain themselves for the duration of the project, and in some cases to outlive it, than those whose members had been brought together on the basis of criteria laid down by an external agency, such as an NGO or Government, and whose participation is motivated solely by an anticipated benefit.

Yet, affinity by itself is no guarantee of a group's sustainability. It is simply a more promising

starting point. The relationships that flow from such affinity, the suborning of personal interest to that of the group which affinity promotes, the internalization of a common vision and goals which makes joint action possible—which comprise the "social capital" of RPOs—are the true ties that bind.

Social capital is the glue that holds together organizations of the poor. As organizations draw on this stock of goodwill to further the interest of the group, they simultaneously enrich it. As they accumulate experience of mutual assistance and mutual gain, the ties that initially brought them together harden into commitment, making future—unprogrammed—collaboration not only possible but desirable, and proving that there is life after the project.

MATCHING GROUPS WITH THE RESOURCE

A milk society after the AMUL model (the well known Milk Cooperative of Anand, in Gujarat State), for example, has an institutional structure which is appropriate to manage milk but is not appropriate to manage credit targeted to the poor. The milk society at the village level is large and heterogeneous. The large farmer who produces a surplus of 10 litres of milk and the small farmer who produces just half a litre are both members of the society. In this case, however the small farmer needs the big farmer; it is the latter's supply that makes the milk route viable. In the milk society it could be said that the small person sits on the back of the big one. A sufficiently large number of members is required in order to produce the quantity of milk which makes the route viable. In a credit society however, a heterogeneous structure results in the big person exploiting the small.

The functioning of the Cooperatives is ample evidence of this. The large farmers and powerful members sit on the backs of the small and the poor who depend on the powerful for loans and jobs. The self-help affinity groups managing credit therefore need to be homogenous; the members need to be of the same economic status and there should be no exploitative relationships among them. In brief, unless the structure of the group is appropriate to the resource to be managed, the performance of the institution will constantly require intervention from without in order to survive.

The assumption was that the structure of these appropriate institutions and their governance systems developed by the members would in turn foster the attitudes and skills required for sustained management, would build the ability to mobilise resources, to establish linkages and to initiate change. Together, these features form the basis of empowerment.

—From Fernandez, Aloysius, "Self-Help Affinity Groups (SAGS): Their Role in Poverty Reduction and Financial Sector Development".

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF THE POOR
Building Self–Governing, Sustainable Institutions

Much of the challenge of preparing the poor to form self-governing, sustainable institutions lies in the question of their capacity for such an undertaking. The key, then, is identifying *which* capacities need to be built up and *how*.

With regard to *which* capacities to develop, a logical starting-point would be the innate strengths and qualities that groups of the poor possess. These need to be assessed as to their potential positive contribution, as well as to any obstacles they may pose, to the formation of a more formal institution. Once the positive innate strengths are factored into the process, however, more formal, institutional capacities—formulation of rules, handling of meetings, selection of leaders/representatives, record-keeping, accounting procedures, and the like—must be built up in order to transform traditional, often informal groups into capable institutions. Further yet, a higher level of capacities must be set in place to help ensure not only the institution's survival and continued effectiveness, but its entry into the next phase of involvement in coalition, federations, and/or networks.

With regard to *how* these capacities could best be developed, the usual classroom-style lectures and training are further augmented by hands-on, experiential learning—going on site visits, engaging in technology exchange with like-minded interest groups; represent-ing one's group; interacting and negotiating with outside entities, such as government agencies, banks, the academe; drafting laws; building models; and more.

TAPPING THE POOR'S INHERENT CAPACITIES

Past practice tended to view capacity development of the poor as externally imposed and orchestrated by an outside entity—most often an NGO—and consisting of skills and knowledge acquisition through training. There is, however, a growing recognition of and respect for the *inherent capacities* of organizations of the poor which they possess prior to any intervention. Existing, often informal, groups of the poor in communities have been found to have certain natural strengths and resources that, rather than being replaced or ignored, could very well serve as building blocks for further capacities that become needed as the group grows and formalizes.

AFFINITY

One such inherent strength has to do with the natural links and bonds that already exist within small groupings of poor members in a community. A clear case in point are the "affinity groups" that have been successfully tapped into by MYRADA in Bangalore, India. [51]

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[51] MYRADA is a large NGO with 450 staff working directly with 1.5 million poor. "Building poor people's institutions" is its short mission statement. It manages 15 major projects in three Indian States and has major involvements in three others where it has deputed staff to Government or conducts regular training and visits. Website: www.myrada.org.

The members of such groups are linked by a common bond like caste, sub-caste, blood, community, place of origin or activity. As reported, any interventions by MYRADA takes cognizance of the fact that such affinity is a potent base for group success. The generic term "self-help groups" (SHGs), referring to MYRADA's vehicle for effecting change in communities, has since been modified to "self-help *affinity* groups" (SAGs) in recognition of this vital element.

This affinity is based mainly on relationships of trust, relations that are non-exploitative; on certain **social features** (like a degree of homogeneity among the members, of voluntarism and self reliance and willingness to support one another in need); on certain **structural features** like a common origin (blood or ancestral village) or the same livelihood base (all daily wage earners, landless or marginal farmers, even though from different castes, religions or communities); or on **gender bonds** (all women or all men). In a few cases they are based on similar activities undertaken by the members (like a group of basket weavers).[52]

Such affinity relationships exist in communities *before* the intervention of an outside agent. They are adequate to support traditional responses like mutual help in times of sickness or childcare, in the case of MYRADA-served communities; or in times of threats to ancestral domain, in the case of Philippine indigenous people (IP) groups. This complex of relationships is often referred to as "traditional social capital".

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND VALUE SYSTEMS

In the experience of the Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID) among the indigenous peoples (IPs) of the Philippines, already related in Section I of this book, the strength—indeed, the identity—of such groups emanates from the very ancestral domain that they inhabit. As PAFID Executive Director, Dave de Vera, puts it, "Without traditional lands, there is no indigenous person." [53]

IP groups thus possess an unmatched store of firsthand, experience-based information about the land and natural resources on which they survive. Through the centuries, this intimate and comprehensive knowledge of their natural territory has translated into their own resource management technology and their own value systems embodied in their community life. Any intended institution-building within an IP community, then, would do well to value this traditional resource management technology and value system, and to draw from them both information and practices that would help ensure that the intended institution is truly relevant, acceptable, and beneficial to the community.

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Yet another area of inherent capacities already existing in groups of the poor are what may be termed as "normative institutions". These

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[52] Fernandez, Aloysius P., "Self-help affinity groups (SAGs): Their role in poverty reduction and financial sector development," Paper presented at Concern Worldwide, Dublin, Ireland, March 2005.

[53] de Vera, Dave. "Capacity building for ancestral domain management planning: Empowering indigenous communities for self-determination", Presentation at SCOPE Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005.

are the groups' established ways of organizing and working together, selecting and replacing leaders, planning and scheduling common activities, sharing group benefits, sanctioning any infractions, and so on.

While such normative institutions may be effective in varying degrees in the context of traditional groups, care must be taken to judge all such practices as "good" or beneficial simply because they are there. Some may, in fact, perpetuate power in the hands of an individual or clan. Others may discriminate against women or limit access to resources by some sectors within the group. Still others may inhibit openness to more efficient practices due to long-held beliefs or taboos.

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

It is the responsibility of the facilitating agency, then, to discern which aspects of the existing group's inherent capacities to draw from—and then build upon. In fact, even in the case of groups *formed as a result of the outside agency's intervention* (as distinct from traditional groups already found in the community), the formation and acceptance of such groups is facilitated if respect is paid to the community's norms and values.

In the examples cited in this Section, we see how such inherent capacities—affinity, indigenous knowledge and value systems, and traditional institutions—were used as the foundation upon which further institutional capacities were then built.

The progression of capacity development as affinity groups mature, for example, can be seen in MYRADA's three-phase process for forming SHGs/SAGs *(see box: The Process of Forming SHGs: The MYRADA Experience)*. While many aspects of the process necessarily deal with logistical and practical concerns of institution-building, such as schedules of meetings, selection of representatives, record keeping, accountancy ("numeracy"), and the like, it may be seen how these made good use of the natural bonds in traditional groups.

The same may be said of the Ancestral Domain Management Plan drawn up with PAFID's intervention. Technology transfer may have taken place with the introduction of Community Mapping and 3-D Modelling as part of the IPs' Participatory Geographic Information System (PGIS). However, that technology transfer owed its relevance and effectivity to the inherent capacities of indigenous knowledge and value systems that the IP groups brought with them to the mapping and modeling exercise.

BUILDING UP TO BE "BUILT OUT"

"An NGO ideology should therefore incorporate as a major component of its functional code that NGOs, who work with POs, should consider themselves dispensable entities, or conversely that POs needing to work with NGOs should be helped to become their own NGOs...(achieving) viable development status, in terms of literacy, income, social services, community self-management capability and socio-political power."

—Chandra de Fonseka (1992)[54]

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[54] De Fonseka, Chandra. *Challenges and Future Directions of NGOs.* Manila: Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, 1992. Page 12.

DEVELOPING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES

BEYOND THE NUMBERS

In institutional capacity building, obvious initial targets would be group size and financial soundness. Having a stable—and growing—membership base, plus sufficient funds to cover both current and upcoming group activities are easily measurable indicators of capacity building. However, such growth in numbers and resources can easily make group operations unwieldy and give rise to internal tensions. Hence the sudden urgency for the next level of capacities.

Such capacities would enable groups "to cope with the demands of effective *financial* and *organizational management*, as well as with the *social role* that the groups begin to play— for example, initiating change in society and in the home, to protecting and furthering their interests, as well as establishing linkages with supporting services and institutions." [56]

As cited in the "Review of IFAD Project Experiences in Asia" (2005), serious problems have emerged in a substantial number of projects with regard to the level of organizational development and maturity of many project-related and supported rural poor organizations (RPOs). Some projects may have reached the target numbers of SHGs formed, for example, but the quality of the organizational capacities was wanting, resulting in recommendations to re-focus on raising

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THE PROCESS OF FORMING SHGs: The MYRADA Experience [55]

Phase I—Identification and Formation of SHGs: 0–4 months

Identification and formation of SHGs begins with collection of information regarding:

1. *credit needs*

2. *incomes and their seasonality*

3. *availability of natural resources, skills and markets*

4. *people's perceptions of poverty and of intervenors*

5. *social groupings in society.*

Participatory Rural Appraisal methods involve community members in collecting and correcting data in a manner in which all can participate using instruments to which they are accustomed (e.g., sticks, stones, seeds, and colored powders).

Through several meetings held over a period of 2 to 4 months, the group membership begins to take shape. These meetings are not only social gatherings, but are also occasions for the members to raise issues concerning the family and the village. Matters regarding savings and lending are also debated thoroughly as this is the major common function of the group. Agreement to save and to lend and the willingness to abide by group decisions without breaking bonds and confidence in the group indicate a degree of trust in one another. These are the building blocks of effective SHGs.

Critical Features of the SHG at the End of Phase I

➢ *The group is identifiable; it is not a place where people can walk in and out at will.*

➢ *The members have agreed to save regularly, to create a habit of thrift and to establish a culture of self help. Some groups may have started savings.*

➢ *Basic records (Attendance Register; Minutes Book; and Members Savings Ledgers and Individual Savings Passbooks) are maintained.*

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[55] Adapted from Fernandez, Aloysius P., "Self-help groups: The concept," MYRADA (http://www.myrada.org/paper_rural_management.htm), 1995.

[56] Fernandez, Aloysius P., "Self-help groups: The concept," MYRADA (http://www.myrada.org/paper_rural_management.htm), 1995.

> The date, time and place of meetings have been decided on by the members, and meetings are held regularly according to the schedule.

> Two members of the group have been elected/selected to function as "representatives"; to be changed every year with the following year's representatives elected/selected six months in advance for adequate preparation and training.

> The group has given itself a name.

> If savings have begun, the group has opened an account in the nearest Bank or Post Office. The account has two signatories— either one from the SHG and the other from the NGO intervenor, or both from the SHG.

Phase II—Group Stabilization: From 4 months to 15 months

MYRADA continues to play a key role in this phase by attending all meetings and ensuring that adequate support is provided so that:

> Savings are regular and lending operations gather strength. This provides the members of the SHG with an opportunity to acquire the skills to manage its resources. The group decides on the rate of savings, on the timing of the loans, on the schedule of payments and repayments, and on the interest rates. It assesses when and whether the member needs a loan and whether she/he is able to use the loan effectively and to repay according to the schedule decided on.

> Meetings are held regularly, preferably every week; attendance is maintained (averaging over 80%); repayment rate is over 90%; sanctions for default on repayment and for deviant behavior (smoking at meetings, arriving late for meetings, etc.) are imposed and accepted.

> Record books are maintained either by a literate member of the group or by the NGO staff or preferably by someone from the village who is paid for such services.

> Gender issues concerning women in private and public life are raised and discussed.

> Literacy and numeracy classes are conducted and attended by all members.

> Common action programs are organized by the group.

> The group begins to interact with other groups, with Government, and with private institutions.

the quality of the SHGs and their membership, rather than merely continuing to expand their numbers. Further, some SHGs were found to have no clear vision of where they were headed, nor were they even aware of or familiar with the aims and objectives of their own groups.[57]

TRAINING

A common intervention to effect capacity building is training. Among the usual content areas of training for groups are:

> Technology and skills transfer
> Literacy
> Meeting management and facilitation
> Record-keeping
> Bookkeeping / Accounting

Beyond these areas, however, the IFAD Project Review cites the need for proper orientation of both group leaders and members on the concept of SHGs in general and the respective groups' vision and objectives, in particular. Training, it is stressed, must be given *as* and *when* needed by the beneficiaries and RPO leaders/members, rather than as a function of rigidly set schedules of training activities— as often occurs in project implementation.[58]

REGULAR COMMON ACTIVITIES

To create a sense of solidarity within the group and to establish a felt presence in the community, regular common activities must be

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[57] Liamzon, Cristina M., "A Review of IFAD Project Experiences in Asia in Building Organizations of the Rural Poor," Presented at the SCOPE Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005.

[58] *Ibid.*

scheduled. These could range from simple weekly meetings, to monthly community projects, to social activities, to annual general assemblies where the group's achievements are celebrated and recognized. Such visible signs of group life keep up the members' sense of pride and accomplishment, while also earning a positive image for the group within the community as well as in the eyes of potential partners, advocates, or donors.

SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Traditional groups are often prone to the "founder syndrome" mode of leadership. Thus, an orderly procedure for democratically selecting qualified leaders within the group is another valuable institutional capacity. Also needed is a system whereby these leaders are held accountable to the members for the performance of their duties; part of which is an orderly turnover procedure—both as a means of avoiding overstaying leaders as well as acknowledging good leadership through re-selection.

CAPACITIES TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Capacity development is more readily visible in indicators such as group attendance records, repayment rates, leader selection, community action programs, training activities, and the like. However, it is now widely recognized that, while these are necessary and easily measurable trappings of institution building, they do not guarantee the institution's sustainability. Even in the MYRADA SHGs/SAGs where loan eligibility and repayment capacity would seem to be the evident driving forces, what keeps the groups alive are far more human factors.

➢ Group training is held regularly to enable all members to participate effectively, to build group culture and to raise the level of commitment to mutual support and acceptance of group decisions, to develop members' self confidence in private and public life, to help members acquire the skills of conflict resolution, etc.

➢ The two representatives per group are given training on: numeracy and literacy skills for record-keeping; how to conduct meetings; how to help the group establish a supportive culture, to establish priorities in lending, and to impose and accept sanctions; development of leadership qualities and the confidence to relate with institutions and to organize common action programs.

➢ Other group maintenance activities, like keeping of accounts and records, can be done by local people who are selected and paid by the group on a job-by-job basis. (Initial funds for this may come from MYRADA, but only for a period of 1½ to 2 years.)

Support to the Common Fund of the SHG

After 6 to 9 months, if the SHG is progressing according to the indicators mentioned above, grants in installments matching the savings or in a higher ratio depending on the performance of the group are credited directly to the common fund. This helps to build up available capital, enabling members to access larger loans for business, trading, and other small income generating activities.

Features of the SHG at the End of Phase II

➢ All the members are engaged in savings.

➢ Loans are provided to all.

➢ All transactions are supported with documentation; a summary of loans and recoveries is posted in a public place and regularly updated.

➢ The common fund is steadily increasing through interest, savings and fund raising by the group.

➢ The common fund is revolving; bank balance is low or nil. The recovery rate is consistently over 90%; attendance is consistently over 80%.

➢ The members have acquired the skills to conduct meetings and to resolve conflicts; perhaps, they have acquired skills in literacy and numeracy as well. Their confidence to act in public life has increased; they are able to relate with other institutions and Government as a group.

> ➢ Initial steps are taken to relate with the Bank and to negotiate a loan to the group.

> ➢ The group has the experience of organizing and being involved in one or two common action programs and in conflict resolution.

> ➢ The members of women's groups have begun to address gender issues and to take small though significant actions both in public and at home.

Phase III—Withdrawal: From 15 to 36 months

Withdrawal must be integrated in the strategy from the beginning of the process, in order that interventions actually support the growth of self-reliant people's institutions and not increase their dependency. However, withdrawal becomes more tangible and acceptable only after the major interventions required to build up the groups taper off.

MYRADA expects withdrawal to be visible 15 months after the groups exhibit the features listed at the end of Phase II, which is about 15 to 20 months after the groups were initially identified. As the groups take on the major role in organizational maintenance, the intervenors gradually withdraw. Initially, the intervenors reduce their attendance at weekly group meetings. Next, the groups begin to pay for those maintenance services which they require (e.g., a group would pay one person for writing the minutes and for keeping accounts). MYRADA would still have to provide the services of its accountants for an annual audit, towards which service the group should be asked to contribute until it is capable of hiring these services on its own. The NGO also responds to requests to intervene in the event of a crisis situation which the group on its own cannot resolve.

Major interventions during this period would be technical services for asset management and productivity, all round support for off-farm activities, especially for design, quality and marketing. These services could be provided partly by MYRADA staff or consultants, and partly by trained local barefoot specialists.

During this period the supportive role of MYRADA decreases. Regular feedback and analysis of data must be ensured, however, in order to identify trends in financial management of the SHGs.

SOCIAL CAPACITIES

The relationships that the SAG members establish among themselves are motivated by a mix of social and material needs. Based on existing evidence, it is even fair to say that in an affinity group which has been fostered along the lines advocated by MYRADA, the motivation of the members in the initial stage is equally divided between the perceived fulfillment of social needs and the expectation of material gain. In the case of women's self-help groups, social needs, however, often tend to be a priority. Women need space in traditional rural societies to meet freely, to share concerns, to express a sense of togetherness and fellowship.

SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Genuine SAGs function not because the members have joined a group as a condition to receive loans but because they have taken the initiative *to build an institution on the basis of their own efforts*. If, on the other hand, "eligibility" to receive benefits of some kind from an external source becomes the only basis for group formation, the group will probably dissolve once the benefits are received. In a genuine SAG, the group continues to grow and function even after the project period is over.

"HAVING A VOICE"

Involvement in SAGs also provides the poor with an experience of democratic culture, in which their voices—normally unheard—may be listened to. It also provides them with opportunities to imbibe norms of behavior that are based on mutual respect. The SAGs foster an "intrapreneurial" culture (as distinct from "entrepreneurial" which implies a strong element of competition) where each

member realizes that while she/he needs the support of the group to achieve her/his objectives, the group also in turn requires her/his support in adequate measure.

Among herder groups in Mongolia, for example, the experience of going through the process of developing their organizations allowed them to learn the principles of good governance, while the government organizations they worked with in turn benefited by interacting with them. Moreover, the strengthened community organizations became more able and active partners in collaborative management of natural resources and in addressing rural development issues. They likewise began to demand better services from government and to communicate their concerns more effectively. [59]

NEGOTIATING CONFIDENCE

In the case of the Philippine IP groups as well, social capacities were in fact the partner-results of seemingly purely technical skills development. The groups gained valuable *negotiation footing*, as they helped transform the traditional knowledge of their domain that they had possessed for generations into forms comprehensible to modern technology. What they knew from memory and from daily practice took on the form of maps and 3-D models—thereby providing a common base of information upon which they and other stakeholders (NGOs, Government agencies, private enterprise) could communicate and negotiate. On the basis of these maps and models, these same stakeholders could then collectively analyze the local data and generate collaborative land-use plans. The data could also be linked to a formal Geographic Information System (GIS) to serve as a reference for policymakers, as it equaled or even surpassed Government technical standards.

This experience of traditional IP leaders in engaging other stakeholders on an equal footing built their confidence, as it likewise earned them the respect of those other stakeholders. Ultimately, the IPs' access to and control of their ancestral lands through the exercise of traditional leadership and management systems was preserved.

Thus, it may be said that *the greatest capacity-builder is the experience of success, of achievement, of attaining a long sought-after goal*. Such an experience—especially for the poor, among whom it is so rare—builds tremendous confidence and a sense of finally having a say in one's destiny. In a word, empowerment.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

Unavoidably, growth and change within organizations—however much valued and seen as important—exert pressure on the traditional roles, relationships, procedures, even world views long held by the members. Therefore, a vital component of capacity building is the skill of managing and resolving conflicts. Group leaders and selected members may be given special training as "conflict managers" or "mediators", thereby hopefully enabling

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[59] Schmidt, Sabine, Altanchimeg Ch., and Narangerel Yansanjav. *People Centered Conservation and Poverty Reduction in Mongolia's Southern Gobi Region*. Presentation at SCOPE Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005.

the group to in fact gain from, rather than be destroyed by, inevitable conflicts.

Of course, should the conflict be between the group itself and outside individuals, interest groups, or even social structures, a different level of conflict resolution is called for. Group leaders should thus be equipped to discern when an external mediator, negotiator, or arbiter should step in and assist.

THE ROLE OF SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

In this complex capacity-development process, NGOs and CSOs are now seen as playing a somewhat different role. With the "we have all the answers" stance now out of favor, the interventions introduced by such organizations are decidedly more supportive than in the past.

This was readily reflected in the descriptions of a support organization given by the participants in the SCOPE Workshop (Bangkok, November 2005):

> ➤ "learning partner"
> ➤ "helper"
> ➤ "resource guide"
> ➤ "brain teaser"
> ➤ "facilitator"
> ➤ "sister-in-arms"
> ➤ "builder of confidence"
> ➤ "provider of access to resources"
> ➤ "provider of an enabling environment"
> ➤ "mobilizer"
> ➤ "creator of initiative"
> ➤ "monitor"
> ➤ "collaborator in the implementation process"

Clearly, the image of a superior entity imposing a prescribed "solution" on a community to meet its needs is unacceptable. The descriptions above indicate a more equal

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RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Most communities have institutions and structures that help resolve conflicts. These can involve people who traditionally act as mediators (religious or political leaders), or arrangements that are used locally to regulate access to and control over resources. However, many disputes remain unresolved because the mechanisms in place to manage them are inadequate, or because the parties in conflict do not have the skills needed to negotiate effectively. This is especially true of multi-stakeholder conflicts and those where accessibility is an issue for politically or socially marginalized groups and remote communities because of cost, distance, or language barriers. Some form of capacity building for local stakeholders will therefore be needed in most conflict management processes.

The principle of subsidiarity *states that conflicts should always be managed at the lowest possible level or closest to where they will have the most effect (locally, rather than regionally or nationally). This makes it possible to avoid unnecessary external interference, which might undermine or rob the existing structures and institutions of their functions.*

Outsiders should not interfere unnecessarily in the affairs of local people if there are adequate structures and institutions in place to deal with conflict. Over time, interference can cause the breakdown of important institutions and structures in society. Any intervention should therefore be specifically focused, limited, and temporary, and should aim to build on and strengthen local capacity for conflict management.[60]

—Engel and Korf , FAO (2005)

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[60] Engel, Antonia and Benedikt Korf. *Negotiation and Mediation Techniques for Natural Resource Management.* Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2005. Page 51.

status between the NGOs/CSOs and the communities they are serving. They are also premised on that same basic recognition that organizations of the poor have inherent strengths and capacities that merely need to be tapped and built upon by "partner", "facilitator", "mobilizer" NGOs/CSOs.

With regard to the active relationship between NGOs/CSOs and organizations of the poor, among the terms that arose were "working together", "building consensus", "guiding but not imposing or dictating", "encouraging the group to move", and "indigenous knowledge in harmony with technology". Clearly again the emphasis is on a side-by-side, hand-in-hand partnership.

MENTORING

Very much in keeping with the above descriptions is the role of NGOs/CSOs as "mentors". Admittedly, the mentor-mentee relationship is more commonly found in the fields of business, law, medicine, politics, the academe, the arts, and even sports—and most often on a one-on-one basis. However, mentoring at the collective level—with one organization as mentor and another as mentee—is also possible.

An NGO or CSO could itself serve as mentor. However, with NGOs and CSOs often being "outsiders" to the community, taking on the mentor role directly could imply a superior-inferior relationship and in fact increase resistance on the part of the mentee-organization. A modified approach could have the

NGO/CSO serving as a facilitator of mentor-mentee link-ups in the community.

One example is the scheme adopted by the Northern Mindanao Community Initiatives and Resource Management Project (NMC, REMP) in the Philippines. As reported by Project Director, Antonio Menor: "We adopted the concept wherein an organization that is based in the *barangay (*village*)* is willing to serve the poorest of the poor (who) cannot be members of the organization because they have their own policies. We tapped them to help oversee the formulation of self-help groups. [The self-help groups are smaller than community institutions.] They will help in the capability-building of these organizations, of these self-help groups. We are not expecting the self-help groups to evolve as another community organization. But these are tools to increase the capability of the poorest of the poor to be members of the existing organization, if they are capable of doing it. Or if they are capable of doing another relation, so that's another dynamic."[61]

Another example was reported by Dang Ngoc Quang, Director of Rural Development Services Center in Vietnam. He related that there are communities in which several established as well as emerging organizations co-exist, each at different stages of development. Leaders of the more mature organizations are asked to conduct training for the younger organizations, serving as trainers and facilitators. They share their experiences, frustrations, successes, failures—in short, their accumulated learnings. Exposure trips to different communes and dis-

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[61] Transcribed notes from SCOPE Workshop plenary sessions and small workshop group discussions, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005.

tricts are organized, followed by discussions of insights gained and lessons learned. The management systems of the more mature organizations are documented and then presented to other CBOs for consideration. The latter study the appropriateness of such systems to their needs, and whether or not these may be effectively adopted.[62]

In this "facilitative" mentoring role, NGOs/CSOs can thus identify and match mentor and mentee organizations from *within* the community itself. With both parties sharing a common environment, facing common challenges, and seeking common goals, it is more likely that the mentee organization will take guidance well from the more mature organization and thereby gain from the latter's experience.

The process of transforming a group into a self-governing, sustainable institution is complex indeed. In cases where the group is already existing in a community, certain inherent capacities—affinity, indigenous knowledge and value systems, traditional institutions—may serve as valuable building blocks for further group growth. In cases where the group is formed through outside intervention, the ways and world view of the community it arises from must likewise be taken into consideration.

In either instance, when the group's size and resources make it poised for entering the next phase of growth, the need suddenly arises for the institutional capacities of organizational and financial management. Meetings must be scheduled and managed, rules and sanctions must be formulated, accurate records must be kept, regular common activities must be held, a leadership selection and replacement scheme must be put in place, training and/or mentoring must be undergone to continually build up the group's capacities.

Aside from such institutional capacities, however, other valuable skills and qualities are built up in the process. These are the less tangible—but nonetheless real and potent—social capacities, sense of achievement, "having a voice", negotiating confidence, and conflict resolution skills that truly give the organization a sense of empowerment.

POINTS for CONSIDERATION by Project Managers:

1. **What are the key elements or features of an "empowered organization"?**

2. **What is the nature or function of a "support organization"? What is the role of NGOs/ CSOs in building & strengthening RPOs?**

3. **"Capacity development" involves much more than just "workshops" or "training". Rather, empowerment requires constant guidance, or *"mentoring"*. What are the crucial functions involved in "mentoring"? What are the essential features of a good and effective "mentor". Who plays this "mentoring" role?**

4. **What is capacity development, when working among indigenous peoples (IPs)? This may require the strengthening of indigenous institutions (ex: tribal systems) especially when working for IP rights and entitlements. Yet, what are the limits in terms of working with existing indigenous institutions & system of leaders?**

5. **As an organization grows stronger, how does its relationship with its mentors and support institutions change or transform over time? What types of institutional relationships have been successful, in this regard? (i.e,, the changing relationship between NGO and RPO)**

6. **How do you evaluate *capacity* development, as opposed to just *organizational* development?**

[62] *Ibid.*

SCALING UP
Forming Coalitions, Federations and Networks of the Poor

SCALING UP: WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT IS DONE

Scaling up, in the light of empowerment of the poor and development, has come to mean "more quality benefits to more people more quickly more equitably more lastingly over a wider geographical area".[63]

The means generally employed to achieve this is through the formation of *coalitions*, *federations*, and *networks*. Scaling up thus signals the entry of organizations of the poor into a higher and broader level of involvement. Linking up organizations of the poor with other organizations and institutions opens up whole new areas of influence, capacity, and access through the complementarity of experience, skills, and contacts that all the member-groups bring with them.

As a result, scaling up through coalitions, federations, and networks provides avenues of empowerment that organizations of the poor would likely never enjoy on their own, such as building common cause, improving bargaining positions, and creating a critical mass to induce change—whether that change is physical (as in building a road) or policy/political (as in policy or institutional reforms).

SCALING UP: WHAT AND HOW?[64]

Power or the ability to influence decisions determines *what* is scaled up in a program or organization. It is often the concerns of the more influential block (being influential not necessarily in terms of number) that gets scaled up. This dominant block could be the policy makers, the aid supporters, the privileged professionals (researchers, scientists, academics, extensionists, etc.) or the local people with the capacity to organize and position themselves strategically. If the overall context of scaling up is bringing development to the poor, then people empowerment is critical to the process. Scaling up just things or innovations (e.g., technologies, processes, principles) without empowering the stakeholder groups—particularly the resource providers—usually results in an unsustainable effort.

The question of *how* scaling up takes place has to do with whether the growth is horizontal or vertical. Horizontal scaling up is *geographical spread* to cover more people and communities, and involves expansion within the same sector or stakeholder group. Others refer to it as a *scaling out* process across geographical boundaries. Achieving geographical spread is also realized through

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[63] Definition arrived at during the workshop organized by the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in the Philippines, April 2000, cited in "Going to Scale: Can we bring more benefits to more people more quickly?" Workshop highlights (Philippines: International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, 2000)

[64] "Going to Scale: Can we bring more benefits to more people more quickly?" Workshop highlights (Philippines: International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, 2000).
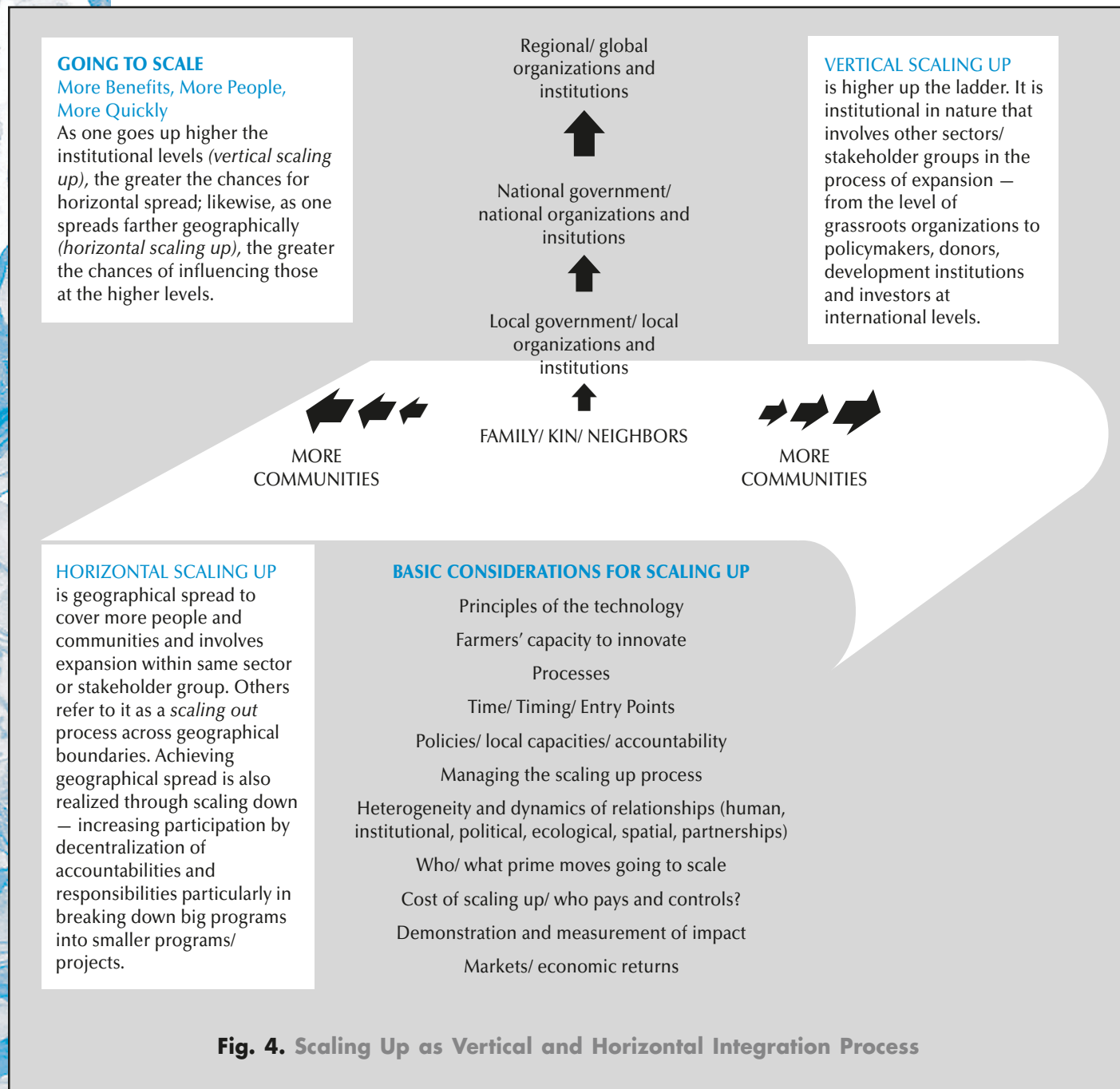
scaling down—increasing participation by decentralization of accountabilities and responsibilities (e.g., breaking down large programs into smaller programs/projects).

Vertical scaling up is *higher up the ladder*. It is institutional in nature in that it involves other sectors/stakeholder groups in the process of expansion—from the level of grassroots organizations to policymakers, donors, development institutions, and investors at international levels.

DIFFERENTIATING COALITIONS, FEDERATIONS, AND NETWORKS

While "official" definitions of coalitions, federations, and networks are likely to be

GOING TO SCALE
More Benefits, More People, More Quickly
As one goes up higher the institutional levels *(vertical scaling up),* the greater the chances for horizontal spread; likewise, as one spreads farther geographically *(horizontal scaling up),* the greater the chances of influencing those at the higher levels.

Regional/ global organizations and institutions

National government/ national organizations and insitutions

Local government/ local organizations and institutions

FAMILY/ KIN/ NEIGHBORS

MORE COMMUNITIES

MORE COMMUNITIES

VERTICAL SCALING UP
is higher up the ladder. It is institutional in nature that involves other sectors/ stakeholder groups in the process of expansion — from the level of grassroots organizations to policymakers, donors, development institutions and investors at international levels.

HORIZONTAL SCALING UP
is geographical spread to cover more people and communities and involves expansion within same sector or stakeholder group. Others refer to it as a *scaling out* process across geographical boundaries. Achieving geographical spread is also realized through scaling down — increasing participation by decentralization of accountabilities and responsibilities particularly in breaking down big programs into smaller programs/ projects.

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCALING UP
Principles of the technology
Farmers' capacity to innovate
Processes
Time/ Timing/ Entry Points
Policies/ local capacities/ accountability
Managing the scaling up process
Heterogeneity and dynamics of relationships (human, institutional, political, ecological, spatial, partnerships)
Who/ what prime moves going to scale
Cost of scaling up/ who pays and controls?
Demonstration and measurement of impact
Markets/ economic returns

Fig. 4. Scaling Up as Vertical and Horizontal Integration Process

found in the literature, common usage would distinguish them in this way:

Coalition — usually a temporary and rather loose alliance of groups held together by a common issue and directed towards achieving defined objectives

Federation — a more formalized alliance of groups, with some structure or hierarchy whereby the smaller units surrender some part of their decision-making to a higher unit (e.g., trade union federations), usually brought together by a general common interest and held together by structures and internal rules

Network — any grouping of individuals or organizations, which, on a voluntary basis, exchange information or undertake joint activities to achieve common objectives in such a way that the individual autonomy of its members is strengthened by the interactive process of networking.

Examples of Coalitions, Federations, and Networks

Elements of the different forms and methods of scaling up *(see box: "Understanding Scaling Up")* come into play when organizations choose to band together into coalitions or federations, or to link up with other like-minded groups through networks.

UNDERSTANDING SCALING UP [65]

The process of scaling up has been seen as taking one or more of the following basic forms: quantitative, functional, political *and* organizational. *(Uvin and Miller) Quantitative scaling up is simply growth or expansion through an increase in the number of people involved in a program or organization. However, where new activities are added to the operational range of the program or organization, this is functional scaling up. The process becomes political when there is a deliberate building of a political power base to further the goals of the program or organization. Going to scale where an organization tries to ensure its sustainability as it grows is organizational scaling up.*

Korten (cited in Uvin and Miller) discusses a different aspect of scaling up through what he calls "third generation" NGOs—with their concern for "bridging the gap between micro and macro" (i.e., quitting the local level) and the desire to attack the (political) root causes of underdevelopment, involving the development of relationships with governments as well as international partnerships.

Bernard Lecomte (cited in Uvin and Miller) writes about different phases in the maturing of self-help organizations—phases mainly characterized by increased capacity to innovate, generate local resources, and improve organizational capacity. His scaling up is a matter of autonomy, self-reliance, and independence.

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1. Coalitions of Primary Groups[66]

In the case of MYRADA in Bangalore, India, for instance, they work with what they call "coalitions of primary groups"—the majority of which are the 9,284 self-help groups

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[65] *Ibid.*

[66] Ramachandran, Vidya, "Coalitions of primary groups", Presentation at SCOPE Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005.

Do's

1. Facilitate the development of the coalition's vision, mission, and goals.

2. Formulate action plans based on the vision, mission, and goals.

3. Conduct periodic assessment of achievements against plans.

4. Facilitate to strengthen organizational features.

5. Circulate meeting minutes to member groups.

6. Ensure responsibility sharing.

7. Have audits conducted and share audit findings for corrective action.

8. Have periodic reaffirmation of the need for the coalition.

9. Establish a revenue model for self-sufficiency.

Don'ts

1. Don't take the responsibility of calling for coalition meetings.

2. Don't host the coalition meetings.

3. Don't hold the documents or write the books of accounts.

4. Don't be a signatory to the coalition bank account.

5. Don't use the coalition to achieve the NGO agenda.

6. Don't get involved in decision-making on behalf of the coalition.

7. Don't pay charges directly to individuals; discuss with the coalition and pay into the coalition account.

8. Don't encourage the coalition to perform any activity that can well be performed by the individual CBOs.

9. Don't encourage the coalition itself to engage in micro-finance activities.

(SHGs) that they have helped form in villages. MYRADA has found it necessary to form such coalitions (or what they also refer to as "federations") of primary groups in order to avoid replication of functions—but not, as they stress, for micro-finance activities.

They link these groups together on two levels: in the form of clusters and through Community Managed Resource Centres. The decision as to which structure is more appropriate is determined by the purpose of the grouping. The primary groups are represented in the coalition by "good" members, possessing conceptual clarity, able to communicate, willing and able to give time, and having a supportive home environment. A regular term for such representatives is prescribed, although the reality is that having a title or position is quite an incentive for representatives to stay on.

From the facilitator's standpoint, the challenge is to balance the necessary interventions of starting up and then strengthening the coalition with the equally necessary "distance" of allowing the member-groups to take on an increasing share of the responsibility for coalition operations *(see box: "Do's and Don'ts of Facilitating a Coalition")*. The specific caution by MYRADA against encouraging coalitions to engage in micro-finance activities may help prevent the risk of member-groups losing sight of their coalition vision and objectives. In many instances, a coalition's common issue for coming together may not have involved saving and lending in the first place,

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[67] *Ibid.*

but may be diverted in this direction once money issues become the focus.

2. COALITION OF IP GROUPS [68]

In the experience of the Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID), the process of scaling up resulted in a national coalition of indigenous peoples (IP) groups called *Katutubong Samahan sa Pilipinas* (KASAPI).

The process began with the objectives of (1) advocating for a change in policy where the rights of indigenous peoples would be recognized by law; and (2) gaining access to resources by securing legal titles over their lands, including traditional waters.

Prior to the start of this initiative for coalition building, what existed were small, organized, but very fragmented, groups of indigenous communities. Participation and policy development were more ornamental than substantive, where the IP groups were asked to sit there, sign attendance sheets, and that was it. When they started raising their hands, they were not listened to. More and more, the educated, sophisticated, and more urbane indigenous peoples leaders dominated the dialogue. Those who knew how to speak English, those who dressed well, those who had the connections were the ones who were always invited to policy dialogues.

Whenever there was an attempt to scale up organizing of indigenous peoples, this was usually initiated by politicians and vested interests outside of IP communities. Therefore, PAFID proceeded to build a broader coalition of indigenous organizations that would provide a voice to communities in the on-going debate and struggle for the enactment of a law that would recognize the rights of IP communities. Recognizing that they could not succeed at this alone, they helped build strategic partnerships with civil society organizations and other progressive entities within government. They engaged government and the private sector in a continuing dialogue to sensitize and educate them on the essence of traditional rights— of what the communities really meant when they said, "We need land security. We need that our rights be recognized."

Among the many challenges they faced were the ideological differences among communities that had to be bridged. Political pressures and interests had to be checked. Cultural differences had to be recognized—with 110 different communities coming from areas with widely differing geographical features—and funding was always short.

After a year-long process of consensus building, a national coalition of indigenous peoples called *Katutubong Samahan sa Pilipinas* (KASAPI) was organized. Founded in 1997 in a national assembly of 140 representatives of indigenous communities, it included 14 regional and subregional federations and about 240 indigenous peoples organizations all over the Philippines.

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[68] de Vera, Dave, "Empowerment of indigenous peoples groups", Presentation at the SCOPE Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005.

KASAPI then embarked on initiatives to further its cause. Its members did direct advocacy, talking to senators and representatives to lobby for the passage of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). They linked with other groups with similar concerns: environmental groups who were also concerned with the areas where indigenous peoples lived, farmers groups who were also concerned with tenure issues, and human rights advocates who were concerned about the continued violations of the rights of indigenous communities.

The result was the passage in 1997 of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). It recognized the rights of ownership of indigenous communities over their ancestral lands and domains, it respected the traditional resource management practices of indigenous communities, and it required that free, prior informed consent be secured from a community prior to the implementation of any project or initiative within areas that are identified as traditional territories.

COALITIONS OF THE POOR AND THE RICH: A Special Case

There are projects in which both the poor and the rich gain by agreeing on, and delivering, a strategy. There are also examples where the poor have benefited by uniting with some of the rich in a coalition to raise their income. Whatever the options for the poor to enrich themselves by influencing institutions, the crucial issue is how institutions, initially controlled by the rich and strong, can be run mainly in the interests of the majority who are poor…In such cases, much depends on whether the poor use their resources and power jointly, or are divided by distance, caste, ethnic group or gender. [69]

After the passage of the IPRA, KASAPI was given direct participation in the drafting of the implementing rules and regulations of the law, with most of the group's major recommendations being adopted. Many of the KASAPI elders were also appointed as commissioners of the office that was going to implement the law that they had lobbied for. In a span of five years, 26 titles covering 847,000 hectares of land, were granted, as well as 125 recognition certificates and 37 community forest management agreements.

Several important lessons were learned from this experience. First among them was that very high expectations of partners and members are difficult to meet. When the coalition was organized, everyone had very high expectations. But once the momentum had slowed down, these expectations were not met. Another major lesson was that there was limited readiness and capacity of the traditional indigenous leaders to adjust to their new role as government policy makers and implementors. They were not ready for the transition from being a community leader, then an advocate, then entering a totally different world, to be a policy maker.

The growth of the coalition was not matched by the capacity of the coalition to manage itself. The size of the coalition made it unwieldy and affected its dynamism and ability to respond. Acceptance and understanding of the rights-based law was not easy and this affected partnerships with other sectors. Many of the coalition partners started drifting away when they saw that their in-

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[69] IFAD, *Assessment of Rural Poverty: Asia and the Pacific*, 2002, p. 121.

terests might be affected by the IPRA. Farmers groups were worried that traditional territories might cover agrarian reform lands. Environmental groups became concerned that the indigenous peoples' newly-legislated power would affect conservation projects. In fact, there was a break between those who were promoting protected areas and the indigenous peoples because the latter refused to have anything to do with the protected area system.

As a result, KASAPI adopted a new role and function to accommodate new needs. In effect, it *scaled down* instead of scaling up, because it was clear that the main objective of the coalition had been met. However, new needs and challenges continue to arise. So KASAPI agreed to serve as a "watchdog" for the implementation of the law, rather than continuing as a huge coalition. It has adjusted its structure and processes to optimize resources, scaling down to a more manageable size for cost efficiency and effectiveness. From a huge coalition of indigenous communities, it now maintains a small secretariat that does the work of watching over the implementation of the law and disseminating information.

3. VILLAGE-CLUSTER WOMEN'S NETWORKS AND FEDERATIONS [70]

In the case of SAMARTHAN—a development organization assisting women SHGs to influence local governance institutions in Madhya Pradesh, India—the process of group development has been designed keeping institutional linkages in mind. Primarily two sets of interrelationships have been employed for greater impact and sustainability. The groups have federated at their own level to form clusters and large-scale federations on the one hand; while, on the other hand, they have been linked to permanent constitutional institutions of elected local bodies. Thus, the groups have been able to impact upon the domination of larger institutions, while maintaining their identity even after project completion.

The SHGs served by SAMARTHAN have been federated as Cluster Associations comprised of groups within an area of 8 to 10 villages. The formation of clusters has led to the development of networks amongst different groups and provided them an opportunity to share their experiences with groups in other villages that have similar concerns.

A *cluster,* as defined, involves an area that would require a member to commute a maximum distance of three to five kilometers to and from cluster meetings. Thus, office bearers of the groups, along with one ordinary member of each group, could easily attend such meetings. Meetings of the cluster associations are also held by rotation in the different villages for the convenience of the members. Usually held once in two months or once in a quarter, such meetings primarily address larger management issues of the SHGs as well as identify agenda for collective action.

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[70] Kumar, Shrdha, "Influence of women self help groups in grassroot self governance institutions in the State of Madhya Pradesh in India", Presentation at SCOPE Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005.

Supportive youth groups or *Kishori* (adolescent girls) groups are also found in many villages, complementing the efforts of the main groups in fulfillment of the cluster's larger objectives. For instance, teenage girls of one group helped in teaching and enhancing the literacy of the group members.

Many of the SHG members have also become members of the standing committee of the Village Panchayat. These inter-linkages have not only resulted in sustainable impact and life for the clusters, but have also contributed significantly in bringing about transparency and accountability in local self-governance institutions.

EFFECTS OF FEDERATING GROUPS

➢ *The field worker is able to provide minimum support in time of emergencies by attending cluster meetings. Therefore, the groups do not suffer due to withdrawal of regular support.*

➢ *The inter-group experience sharing has succeeded in tapping the resources of different groups to help each other.*

➢ *Being a larger entity, the federation is able to function as a strong pressure group on district administration and higher tiers of governance institutions.*

➢ *The federated groups are able to engage large banking institutions to give large sums as loans for economic activities.*

➢ *The federation is able to put pressure on the defaulting members for timely recovery of loans.*

—SAMARTHAN

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4. NETWORKS ON CBNRM

In the experience of livestock herder communities in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia[71], links among various groups and sectors were initiated through community-based experience sharing. One community center that became a model in the region was established by local herder women in the Middle Beauty Mountains (Bayan Bag, Bayandalai Soum, South Gobi Province). These women felt that a "mobile community center" would serve their needs better than a meeting house in the *bag* (smallest administrative and territorial unit) center, as they had to care for small livestock as well as their children in the summer camp sites. Their response was the formation of a mobile community center that traveled with them as they moved to new pastures. The center and the community group, named *"Shine Ireedui"* ("New Future"), thus became a hub for organizational development and learning.

The success of the group—in particular the completion of a resource use contract with local authorities—led to numerous exchanges for experience sharing. Individuals and groups from the region began to visit the herder community to learn about their processes of organizational development, their community norms, their planning and implementation of communal activities and natural resource management, and their cooperation with government and other organizations. In time, even district governors and other

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[71] Schmidt, Sabine, Altanchimeg Ch., and Narangerel Yansanjav. "People-centered conservation and poverty reduction in Mongolia's Southern Gobi Region," Presentation at SCOPE Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005.

officials came to undergo training with the community organization.

Beyond the local level, linkages were likewise formed at the national and international level. Representatives of livestock herder communities have participated in a number of international events, sharing their experiences with pastoralists from many countries. Such participation has enabled them to form alliances to promote the role of mobile pastoralists in conservation and to advocate extensive livestock husbandry as a modern management strategy for dry lands. The experience of common concerns and experiences has empowered participants to articulate their concerns more effectively and to foresee challenges that may lie ahead.

For herders in Mongolia, currently faced with the issue of intensive versus extensive livestock husbandry and changes in tenure of pasture land, these international experiences may prove crucial in advocating enabling policies to maintain pastoral livelihoods and rational management of arid lands through mobility. International linkages have thus added another dimension to the empowerment of people to develop their own institutions and set their own development agenda.

KEY ISSUES FOR FEDERATIONS

In a paper that emerged out of a MYRADA Staff Workshop held in May 1999 on the subject of federations—or 'apex bodies' as

SOME PRACTICAL PROBLEMS FOR NETWORKS[72]

Networks without clear objectives find it difficult to develop dynamic, monitorable programs, with distinct targets that can be met.

Networks can easily become dominated by particular organizations, individuals and interest groups. Members in small organizations close to the reality of existing problems may be less influential within the network than the well-educated, confident and perhaps intimidating staff of resource-rich agencies and international institutions.

Centralization can occur when a network coordinator, secretariat, steering committee or network board starts to run the network for its own sake rather than facilitating the activities of its members.

Networks may have insufficient funds for network activities and coordination. On the other hand, when networks have funds, their allocation and administration can generate tension.

While networks can disseminate valuable information, an atmosphere of questioning and self-criticism is required. Otherwise networks could end up sharing information of dubious reliability.

Competition from networks or organizations with overlapping agendas should lead to creative collaboration but can also cause competition for recognition, limited resources and membership.

Assessing the impact of networks is difficult. Their influence on members, policy makers and the public may be profound yet of a general nature (enhanced awareness of problems, improved communications, increased motivation, more relevant discussion of issues, etc.).

There can be political constraints to the operation of national and international networks, especially where information exchange and criticism of government policy is unwelcome.

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[72] Starkey, Paul, "Working together for refugees: The value of network collaboration", Animal Traction Development and University of Reading, United Kingdom.

they used to be known in MYRADA—the following key issues for federations of SHGs were discussed [73]:

RATIONALE FOR FEDERATIONS

Federations need to be seen as institutions in their own right and not merely as a replacement for MYRADA. Therefore, the acceptable reasons for promoting federations are:

1. For strengthening SHGs through providing a forum for regular interaction and networking;
2. For information dissemination to SHGs; and
3. For undertaking such activities that benefit the SHGs and communities but cannot be taken up by individual SHGs on their own.

FEDERATION ACTIVITIES

In order for a federation to be a functional and sustainable institution, its activities should be concrete, interesting, and useful to the SHGs and communities, including:

1. Regular review of the functioning of member SHGs
2. Strengthening of SHGs through ideas, suggestions, visits, exposures, audits, training, etc.
3. Collection and dissemination of relevant, useful, and interesting information to SHGs (at monthly meetings, through newsletters, etc.)

4. Taking up activities beneficial to member SHGs & communities
5. Engaging in activities that strengthen the federations themselves

Federations should not be encouraged to take on such functions that the individual SHGs could perform on their own.

FEDERATION SIZE

Based on MYRADA's experiences with federations, it was decided that:

1. Only federations with a membership of not less than 10 and not more than 20 SHGs would be encouraged.
2. Federations that were already in existence and had more than 20 SHGs as members would not be broken down unless absolutely necessary.
3. If necessary, higher-level federations (i.e., federations of federations) could be promoted at a later date.

The reasons for keeping the federations to a maximum of 20 SHGs was a management decision taken with a view to ensure maximum participation through keeping the size and scale of activities manageable.

FEDERATION MEMBERSHIP

Membership in a federation is open to groups that have the features of SHGs *(see box: Key Features of SHGs)* and have functioned as SHGs for at least 6 months prior to joining

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[73] Ramachandran, Vidya (ed.), "A concept paper on federations of self-help groups", resulting from a MYRADA Staff Workshop, May 1999

the federation. Prospective member-SHGs should attend federation meetings for six months as observers before being granted membership. Other SHGs (not necessarily promoted by MYRADA) are welcome, subject to the same conditions above.

FEDERATION FUND-RAISING

Federations require funds to meet their operating costs. Even with a limited range of activities, they still need money to open a bank account; purchase books of accounts, files, stationery, etc.; pay a bookkeeper; host tea for members at federation meetings; meet travel expenses; and so on. They must be strongly encouraged to meet such expenses out of their own funds, which may be raised through:

1. Membership/admission fees as a one-time payment from member SHGs
2. Monthly contributions from member SHGs; a fixed amount to be collected each month
3. Fines from member SHGs for violations of rules, etc.
4. Bank interest earned on the account of the federation
5. Donations from any source
6. Contributions from other institutions for programs within the scope of the federation's objectives
7. Service charges (when the federation's services are used for any work)
8. Income earned from any income-generating program taken up by the federation

FEDERATION TRAINING

At the SHG level: One training session per SHG for all SHG members on the concept of federations, roles of federations, and their

> **KEY FEATURES OF SHGs**
>
> ➢ Stable and voluntary membership of 20 members or less
> ➢ Regular meetings attended by all members
> ➢ Regular savings by all members
> ➢ Building up of Common Fund
> ➢ Bank account in the name of the group
> ➢ Credit transactions from the Common Fund
> ➢ Maintenance of books and documents
> ➢ Rules and regulations for proper governance
> ➢ Rotation of leadership roles
> ➢ "Credit-plus" roles

own roles as members. *At the federation level:* 3 to 4 training programs attended by all federation level representatives on key topics related to the efficient functioning of federations.

FEDERATION CREDIBILITY AND LEGITIMACY

In order to be sustainable, a federation should establish credibility and legitimacy for itself not only in the eyes of member SHGs but also in the community through the following means:

1. Attaining the features of an organization (vision and mission, organizational and financial management systems, organizational accountability, linkages, learning and evaluation systems)
2. Showing good results in relation to objectives
3. Building good relations with as many institutions as possible

➢ **What are the bases for scaling up & linking up RPOs?**

- **Business & marketing arrangements; reduction of costs**

- **Need to negotiate with external agencies using common political platforms for advocacy on issues and rights**

- **To undertake projects that need economies of scale**

- **To manage a common resource**

- **For capital build-up & to increase bargaining power**

- **For social & personal security; enforcement of rules**

- **To build collective self-reliance**

➢ **What factors determine the readiness of RPOs to coalesce into federations and networks? What are the guidelines for clustering RPOs, building "common cause," and establishing federations? What are the entry points? When and how does one start building coalitions and federations?**

➢ **As coalitions of the poor are created, what new competencies are required, and who provides these? What are the requirements for both *management* and *leadership*?**

➢ **How do you *structure* a coalition, so that individual members maintain interest, a sense of ownership, and control over the coalition?**

➢ **The power of a coalition can also be problematic. As it grows in membership and strength, the coalition becomes increasingly attractive to politicians, ideological groups, political parties and various interest groups that often entice the coalition or its leaders to take on their causes. What are the experiences in this regard? How can a coalition stay true to its course and purpose without being seduced by offers of money and power?**

➢ **We often see the need for "coalitions of the poor" mainly in their advocacy and political roles. What are the experiences in mobilizing coalitions for *strengthening livelihoods* and for *economic empowerment*?**

Scaling up refers to the enlargement of scope, reach and effectivity of organizations of the poor to participate, negotiate, change and hold accountable the institutions that affect their well-being. It primarily involves development interventions that *link up primary groups with each other in coalitions and federations* – in order to create common cause, address common challenges, create political space, increase the poor's bargaining power, access resources more effectively and mobilize around resource and asset rights. It may also involve initiatives that *build partnerships and networks with support groups and sectors*, in order to address common issues and needs.

BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
Working with Other Groups

In order for organizations of the poor to achieve impact in addressing such far-reaching and fundamental issues as food security, poverty reduction and environmental concerns, different sets of partners are needed. Too frequently, organizations get involved as individual entities in efforts to try and solve complex problems. As in networking, partnerships can help people and organizations to exchange information and experiences, to share knowledge and skills that would be hard to achieve through independent action, and to cooperate with those outside their immediate working environment.[74]

DISTINGUISHING PARTNERSHIPS FROM NETWORKS

Networks refer to any group of individuals or organizations, which, on a voluntary basis, exchange information or undertake joint activities to achieve common objectives in such a way that the individual autonomy of its members is strengthened by the interactive process of networking. Networking can be an extremely valuable and cost-effective mechanism for stimulating interaction, sharing information, strengthening professional support and raising awareness.

Partnerships, on the other hand, can be defined as mutually beneficial associations between organizations with *complementary* areas of expertise. Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly marked out. Partnerships facilitate continuous two-way learning and are based on trust, shared vision, and commitment to common objectives, the outcomes of which are difficult for each to reach alone.[75]

PARTNERSHIPS BASED ON COMPLEMENTARY EXPERTISE

Partnerships are forged on the basis of complementary expertise and activities among the linked organizations. Thus, different partnership types arise in response to the areas in which RPOs are weak or are lacking in capacity, such as:

1. Partnerships on agri-technology
2. Partnerships on marketing
3. Partnerships on community-based natural resource management (CBNRM)
4. Partnerships on local governance

RPOs thus link up with institutional partners in order to mediate their access to such capacities as: business and marketing arrange-

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[74] De Haveskercke, Caroline Jacquet, "Scaling-out agroforestry through partnerships and networking: The experience of and the way forward for the World Agroforestry Centre in Southern Africa," April 2004

[75] *Ibid.*

ments; reduction of costs; negotiation with external agencies using common political platforms for advocacy on issues and rights; economies of scale; management of a common resource; capital build-up and increased bargaining power; social and personal security; enforcement of rules; and building of collective self-reliance.

A PARTNERSHIP ON AGRI-TECHNOLOGY:

THE "LANDCARE TRIANGLE"[77]

In the mid-1990s in the southern Philippine region of Mindanao, soil degradation was among the urgent environmental issues associated with agricultural development. Thus, an approach known as Landcare drew interest as a means of enhancing the development, dissemination and adoption of appropriate conservation farming measures.

Landcare was an approach for mobilizing collective action by local communities to deal with land degradation and natural resource management issues. It was a grassroots initiative based on a *three-way partnership* of farmers, local government units (LGU), and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)—later referred to as the "landcare triangle".

One Landcare pilot-project involved the propagation of "natural vegetative strips" (NVS) as a form of low-cost conservation farming in

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[76] *Ibid.*

[77] Catacutan, Delia, Ph.D., "Scaling up through partnerships: The case of Landcare in the Philippines", Presentation at the SCOPE Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005.

the municipality of Claveria in north-central Mindanao. The initial uptake of NVS encouraged ICRAF to examine how public sector research and extension institutions could develop more effective techniques to diffuse the NVS technology rapidly to a large number of interested farmers. With increasing demand for training in soil conservation technologies, ICRAF established a partnership with the municipal government to set up the Contour Hedgerow Extension Team (CHET) in 1996, comprising a trained farmer, an agricultural technician, and an ICRAF staff member.

In late 1996, a number of trained farmers agreed to form a municipal-wide group which was given the name, Claveria Landcare Association (CLCA). The CLCA then proceeded to set up community Landcare groups in the villages and sub-villages of Claveria to help promote NVS. Given this initial success, Landcare was scaled up in other sites using different modes.

CHALLENGES FACED

A flexible approach was taken in the introduction of Landcare in the study sites, with different modes of scaling up being used to adapt to specific conditions. However, it was difficult to juggle the compromises and tradeoffs between process and outcomes, especially where Landcare involved both technical and institutional innovations. For instance, the promoted technologies were more easily adopted than was the Landcare process itself because they were less complex

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TYPES OF PARTNERS[78]

Different types of collaborating organizations can be identified. However, the three main partner categories are government organizations (GOs), non-government organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs). The table below shows how partner contributions in scaling-out vary, based on the experience of the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF):

Type of Partner	Partner Contribution	ICRAF Contribution[*]
GO	infrastructure executive power personnel	operational funds
NGO	grassroots level organization personnel operational funds practical feedback	institution building empowerment
CBO	land labor time indigenous knowledge	compensations organizational support empowerment

[*]ICRAF contribution provided in addition to the core services—provision of information, knowledge, networking, germplasm and capacity building—to make collaboration more effective

GOs—The government is often a priority partner because GOs are part of a permanent structure. Governments usually have many skilled people. And they often have good networks with regard to enabling entry at the community level. It is thus crucial to include them as partners to increase the likelihood that the project will be sustainable. Issues in working with GOs include often complex working relationships, hierarchical institutional and managerial set-up, top-down planning and implementation, and lack of operational funds.

NGOs—Most NGOs consider empowering the poor as a major goal and objective. They engage the poor in capacity-building activities as a major component in their programs and projects. They deem active participation by the poor as an essential precondition to their empowerment—participation not only in the implementation of programs and projects, but also in their conception, design, monitoring and evaluation.

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[78] Ibid.

and easier to implement. Implementation was met with a myriad of issues including political conflict, leadership, participation, and

sustainability issues. Even so, the overall outcomes were impressive.

OUTCOMES

The most important outcome was the improvement of human and social capital, enabling farmers to adopt conservation technologies and agroforestry practices with foreseeable improvements in natural and financial capital. It regenerated the culture of volunteerism and cooperation among farmers, and fostered community participation.

For ICRAF, the resources used in implementing Landcare were more technical or human, rather than financial. Although the latter was important, the fiscal cost was cut down significantly through consolidation of gains, decentralizing training at the farmer level, and testing different modes of scaling up. The different modes showed that ICRAF's cost of scaling up per site was significantly reduced, with local partners sharing the overall cost of implementation.

From the point of view of an external agency, implementing indirect impact activities through "partners" was a cost-effective approach for scaling up. Thus, a combination of direct and indirect impact activities could be promoted as a two-pronged approach for scaling up.

LESSONS LEARNED

Based on the Landcare experience, some generalizations could be made about the preconditions for successful scaling up:

➢ First, a set of widely adoptable technologies (in this case, NVS) would be desirable for effective scaling up. Where a

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NGOs are recognized for their role in developing new initiatives, new approaches and new mechanisms to address development problems and issues. Many NGOs have a generally flexible organizational structure and characteristics—organizational independence, participatory structures and willingness to spend time and other resources on dialogue and learning. They frequently have a history of working in specific communities, possessing extensive knowledge of local conditions. Their relationships with local communities are broad and deep; and a strong sense of mutual trust and respect has been established.

NGOs are often able to reach segments of rural populations that governments neglect or do not target as a priority. They find their way into remote rural areas; they identify the poorest segments of communities; they deliberately seek out those who are generally excluded from development processes because of their isolation, their lack of assets and their vulnerability.

For most NGOs, partnership is based on the geographical areas where they operate, thematic interest or complementarity of activities.

CBOs—Finally, vital in collaboration is direct interaction with community-based organizations—e.g., farmer(s) groups, carrying out trials and training farmers, since this is the only opportunity for direct client consultation, and in order to build local ownership, capacities and sustainability. Through farmer feedback, the quality of services can continuously improve.

The advantages of directly training farmers (farmer-trainers)—whereby these farmers are expected to pass on their knowledge to other farmers—are manifold: farmers know the environment, people and culture, the information dissemination modes used are more appropriate and accessible to farmers, the number of intermediaries is cut, the knowledge and expertise will essentially remain within the community, and usually low costs are involved. Disadvantages are problems of representativeness of farmers, mobility, and quality assurance.

proven technology is absent, a locally adapted technology could well be a starting point.

➢ Second, it appeared that Landcare succeeded in areas where farmers were wholly focused on farming, conservation efforts were promoted and supported, and farmers were not affected by rapid economic change. However, where these conditions are absent, Landcare could potentially expand its scope to include NRM-based livelihood options, industry-based strategies and foster private sector support.

➢ Third, Landcare had better prospects where local politics were stable, allowing the Landcare triangle to prosper. However, in cases where LGU support is limited or where the political situation is hostile, a committed and highly competent external agency is an essential ingredient, offsetting the immediate need for LGU support.

➢ Fourth, and in connection with the above, a highly competent external agency proved desirable, not only for offsetting the weakness of the LGU, but also for providing the necessary technical expertise and longer-term presence to explore different strategies and adopt a step-wise development approach. However, this requires high institutional competencies that might be uncommon even with experienced NGOs and with other research and development (R&D) institutions.

➢ Fifth, an initial level of human and social capital is desirable, but is not essential for scaling up, as Landcare in-

LESSONS IN SCALING UP THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS [79]

Partnership with rural poor organizations (RPOs) could be formed on the bases that:

➢ *The problems/issues they face are becoming a common concern. RPOs and external agencies are both concerned about private and public goods/benefits*

➢ *Development goal is broad, encompassing myriad of sectoral/societal goals*

➢ *The resources available are often limited—the need for resource-sharing*

➢ *Interventions have higher chances of success when RPOs are regarded as partners than as passive recipients of interventions*

➢ *Partnerships have spread or spill-over effects, e.g., scaling up the impacts*

➢ *Shift in development thinking from instrumental participation to transformative participation*

Such partnerships should be based on mutual understanding that:

➢ *The program/intervention has a perceived value to RPOs and to supporting institutions; that is, a common good is desired.*

➢ *The program/intervention is relevant and urgently needed, and needs to be prioritized, otherwise, the consequence is posing threats to life and the environment.*

➢ *The costs of producing outcomes, though not always equal, can be shared by all actors. There is an opportunity to share benefits.*

➢ *Partnership is built around "complementation" rather than "competition". There is sufficient trust among the partners.*

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[79] *Ibid.*

SOME ISSUES IN SCALING UP THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS [80]:

➢ requires high transaction cost especially during the initial years

➢ requires on-going facilitation, coordination and nurturing, and interpersonal skills on the part of the facilitator

➢ has no exact recipe—relies on effective working and personal relationships

➢ easily dissipate when partners do not realize the benefits

➢ easily disintegrate when the initial objective of the partnership is already achieved

➢ there are "free-riders" and "bed-fellows" in partnerships

➢ they must be recognized so that appropriate strategies are devised to encourage active involvement.

MECHANISMS FOR SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIPS:

➢ Joint planning to define roles and responsibilities, level-off expectations, and identify deliverables and needed resources

➢ Maintaining an open communication and effective feedback mechanism—maintain connectivity

➢ Establishing regular meetings, and apply consistency in monitoring and follow up of actions

➢ Acknowledging success and partners' contribution

➢ Building partners as team-players (include teambuilding for, and among project partners)

The most important thing to consider, however, is the use of simple, working mechanisms and the reputation, confidence, competency and track record of the lead partner in order to gain respect and trust among its partners.

volved investments for maintenance and expansion of human and social capital within a sensible timeframe.

➢ Finally, effective training, communication, and facilitation are essential ingredients for scaling up, without which the essence of farmer-based extension embodied in the Landcare approach would be difficult to achieve and maintain.

A PARTNERSHIP FOR MARKET ACCESS:

GETTING CBES TO MARKET[81]

A common outcome of community development efforts is what are known as community-based enterprises (CBEs)—businesses anchored within the community, owned and managed by people's organizations, and engaged in the trade or processing of local raw materials.

Frequently set up as a result of either an abundance of a local raw material or the introduction of a technology for processing a local material, the focus and orientation of these businesses are primarily *production*-based. In some cases, the business was a result of rights advocacy, where the emphasis was on the community's right to have a living rather than on tapping a promising opportunity. As a result, many CBEs fail to gain the perspective of seeing their business vis-à-vis the market or the industry it belongs

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[80] *Ibid.*

[81] Guarin, Rene, "Managing the value chain of community-based enterprises: Providing affordable access to technology, resources, and markets", Presentation at the SCOPE Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005.

to. Hence, their inability to grow and operate beyond the project period of the development programs that initiated them.

Without proper understanding of and access to the markets most suited to their products, many CBEs achieve very limited success. This was the case for two Philippine CBEs: the Pecuaria Development Cooperative Inc., a farmers' cooperative that is the major producer of Healthy Rice; and the Kalahan Educational Foundation Inc., an IP community-based producer of Mt. Fresh Jams and Jellies. To help establish effective links with the appropriate markets, these groups forged a partnership with the Upland Marketing Foundation, Inc. (UMFI).

INTERVENTIONS

UMFI's approach is to manage the value-chain of its partner CBEs, like Pecuaria and Kalahan, as a means to provide a holistic and appropriate set of interventions that will allow them to enter, survive and thrive in the market.

Links with business resources — Recognizing that access to markets, technology and financial resources—while available—is often too costly for them, the CBEs rely on UMFI to act as their conduit to these resources. A similar problem of access poses a marketing predicament for the CBEs wherein their distance, scale of operations, limited experience, and lack of expertise work against them. UMFI applies the strategy of consolidation to address this situation.

Links with consumers —The CBEs are able to reach consumers through the promotional and advertising activities that UMFI engages in. For example, the foundation co-sponsors

activities of consumer groups that would be potential buyers of its partners' products: World Food Day, World Fair Trade celebrations, exhibits and trade fairs. The UMFI website features information about its partner CBEs' products and, more importantly, about the communities that produce them.

Support services — With UMFI spreading costs among the different CBEs it assists, communities are able to identify the right products, develop their quality, and improve their look and market appeal without having to shoulder the sizable expenses that this would normally entail. For instance, CBEs can have UMFI help them identify and develop new products, conduct market research for potential products, and pre-purchase packaging materials and replacement parts that the CBEs can then purchase from UMFI in small quantities or as needed.

'Investing' in its partners — Communities may acquire market information through UMFI, without incurring any up-front expense. Instead, UMFI projects to recover its acquisition costs through the margins generated from future marketing activities of new products. Similarly, CBEs may also access new processing technology and equipment through UMFI. To ensure affordability of such technology and equipment, UMFI links up with other groups or outsources services to other suppliers, both public and private, that are better equipped for the job.

CHALLENGES FACED

The **payment system** is one of the biggest challenges faced by the CBEs, through UMFI. When the enterprises are just starting, the volume of trade is manageable so that the CBEs can be paid in cash or within 15 days

by UMFI. However, as the businesses grow and volume transactions balloon, UMFI has to ask the CBEs for credit terms (up to 60 days). The supermarket outlets, however, normally pay for their purchases in 90 days or more. This has led to major tension between UMFI and the suppliers—mostly farmer groups unused to being paid in "terms". To address this situation, UMFI recently requested financial intermediaries (NGOs and cooperative banks) to explore opening a credit line for its suppliers.

Product quality is another major challenge that the CBEs face. UMFI conducts talks and guided business transactions on the importance of maintaining quality. Once a quality standard has been agreed upon, UMFI returns any delivered products that do not meet the agreed standards—and the CBEs must accept the consequent losses. This requires open communication and continuous feedback between UMFI and the community, plus constant monitoring at the community level to ensure that agreed systems are followed.

Balancing weak and "champion" products — To help the weaker products of its partner-CBEs survive, UMFI has developed the concept of "champion products"—high quality, saleable products supplied by bigger and more stable groups. It is these champion products that generate the real income, providing the stability for the marketing or business activity to devote more time and effort to taking in more weak products and gradually upgrading them over time.

LESSONS LEARNED

Partnering with an entity like UMFI gives the CBEs firsthand experience in the relatively new concept of *businesslike*—as distinct from *benevolent*–community development. As UMFI Managing Director Rene Guarin puts it, "Business is more than just about rights of communities, but more realistically about opportunities and efficiencies."

Ruthless as this may seem, UMFI's partner-CBEs have come to realize that consistently good quality and efficiency of operations are vital for their survival. For its part, UMFI believes that accommodating poor quality and inefficiency would make the businesses weak in the face of real competition, thereby shortchanging the very communities that stand to benefit. Thus, the CBE-UMFI partnership phases the communities through the challenges and rigors of becoming competitive because of the conviction that, ultimately, being businesslike *is* being benevolent.

A PARTNERSHIP ON CBNRM:

INVOLVING THE ACADEME[82]

The coastal waters of Bolinao, Pangasinan in northern Philippines were a haven for abundant marine species until the early 1970s. However, the mid-1970s onward saw the

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[82] Capistrano, Robert Charles G., "Gleaning from lessons learned in Community-based Coastal Resource Management in Bolinao, Pangasinan, Philippines", Haribon Foundation, Presentation at the SCOPE Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005

onset of fishing problems that led to a gradual decline in the fish harvest and, eventually, poverty in the surrounding community.

This situation prevailed until 1995, when a community-based coastal resource management (CBCRM) program was launched by three partner institutions. These were the University of the Philippines–Marine Science Institute (UP–MSI), UP–College of Social Work and Community Development (UP–CSWCO), and the Haribon Foundation. This project was supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). As the lead agency, UP-MSI handled the biophysical research and natural resource management component while UP-CSWCD focused on pioneering livelihood projects in the community. With its in-depth experience in working with coastal communities in establishing marine protected areas (MPAs), Haribon was tasked with community organizing, advocacy and mobilization activities.

At the start of the project, most of the fisherfolk communities in Bolinao did not understand the purpose of the CBCRM initiative. The main interest of those who attended the community meetings was the financial gain they might derive from participating in the activities. After various consultations and meetings conducted by the CBCRM staff, a fisherfolk organization called SAMMABAL was formed in barangay Balingasay, Bolinao, Pangasinan.

SAMMABAL has since embarked on a number of other projects, including capacity building activities such as basic ecology seminars, environmental law training, leadership and team building. Other educational activities for the members have included livelihood training and cross visits to other com-

munity-based marine protected areas. Lessons learned from these trainings and exposures have increased environmental awareness within the organization toward the establishment of a marine sanctuary in Balingasay.

SAMMABAL, together with the CBCRM staff, worked on the processing of the MPA. The people's organization (PO) secured an endorsement letter for the Barangay Council to obtain financial help from the Lingayen Gulf Coastal Area Management Commission (LGCAMC). The funds were used for the construction of buoys and the purchase of other materials. The PO then obtained a certificate from the municipal mayor confirming the completion of public hearings for the MPA and its impending approval. With these papers, SAMMABAL was granted a loan by the LGCAMC in December 1997. At the same time, the MPA was formally launched by a simple ceremonial positioning of buoys.

The CBCRM project, which started in 1995 and ended in 1997, resulted in the formation of five POs in the area. These POs have since merged to form a federation known as KAISAKA.

One major undertaking of KAISAKA was opposing the construction of a cement plant in Bolinao. With the technical assistance of the CBCRM staff, the organization coordinated with the members of the Movement for Bolinao Concerned Citizens, Inc. (MBCCI), and other fisherfolk organizations established under the CBCRM program. Various stakeholders embarked on mass actions such as rallies, consultations with the community, public hearings, and dialogues with concerned agencies like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to

voice their concern against the construction of the cement plant. These actions went from the local to the national level, leading to the closure of the proposed project. Eventually, the environmental advocacy of various stakeholders in the area paved the way for the passage of a Coastal Development Plan.

A Partnership on Local Governance:

Building Tripartism[83]

The citizens of Naga City in the Philippines had long had a reputation for civic-spiritedness and active involvement in the affairs of their city. Thus it was not surprising that, in the early 1990s, a logical outgrowth of this was the formalization of a partnership on local government concerns and issues. Specifically, this was a partnership—termed "tripartism"—between and among stakeholders from the Local Government Unit (LGU; i.e., the city government), people's organizations (POs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in that city that had begun in 1989. Built up on the basis of mutual trust and respect among the government, NGOs and POs, this was the fruit of painstaking organizing processes and advocacy work by the POs and NGOs.

Outcomes

In 1995, an ordinance initiating a system for a partnership in local governance between the City Government and the People of Naga was passed, as a result of the intensive campaign of the Naga City NGO-PO Council (later called the Naga City People's Council). One of the major pillars of this Council was the Naga City Urban Poor Federation (NCUPF).

Advocacy for the Urban Poor — A force to reckon with in the local governance sphere, the urban poor federation was joined in its lobbying efforts by other sectors, POs and NGOs within and outside the city. One result was the Peace Agenda of Nagueños, drafted by these coalitions, which included calls for the urban poor's right to security of land tenure and basic social services. In addition, alliances with officials of different government agencies helped pass pro-urban poor laws and facilitated the implementation of these laws.

The good relations between local officials and the technical personnel of the city government, on the one hand, and the federation and the urban poor communities on the other created a conducive and harmonious environment for effective and efficient partnership. Among the tangible results of this were: the creation of special bodies (e.g., housing boards), projects, and consultative channels in which all three parties participated. The Naga City Socialized Program for Empowerment and Economic Development (Naga SPEED) provided for consultative channels, such as multi-sectoral meetings, *barangay* consultative meetings, and an expanded Development Council.

The *Kaantabay sa Kauswagan* (Partner for Development) was another government-PO-NGO program initiated, whose name clearly de-

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[83] Vicente-Angeles, Jocelyn G. and France C. Clavecillas, "Community organizing and tripartism: The Bicol experience", COPE Foundation

clared that the poor are partners for, rather than a hindrance to, progress. The program included the delivery of basic infrastructure and services, a campaign against forcible demolition of urban poor homes, the provision of relocation sites for those who were displaced and the strengthening of urban poor participation in local governance. It also institutionalized problem-solving mechanisms through dialogues between government, NGOs, community groups, and private landowners.

The Naga City Urban Poor Federation grew to a total of 57 affiliated community organizations. It became one of the pillars of the Bicol Urban Poor Coordinating Council (BUPCC), a confederation of urban poor federations from the cities and major municipalities of the Bicol Region. Activities of the confederation ranged from consultation-dialogues with concerned housing agencies, fora, symposia, educational campaigns, meetings, mobilizations, and lobbying to resolve the urban poor issues in the Region.

Support groups of the urban poor sector also organized themselves into a network of NGOs and academic institutions, called the Bicol Urban Poor Colloquium (BUPC). The objective of the network was to improve the government's land and housing programs through activities ranging from legal (court litigation) and para-legal education, exploring alternative financing schemes, and community development. A partnership with Aquinas University and Bicol University was developed, with students of Architecture and Engineering providing technical services to

THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION[84]

Collaboration—whether through partnerships or networks—can provide persistent and wide-ranging benefits. On the other hand, scaling-out can have serious disadvantages: high costs in terms of time and other resources; and high risks: compromised impact depending on partnership priorities, sometimes limited geographical reach because of partners' preferences for certain areas, and loss of identity when having to compromise too much, to mention but a few.

On balance, though, the advantages of collaborating outweigh the disadvantages:

1. *The rationale for collaboration is that the complexity of the problem or need being addressed requires expertise from different specialists and organizations.*

2. *A major cornerstone of collaboration is that it can tap indigenous knowledge. Example: Farmers' organizations play key roles—they express demands and exert pressure on research and extension to make them more accountable and responsive to farmers' needs and priorities; they work as partners with research and extension taking on some responsibilities for problem identification, testing and transfer of technologies; and they play a support role in assisting farmers to gain better access to services and inputs needed to facilitate adoption of new technologies and enter new markets. Partnerships and networks improve research and development through performance feedback and adaptation of technologies to new situations.*

3. *Collaboration can lead to a more efficient use of scarce resources and less duplication of efforts through coordination of activities and undertaking of joint projects, thus facilitating cost-cutting, faster progress, and a wider overall impact.*

4. *Collaboration provides the opportunity to expand. Many organizations have highly localized impact. Projects nowadays need to show results over a wider zone of influence, beyond 'pilot sites'.*

5. *Collaboration improves access to donor resources. Donors now expect or even require organizations to collaborate; maintaining relationships with different institu-*

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[84] De Haveskercke, Caroline Jacquet, "Scaling-out agroforestry through partnerships and networking: The experience of and the way forward for the World Agroforestry Centre in Southern Africa," April 2004

tions should thus enhance an organization's access to donors.

6. *Collaboration* enhances sustainability and strengthens national capacities. *Local institutions understand the communities better than outside agencies. Strengthening local institutions through partnerships and networking helps ensure that viable development activities will continue beyond the life of the project: local organizations are trained to develop their own structures, programs, and resources, and to use their local networks to reach far into communities.*

7. *Partnerships and networks* help build critical mass, *needed for advocacy, action and policy change.*

8. *Collaboration* can initiate and develop contacts *with existing networks.*

POINTS to CONSIDER for Program Managers:

➢ **On what basis should strategic partnerships be built? What are the "principles" of such partnerships?**

➢ **What key roles are partners expected to play in support of rural peoples organizations (RPOs)?**

➢ **Are partnerships the same as "networking"? Or do partnerships refer to a different kind of institutional or working relationship?**

➢ **How do partnerships contribute to "scaling up"?**

➢ **What are the issues in partnership? What factors ensure that partnerships are sustained?**

selected urban poor communities. As of 2003, the Urban Poor Research Consortium was in the process of being organized.

LESSONS LEARNED

A major factor in the success of this tripartite partnership was the favorable environment for civic involvement already prevailing in Naga City. The local residents were open to new ideas, respected diverse opinions, and recognized the principle of mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence. They were accustomed to active involvement in issues such as price increases, taxes, and tuition fee hikes. Forums and dialogues on national and local concerns were often conducted by different groups in the city.

Another potent element was the presence of progressive-minded officials in the local government—led by the city mayor himself—who were open to and supportive of the causes of POs and NGOs. The progressive bloc in the city council sponsored a significant number of resolutions and ordinances, including the creation of the Naga City People's Council.

CONCLUSION

Strategic partnerships are essential in broadening organizations' reach—across geographical areas, across sectors, across disciplines…indeed across time constraints of a project's lifetime, a funding cycle, etc. In truth, if an organization aims for more than mere survival, it must seek out and forge ties with strategic partners that will fill in the gaps and bolster the weak areas that limit its own effectiveness.

LIFE AFTER THE PROJECT
Ensuring Post-Intervention Sustainability

Striving to keep up a service or benefit over time is hardly a novel concept. Groups and institutions that stand to gain in a variety of ways from sustaining the results of an effort or investment have been preoccupied with it for many years. As a result, there are today as many definitions of sustainability as there are organizations involved in securing it for their particular advantage.

How sustainability is defined however is indispensable to setting the parameters used to measure it, as well as to understanding the factors which either advance or impede its prospects. Hodgkin accounts for the difficulty of arriving at a common definition, thus: "*One of the problems for objective quantification of sustainability is the fact that the adjective "sustainable" has strong normative connotations. That is to say, that different people, or different groups of people (users of [a resource], donors, national governments, local private sector companies, research institutions etc.) will have different perceptions of sustainability based on the relative value of achieving the various goals*".[85]

The normative differentiation is evident not just among the various disciplines (for instance, economists would view sustainability as having been achieved when a given level of expenditure can be maintained over time; whereas from the point of organization development, sustainability is attained when "prevailing structures and processes have the capacity to continue their functions over the long term,"[86] but even among proponents within the same sector. For instance, development thinkers and agencies have widely divergent views of sustainability.

Abrams describes it simply as: "*whether or not something continues to work over time*"[87]. In the context of rural water systems (RWS) projects, Bamberger has offered various definitions which emphasize the capacity of a project to continue delivering a flow of benefits for a long period of time after project inputs have ceased. This definition chimes with another that was drawn from the work of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which describes a development program as being sustainable, "*when it is capable of supplying*

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[85] Lockwood, Harold (2003). "Post-Project Sustainability: Follow-up Support to Communities (Literature Review and Desk Review of RWSS Project Documents). http://www.trend.watsan.net/page/437

[86] DFID, "Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets," Department for International Development, February 2000.

[87] Cited in Lockwood, Harold (2003). "Post-Project Sustainability: Follow-up Support to Communities (Literature Review and Desk Review of RWSS Project Documents). http://www.trend.watsan.net/page/437

an appropriate level of benefits during an extensive time period after the withdrawal of all forms of support from the external agency".[88]

Other definitions would incorporate an element of social equity, reflecting an ideological bent which views access to basic services as a fundamental right. For instance, Mukherjee and van Wijk define sustainability in tandem with equity, [describing] *sustainability* as the "*satisfactory functioning and effective use of services*", and *equity* as "*everyone (men and women, rich and poor)…. having equal access to benefits from projects*".[89] In offering a definition of sustainability, Schouten and Moriarty argue in the same breath that "*a system that reliably and sustainably meets the needs of 80% of the population while leaving the poorest 20% un-served cannot be counted a success*".[90]

While the concept leaves much room for debate, three aspects emerge as common elements in its definition, namely: the limits of available resources; the interdependence of human activities, both in the present and for future generations; and, issues of equity in distribution of a good or benefit.[91]

DETERMINANTS OF POST-PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

Different types of organizations attribute their longevity to different factors. For instance, a community based enterprise (CBE) would emphasize profitability and the reliability of market linkages. Community-based organizations (CBOs) charged with infrastructure projects would put a premium on the maintenance of facilities. Others would regard their sustainability as contingent on policy and follow-up support.

LEVELS OF SUSTAINABILITY

In assessing the sustainability of rural water systems (RWS) projects, Hodgkin (as cited in Lockwood, 2003) developed a classification system which groups RWS projects into four classes corresponding to diminishing degrees of sustainability, as follows:

Class I: benefits exceed end-of-project levels through system expansion or replication; this ideal is rarely achieved.

Class II: benefits continue for the original target group at or about the same end-of-project levels.

Class III: benefits drop down to a stable level somewhat below end-of-project levels.

Class IV: benefits drop below an acceptable level and continue to decline or cease completely.

Lockwood (2003) notes that Classes I and II, and in some cases III, can be said to represent sustainability.

Source: Lockwood, Harold (2003). "Post-Project Sustainability: Follow-up Support to Communities (Literature Review and Desk Review of RWSS Project Documents).

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[88] OECD/DAC 1998 in CINARA/IRC/WSP, 1997.

[89] Cited in Lockwood, Harold (2003). "Post-Project Sustainability: Follow-up Support to Communities (Literature Review and Desk Review of RWSS Project Documents). http://www.trend.watsan.net/page/437

[90] *Ibid.*

[91] *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, a number of factors appear to promote post-project sustainability regardless of the type of organization. These are as follows:

> Demand-responsiveness[92];
> More flexible/ longer project timeframes;
> Degree of social cohesion, or social capital;
> Linkages with local government and other potential partners;
> Capacity-building;
> External follow-up support;
> Continuity in project management;
> Incentives for project sustainability; and
> A clear exit strategy.

1. DEMAND-RESPONSIVENESS

Many studies have shown that where demand is directly expressed by beneficiaries, rather than through their representatives, a CBO is more likely to retain its constituency and thus generate support for itself and its operations. Closely related to this is the degree of community satisfaction with the service it provides or the benefits that accrue from it.[93]

The extent to which beneficiaries had been involved in the initial design and implementation of the CBO's interventions as well as in periodic review of and improvements on these determines the degree of demand-responsiveness of the CBO to its beneficiaries.

2. MORE FLEXIBLE/LONGER PROJECT TIMEFRAMES

Development projects are usually short-term, reflecting donor-imposed timeframes. This convention suggests a degree of indifference to the fact that certain types of projects need more time to get to the point where they can be sustained after the cessation of external support. A lack of flexibility in this regard forces project staff to take shortcuts rather than allowing the project—and the processes that underlie its potential for success—to take its course, thus seriously undermining its prospects for sustainability.[94]

The IPECON project in Mongolia's Southern Gobi Region is a case in point. Against a backdrop of well-entrenched institutions and mechanisms for decision-making, the process of building consensus on land use and developing norms for natural resource management which is indispensable to the fulfillment of the project's goals could take decades.[95] Unless this project's funders can see it through, the effort would end up half-baked.

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) projects are another type of intervention that does not lend well to short timeframes. Typically designed to run for at most five years, these projects thus have barely four years after the start-up phase to establish community-based management in a form

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[92] Lockwood, Harold (2003). "Post-Project Sustainability: Follow-up Support to Communities (Literature Review and Desk Review of RWSS Project Documents). http://www.trend.watsan.net/page/437

[93] *Ibid.*

[94] Open Forum, 25 November 2005, SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[95] *Ibid.*

that is expected to be sustained and continue to be pro-poor after the project ends. Past experience seems to suggest that CBNRM projects need at least eight years to develop systems that can be sustained without "special external support".[96]

And then there are projects working specifically towards the rehabilitation of a resource. If the latter takes, say, 10 years to restore to the desired state, shouldn't the implementing organization be supported for at least as long as that?[97]

But where there is no getting around the time constraint, projects and their partners need to explore mechanisms through which CBOs can continue to be supported post-project. Networks and resource centres are possible options, as well as close bridging to local government.[98]

3. SOCIAL COHESION

A perceived benefit is an important part of members' motivation to support or contribute to the maintenance of their organization. However, a CBO's sustainability requires rather more than bursts of collective energy which just as quickly dissipate as soon as the anticipated reward is secured. What it demands is members' willingness to work together and to collectively invest time, effort, and meager resources towards a common goal. This kind of social cohesion points to the emergence of a collective identity and is indicative of the size of a CBO's store of social capital—one of the most crucial determinants of post-project sustainability.

4. LINKAGES WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER POTENTIAL PARTNERS

In its evaluation of community based natural resource management programs, RLEP, or Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership, acknowledged the importance of *bonding* social capital, which strengthens "horizontal" relationships among [community members]. In the same breath, however, RLEP made a case for *bridging* social capital, which strengthens the "vertical" relationships to individuals and organizations—especially those in power. RLEP argues that while "NGO-led CBM has been quite effective at building bonding social capital between peer groups of the poor, it has been less effective at building links between CBOs and more influential individuals and organizations".[99]

Similarly, CBOs looking to sustain their operations would profit from IFAD's emphasis on a multi-stakeholder approach to sustaining projects. Noting the rapid deterioration post-project of infrastructure constructed for the Orissa Tribal Development Project

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[96] RLEP. "Community Based (Natural Resources) Management: Key Lessons", Thematic Lesson Paper Series 3, October 2004.

[97] Open Forum, 25 November 2005, SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[98] *Ibid.*

[99] RLEP. "Community Based (Natural Resources) Management: Key Lessons", Thematic Lesson Paper Series 3, October 2004.

(OTDP), IFAD argues in its post-project report that "in development programmes where there are a number of inter-linked activities such as infrastructure development, agriculture and natural resource management and human resources development, the crucial role of the beneficiaries, community-based organisations **and counterparts** cannot be over-stressed in ensuring the sustainability of the investments made."[100]

IFAD emphasizes the importance of institutional support from Governments as well as an enabling environment that can help sustain the OTDP's activities. Just as crucially, IFAD thinks that governments need to allocate funds to sustain selected project activities after the closing date, and that to this end they should introduce a budget line in their core program budget for the purpose. However, IFAD cautions against communities becoming overly dependent on governments to co-finance post-project activities, and recommends that projects be designed with a view to supporting follow-up activities with only minimal financial assistance from governments, if at all.

5. CAPACITY-BUILDING

Well before the handover, the CBO should undergo sufficient preparation to handle all aspects of post-project management.

An important part of this preparation is assuring the CBO's readiness to finance its operations. One proposal in this regard is to set up a bridge fund that would tide the CBO over until it can assume financial autonomy from its former donors.[101]

Just as importantly, a CBO and its staff need to acquire all the requisite skills to run the organization. Fledgling CBOs which had been managed by an external agency such as an NGO need a clear structure, as well as a workable mechanism, for post-project management. Members of the management committee should be selected by the CBO's members, and the roles and responsibilities clearly delineated. Forming a management group at the last minute and unilaterally foisting it on the CBO is almost certain to result in upheaval.

But there is more to capacity-building than simply addressing financial or management concerns. For CBOs charged with CBNRM projects in particular, capacity-building should "emphasize community organization and institution development – i.e., the 'soft' aspects of [community based management], rather than the technical aspects. [Capacity-building interventions] that go beyond the technical aspects and instead focus on building appropriate institutions that are pro-poor, appear to make better progress in addressing institutional sustainability issues post-project in addition to the biological/environmental sustainability issues that all such projects consider."[102]

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[100] IFAD, "Sustainability," http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/public_html/eksyst/doc/lle/l157suse.html

[101] Notes from Session 1: "Institutional and Policy Issues for IFAD," SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[102] RLEP. "Community Based (Natural Resources) Management: Key Lessons", Thematic Lesson Paper Series 3, October 2004.

Another part of capacity-building is the provision of some degree of external follow-up support. It may seem a contradiction to say that the sustainability of an organization is greatly helped by continuing external support. After all, isn't it a hallmark of sustainability that a group is able to go it alone without outside help?

However, in regard to certain types of organizations, some agencies are lately realizing that most groups can only go so far without some form of external support.[103]

6. CONTINUITY IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Frequent turnover of IFAD mission staff, who are charged with appraising and reviewing projects, is thought to have a detrimental effect on project sustainability. At least one participant to the SCOPE workshop argues that it is difficult to make an effort sustainable where you are asked to do something over as often as mission members change. "If you could work with the same person, even if it is the wrong person, you would at least have a consistent message across five or seven years of a project."[104]

In this regard, IFAD could offer incentives to its Country Program Managers (CPMs) for staying the course. As it is, CPMs are concerned mainly with loan disbursements.[105]

Related to this, there are proposals to get IFAD to offer concessional terms on loans to governments in the interest of promoting project sustainability, e.g., by reducing the interest on loans to sustainably run projects.[106]

7. A CLEAR EXIT STRATEGY

Hendricks illustrates the importance of a clear and formal exit strategy by comparing and then contrasting it with a prenuptial agreement. A couple that draws up a pre-nuptial agreement in effect expects the marriage to fail. This may or may not be true, says Hendricks, but the partners to a project that forego drawing up an exit strategy are headed for the rocks.

Thus, Hendricks proposes designing projects, especially micro-finance, around an exit strategy. He describes this approach as follows[107]:

> *It is important to assess every aspect of the microfinance program in terms of*

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[103] Lockwood, Harold (2003). "Post-Project Sustainability: Follow-up Support to Communities (Literature Review and Desk Review of RWSS Project Documents). http://www.trend.watsan.net/page/437

[104] Vidya Ramachandran during the Open Forum, 25 November 2005, SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[105] Notes from Session 1: "Institutional and Policy Issues for IFAD," SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[106] *Ibid.*

[107] Hendricks, Larry (2002). "Designing Microfinance from an Exit Strategy Perspective". AusAID/China Chongqing Comprehensive Poverty Alleviation Project (CCPAP). http://www.alternative-finance.org.uk/rtf/hendricks-designing.rtf

its contribution to sustainability. The consequence of applying this assessment filter to the design of a microfinance operation focuses on more aspects of the program than operational and financial sustainability. This filter adds several dimensions to the design. One of these dimensions relates to the development of a sense of local ownership right from the very beginning, not waiting until the last year to consider a "hand over phase."

When thinking about the design of a microfinance program from an end of project perspective it becomes important to filter all design decisions. The test that every element of the microfinance program must pass is: Will it continue to exist without project staff pushing it and without project money to support it? Will it be sustainable in its own right?

Hendricks's "assessment filter" is easily transposable to other types of projects. Tested against such a filter, the multiple components that usually make up development projects can be assessed according to their potential contribution to the sustainability of the project. Project components that offer little value in this regard can be immediately ferreted out, thus freeing up resources for ones that promise a better return. Capacity-building, for instance, would be better targeted as this filter accentuates real needs while showing up superfluous ones. The

same kind of test can be applied to other project components, such as capital investment, technology development, partnership-building, etc.

Apart from this assessment tool, there are other elements to an exit strategy, as follows:

➤ **A mechanism to facilitate cooperative engagements between communities and local government.** Helping CBOs link up with one another and with local government can help ensure that the project or benefits are sustained following the donor's withdrawal. As much as possible, projects must be anchored on related government schemes, and must involve all relevant agencies.[108] An example of this is ICRAF's facilitation of a collaborative management planning exercise between the community and the municipal government which resulted in the integration of community plans into that of the municipal government.

➤ **Institutional development.** Aside from seeing to the development of community organizations, the capacities of partners—whether NGO or government—must also be continually assessed and reinforced where necessary to ensure their continued and competent support.[109]

➤ **An enabling policy and legal framework.** The policy and legal environment should promote the continuance of the project

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[108] Notes from Session 1: "Institutional and Policy Issues for IFAD," SCOPE Regional Workshop on Strengthening Rural Poor Organizations in Asia, 25-28 November 2005, Viengtai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

[109] *Ibid.*

and protect its gains. In the case of projects whose sustainability is contingent on a community's access and rights to a resource, an exit strategy should ensure either that existing laws and policies do not undermine such access or rights, or that a more favorable policy and legal environment is put in place.

Just as importantly, Government should be helped to develop an appreciation of the need for sustainable CBOs and to make a commitment to bringing this about.[110]

➢ **A process orientation.** Designing projects with an exit strategy would prioritize "processes" over "structures". Especially in the case of CBNRM projects, this would imply[111]:

- Focusing on outcome targets, and less on output targets (e.g. community empowerment and ability to manage a resource collectively, not production).
- Ensuring there is in-built flexibility for resource management institutions to be tailored to the social, and environmental, situation of different locations. A blueprint for specific committee types should be avoided.
- Focusing more on CBO development and ensuring the sustainability of CBNRM institutions rather than on technical interventions.

THE ROLE OF NGOs IN PROMOTING POST-PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability also has to do with having the right sort of partner, especially when it comes to scaling up a project. Government and its agencies are usually high up on the list of possible partners because of a number of factors that are inherent to them. They are part of a permanent structure, which bodes well for long and sustained collaboration. They usually have experts either in their employ, or within reach, thus assuring the project of access to the necessary technical knowledge and expertise. Governments have massive resources at their disposal, or else are the logical conduits for external financial assistance on a grand scale. Finally, they are present, by virtue of their structure, at all levels of organization—from the village to the national level—making them the partner of choice for a scaled-up or highly integrated program.

Ironically, however, these inherent advantages of Governments have often militated against efforts to ensure sustainability, specifically by disempowering the partner organizations or communities they were meant to empower.

In contrast, NGO-led programs, while frequently small-scale, poorly staffed, underfunded, and localized, have yielded some highly sustainable results. NGOs are

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[110] *Ibid.*

[111] RLEP. "Community Based (Natural Resources) Management: Key Lessons", Thematic Lesson Paper Series 3, October 2004.

able to get around some of their limitations, and in fact, use these to great advantage.

Centrally designed Government programs "are based on general standards—i.e., conditions in a typical village, perceptions of common problems, and standard delivery systems and procedures."[112] In contrast, NGOs use a more "nuanced" approach, adapting programs to make them more responsive to local conditions and particular needs.[113]

NGOs avidly promote a bottom-up approach to all aspects of program implementation. Assisted organizations or communities are actively involved at all stages of the project cycle, and are simultaneously prepared to take on more of the leadership tasks initially assumed by the NGO. NGOs in fact infuse the whole effort with a "culture" that has become its trademark—consultation, consensus-building, respect for communities and local groups, and belief in people's potential for development. This not only cultivates a sense of ownership of the project among the communities or local organizations—which is a crucial factor in promoting sustainability—but enhances if not restores people's faith in their own capacities.

It is this primary goal of empowering the poor, which NGOs uphold, which distinguishes them from other partners and makes them more effective in the long-run as promoters of sustainability.

POINTS for CONSIDERATION by Program Managers:

1. How do you build *self-reliance* and *self-governance* within rural people's organizations (RPOs) for their long-term autonomy and sustainability?

2. Specifically, what financial or material resources are available for RPOs and coalitions to sustain their activities? What are the experiences of successful coalitions in this regard?

3. How does one continue the facilitation of RPOs and their coalitions/federations even beyond the life of projects, during the transition period of diminished resources?

4. What are the *"exit strategies"* for NGOs in their work of building RPOs and coalitions?

5. What are the *indicators of sustainability* for RPOs and coalitions?

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[112] Quizon, Antonio B., "NGOs in the Philippines," study prepared for the Asian Development Bank, 1997 (unpublished).

[113] *Ibid.*

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