Executive Summary

A wide array of experiences in participation at different stages of the project cycle can be found in projects of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Asia. Several of these projects showcase innovative features and a range of possibilities that can be replicated elsewhere.

In some countries, multistakeholders have meaningfully participated in public consultations prior to project identification and the drafting of the Country Operational Strategies and Opportunities Paper (COSOP). Certain conditions, such as the presence of a dynamic civil society, government's commitment to pursue participation, and extensive groundworking among multistakeholders prior to the consultations have all contributed to the increased participation of stakeholders.

A large number of the Asia and Pacific projects incorporated participatory elements in the implementation phase. However, participatory management is one area that needs to be much better addressed in all IFAD projects.

A few projects permitted a longer gestation period for group formation before going on to succeeding project components. This was based on the realization that group formation and development is a long and complicated process. Most of the projects did not really take into serious account of the learning process and thus did not provide for enough time and the right mechanisms to assist project beneficiaries.

The participation of civil society organizations/non-government organizations (CSOs/NGOs) in IFAD projects was built in for many projects, especially in countries with vibrant CSOs/NGOs that could deliver some of the project components, particularly in the areas of training, group formation, community organization, community development, credit, and technical assistance. In many cases, NGOs undertook a combination, rather than a single set of activities, depending on their level of capacity. However, there has been a tendency to relegate NGOs to community organization types of work, leaving them out of other technical activities, such as project missions, preparation for public consultations, and meetings for the COSOP. This is another area that Country Portfolio Managers (CPMs) could look into when they draw up their plans.

In the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) stage of projects, beneficiary participation can be further enhanced. This should include their involvement, as early on in the design stage as possible, in deciding indicators for participation as well as key result areas. Representatives of beneficiaries can also be included in the monitoring of ongoing projects which had not originally provided for such participation.

Notwithstanding these efforts to integrate participation at various levels of the project cycle, participation is still viewed in terms of particular "activities", or one-off events, such as a mechanical Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise during project design, or a simple incorporation of group formation activities. Instead, if it is to be meaningful, participation should be viewed and practised as a continuous process built into as many, if not all, stages of the project cycle.

Since 1998 a major step has been taken to systematically incorporate PRA and other participatory needs assessment tools at the design stage of all new projects. In addition, it would help if other participatory approaches, tools, and elements are incorporated into the other project phases. The necessary guidelines and indicators should be drawn up to ensure that this can actually be done, and not in a mechanical manner.

The constraints and barriers to participation are both internal and external to IFAD. The adoption of participatory methods is influenced by a number of factors, namely, the support and commitment of government at the national and local field level; the dynamism

and vibrancy of the CSO/NGO sector; the level of their capacity and skills, including their attitudes on participatory processes at the country level; the capacity of CSOs/NGOs to deliver on the participation components of projects; and the complexity of the CSO/NGO sector. In countries that are lukewarm, if not actually hostile to participation, IFAD can still find ways to promote participation. It can identify potentially sympathetic government officials, or provide exposure for government or project staff to successful participatory practices, etc.

Critical Issues within IFAD

In IFAD, the key factors that affect the promotion of participation are: availability of a comprehensive framework on participation; time and budget to pursue participation; a system of rewards and incentives for participation; staff to monitor and assist in promoting participation internally; and the availability of information on the CSO/NGO sector in countries.

Interviews, discussions and project documents point to a number of barriers to full participation within IFAD. For example, how congruent and coherent are IFAD's policies on participation in projects and in structures within these projects, especially where financial disbursement is concerned. The fact remains that IFAD, like any multilateral or bilateral organization, is driven by its accountability to its donor constituencies, thus inhibiting it from fully undertaking a process-oriented approach to project management. However, the relative flexibility of IFAD as an organization, owing to its small size and its commitment to pursue participation, permits a less rigid interpretation of its rules in order to balance concerns of accountability against the need to control project components.

Despite IFAD's strong organizational mandate on participation and its attempts to engage and involve its major stakeholders, IFAD offers no matching incentives and rewards for staff compliance with such mandate. There are no policies, guidelines or standards by which participation can be assessed and evaluated by IFAD staff, particularly to monitor the extent to which projects have empowered its target beneficiaries to get control of the project and subsequently improve their life conditions; and to define outcomes in terms of the beneficiaries' newfound confidence, the stability of the organizations formed, the extent to which people have learned to access resources outside of the project, and their ability to partner with government and project staff, etc.

Just as importantly, IFAD would have to provide instructions on how to implement these guidelines, should they be developed. For instance, how can the commitment and ownership of IFAD staff be ensured so that they will not view these guidelines as yet another imposition from above?

A Working Group (WG) on participation, similar to the WG on NGOs, has recently been formed. While this is a welcome development in pursuing participation among IFAD staff, these WGs should be run as regular forums for the exchange of ideas and experiences, which can over the long-term improve IFAD's capacity to be a knowledge and learning organization where participation is concerned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For IFAD Management:

A key question is how to find ways to bring about a stronger culture of participation in IFAD, given that there is already a general commitment to pursue participation among the CPMs. One suggestion is to develop a comprehensive participation framework and guidelines that are coherent with other organizational policies and guidelines. This undertaking should be a collective effort of CPMs and other key staff doing participation-related

work. In this regard, tools can be developed for in-house use, similar to those developed for gender assessment. The important thing is to ensure that the CPMs have a sense of ownership for such tools.

The WG on participation can capture learning on participation at all stages of the project cycle in various projects, as well as in the other operations of IFAD. At the start, this WG could be made up of representatives from each region/division, an arrangement similar to the set-up of the NGO focal points in each division. Later, other interested staff members could join. This WG can discuss, among other things, (1) the costs of ensuring participation at all stages of the project cycle; (2) obtaining quantitative information on the benefits of participation for the primary beneficiaries; (3) building the confidence and enthusiasm of staff; and (4) finding new ways of working. In addition, a staff member should be assigned to monitor the group's progress, and assist it in its work.

For the Asia and Pacific Division:

- Ensure capacity building on participation for key stakeholders in projects, including beneficiary groups. Training in participatory tools should be made mandatory for government officials and project staff primarily to wean them from traditional management methods which do not promote participation. Capacity building in this area should be sustained among IFAD staff, especially the CPMs, through seminars, workshops, etc.
- Ensure that beneficiaries and other major stakeholders are integrated into the M&E mechanisms for projects, not just as sources of information but as active participants in the process. This implies making sure that they are part of the decision-making on determining indicators on participation, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as key result areas/success indicators for projects.
- Expand the extent and level of CSO/NGO participation to include, among others, their involvement in the COSOP and project identification processes, etc.
- In countries that are less open to civil society, IFAD should try harder to influence government to involve civil society in framing the COSOPs, and to allow the use of more participatory approaches at the village level. This could be done by exposing government officials, at IFAD meetings, to successful experiences in adopting participatory tools or by insisting that civil society/participation be integrated into projects whenever possible.
- Allow for greater flexibility in group formation/development and other participatory components in the project designs that can strengthen the process- as opposed to the blueprint-approach to projects.
- Strengthen cooperation and links with the NGO unit and other units with NGO components, such as the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty and the Belgian Survival Fund Joint Programme (BSF). Data and information on NGOs can be exchanged with these units to enhance the learning on CSOs/NGOs.

Some definitions:

Civil society: one of the three spheres, together with the state and market, that interfaces in the making of democratic society, It is the sphere in which social movements become organized around certain objectives, constituencies and thematic interests.

Civil society organizations (CSOs): broadly defined to include a wide range of non-governmental organizations and networks, voluntary associations, community groups, trade unions, media, religious and traditional groups, etc.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs): in its broadest sense, the term NGO refers to organizations that are not based in government and not created to earn a profit.

Community-based organizations (CBOs): usually formed within the community where they are located or where they serve. CBOs are more formal types of groupings than self-help groups; also called local organizations.

Intermediary NGOs: developmental NGOs whose principal activity is to support and provide services to local or primary grassroots or community-level groups or households.

International NGOs: usually based in industrialized countries and provide funds for development programmes of local NGOs, or in some circumstances implement projects directly.

People's Organizations (POs): usually membership organizations of the poor and marginalized formed primarily to protect and promote the interests of their members, such as cooperatives, rural workers' organizations, women's organizations.

Capacity building: an approach to development rather than a set of discrete or prepackaged interventions to empower people, including but not limited to, awareness building, skills training, resource mobilization, leadership formation.

Empowerment: enabling people to develop their skills and abilities to decide on and take actions which they believe are essential to their lives and development.

Participation: principle and process through which stakeholders influence and share control of development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them.

Participatory rural appraisal(PRA): techniques and methods which are largely visual to enable local people to make their own appraisal, analysis and plans, to act and monitor and evaluate actions and programmes.

Stakeholders: groups or individuals who have a stake or vested interest, in determining the success or failure of an activity. They can include: local and central government officials, line agency representatives, CBOs, mass organizations, cooperatives, water user groups, local and international NGOs, international donor organizations, traditional leaders, religious leaders and groups, political parties, elders' societies, the very poor or destitute, the subsistent poor, money-lenders, the landed and the landless, and the business community and local contractors.

Stakeholder analysis: helps planners to identify a variety of groups of people that may be affected, adversely or positively, by the project, or that may have been overlooked.

They may be categorized into primary stakeholders (targeted participants in an activity), secondary stakeholders (intermediary participants) and external stakeholders (people and groups not formally involved but possibly impacting or being impacted by the activity.)

Introduction

Background, Context and Purpose of TAG Project and Review Paper

Over the last several years, IFAD has taken conscious steps, as part of its corporate strategy, to expand the participation of civil society groups, particularly target beneficiaries in its projects from the design of projects to implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

It was with the aim of widening IFAD's knowledge base of the range of experiences in participation that the organization provided a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) to the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC). The two-year project (1999-2001) intends to document NGO participatory approaches in the Asia region for dissemination and sharing within IFAD, and at the same time, to explore how some of these approaches can be used in future IFAD projects.

The project involves several components:

- a documentation of NGO best practices in participatory approaches;
- a review of the participatory approaches found in projects in the region;
- NGO interventions in four selected countries - China, India, the Philippines, and Vietnam--in a specific phase of the project cycle; and
- a directory of institutions involved in poverty-related training in Asia.

The final activity is a workshop in Rome to exchange of learning among IFAD staff and NGOs involved in the project activities.

Project objectives

Specifically, the project aims to:

- build awareness and capacities on participatory approaches among the IFAD Asia Division staff which can ensure wider participation of various stakeholders, particularly beneficiaries, in the project cycle;
- adopt participatory tools and approaches from existing NGO best practices in the region.

Objectives of the review paper

This review study seeks to:

- provide an overview of the participatory approaches and tools that have been utilized by IFAD in the different phases of the project cycle for various projects in the Asia region during the 1990s;
- contribute to a better understanding of the issues and dynamics of participation, including the factors helping and constraining it, which can assist IFAD in its efforts to strengthen the promotion and practice of participation.

It must be noted that this review and the paper on NGO Best Practices on Participation, both prepared by ANGOC, should be seen as complementary documents presenting a comprehensive framework on participation that could serve as a guide for IFAD.

Methodology

Data gathering: constraints and limitations

Data for this review was obtained from project documents - formulation and appraisal reports, supervision reports, and the limited number of mid-term and evaluation reports available. Sixty-seven projects from 19 countries were reviewed.

Interviews were conducted with IFAD Asia division staff: the country portfolio managers (CPMs), the associate programme officer (APO), the regional economist and regional director. Discussions also took place with staff members of the evaluation division, the technical division including the gender specialist, the NGO unit, the Belgian Survival Fund Joint Programme (BSF), and the coordinator

of the Popular Coalition for the Alleviation of Hunger and Poverty. These interviews yielded insights on successful attempts to promote participation as well as frank assessments of the difficulties and obstacles faced in the effort.

The paper benefited from having been written after the Asia Division published its own assessment of its experience in participation. This IFAD document provided examples of the participatory approaches in project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, that have proved successful in various projects in recent years. [1]

It must be noted that as the review basically involved a desk study of project documents, it is limited in its analysis of how far participation has actually taken place at the local, particularly village level, in the various phases of the project cycle. It was not possible to directly observe participation happening in the projects. Neither could information be obtained directly from the beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Contents and organization of the report

Section I discusses the current issues that define ongoing discussion and debate on participation. The section also includes a synthesis of the dilemmas and contradictions which development agencies, including IFAD, face as they pursue their participation mandates and objectives. Development agencies need to better recognize and appreciate these issues in the context of their operations not only at project field level but at all levels - within headquarters and in countries -- and openly deal with these issues and concerns.

Participation policies and practice of specific multilateral organizations have also been included in Section I upon the suggestion of the Project Steering Committee in its first meeting in December 1998, to provide a perspective on the various agencies' approaches to participation and also to offer a comparison to IFAD's approach. The organizations included are IFAD, the World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Section II presents IFAD's framework and mandate on participation. The bias of this review is, of course, to strengthen civil society's participation in IFAD Asia projects. However, it also seeks to positively influence IFAD's policies vis-à-vis civil society. IFAD's overall policy and programmes in involving civil society in IFAD's work, including a brief discussion of IFAD's NGO programme and its initiative related to the Popular Coalition for the Alleviation of Hunger and Poverty. The main part of this section is an overview of IFAD's past and current experiences of participatory approaches in its projects in the Asian region.

Section III is a summary of the enabling factors and constraints to participation and lessons learned from the projects. Suggestions and recommendations are given on the basis of the findings and lessons learned.

Basic Issues in Participation

Over the past few decades, the participation of civil society has become accepted as essential to the democratization process at the local, national and international levels. In the area of development assistance, in particular, governments and bilateral/multilateral agencies have realized, following the failure of numerous development projects, that the participation of major stakeholders, particularly beneficiary groups, is key to ensuring the success and sustainability of projects. Many studies have shown that as community groups or organizations develop a stronger sense of ownership of a project, so will their incentive to sustain the project even beyond its formal life. More recently, there has been a clamor for increased stakeholder participation beyond the traditional project boundaries to include greater involvement in analysis of national poverty situations and in identifying and designing broader country strategies to respond to these conditions.

But despite the realization that beneficiary participation is critical in the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects, their involvement has tended to be limited to the implementation phase, that is, through their contribution of their labor or other resources. The practice of participation, especially quality participation, continues to lag the rhetoric.

Through the years, the theory and practice of participation have evoked much discussion and debate in development circles. Critics question donor agencies' policies, and more so their practice of participation in projects, particularly the degree and quality of involvement of primary stakeholders--the poor and marginalized.

Controversy still surrounds the issue of what participation really means and what it involves. What are the main objectives of participation? Who exactly should be included? What degree or level or quality of participation should be aimed for? What kinds of methodologies and tools are appropriate at which stage or phase of the project cycle or the development process, to elicit various forms of participation? The issue of cost and time efficiency has also been raised, among other questions, in discussions on participation.

This section discusses these issues and presents different perspectives on participation, including those of multilateral agencies. It highlights the complicated process and parameters in which participation needs to be assessed, better understood, promoted and practiced.

Objectives of Participation - Participation for Transformation and Empowerment

An important component of the participation debate is the question of whether participation should be viewed as a means to achieve an objective or as an end in itself. The consensus seems to be that it is both means and end. The view that participation is by itself worth promoting invites little comment and has, in fact, gained wide adherence. Those who hold this view see participation as an expression of the democratization process. A participative and involved citizenry makes for a dynamic and democratic society.

It is the matter of what objective participation should serve that remains vexed, especially because participation has so often been used to disappointing results in the last few decades. If participation should be pursued as a means towards a particular objective, then what should this objective be?

Korten (1990), *Hollsteiner (1983)*, and *Freire*, among others, argue that it is important to determine if participation is helping to transform the socio-economic and political system by identifying and challenging the structural issues within, or if it is merely helping to prop up the system by integration through an

ameliorative process of gradual improvements? They strongly contend that if it is to lead to sustainable action, participation must be pursued in the context of a social transformation agenda. It must lead to an empowerment process "by which people become conscious of the structural causes of their poverty or exploitation, and then organize to use their collective skills, energies and resources to alter those conditions" *(IRED 1992)*. Development agencies tread lightly on this ground, if at all, because it is those very structures and systems that permit them to operate. They would rather avoid confrontation among various economic and political interests, even if this is an inevitable consequence of participation within this framework.

In fact, these critics argue that the very nature of development programmes and projects is antithetical to participation, let alone to any real empowerment of people. They see little, if any, meaningful participation that can happen within a project context, as participation in most development programmes or projects is limited to mobilizing people to undertake development activities, either through their labour or contribution of materials *(Oakley, 1995)*. Furthermore, such form of participation in projects seeks to bring and integrate people into the mainstream development paradigm, instead of challenging or transforming the latter. In the end, the poor tend to become dependent on development assistance, thus negating the very aim of the projects in which they are involved *(Ghai, 1990)*.

While not everyone subscribes to such a framework on participation and empowerment, most concede at least that empowerment is still possible within a project context. Given the right intervention, people can be helped to improve their socio-economic and political conditions. Uphoff, for one, contends that it is possible to incorporate power even in the most traditional projects, the challenge being to increase the power associated with participation *(Bergdall, 1993)*.

However, it is precisely these issues of control and power that make it very difficult for "development projects" to be effectively participatory and empowering.

Power and control are two fundamental concepts in participation which are generally ignored by governments. Development agencies, on the other hand, are only dimly aware that such concerns should be considered, or acted upon. Whether the reasons are lack of trust of stakeholders, or fear of loss of control over a project, or that the situation can lead to conflicts with powers that be, development agencies face a dilemma: to what extent can governments and development agencies (including NGOs at times) relinquish their authority and control of projects, or components or processes within projects, to beneficiary groups and other stakeholders?

Recent attempts to decentralize government functions and authority have succeeded in transfering resources and decision-making to lower levels. At the same time, as *Ghai (1990)* notes, this decentralization of government authority will not translate to any meaningful participation by the masses unless real authority is also delegated to target beneficiaries, giving them substantial power to decide on important areas in a project. One of the most crucial elements of control is in the area of finances. How willing and able are governments and donors to trust stakeholders, beneficiary groups, or even local project staff to decide on major financial issues, or to handle and disburse project funds?

The over-concern among development agencies to show where the money goes and to get value for money forces them to adopt a blueprint, as opposed to process, approach to to projects. The blueprint process is donor-driven, -dominated and -controlled; beneficiaries are expected merely to participate in the different project components. The poorer social groups

are dealt with as minors who have to be helped, organized and provided with external expertise, while the control of the project, particularly vis-à-vis its management and financial resources, remains firmly in the hands of project staff and donors *(Donovan, 1997)*.

Beyond projects, there is need for greater openness on the part of governments to civil society participation in the socio-political and economic spheres. The prevailing policy and legal environment provides a good indication of the level of power and control that governments are willing to share with civil society in general, and in turn shows how far they would agree to promote the participation of primary stakeholders (other than themselves) in development projects.

The dynamics of power within and among communities and groups is still another area many development agencies tend to neglect or would rather avoid. Often, project designs fail to fully comprehend the significance of village or community stratification. Power and class relations in communities are accepted as a matter of course, even in areas already identified as homogeneously poor. Little or no attempt is made to incorporate project elements to balance these relations. Unless these power imbalances are addressed, through the appropriate mechanisms, the targeted poorer segments of communities will not be able to promote their interests fully, and thus will not gain from the project benefits.

Based on analysis of urban poor experiences, Hollnsteiner provides an illustration of six different means of participation and the corresponding degrees of actual power and control they confer on the poor. These are : representation as citizens' groups; appointment of local leaders to official solutions; allowing the community to select one of several plans; consultation throughout the planning process; representing the public in decision-making boards; control by community over funds and expenditures. Of these, she thinks that only the last three really constitute participation, while the others are forms of cooptation by the elites who dominate the processes involved *(Bryant et al, 1982)*. Care should therefore be taken to distinguish the differences (*i.e.*, in terms of class or income) among apparently homogeneous groups to ensure that the specific target groups gain access to power and control, and consequently to project benefits.

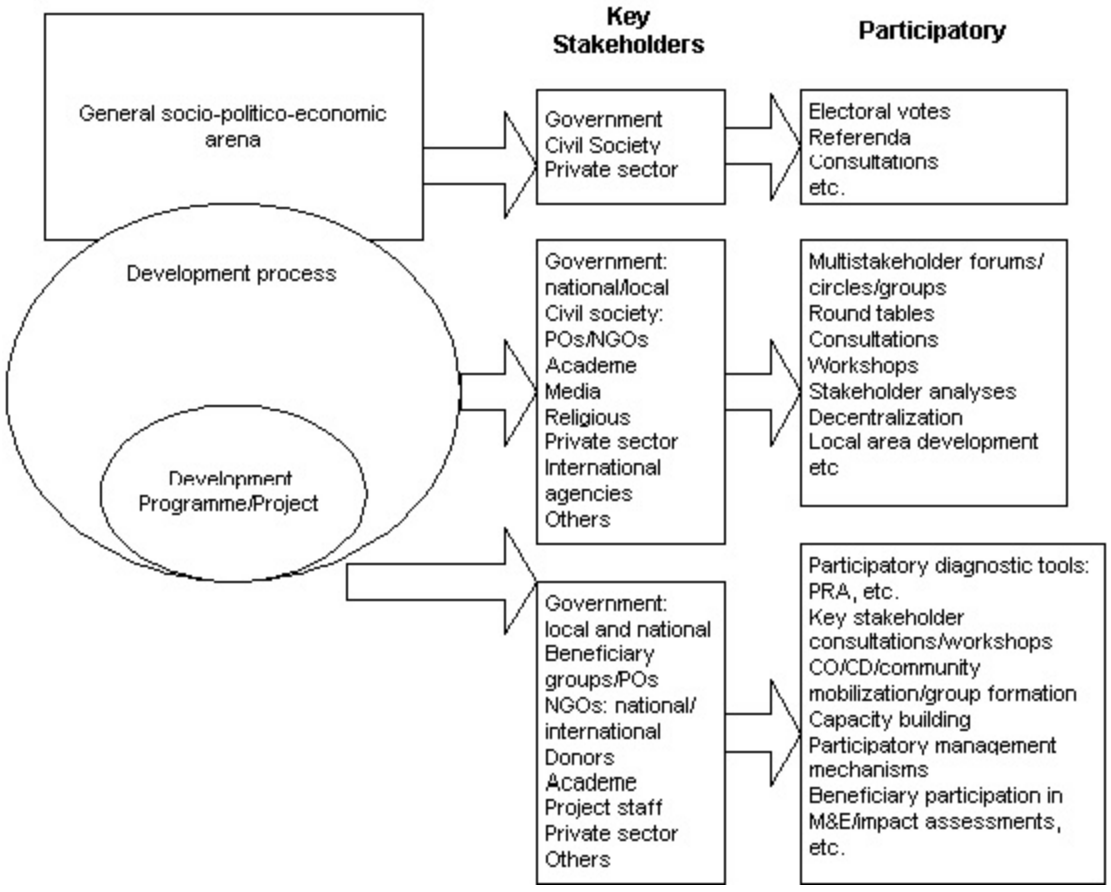
Clearly, participation involves a complex set of dynamics that needs to be continuously analyzed. It is necessary to find ways to ensure that people are empowered to control and direct their lives and destinies, even within a project setting.

Participatory Approaches and Methodologies

First of all, participation, needs to be promoted and pursued not only in the formal project cycle but in the entire development process, if not the whole socio-political and economic arena. *(Figure 1 provides a framework on how participation should be situated in the general society, in the development scene and vis-à-vis programmes/projects, as well as some of the approaches and tools for promoting participation at each level)*.

While the focus of participation among development agencies is basically programmes/projects, participation must actually be contextualized within the wider development scenario. Increasingly, a wide range of participation approaches has been developed, and others continue to emerge, to involve stakeholders in the total development process. More recently, the UN and other multilateral agencies have begun to systematize processes to incorporate civil society contributions in developing country strategies that will guide their country development assistance prior to formal project identification.[2] Major stakeholders are identified, and extensive consultation processes are facilitated with a broad array of civil society (CS) stake-

Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework and Approaches to Participation in Society, in the Development Process, Programmes and Projects



holders. Country strategy papers, which were previously prepared by the multilateral agencies with some assistance from government and/or the academe or private sector, and with no feedback from civil society organizations (CSOs), now have the benefit of CS inputs.

Expanding participation in programmes and projects still remains a big challenge, however, and over the years numerous tools, methods and approaches have been developed, tried and tested. The Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools have become very popular and have been used for various purposes, including: exploration, research, training and statistics, planning and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). In development projects, however, PRA is still basically used to facilitate needs assessment and diagnosis for project design and formulation and less so for M&E.

PRA, like other methods, has benefits as well as limitations. PRA is practical and effective in getting people's views and acquiring a better understanding and diagnosis of their conditions to guide the identification, formulation, planning, and M&E processes. At the same time, its "rapidity" can sometimes result in cultural dimensions being overlooked. PRAs are not always easy to conduct and can raise expectations among the people that the project cannot deliver. The sensitivity of issues facing the communities and the lack of enthusiasm among those involved in the process must also be considered. As PRA tools involve

Box 1.Brief Description of Selected Participatory Methodologies for Community Information Gathering and Planning

RRA is an umbrella terms for methodologies that use multi-disciplinary teams to develop quick, systematic overviews of village systems. These exercises helped to identify the needs of a community, its priorities, action steps to achieve priorities, feasibility of interventions and monitoring of development.

PRA evolved from RRA to ensure that the key resources, who are the local people, should be enabled to participate in all phases of a project, from planning to implementation to evaluation. As opposed to RRA which facilitated extraction of information from the village, PRA is an attempt to create local sustainable institutions. Sometimes called Participatory Learning Action (PLA).

ZOPP, developed by GTZ, is a planning method that is only possible with the participation of the different stakeholders, where the participants share their ideas in the analysis of the situation (environmental scanning) and in prioritization of the problem through the problem tree, setting up objectives through the objective tree, and in summarizing the essential elements of the project through the Project Planning Matrix. ZOPP introduces participatory analytical tools that enable a group to develop a plan or a project.

SEPSS provides an essential framework in which detailed project activities are to be designed and target groups are identified. Its aim is to involve local communities in the analysis of their needs,priorities, constraints, and potential, economic, social, production, community organization and mechanisms of decision-making.

CIPS is a participatory action research model initially developed by CIRDAP. It empowers the community through its leaders to participate in every step of the project cycle from project conceptualization through participatory research, planning, and project implementation. Its mode of community participation is through the selection of village committees that handle the research, planning, or project implementation but these committees involve the entire community in all these steps through village consultations.

SEGA, developed at Clark University and commissioned by FAO and USAID, is a framework of analyzing the socio-economic structures that perpetuate the inequitable structures in society and imbeds in these processes, the most effective interventions to attain sustainable development. These most effective interventions are through the empowerment of the local communities so that they can access and control resources and participated in the decision-making activities of their societies. It also recommends the macro-level interventions in the level of policy, programming, funding allocation etc. should be implemented to allocate resources more for the disadvantaged groups. These processes can be facilitated through the implementation of various participatory approaches.

complex negotiations, it is important that they are conducted by trained people, thus the need for adequate training in and supervision of such methods *(Mukherjee, 1993)*. As Chambers also notes, PRA has tended to suffer in quality when the scope of the work substantially widens. Furthermore, there has been a tendency to focus on the methods, whereas the more important aspect has in fact to do with the attitudes and behavior of those conducting the tools *(Chambers, 1998)*.

The other tools commonly used by development agencies for community information gathering and planning combine PRA with other methods: the Objective-Oriented Project Planning (ZOPP), Participatory Poverty Assessments and Beneficiary Assessments, Socio-economic and Production Systems Surveys (SEPSS), etc. NGOs and other agencies have developed their own participatory approaches, used for a variety of purposes, among which are: the Community Information Planning System (CIPS) for grassroots education, the Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEGA) model, Participatory (Action) Research (PAR), Technology of Participation (ToP). *(See Box 1 for short descriptions of these methodologies.)*[3]

However, PRAs and similar tools should not be seen as the final answer to ensuring participation in projects. Contrary to the perception of many government and development agencies, these methodologies do not constitute the whole of participation within the project cycle. It is just as essential to ensure that beneficiary groups have ample decision-making authority and control, particularly in crucial elements such as funds allocation. Methodologies for organizing and mobilizing people are equally critical. An example is community organizing, as it originated from the teachings of Saul Alinsky and Paolo Freire, and then tested to great success in countries like the Philippines. The community development methods of CSOs/NGOs that have proven highly effective, for example, in countries like Bangladesh or India are another.[4] Other participatory elements in projects may include ensuring fair and balanced representation of beneficiary groups in project committees, whether in the implementation of projects or in M&E, and mechanisms to ensure that the government or development agency listens to people's feedback and revises project plans accordingly, etc.

It is essential to note that it is the totality, indeed the integration, of all the participatory components or approaches for all stages of the project cycle that in effect determines the level or degree of participation being pursued in a given programme or project. To include only an element or approach is just a token attempt at participation. *(See Figure 2 which gives the key elements which need to be considered to facilitate meaningful participation in the project.)*

Participation and the Development Catalyst

The degree and extent to which participation can be pursued greatly depends on the ability of development catalysts (whether from government or development agencies) to seize existing opportunities to promote participation, or better yet to create opportunities where they do not yet exist, for instance in countries with a restricted legal and political environment. This requires development catalysts to have a resourceful and open attitude. Furthermore, support structures and policies within agencies must provide for the appropriate incentives and rewards for development catalysts and staff that are able to successfully facilitate people's participation. Such incentives could include sufficient budget to carry out participatory activities, etc. Otherwise, efforts to promote participation will remain token.

Development agencies or governments, or even CSOs/NGOs, need more than just the right attitude and mind-set towards participation. They must also be willing to learn and begin from where people are coming from and

to tap into their wealth of knowledge. Unfortunately, as *Rowlands (1991)* and many others contend, development agencies have "[a] tendency towards finding alternatives to what people already have, rather than identifying where the inadequacies lie and improve on them. People are repositories of local knowledge and must be enabled to tap their knowledge. The best way to assist them is to help them extrapolate from what they know best - their culture... because development agents fail to understand what rural people know, they tend to compensate with something new rather than proving inadequacy of existing knowledge, systems and institutions."

Or as happens more often, development experts assume they know more than the local people. Thus the question that Chambers poses, "Whose reality counts?" is a major issue of concern for the development agent.

Or even if external experts do consult with the people and listen to their inputs, what is missing is the "learning on the part of the people in the local system". That is, the learning happens only on the side of the experts *(WB, 1996)*.

According to *Kaplan (1999)*, development practice involves "process facilitation, not product delivery; thus, a development practitioner must be able to diagnose a context and respond appropriately with interventions which leave people better able to control their life circumstances. This demands the highest form of consciousness, involving balance of polarities of interventions and respect for the integrity and freedom of people".

It is critical therefore to ensure that development catalysts employed to promote participation have the right attitudes from the outset. These attitudes should include at the very least a bias for the poor and the powerless.

Organizations play a fundamental role in ensuring people's effective participation in development activities. Development agencies have long recognized the importance of building community-based or local organizations (CBOs) or sectoral organizations that facilitate people's participation in development activities. In its over two decades of experience in assisting the rural poor, IFAD has emphasized the organization of various types of rural poor groups and CBOs, and this has proved to be a major factor in the success of many of its projects. These CBOs also help to ensure sustainability of these activities beyond the duration of development assistance.

In its People's Participation Programme, *FAO (1990)* has found that the small, democratic and informal groups of the poor are some of the most efficient means to achieve the objectives of the rural poor. These small, homogeneous groups are able to pool their resources, human and material, to attain their objectives.

These organizations may be informal, such as self-help groups formed for credit purposes or sectoral groups of small farmers, women, small irrigators, small fisherfolk, cooperatives, etc. There are also more formal types of organizations, such as cooperatives, rural workers' organizations, village organizations, trade unions, and credit unions. In the process of designing a project, the question of whether to use existing organizations, or to set up new ones to implement it usually comes up. It is not an easy issue to resolve. Experience has shown that organizations are not always able to shift from their original focus/ purpose and hence it is often more appropriate to start from scratch.

Group formation among the poor is however a challenging task. Stimulating and strengthening local organizations involves a process of gestation, birth, adolescence and adulthood that cannot be rushed *(Schneider, 1995)*. Obstacles are many, both within and outside the organizations themselves. For various reasons, such as heavy workload and even poor health, the poor may not always have the energy nor the time to spend building their organization nor on participating in activities. Likewise, with their limited educa-

tion, the poor do not often have the confidence nor the skills to actively participate. Geographic isolation is another major constraint for many. Other factors, such as lack of unity and psychological dependence on the rich, prevent organizations from maturing to a point where they are able to mobilize enough resources internally as well as from the outside, and to pursue the organizations' aims and objectives *(IFAD TAD, 1994)*.

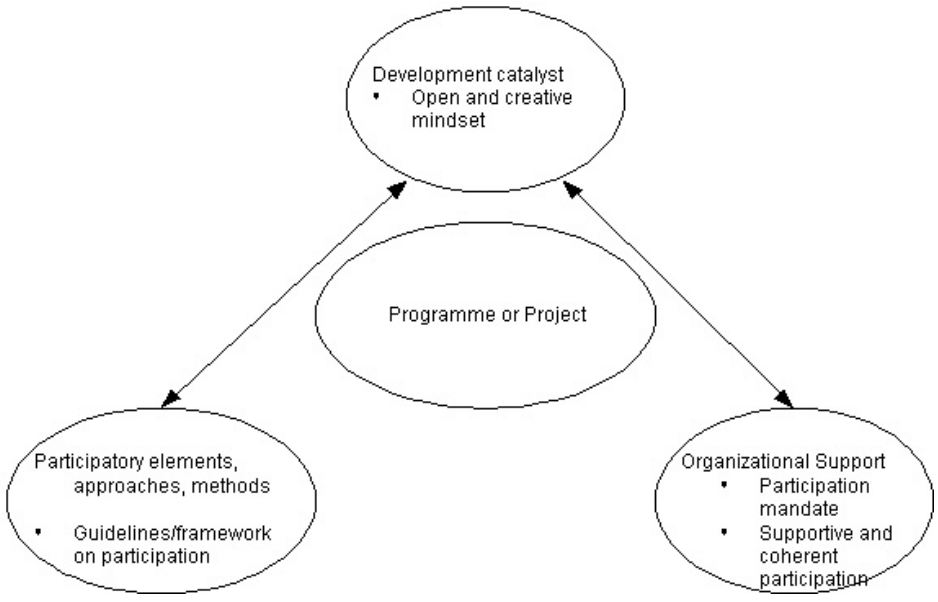
Helping the poor build up their organizations and their capacities to decide, implement and manage development projects, as well as sustain their initiatives, takes much time and effort not only from the local organizations, but also from those working directly with the poor. It is not possible to rush the process of organizing, community and institution building. Rigid timetables for project implementation can cause frustration on the part of both the development agents and the beneficiary groups. A change in the framework, attitudes and operational procedures, allowing greater flexibility on the part of development agencies, is needed. Unfortunately, development agencies are often more concerned with meeting project deadlines and hence cannot accommodate changes.

Participation and Capacity Building

Closely related to the formation of organizations and institutions is the issue of building the capacity of these organizations, not only in technical matters such as agricultural extension, credit management, irrigation management, aquaculture, etc., but also in the social and organizational aspects of organization building, including leadership training and formation, dialogue, and participation in policy/decision-making.

Capacity building involves developing and strengthening organizations of the poor so that they are empowered to run their organizations smoothly and effectively as well as to adequately represent their interests. Members need to acquire the skills to negotiate, resolve conflicts, confront authority and demand their rights, if and when needed, even beyond the life of development projects. This is one way that "sustainability" is achieved. However, these components are often not sufficiently

Fig. 2. Key Elements of an Effective Participation Framework



covered in development projects.

Capacity building, like empowerment, needs to be framed within a wider socio-political and economic context. *Eade (1997)* describes capacity building as aiming to enhance the quality of participation in the processes of change. Many NGOs view capacity building as an approach to development rather than as a set of discrete or prepackaged interventions, such as what is often built into development projects. Thus, such activities as linkage building and networking are also deemed important to building and strengthening capacity.

For many development agencies, however, capacity building often simply means assisting institutions to be more effective in implementing development programmes, and not much else. As *Pretty (1996)* points out, "as little effort is made to build local skills, interests and capacity, local people have no stake in maintaining structures once the flow of incentives stops."

Participatory Development and Selected Multilateral Organizations

This section gives an overview of the forms of collaboration of several multilateral agencies vis-à-vis civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly NGOs and to some extent, people's organizations (POs). Over the past few decades, bilateral and multilateral agencies have substantially expanded their support of, and for the involvement of, NGOs/POs in projects which they fund. This comes from increasing recognition of the importance of participation, not just of primary beneficiaries but also of other stakeholders, such as CSOs or NGOs. Estimates show that some 15 per cent of official development assistance (ODA), or some US$9 billion a year, is presently being channeled through NGOs.

In most countries CSOs/NGOs are now accepted as major stakeholders in development. But while CSOs, especially development NGOs, are still invaluable as intermediaries for POs, the latter are slowly gaining recognition in their own right. CSOs/NGOs provide various services to POs and community or sectoral organizations, as well as skills to promote the participation and empowerment of communities.

Just as CSOs/NGOs throughout the world are expanding their numbers and roles in society, they have also become major advocates for pro-people policies and participatory approaches among multilateral and bilateral agencies. By their very nature, CSOs/NGOs are more easily disposed to the concept of participation in its fullest sense and indeed have been significantly influenced by it. *(Oakley, 1995).*

Recognizing the increasingly important role that CSOs/NGOs play in the development arena, this section is being added to present an overview and some comparison of the policies and practice of several multilateral agencies vis-à-vis CSOs/NGOs in their programmes. Four agencies are included in the overview: the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank (WB), and IFAD.

Perspectives, policies and programmes involving CSOs/NGOs

Over the past three decades, multilateral agencies have grown to appreciate the many important roles that CSOs/NGOs play in the development scene, and how these could be put to use by these agencies.

FAO was one of the first UN agencies, in the early 1970s, to initiate activities with the NGO sector through its Freedom from Hunger Campaigns in various countries worldwide. Since 1972, the WB has been involving NGOs in Bank-supported activities. IFAD underlined the importance of collaborating with NGOs in 1977, while the ADB started its informal cooperation with NGOs in the early 1980s.

Today, all multilateral agencies view their relations with CSOs/NGOs as an important feature of their operations, considering the benefits that CSOs/NGOs bring and the influence they exert in communities and societies. NGOs' ability to promote participation, provide expertise, and more accurately target the beneficiaries of projects is widely acknowledged by these multilateral agencies.

In the 1980s less than 10 per cent of NGOs were involved in one way or another in the four agencies' projects. This number increased considerably in the mid- to late 1990s. NGOs were involved in half of all WB projects, a significant increase in recent years from just 12 per cent of projects in the 1980s. At the ADB, NGOs were participating in 38 per cent of projects as of 1997. Meanwhile, 314 NGOs were implementing IFAD projects in 1997; just a year later, 39 more NGOs had gotten involved. From 1973 to 1977 NGOs/CBOs were involved in 954 IFAD projects, or 17 per cent

of the total. Of these NGO partners, 80 per cent were from developing countries.

Of the NGOs involved in WB projects, 65 per cent had signed up for project implementation; 73 per cent for operations and maintenance; while only 43 per cent had assisted in project design. This data, however, may have been interpreted too loosely to suggest more than what has actually happened. It is common practice, for instance, to give grants to NGOs for assisting in the planning process and with a proviso that the process is kept participatory. However, such funds are usually spent on implementation, rarely on the preparatory tasks. Data from the other agencies also indicate that NGOs were much more involved in implementation activities rather than in assisting in the design and preparatory stages, although the trend is in increasing upstream involvement of NGOs also in project preparation *(UNGA, 1998)*.

While FAO does not have quantitative data on its partnership with CSOs/NGOs/CBOs in field projects, recent data can be found on the extent of its participatory field projects. Of 3,457 projects examined as an in-house exercise, 49 per cent were graded as "participatory", 32 per cent "somewhat participatory", 12 per cent "considerably participatory", and five per cent "highly participatory".[5]

In all four agencies, CSOs/NGOs were involved in a wide reach of collaborative activities with CSOs/NGOs, from policy development and advocacy involving national and international CSOs/NGOs to field operations involving technical and programmatic work with national and/or local NGOs and CBOs. The extent of NGO involvement in projects ranges from minimal to substantial and the demand for experienced NGOs often exceeds supply.

NGOs have been working to influence the policies and practices of governments, development agencies, other actors in development and the public. They also provide technical assistance and services to almost all sectors, particularly in credit (micro-credit following the Grameen experience), agriculture (sustainable agriculture), natural resource management, health (alternative health) and education (non-banking education and literacy education). But it is in the area of social infrastructure building, consisting of community organizing, social awareness building, leadership training, and values formation that NGOs have truly distinguished themselves. Consequently, too, they have thus been typecast.

The ADB has defined three broad areas of cooperation with NGOs in its operations: cooperation in loan and technical assistance activities, programming and country-level work and cooperation in policy development work. FAO has identified four functional areas for cooperation with NGOs: information sharing and analysis, policy dialogue, action programmes and resource mobilization. IFAD's collaboration with NGOs focuses primarily on involvement at the field and project level. The WB has begun to more actively support CS participation in its Country Assistance Strategies (CAS), through CS consultations, aside

Table 1. NGO Participation in Projects in Multilateral Financial Institutions

AGENCY	%						
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
ADB	8	16	25	20	26	3	38
IFAD*	23	27	31	36	40	39	37
WB	-	-	-	50	41	48	46

* *Figures cover only NGO participation in implementation of ongoing projects*

Sources: *WB: OED (1999) NGOs in WB-Supported Projects ADB: Cooperation between the ADB and NGOs, April 1998 IFAD: ED NGO Coordination Unit Data Base, 1999 IFAD 1997 Annual Report*

from involving CS in its project activities.

All the agencies note that NGOs have a comparative advantage in identifying beneficiary needs and in group formation and community organization. In fact, in many cases, NGOs have made a positive difference to project performance. NGOs have gained credibility for various innovations in social processes, as well as for their accountability to people, their responsiveness to community needs, their capacity to promote participatory processes in community activities, programmes and the sustainability of the projects and organizations they assist. Many NGOs have greater operational capability to identify, design, and implement projects or components of projects. They also contribute towards policy and programme development. NGOs can also serve as intermediary between government or development agencies in providing information, resources, and/or technical support.

At the same time, the agencies cite several limitations of NGOs which work against their fuller involvement in agency activities, programmes and projects. For one, many NGOs, especially small NGOs, have limited technical, financial, implementation and management capacity, allowing them little scope for scaling up. They may become overextended and programmed to fail as they get involved in large development projects with big amounts of funding. Agencies also mention problems of accountability and transparency among NGOs. Having to deal with growing numbers of NGOs at various levels, particularly in countries where civil society is vibrant and dynamic, agencies have a hard time identifying which NGOs to best relate with. These different levels of NGOs include: primary, secondary, tertiary, networks, networks of networks.

CSOs appreciate the willingness of multilateral agencies to collaborate with them, especially in consultations. However, CSOs/NGOs argue that distinctions need to be made between consultations, which agencies promote, and fuller participation, which they prefer. Consultations imply that agencies, while seeking to obtain the views of civil society, are not obliged to integrate these views into their particular policies and programmes. Participation, on the other hand, indicates a commitment at the outset that at least "certain decisions will be determined by the participants" *(IDR/PRIA, 1997)*.

CSOs/NGOs are concerned that the agencies do not address the long-term capacity building needs especially of small NGOs/CBOs that are involved in projects. Once the project is finished, the support for the work of these CBOs/NGOs is just as quickly withdrawn. NGOs also complain of bureaucratic procedures and rigidities characteristic of development agencies that are incompatible with NGO needs and requirements, causing cash flow and other administrative difficulties. Likewise, inconsistency in the approach taken by development agencies to NGOs/CBOs causes confusion and uncertainty. CSOs/NGOs are quick to point out, however, that their involvement in project implementation helps build up both their and the beneficiary groups' capacity. Also, as many NGOs are locally based and rooted, it is good strategy for donors to address the long-term capacity building of the NGO/PO as this can help assure the sustainability of the project beyond its funded life.

The donor community also needs to appreciate that the NGO/PO sector is diverse and heterogeneous, hence each NGO has its own philosophy, management style and base of experience. Distinctions need to be made among the sector. This diversity may not be easily understood nor appreciated by government and other development actors that are used to dealing with homogeneous groups.

Despite the difficulties and obstacles for both parties, CSOs/NGOs and development agencies are expected to continue and expand in the future. The challenge for both parties is

to find ways and means to overcome these difficulties.

CSO/NGO and Multilateral Agency Mechanisms

Over the years, as appreciation for CSOs grew, multilateral agencies have established mechanisms to further and deepen relations with CSOs/NGOs. All four agencies, as well as other multilateral agencies, have put up NGO units or focal points to coordinate with NGOs. Sixty-three of the WB's Resident Missions are staffed to coordinate with NGOs in the field. An NGO thematic group brings together representatives from each region and the WB management for discussions on matters concerning both operational and policy work with NGOs.

Both the WB and IFAD have set up regular advisory committees to provide guidance and recommendations on issues of common concern. Annual NGO/CSO consultations have become regular fare at the ADB and IFAD. FAO's technical committees and governance structures regularly invite NGOs involved in specific themes to participate at meetings. Both IFAD and the WB have funding windows to provide support specifically to NGO projects, although in much smaller amounts than those in regular country level funding. *(See Table 2)*.

FAO's experience shows that a clear distinction needs to be made between seeking partnership with an NGO on the basis of shared objectives and resources and mutually agreed actions, on the one hand, and sub-contracting an NGO to carry out specific services on the other. In its field activities, FAO has attempted to do go beyond the rhetoric of participation and to actually examine the degree to which programs are actually negotiated with civil society actors resulting in clear responsibilities for all concerned." *(FAO, 1998)*.

In so doing, FAO has taken a step ahead of the other three agencies in the effort to forge a partnership role vis-à-vis NGOs. This may be more difficult for the other agencies, given their nature as multilateral development banks. Besides, they have become used to sub-contracting only particular sets of activities to CSOs/NGOs. However, the WB and the ADB have made some progress in increasing civil society participation through consultations in the development of country assistance policies and strategies, while IFAD has opened up consultations for the COSOP to include in the planning process not just governments but NGOs as well.

Furthermore, the WB has adopted a long-term organizational strategy and plan of action, *i.e.*, "significant shifts in the Bank's institutional culture and procedures to systematically adopt participation as a regular feature of work with borrowing countries". This Plan of Action has six components, namely:

- More enabling environment for participatory development;
- Shared responsibility for economic and sector work with government and wider range of stakeholders;
- Lending operations identifying at an early stage both stakeholders and how to get them involved in activities;
- Training programme in participation for bank staff and managers;
- Incentives for staff who do participatory initiatives; and
- Appointment of a senior management team to oversee the Plan's implementation.

In a recent document the ADB identified ways in which its staff can involve major stakeholders more actively in Bank operations in order to incorporate stakeholders' views into the different phases of the project cycle, including the formulation of country operational strategies and country assistance plans. Minimum participation standards or a minimum set of requirements with management oversight, are identified in the Bank's participation guidelines starting from country programming processes. *(ADB, 1999)*.

As part of the internal measures being undertaken to ensure a more systematic and organization-wide approach to the participation of CSOs/NGOs, agencies have identified NGO focal points, as well as focal points on participation, in different organizational divisions - recent developments in IFAD and FAO. Inter-divisional working groups on participation have also been formed in FAO and the WB, and very recently in IFAD as well, to ensure that lessons on participation from field projects are shared across the organizations' divisions and staff.

Table 2. Data on NGO Relations with Four Multilateral Agencies

	ADB	FAO	IFAD	WB
Direct involvement of NGOs in projects (1997)	38%	N.A.	37% or 314 NGOs in project implementation; 32 in Asia	46%
Areas of cooperation w/ NGOs	1. loans/TA activities 2. programming/ country level work 3. policy development work	1. information sharing and analysis 2. policy dialogue 3. action programmes 4. resource mobilization	1. policy development work 2. country level work 3. information sharing 4. loans/TA activities	1. group formation 2. extension, institutional strengthening 3. credit and savings
Roles for NGOs	❑ source of information ❑ consultants/ contractors ❑ executing/ cooperating agencies ❑ contractors	❑ consultants ❑ source of information	❑ consultants/ contractors ❑ executing agency	❑ consultants ❑ executing/ cooperating agency ❑ source of information
Sectors with NGO cooperation	Agriculture, natural resources, social infrastructure, energy, transport and communication	Agriculture, fisheries, forestry, food security, plant genetics	Agriculture, water resource dev, environmental protection, livestock, small-scale enterprises	Agriculture, social infrastructure, health, nutrition
Institutional Mechanisms for Cooperation	General annual consultation prior to regular Bank meeting	Participation in regular meetings of technical committees and FAO Conference and Council	IFAD/NGO Advisory Group, IFAD/NGO Annual Consultation, IFAD/NGO Extended Cooperation Programme	NGO-WB Advisory Committee, NGO Working Group on the WB, Small Grants Funding

Sources: *WB: OED (1999) NGOs in WB-Supported Projects ADB: Cooperation between the ADB and NGOs, April 1998 IFAD: ED NGO Coordination Unit Data Base, 1999 IFAD 1997 Annual Report*

IFAD Framework on Participation

Corporate Mandate on Participation and Mechanisms for NGO Involvement

The Agreement which established IFAD in 1977 underlined the importance of collaborating with NGOs. In 1994 IFAD embarked on a re-engineering process during which it identified five Corporate thrusts. The first of which was to "support projects and programmes driven by beneficiary participation in both design and implementation". The objectives under this thrust are:

- Ensuring higher levels of beneficiary ownership by diversifying participatory tools and testing innovative approaches through pilot projects;
- Securing greater involvement of NGOs and other grassroots organizations by launching a civil society facility based on supplementary donor and private sector contributions;
- Ensuring flexibility in project design and implementation by developing transparent guidelines that incorporate clients' views without compromising the core objectives of projects;
- Building local capacity by using grants and linking the capacities thus created with IFAD project activities;
- Ensuring gender balance by supporting the development of NGOs targeting gender activities and consolidating related lessons and experiences from IFAD's projects and, where possible, replicating and upscaling them.

To this end, IFAD has been seeking to strengthen its partnerships with CSOs/NGOs using three frameworks: project collaboration in the field; the IFAD/NGO Extended Cooperation Programme (ECP); and the IFAD/NGO Annual Consultations.

On the ground IFAD/NGO collaboration began in the mid-80s with the Grameen Bank. By November 1998, 353 NGOs in one way or another were participating in IFAD-funded projects with 22 per cent of these NGOs were from the Asia and the Pacific, 40 per cent from sub-Saharan Africa, 30 per cent from Latin America and eight per cent from the Near East and North Africa. Seventy-nine per cent of these NGOs are from the South. Several of them were involved in more than one project.

IFAD's ECP was started in 1987 to provide direct financing to NGOs for pilot and innovative activities in support of IFAD projects. To date, the ECP has granted a total of US$8.81 million for 139 projects. Twenty-three per cent was used to test new technologies, 45 per cent for new institutional approaches, and 34 per cent to develop and implement training programmes for beneficiaries and extension personnel.

The IFAD/NGO Annual Consultation was begun in 1990 and has continued bringing together a select group of northern and southern NGOs "to review collectively and exchange views on, major policy and operational issues affecting development initiatives". An Advisory Group of NGOs and IFAD staff was also formed to provide advice on ways to strengthen cooperation with NGOs.

The Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty was established following IFAD's International Conference on Hunger and Poverty held in 1995. The Coalition's Steering Committee is composed of 12 members, seven of whom are representatives of CSOs. Its program of action covers seven key areas: revival of agrarian reform, establishing knowledge networks, supporting capacity building, linking with the formal banking sector, building public awareness, improving emergency prevention and supporting the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

Overview of IFAD's Experience in Participatory Processes

This overview of Asia Division's experiences in participation is generally based on formulation and appraisal reports on 67 projects in 19 countries that started implementation from 1990 onwards. In several cases, supervision reports and mid-term reviews, where available, were also used. Interviews with CPMs also provided important insights for this and succeeding sections.

A major task in reviewing the different project documents was attempting to understand the various ways participation was defined and the 'hows' by which participation was to be achieved in different stages of the project cycle. The analysis sought to determine two points: (1) Which, if any, participatory tools were used to assist in the formulation of the project? To what extent were the stakeholders, primarily the beneficiary groups, involved in the actual design of the project? (2) Which elements of participation were incorporated in the project - from the design stage, to implementation and in the monitoring and evaluation.

In reviewing the projects, no attempt was made to determine the level or "degree" nor the quality of participation that resulted from the approaches used; that is, if they were highly participatory, considerably participatory or minimally participatory. This was difficult to do given that not enough information could be gathered. Furthermore, there were no standard indicators for participation that could make such an assessment possible from mere examination of preparatory documents. However, one indication of how participatory the projects were designed to be can be gleaned from the extent and level of attention given to questions of participation in the design elements of the projects. *Figure 3* gives an overview of the various forms of participation in the different stages of the project cycle that were found in the projects.

Throughout the 1990s, but especially so towards the end of that decade, IFAD sought greater participation from its primary beneficiaries and other major stakeholders in IFAD projects.

The Asia Division's document on its *Experience in Participation (1999)* mentioned that in1998, seven out of eight new projects in the region used PRA tools in the design stage.

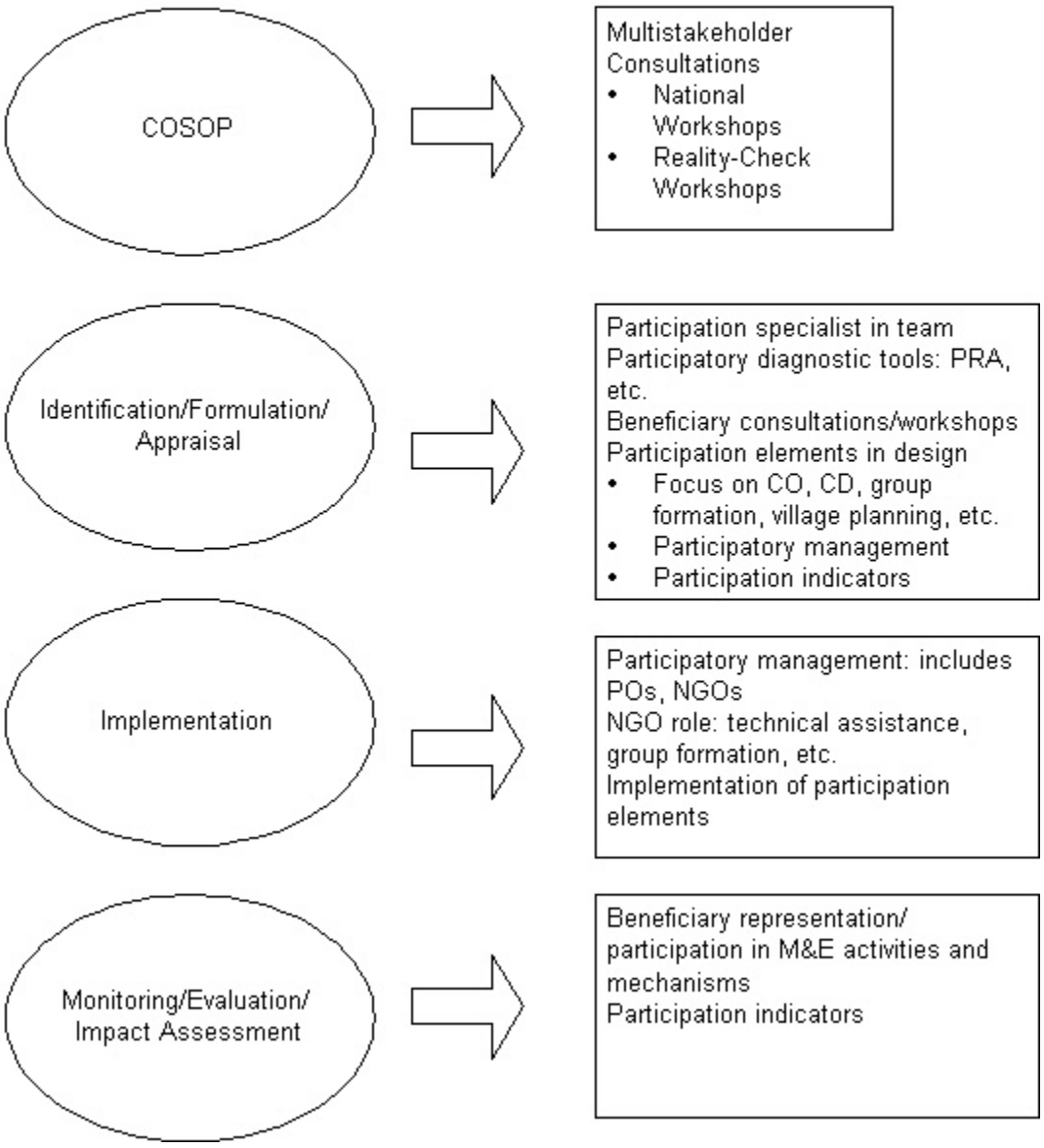
COSOP and the Project Identification Stage

In the preparation of the Country Operational Strategies and Opportunities Papers (COSOPs) and in the project identification stage, efforts were made in some countries in the region to promote the participation of major stakeholders of IFAD projects.

In the Philippines, India, and Indonesia, national consultations and Reality-Check Workshops involving a wide range of stakeholders were held to collectively suggest guidance for IFAD's policy and on projects in these countries. In the Philippines, the consultations identified project prospects in the country through a collective process involving government and NGOs and some people's organizations, and eventually led to agreement on a project in Western Mindanao. Participants identified the target sectors - the upland farmers, indigenous peoples, marginal fisherfolk, and lowland farmers - that should be prioritized in the IFAD poverty alleviation project. Project interventions were categorized as institutional capacity building, agricultural productivity development and marketing, resource tenure improvement and infrastructure development. *(See Box 2 for an illustration of the multi-stakeholder process undertaken).*

In India, IFAD's planning priorities were affirmed in a process which engaged an expanded group of stakeholders, such as NGOs, academics, and even beneficiaries. The workshop focused on the need to deepen the understanding of the poor, particularly of expro-

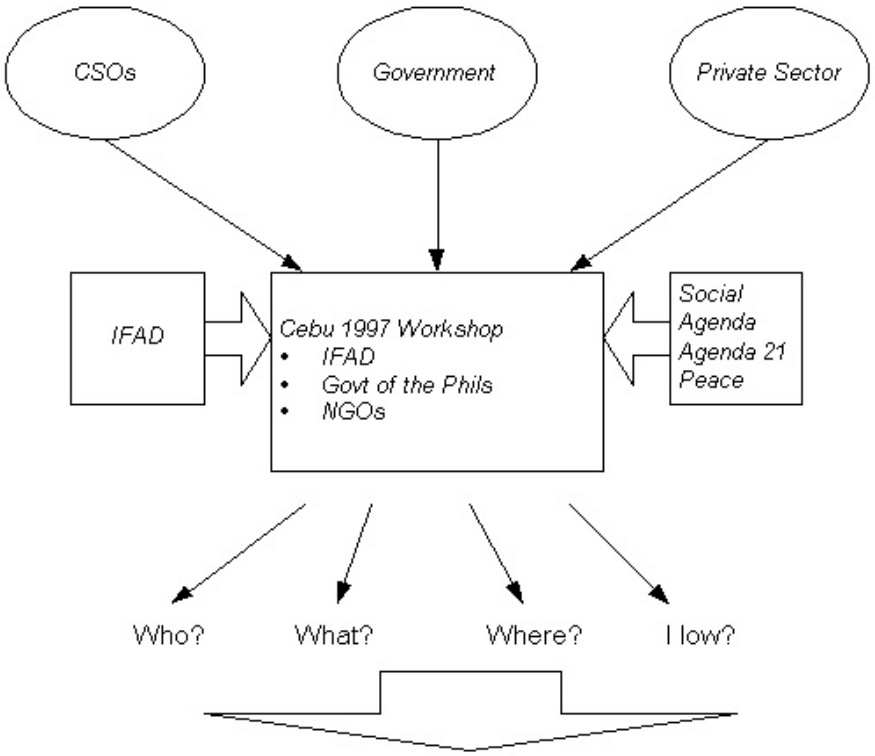
Fig. 3. Current Areas of Participation in IFAD Project Cycle



priation, as it is the main cause of deprivation and poverty. Other major themes were capital formation in the rural areas, the need to test projects against the criteria of viability, sustainability and replicability.

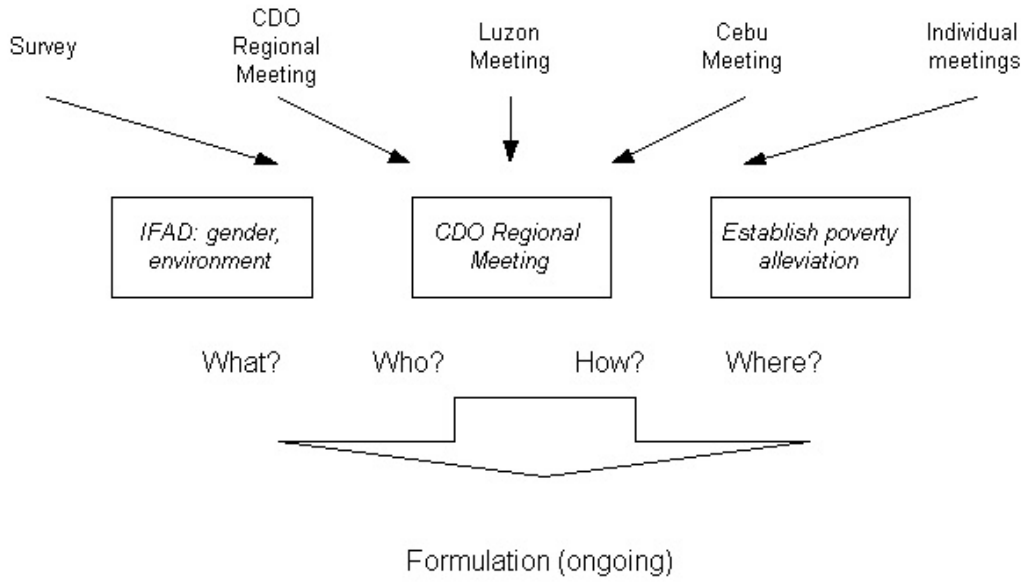
These participatory initiatives, which were highly appreciated by the participating stakeholders, have helped to develop a constituency for IFAD that did not previously exist within the countries. Participants reported that the

Box 2. A Multistakeholder Process for Project Identification: the Philippine Case



Western Mindanao Community Initiative Project

(1999)



Formulation (ongoing)

Source: Brian Baldwin

Box 3. Key processes and steps to be considered in organizing National Multi-stakeholder Consultations/Workshops for COSOP (based on experiences in India and the Philippines)

Stakeholder analysis:

- ❑ Identify potential list of participants representing various stakeholders/constituencies (government: national/local, CSOs: NGOs/POs, academe/research, private sector, donor community, religious, media etc) using different sources: NGO networks, development agencies, government, etc.
- ❑ Balance list of participants for a representative grouping of advocacy/operational/research institutions/experts; sensitivity to CSO or other stakeholders' dynamics
- ❑ Determine balanced representation in terms of: government/CSO/private sector, gender, geographical, national/local
- ❑ Ensure sufficient representation of people's organizations

Consultation/ Workshop preparation:

- ❑ Conduct preliminary discussions with key participants to verify process
- ❑ Prepare background and discussion papers well in advance
- ❑ Ensure clear workshop/consultation objectives
- ❑ Distribute these papers to participants way before workshop or consultation to ensure papers will have more chance of being read and there will be a high level of discussions
- ❑ Select highly effective facilitators or moderators
- ❑ Choose an appropriate venue

Consultation/ Workshop proceedings:

- ❑ Set clear expectations and objectives of consultation/workshop
- ❑ Provide adequate time and space and freedom to surface issues for discussion
- ❑ Document process and outcomes of discussions
- ❑ Disseminate report of workshop/consultation to participants
- ❑ View process as a continuing exercise for succeeding COSOPs

workshops made it possible to shift to the priorities that came out of the discussions rather than sticking to those that had been presented at the beginning of the workshops. Likewise, particularly in the case of the Philippines, there was a genuine interaction and positive feeling between government and CSO participants as they undertook a joint effort to identify common priorities. This fostered better understanding of each other's agendas and facilitated future collaboration.

Prior to the India workshop, the CPM identified certain conditions that needed to be met before holding it. Participants were selected from a cross section of multi-stakeholders to ensure a mix of views and insights. He

Table 3. Date of Project Start-up and Number of Projects with Participatory Tools in Design and Monitoring and Evaluation

Start-up dates	Design		Monitoring and Evaluation		Total Number of Projects	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1990-94	11	31.4	7	20.0	35	100.0
1995-98	20	62.5	16	50.0	32	100.0

briefed and informed the participants on the workshop's background and objectives. Discussion papers for the workshop were circulated circulated way before the actual dates. The choice of facilitator was key to maximizing discussions and achieving results in the limited time available. Difficulties in the workshop preparation arose primarily from issues of stakeholder analysis: who should participate, how to select the right mix of participants, from which sectors, and which organizations? What should be the balance between government and CSO representatives?

A major concern in all the consultation processes was how to bring about greater participation of primary beneficiaries, whose involvement is often much more limited than that of other CSOs/NGOs. Another important consideration was the amount of time needed to prepare and lay the groundwork for such processes within the country and with the various stakeholders.

To ensure a satisfactory outcome and to prevent participatants from feeling manipulated, differences in framework among the stakeholders had to be considered and the groundwork for the consultations properly laid. For example, the CPM for the Philippines spent much time in choosing and discussing with CSOs to be invited, especially those which helped organize the consultation. *Box 3* highlights the steps to ensure that consultations with a multi-stakeholder group is effective. These guidelines are based on documented experiences in India and the Philippines.

However, it is important to note that while India and the Philippines boast of dynamic civil societies, this is not the case in many other countries in the region. Bringing together such a diverse group of stakeholders may not be as viable in other countries, especially those with highly restricted political and legal environments. However, the experience in these countries, particularly Indonesia, provides interesting and valuable learning and lessons that could be adopted for other countries.

Participation in Design of Projects

In the design stage, particularly in the pre-appraisal stage, participatory tools are meant to assess and verify the state of need and rural poverty in the target area, specifically among the potential target beneficiaries. They are also designed to ascertain community capacities and resources. For purposes of this review, a project is deemed to have utilized a participatory approach in the design stage if the project documents mention using participatory tools, including beneficiary consultations, at any stage of project preparation. This review did not attempt to assess the extent and depth of application of the methods and approaches used. The figures may therefore paint a more optimistic picture than what has actually taken place.

Participatory approaches to project formulation have involved the use of PRA, RRA, SEPSS, ZOPPs. Several projects mentioned holding extensive consultations, workshops, etc., with target beneficiary groups during formulation missions. Project missions often

Table 4. Number of IFAD Projects per sub-Region that used Participatory Tools in Design and M&E

Region	Design		Monitoring/Eval		Number of Projects	
	No	%	No.	%	No.	%
South Asia	13	39.4	15	45.4	33	100.0
Southeast Asia	7	77.8	4	44.4	9	100.0
Socialist countries/ countries in transition	14	66.7	7	33.3	21	100.0
Pacific	1	25.0	—	0.0	4	100.0
Total	35	52.2	26	38.9	67	100.0

included institutions specialists, and, at times, a participation specialist.

Using a geographical classification (i.e., South Asia, Southeast Asia [SE Asia], Pacific countries and Socialist Countries and Countries in Transition), the review showed that projects in SE Asia utilized more participatory tools in the design of projects, at 88 per cent, compared to projects in the other three sub-regions. *(See Table 4)*. This is not surprising, as the two countries grouped in this sub-region - Indonesia and particularly the Philippines - have had a relatively longer experience in participatory approaches than other Asian countries. When it came to the monitoring and evaluation phase, South Asia had a slightly higher percentage of projects using participation.

Surprisingly, in design of projects, more participatory approaches were used in the Socialist and Transition countries than in South Asia. The projects in China and Vietnam showed a stronger acceptance for these approaches than in other countries. Once participatory tools or methods were adopted in one project, it was much easier to incorporate similar methods for others, through government support and intervention.

Table 5 indicates that irrigation and agriculture used more participatory tools in the design than others. Rural and credit projects came second. Previous experience, especially in many irrigation projects that did not involve beneficiaries actively, has shown that these projects could not be sustained because the beneficiaries did not want to maintain the irrigation systems. The people who were supposed to benefit from the project felt no sense of ownership nor responsibility for keeping the systems going beyond the project life. Hence, these systems fell into disrepair and depreciation once the projects ended. This learning is a compelling reason to ensure beneficiary participation right from the design of the project.

Targeting in Projects

Table 5. Type of Project and Use of Participatory Tools

Type of Project	Projects with Participatory Tools		Number of Projects	
	No.	%	No.	%
Agriculture	16	66.7	24	
Credit	5	45.5	11	
Irrigation	3	75.0	4	
Livestock	1	20.0	5	
Rural	10	50.0	20	
Others	—		3	
Total	35	52.2	67	100.0

Targeting in Projects

Many projects identified several, rather than just one target group. Most of the target groups were small holders -- small farmers or small fishers, followed by rural women. Other projects did not specify, addressing entire communities. *(See Table 6)* In socialist countries, such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, communities rather than households were targeted on the assumption that their societies are basically egalitarian. In several projects in China, located as they were in areas with large indigenous communities, it was also assumed that the population was largely homogenous. Beneficiary targeting yielded to social pressures within the communities. In Cambodia, two target methods were used: first, to include areas that were demonstrably poorer and then to select poorer sections within these areas.

A recent paper assessing IFAD's targeting mechanisms indicated that many of IFAD's efforts to target its support to the poorer households and sections of communities have generally failed. Benefits tended to be cornered by the less poor in the communities, who were more actively involved in project activities *(Sarkis, 1999)*. This finding was also evident in several projects studied in this review, as indicated in available mid-term assessments.

In a project targeting tribal groups in India, a mixture of the very poor and richer segments of the community in the savings groups initially proved beneficial; its savings and lending activities were at first very successful. Eventually, however, the poorer members dropped out of the groups.

An evaluation of a project in Papua New Guinea demonstrated the need to ensure greater involvement by beneficiaries in the targeting process. The use of RRA was proposed but rarely carried out despite support from the provincial government. The findings from Sarkis' paper also revealed that in recent years, IFAD has been trying out more bottom-up and participatory approaches to targeting. At the same time, it reported that in a large number of projects the community did not participate in beneficiary selection during project implementation. It is evident from several projects, including those in Nepal, that beneficiary participation made a big difference in the positive outcome of the projects.

Sarkis also mentioned, as did the IFAD Asia Paper, that self-targeting may be more useful, and less divisive in communities.

Participation in the Implementation Stage

A review of the 67 projects showed that over 50 per cent of the projects included ways to bring about greater participation from primary stakeholders - the beneficiary groups.

Most of the projects reviewed incorporated elements to promote and facilitate participation at the implementation stage, including that of other stakeholders. *Table 7* gives a

Table 6. Project Target Groups and Use of Participatory Tools

Target groups	Use of Participatory Tools	Number of Projects
Women	6	24
Landless	2	7
Small Farmers/ holders/ fishers	16	29
Cooperatives/Irrigators' Assns/Credit Unions	1	3
Indigenous Peoples	1	3
Whole communities	12	24

Many of the projects indicated several target groups.

Table 7. Participatory elements found in implementation phase of projects.

Participatory elements:	❑ Emphasis on community organizing and community development components ❑ PRA training of beneficiaries ❑ Village improvement fund (VIF) ❑ NGO revolving funds ❑ Increasing women's decision-making in project decisions ❑ Hiring of special women development officers or animators ❑ Creation of community assets ❑ Flexibility in funds allocation ❑ Savings groups with local capital formation ❑ Development of self-help groups ❑ Regular exchange of ideas and experiences from projects through forums, etc. ❑ Farmer participatory research
Participatory management elements:	❑ Participatory management approaches ❑ Devolution of responsibility for project management ❑ Involving whole communities in the project planning process ❑ Village planning approach allowing a menu of community projects and activities
Information dissemination elements:	❑ Village meetings ❑ Public announcements ❑ Visits by group leaders ❑ Booklets, bulletins ❑ Radio announcements

summary of the participatory elements in projects at the implementation stage.

Such participation elements included: a heavy emphasis on community organizing and community development components, PRA training for beneficiaries, participatory management approaches, village improvement fund (VIF), NGO revolving funds, greater participation by women in project decision making; creation of community assets, flexibility in funds allocation. The paper on the Asia Division's Experience in Participation cited savings groups with their local capital formation and the development of self-help groups as a valuable method in enhancing participation. The hiring of special women development officers or animators was an acknowledgment of the need to reach out to poor rural women and to plan not just for their economic upliftment but for their total development as well. This confirms the belief that economic development will not take place without first achieving social development. Projects therefore need to integrate both areas of concern.

Other innovative features to promote the participation of beneficiary groups in the management of projects include devolving responsibility for project management and even involving whole communities in the project planning process. In a number of projects, a participatory village planning approach yielded a menu of community projects and activities from which villagers could choose.

In Indonesia, attempts were made to systematically link projects so that there would be more regular exchange and learning from project experiences. In Vietnam, an informal forum was set up so that different organizations and stakeholders could exchange ideas that can help improve the projects.

Information dissemination is an essential feature of participation. To enhance the flow of information to target beneficiaries, some projects have incorporated information and awareness campaigns through booklets, village bulletins, and in some instances, even the radio. Households were informed of project activities through regular village meetings, public announcements or visits by group leaders. However, there was hardly any indication in project documents of how regular these information activities were held.

It is just as important to demonstrate the link between participation and the provision of services and benefits. For example, because grassroots development is a very slow process and villagers tend to get impatient for results, a Sri Lankan project, rather than do away with the participatory management process altogether, opted instead to continue certain "top-down" activities while village capacities were being built up to allow for fuller participation by the people in decision-making and management.

Several project documents cautioned against raising unrealistic expectations among the target beneficiaries. This could be avoided if the key players are properly briefed on what participation is all about and what it implies: that it does not develop over ambitious plans, nor should it lead to rigid beneficiary targeting that can be divisive to the community, or raise false hopes among those who cannot be covered by the project. Therefore, project staff, especially those who directly relate to beneficiary groups, need to have a leveled understanding of the framework within which the project is situated and must be able to communicate as much to the groups and communities.

A few projects concerned with farm technologies mentioned the need for farmer participatory research to re-orient the research approach of projects. This new approach incorporated farmers' inputs, in recognition of the value of local indigenous knowledge. As it turned out, however, and despite their avowed goal of assisting farmers to modernize their agricultural practices using sustainable agriculture principles, these projects focused instead on the dissemination of chemical farming practices. This is one example where terms, such as sustainable agriculture, are used with different meanings and interpretations, often quite in contrast to each other.

Or, as in the case of a project in Bhutan, the parameters or indicators of what participation really seeks to achieve or the quality of participation aimed for, may be inadequate. The project was based on a baseline survey and utilized RRA tools but failed nonetheless because its definition of farmer participation was too narrow. It was equated to their attendance at extension training, rather than to their capacity, for instance, to organize themselves, identify their priorities, execute their plans, etc. As a result, the project was not able to create a sense of ownership among the farmer beneficiaries.

In some cases, even if the project design called for beneficiary involvement in choosing project activities at the village level, this did not happen. Generally, however, households did not complain as they were happy enough to be part of the target group that would benefit from the project.

A participatory approach to implementation needs to consider three major aspects:

- Maximum financial transparency for all players concerned;
- Maximum delegation of responsibility to groups and organizations, and
- Enough time to ensure beneficiary capacity is built up, such as through training.

Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of Projects

The projects reviewed showed that much more participation of beneficiary groups was built into projects in the implementation phase rather than in the M&E systems. Most

Table 8. Types of NGO Participation in IFAD Projects

Types of Activities	Projects with NGO Participation
Group formation/beneficiary Identification/community organization/ Community development	23
Credit	12
Implementation	7
Technical Assistance	3
Training	14

NGO participation can comprise several types of activities

projects tended to rely on outside experts, including academic institutions, to undertake the evaluation. The majority of projects made no explicit mention of involving beneficiaries in the exercise, except as sources of information for the evaluation.

In projects with some form of participation in the M&E process, participation has generally meant involving beneficiary groups in certain activities that are part of the M&E process, such as attendance and participation of village representatives in project review meetings. This also covered process documentation and village resource assessment surveys.

A participatory M&E implies more than just involving beneficiary groups more actively in the process. It also means incorporating indicators to assess the level or degree of beneficiary participation. For many of the projects, specific indicators and methods were left to be done later on in the project.

But even if beneficiary participation in the M&E was not provided for in the original project design, it is still possible to include it at a later stage, *i.e.*, in project implementation. It is worth noting that in China, some recent projects have incorporated workshops on participatory monitoring and evaluation for project management, while in Vietnam, a project has actually institutionalized participatory evaluation exercises covering almost 800 villages and done through the Village Development Boards (VDBs) *(IFAD Asia Division, 1999)*.

Role of CSOs/NGOs

Many projects incorporated some form of NGO intervention at different stages of the projects. *Table 8* summarizes the types of NGO participation in the 67 projects covered by this review. This provides an overview of the work for which NGOs were contracted. There was a whole range of NGO interventions in project activities, particularly: training, group formation, community organization, community development, credit, technical assistance. In many cases, NGOs undertook a combination, rather than a single set of activities.

NGOs were most involved in the cluster of activities that includes group formation, beneficiary identification, community organization and community development. While these concerns are acknowledged as areas of comparative advantage for NGOs/CSOs, there is also a tendency to stereotype NGOs/CSOs in this mode, to the exclusion of other domains of expertise. Training activities were the next type of activity with significant NGO participation, followed by credit. Seven of the projects fully involved NGOs in the implementation of the projects. Minimal mention was made of NGOs being involved in project missions or project identification.

Table 9 shows the geographical distribution of NGO involvement in projects. The subregions of South and Southeast Asia had much higher percentages of projects with some

form of NGO participation. This is indicative of the generally more active presence of the NGO sector in these regions as compared to the Pacific or Socialist or Transition countries.

It was evident from mid-term reports and other evaluations of IFAD projects that there was a general appreciation for NGO performance in projects, particularly where NGOs took an active part as group animators and catalysts in group formation and credit delivery. Even in countries in transition such as Cambodia, it is recognized that almost all rural development management in the past decade had been done by NGOs, although only the international ones. In countries with a still developing indigenous civil society and NGO/PO sector, international NGOs were contracted in a few projects to assist in such activities as group formation and linkage building. In countries with strong NGOs, most if not all projects tried to incorporate NGO involvement in one or several project components.

A critical question raised by a Bangladesh NGO contracted to implement the credit project component was, to what extent can an NGO, with a highly developed strategy and long track experience, deviate from the strategy prescribed by IFAD, especially concerning beneficiary selection and use of credit fund repayments? Such issues will take on added importance in the future, particularly as IFAD involves more NGOs in its operations.

The presence of skeptical and recalcitrant government officials in many countries remains a major constraint to broadening NGO intervention in projects at both the national and local/project levels. However, this too is poised to change as CS grows worldwide.

Meanwhile, the insensitivity of most government bureaucrats to the need for participation in general will take a "long and difficult process" to address. Current legislation in Asia regulating the operations of NGOs and financial contributions to them is not always favorable.

Issues on NGO Participation

Some projects had minimal NGO participation, especially where NGOs in the country or in the particular project area were thought to be incapable of implementing certain project components. This was the case in Pakistan. Project planners were apprehensive about involving NGOs that didn't have a good track record, warning against overextending their capacities. Some projects reported problems with NGOs that did not comply with project requirements or with timetables set. A few projects actually terminated the services of NGOs that had been contracted for particular components due to poor performance.

Other major issues had to do with lack of transparency and accountability, resulting mainly from inadequate accounting and organizational controls. Another important issue that was brought up is the dependence that

Table 9. NGO Participation in IFAD Projects by sub-Region

Region	Projects with NGO participation		Number of Projects	
	No.	%	No.	%
South Asia	23	69.7	33	
Southeast Asia	5	55.5	9	
Socialist Countries/ Countries in Transition	3	14.3	21	
Pacific	1	25.0	4	
Total	32	47.8	67	100.0

NGOs could foster in the POs they're assisting. In countries such as the Philippines, a code of ethics has been instituted by the NGO sector as a self-regulating mechanism. Something like it, however, is not yet found in most countries.

NGOs are also attempting to address issues of capacity building by getting the bigger and better qualified NGOs to assist the smaller ones with limited capacities. Some projects reviewed did try to balance contracting between the big NGOs, which are often national in their scope, and smaller ones, which often operate in the local areas, thus giving the smaller NGOs a chance to build up their capacities. NGO networks and federations, which are recent developments since the 1980s, likewise function to enable its smaller members to access resources.

Clearly, the fact that CSOs/NGOs/POs play a critical role in one or several components of many IFAD projects makes it important for IFAD to address some of the key concerns raised here and to some extent assist the sector in resolving these issues, particularly on capacity building.

It is an investment that is likely to have general long-term positive consequences for IFAD's basic work with the rural poor.

Role of Group Formation and Community Organization and Capacity Building

Almost all of the projects reviewed sought to establish formal or informal groups that could implement the project objectives. In most cases, new groups were formed for the purpose rather than working through existing ones, except where the latter are able to incorporate the project objectives into their own.

Some projects with a participatory approach had strong organization building components and made use of community organization and community development approaches to achieve this. These projects seriously invested in group or community facilitators to work closely with the communities to mobilize community energies and support for project activities. The role of community or group formators was taken on either by NGOs subcontracted to do the work or by hired project staff, particualarly in areas where there are no qualified NGOs. It would be interesting to study the differences in approach and effectiveness of different groups contracted to implement the community organization, community development and capacity building components of the projects.

In a few projects, the design allowed for a long preparatory phase for the organization and mobilization of beneficiary groups. This was prompted by the realization that community or village building is time-consuming, complicated and intensive, involving a continuous, even "torturous" process which should be pursued even beyond the project life. An appreciation could be found in a project in Nepal, which explicitly provided for a three-year exploratory phase to test community reactions and to refine approaches to promoting the project. This however was an exceptional case as the majority of projects tended to follow more rigid timetables, which put undue pressure to accomplish unreasonable target outputs.

The organizations or groups identified in the project documents included: village development committees (such as those found in the villages in China as part of the political and administrative structure of the local government), village implementation groups, farmers'/producers' organizations, credit unions/cooperatives, self-help groups, savings groups, women's groups, irrigators' associations, community development groups, etc.

Most projects incorporated training components but majority of the training for beneficiaries was technical in nature, *e.g.*, farmers' extension, irrigation management, etc. Several projects incorporated training in PRA and other participatory tools for the benefit of

project staff and government officials involved in the project and, in some projects, even the beneficiaries. This type of training was more evident in the more recently approved projects as a result of the increased commitment to actively promote participation. In the case of a few women's projects, as was mentioned previously, women development officers were hired in recognition of the need to reach out to women beneficiaries more effectively and to ensure that women are able to maximize the benefits from the project.

Several mid-term reviews attributed the problem of project sustainability to the lack of prior group orientation and inadequate follow-up of beneficiary groups. This indicates that not enough attention and resources were allotted for capacity building and group formation.

Factors that Facilitated/ Constrained Participation

Within Countries

To review the factors that have facilitated or impeded participation in IFAD projects, it is helpful to use *Oakley's (1995)* categories : structural, organizational, and operational categories.

The structural factors include the level/ degree of political support and bureaucratic decentralization. Some CPMs related that a major constraint to fostering participation in projects is the lack of government support for and acceptance of such practices. This situation is more prevalent in countries wherer government has had little experience in dealing with CSOs. Such governments tend to view participatory approaches with skepticism and a general lack of enthusiasm. Even in countries where the CSO/NGO sector is strong and dynamic, the relationship with government can still be strained, thus hindering CSO/NGO participation.

However, positive experiences can be found in countries like Vietnam, where the government implementing agency, convinced of the effectiveness of participatory tools in enhancing a project's chances of success, has actually expanded the use of these tools at other levels and in other projects. In China, PRA methodologies have been used to cover wider geographic areas than those covered by projects. Such experiences in piloting show that it is possible to work even with what are perceived to beunenthusiastic governments to increase participation. Even with just a few open-minded government officials, it may be possible to open up possibilities to influence the implementing agency to try such initiatives. Building alliances with like-minded officials is also helpful.

A major challenge there is to identify which officials are receptive to participatory concepts and approaches, and to expose the skeptical ones to successful practices and experiences in the use of participation or to provide them with training opportunities on participatory approaches and methods. Moreover, IFAD, as well as other donor agencies, can keep reminding governments of their mandate and commitment to promote participation. This can help to persuade governments of IFAD's seriousness and commitment to promoting participation. This will hopefully contribute to the development of a "culture of participation" in countries. However, as the IFAD paper on the Asia Division's Experience in Participation also notes, "commitment to participation can only be complete when it is fully understood and incorporated into the mind set of the officials in the field".

In contrast, in countries with strong and vibrant CSOs, particularly NGOs that actively engage in development processes, government is more open to participation. However, even in generally receptive countries government agencies may differ in their willingness to pursue the full extent of cooperation. This is obvious from current attitudes and operational arrangements.

The organizational factors which can impede participation include constraints within and among CSOs/NGOs, such as lack of CSO/ NGO accountability or transparency which makes it difficult at times for these CSOs/ NGOs to become effective partners in a project. A 'welfarist', even paternalistic, relationship that can develop between NGOs and their partner POs is also detrimental to promoting full participation of the people.

A few CPMs reported a difficulty in choosing which NGOs to work with, given their present number and variety. When looking around for NGOs to invite to workshops or projects, the CPMs said they usually inquired from their government contacts. However, the latter are often not the best source of such information. There is a need for CPMs to

better understand the range of NGOs, with their different philosophies, strategies and capacities, and to be discriminating in choosing possible partners in the different stages of the project cycle. In this regard, the NGO Coordinating Unit in the ED has a data base of NGOs which could provide the necessary information.

Inadequate capacity and skills in facilitating participation, whether on the part of government, CSOs, project staff or the beneficiary group itself, is another organizational factor affecting participation. There are available human and other resources needed to build skills in participatory approaches in the region but they need to be better identified and utilized. In China, for example, in-country capacity was tapped to organize training in participatory methods for IFAD projects. For many projects, CSOs/NGOs with a proven track record in participation, are contracted to undertake the training in participatory approaches.

Within IFAD

The review of various project and other IFAD documents on participation indicated the lack of a comprehensive framework and guide to participation. This lack of framework is an organizational problem which may impede participation and thus needs to be addressed. This framework and guide could be put together as a collective effort by CPMs from the different divisions, among others, so that the framework reflects the collective thinking and learning of key IFAD project staff on participation.

Such a framework and guide could also serve as a common set of indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, to assess the extent of participation in projects. It can also facilitate the work of CPMs in tracking levels and degrees of participation of major stakeholders.

There was some apprehension, however, that the use of such tools could be viewed as one more bureaucratic imposition on the CPMs, and as such may not be adopted by them. This is especially true where the guidelines have to be ferreted out of voluminous manuals which few people care to read. Instead, the CPMs should be given the chance to decide how such a guide could help them in their work and what they would like to see in such a guide.

The absence of a staff member assigned to monitor participation issues in-house constrains the full promotion of participation and participatory approaches throughout IFAD's operations, particularly though not exclusively its projects. At present, the responsibility for operationalizing participation in projects is with the regional directors and the CPMs. The recent appointments of NGO focal points in the various divisions was prompted by recognition of the need to raise NGO consciousness within IFAD. But none of these is the same as appointing a staff member/s whose sole if not primary responsibility is to support the adoption of participatory approaches in IFAD's operations. Working Groups (WGs) on participation exist in the WB and FAO. These WGs have been particularly helpful in promoting greater understanding among the staff of participation of multi-stakeholders in agency operations.

Some of the CPMs interviewed cited time constraint as a key barrier to pursuing participation approaches. The relatively short period given to project design (*i.e.*, 18 to 24 months) is not conducive to the adoption of participatory approaches, especially at the COSOP preparation stage. The temptation to resort to the services of a consultant is sometimes too great to resist. Even when consultants organize consultations with stakeholders, this does not necessarily translate to meaningful participation, particularly if the consultations are done haphazardly. All those involved in the design process should have a real commitment to and understanding of the processes involved, including the inherent difficulties, as

well as a sensitivity to the socio-cultural, political and economic conditions in the communities being targeted. If the government agencies involved are not thus disposed, then the CPMs will have to try harder to influence them in favor of participation.

Budget constraints were another problem cited. Participatory approaches generally entail more human and financial expenditure, but this is more than made up for by the assurance of greater project success. Unfortunately, there is not enough money for such expenses. Hence, it is advisable to provide for the costs of promoting participation in designing future projects.

A more fundamental issue in pursuing participation in IFAD projects can be summarized from the IFAD Country Programme Evaluation for Nepal which stated that "the farmer-first paradigm needs to be accepted as the first basis for participation, which also means that the priorities and needs of communities should drive the process of institutional innovations" *(IFAD 1997)*. Such a framework is necessary to guarantee that the project components flow from the needs as expressed by the beneficiaries, whether they are the farmers, fisherfolk, women, indigenous, etc., and that a process is ensured whereby POs and communities can "participate on a regular and continuing basis so that constraints in the projects, including constraints to their participation can be debated and their grievances can be heard."

Lessons Learned from IFAD's Experiences in Participatory Processes and Implications for IFAD's Polices and Practice of Participation

A wide array of experiences in participation can be found in IFAD projects in Asia, several of which entail innovative features and a range of possibilities that could be replicated elsewhere.

At the COSOP and project identification stage, the experience of some countries holding public consultations has shown that in some countries have shown positive results in integrating multi-stakeholders meaningfully into this phase of the project cycle. Of course, certain conditions, such as the presence of a dynamic civil society in the countries, and government acceptance and commitment to pursue participation have been instrumental in contributing to this increased participation of stakeholders. Also important was the preparatory work prior to organizing these types of consultations, such as: stakeholder analysis to guide the selection of participants; proper briefing of participants to explain objectives and expectations from the consultations/ meetings prior to the consultations; advanced dissemination of background information and consultation/meeting materials; choice of effective facilitators/moderators, etc.

Other participatory methods to engage key stakeholders in this phase of the project cycle can also be explored depending on the availability of funds or time or level of stakeholder involvement envisioned. These methods include: focus groups, search conferences, strategy forums, round table meetings.

A large number of the Asia and Pacific projects incorporated participatory elements in the implementation phase. Some projects provided for participatory management mechanisms that allow beneficiaries greater control over project management. Participatory management is certainly one area that needs to be much better addressed in all IFAD projects.

A few projects permitted a longer gestation period for group formation before proceeding to the other project components. This is based on the realization that group formation and development is a long and complicated process. This learning, however, still needs to be better recognized and planned for in other projects. Some projects hired special staff to ensure the participation of specific target groups, especially women, indicating an appreciation of the need to address differences in class, gender, etc. among target groups.

CSO/NGO participation in IFAD projects was built in for many projects, especially in countries with vibrant CSOs/NGOs that could provide some of the project components, namely: training, group formation, community organization, community development, credit, technical assistance. In many cases, NGOs undertook a combination, rather than a single set of activities, depending on their level of capacity. However, there has been a tendency to stereotype NGOs in community organization types of activities, thus leaving them out of other technical areas, such as project missions, preparation for public consultations, or meetings for the COSOP. This is another area that CPMs could further look into when they draw up their plans.

In the M&E stage of projects, participation can be much further enhanced to ensure that beneficiaries are much more actively and significantly engaged. This should include their involvement in deciding indicators of participation that will be used as well as key result areas to determine project success as early on in the design stage as possible. The inclusion of beneficiary representatives at all levels of monitoring activity could be incorporated for all projects regardless of the original design of the monitoring systems.

While elements of participation have been integrated/incorporated into various stages of the project cycle, it is still oftentimes considered as a one-off activity or exercise. This seems to be the main form in which participation is currently practised, except in explicitly defined participatory projects. If it is to be meaningful, participation needs to be seen and effected as a continuous process built into as many if not all stages of the project cycle.

Since 1998, a major step has been taken to require that PRA and other participatory needs assessment tools be utilized at the design stage for all new projects. It is equally important to require that other participatory approaches, tools, and elements are adopted systematically for all other project phases, and in all future projects. The necessary guidelines and indicators need to be drawn up to ensure that this is do-able and that it is not done in a mechanical manner.

Constraints and barriers to participation are both internal and external to IFAD. Important factors that can determine the adoption of participatory methods are: support and commitment of government at national and local field level; the dynamism and vibrancy of the CSO/NGO sector; the level of capacity and skills, including attitudes, in participatory processes available at the country level; the capacity of CSOs/NGOs to deliver on participation components of projects; and the complexity of the CSO/NGO sector. In countries that are lukewarm, if not actually hostile to participation, IFAD can still find ways to open the door to promote participation. Some examples are identifying potentially sympathetic government officials, providing government or project staff opportunities for exposure to successful participatory practices, etc.

Critical Issues within IFAD

In IFAD, the key factors that affect the promotion of participation are: availability of a comprehensive framework on participation; time and budget to pursue participation; a system of rewards and incentives for participation; staff to monitor and assist in promoting participation internally; and the availability of information on the CSO/NGO sector in countries.

Interviews, discussions and project documents point to a number of barriers to full participation within IFAD. For example, how congruent and coherent are IFAD's policies on participation in projects and in structures within these projects, especially where financial disbursement is concerned. The fact remains that IFAD, like any multilateral or bilateral organization, is driven by its accountability to its donor constituencies, thus inhibiting it from fully undertaking a process-oriented approach to project management. However, the relative flexibility of IFAD as an organization, owing to its small size and its commitment to pursue participation, permits a less rigid interpretation of its rules in order to balance concerns of accountability against the need to control project components.

Despite IFAD's strong organizational mandate on participation and its attempts to engage and involve its major stakeholders, IFAD offers no matching incentives and rewards for staff compliance with such mandate. There are no policies, guidelines or standards by which participation can be assessed and evaluated by IFAD staff, particularly to monitor the extent to which projects have empowered its target beneficiaries to get control of the project and subsequently improve their life conditions; and to define outcomes in terms of the beneficiaries' newfound confidence, the stability of the organizations formed, the extent to which people have learned to access resources outside of the project, and their ability to partner with government and project staff, etc.

Just as importantly, IFAD would have to provide instructions on how to implement these guidelines, should they be developed.For instance, how can the commitment and own-

ership of IFAD staff be ensured so that they will not view these guidelines as yet another imposition from above?

A Working Group (WG) on participation, similar to the WG on NGOs, has recently been formed. While this is a welcome development in pursuing participation among IFAD staff, these WGs should be run as regular forums for the exchange of ideas and experiences, which can over the long-term improve IFAD's capacity to be a knowledge and learning organization where participation is concerned.

Table 10.Summary of Constraints to Participation in Countries and within IFAD

Within Countries	Within IFAD
❑ skepticism and lack of government support and acceptance ❑ restricted socio-political environment ❑ absence or lack of active and dynamic civil society organizations involved in development ❑ constraints within and among CSOs/NGOs, such as lack of accountability or transparency, 'welfarist'/even paternalistic relationship between NGOs and (POs) ❑ difficulty in determining their partners people's organizations which particular CSOs/ NGOs are appropriate to relate with ❑ lack of capacities and skills to facilitate participation	❑ lack of a comprehensive framework, guide lines and standards on participation for all stages of the project ❑ absence of particular staff member/s assigned to monitor participation issues in-house ❑ time constraints ❑ lack of understanding of the processes involved and commitment to the process ❑ problem of budget ❑ lack of incentives for staff to pursue participation

Recommendations

For IFAD Management:

A key question is how to find ways to bring about a stronger culture of participation in IFAD, given that there is already a general commitment to pursue participation among the CPMs. One suggestion is to develop a comprehensive participation framework and guidelines that are coherent with other organizational policies and guidelines. This undertaking should be a collective effort of CPMs and other key staff doing participation-related work. In this regard, tools can be developed for in-house use, similar to those developed for gender assessment. The important thing is to ensure that the CPMs have a sense of ownership for such tools.

The WG on participation can capture learning on participation at all stages of the project cycle in various projects, as well as in the other operations of IFAD. At the start, this WG could be made up of representatives from each region/division, an arrangement similar to the set-up of the NGO focal points from each division. Later, other interested staff members could join. This WG can discuss, among other things, (1) the costs of ensuring participation at all stages of the project cycle; (2) obtaining quantitative information on the benefits of participation for the primary beneficiaries; (3) building the confidence and enthusiasm of staff; and (4) finding new ways of working. In addition, a staff member should be assigned to monitor the group's progress, and assist it in its work.

For the Asia and Pacific Division:

- Ensure capacity building on participation for key stakeholders in projects, includingbeneficiary groups. Training in participatory tools should be made mandatory for government officials and project staff primarily to wean them from traditional management methods which do not promote participation. Capacity building in this area should be sustained among IFAD staff, especially the CPMs, through seminars, workshops, etc.
- Ensure that beneficiaries and other major stakeholders are integrated into the M&E mechanisms for projects, not just as sources of information but as active participants in the process. This implies making sure that they are part of the decision-making on determining indicators on participation, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as key result areas/success indicators for projects.
- Expand the extent and level of CSO/NGO participation to include, among others, their involvement in the COSOP and project identification processes, etc.
- In countries that are less open to civil society, IFAD should try harder to influence government to involve civil society in framing the COSOPs, and to allow the use of more participatory approaches at the village level. This could be done by exposing government officials, at IFAD meetings, to successful experiences in adopting participatory tools or by insisting that civil society/ participation be integrated into projects whenever possible.
- Allow for greater flexibility in group formation/development and other participatory components in the project designs that can strengthen the process- as opposed to the blueprint-approach to projects.
- Strengthen cooperation and links with the NGO unit and other units with NGO components, such as the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty and the Belgian Survival Fund Joint Programme (BSF). Data and information on NGOs can be exchanged with these units to enhance the learning on CSOs/NGOs.

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Notes

[1] See IFAD (1999) "Asia Division's Experience in Participation". Rome

[2] The UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is an effort by the UN system to integrate their country assistance framework involving civil society and other stakeholders more systematically.

[3] A more exhaustive listing of participatory tools can be found in the document on NGO Best Practices on Participation.

[4] The document on NGO Best Practices on Participatory Approaches also provides a description of these group formation approaches.

[5] Somewhat participatory - some beneficiaries are consulted about their problems and recommendations, but development activities are defined and designed by external development agents; considerably participatory - cross section of beneficiaries define their problems and recommendations and have a role in designing and monitoring development interventions; highly participatory - in addition to the above, a cross-section of beneficiaries have control over local decisions and use of resources for the entire project, or significant project components, and they take part in project evaluation. (FAO Programme Evaluation Report 1998-1999).