Participation, Citizenship and Local Governance

For the last twenty years, the concept of participation has been widely used in the discourse of development. For much of this period, the concept has referred to participation in the social arena, in the community or in development projects. Increasingly, however, there has been a wider acceptance of the idea that participation extends to rights of citizenship and to democratic governance, particularly in the context of programmes for decentralised governance.

> This paper explores:
> - differing concepts of participation, and their intersection;
> - evidence related to the barriers to participation in local governance; and
> - new initiatives and strategies for overcoming those barriers.

Concepts of Participation

Two themes tend to dominate the concept of participation in the context of development: local-level participation in project or programme activities; and, state-level participation through political institutions and processes.

Social and project participation

Within development, perhaps the dominant concern with participation has been related to the community or social sectors, where participation referred to organised efforts to increase the control of marginalised groups over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations. In this sense, participation was located – at least initially – outside of the state, amongst those who had been excluded from existing institutions. It could take a variety of forms, ranging from social movements to self-help groups (SHGs).

More recently, the definition of participation in development has often been located in development projects and programmes, as a means of strengthening their relevance, quality and sustainability. From this perspective, participation could be seen in the level of consultation or decision-making in all phases of a project cycle – from needs assessment to appraisal, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation. While these projects could be funded by the state, participation within them was seen not as related to broader issues of politics or governance, but as a way of encouraging action outside the public sphere. Moreover, the focus was often on direct participation of primary stakeholders, rather than on indirect participation through elected representatives.

Political participation

Political participation refers to activities intended to influence the selection and actions of elected representatives. This might occur through participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies, or through voting, lobbying and protesting. Surprisingly, within development literature there has been little attention to notions of political participation, which involve the interactions of the individual or organised groups with the state, and which often focus more on mechanisms of indirect participation.

Participatory Methods

Each of the concepts of participation carries with it differing methods for strengthening or enhancing participation. Traditionally, in the field of political participation, such methods have included voter education, enhancing the awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizens, lobbying and advocacy, often aimed towards developing a more informed citizenry who could hold elected representatives more accountable. In the social and

community spheres, however, we have seen the development of a number of broader participatory methods for appraisal, planning, monitoring large institutions, training and awareness-building. Here, greater emphasis is placed on the importance of participation not only to hold others accountable but also as a self-development process starting with the articulation of grassroots needs and priorities and building popular forms of organisation

Linking the Spheres: Strengthening Citizen Participation in Governance

Increasingly, in response to donor and civil society pressure, governments have been urged to adopt participatory approaches in their ministries (e.g., forestry, health, irrigation) as a means of influencing policy and as a form of planning at multiple levels. Inevitably, the scaling-up of local-level participation leads those involved in development projects and programmes to engage with the state and with broader issues of governance, representation, transparency and accountability.
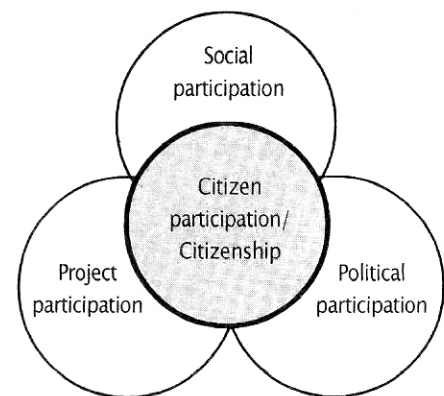
Citizen participation

The moves from government towards civil society, and from social and project participation towards governance, offer new spaces in which the concept of participation may also be expanded to one of "citizenship" – one which involves linking participation in the political, community and social spheres. This integration implies a transition from only being concerned with "beneficiaries" or "the excluded" to a concern with broad forms of engagement by citizens in policy formulation and decision-making in key arenas which affect their lives. Perhaps the best place to see . and understand these new interactions is at the local level, where the concerns of the "grassroots" or locality intersect most directly with those of governance and the state.

Democratic decentralisation

One of the most popular state reforms that has opened spaces for a wider and deeper participation of citizens at the local level has been the decentralisation and deconcentration of financial and political power. Parallel to these developments, enabling legal frameworks and institutional channels for citizen participation at the local level have been developed in many countries.

Linking Participation in the Political Community and Social Spheres

Shifts in Participation

From	To
Beneficiary	Citizen
Project	Policy
Consultation	Decision-making
Local	National

Cross reference: Topic on Building Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

For the purpose of this paper we are interested in democratic decentralisation understood as the transfer of resources and power (and often of tasks) to lower-level authorities which are:

- largely independent of higher levels of government;
- democratic in some way and to some degree; and
- where persons in authority within institutions at intermediate and/or local levels are elected directly or indirectly by secret ballots.

Democratic decentralisation may be promoted for a number of reasons – administrative, fiscal, political or others. However, among the reasons often given is to bring government closer to people and enhance their participation and interaction with local government officers in the affairs of the locality.

The Barriers to Citizen Participation in Local Governance

The apparent gap between the promise of enhanced participation through democratic decentralisation on one hand, and the everyday realities of participatory politics on the other, suggests the need to understand more fully the barriers and dynamics to participation in local governance, as well as the enabling factors and methods that can be used to overcome them.

While few studies focus specifically on the dynamics, barriers and methods for strengthening participation, they do provide some general findings on the obstacles to more participatory local governance. Among the key themes are the following:

Unbalanced power relations

Citizen participation is about power and about its exercise by different social actors in the spaces created for interaction between citizens and local authorities. However, the control of the structure and processes for participation – defining spaces, actors, agendas, procedures – is usually in the hands of government institutions and this can become a barrier for effective involvement of citizens. Further, local elites, local governments and other actors operating on the local scene, such as political parties and even some non-government organisations (NGOs), have often been prone to co-opt popular movements in order to further their own agendas.

Low level of citizen organisation

Citizens find it difficult to counter existing power relations where there is no history of effective grassroots organisation or social movement. This is particularly true where popular organisations fail to place representatives in political posts within municipal governments.

Lack of participatory skills

As progress is made from lower to higher levels of participation (information, consultation, decision-making, management), participatory processes become more complex and demand different types of skills, knowledge, experience, leadership and managerial capabilities. The problem of weak participatory skills at different levels is a common constraint to effective citizen involvement in decentralised governance structures.

Inadequate financial resources at the local level

Financial resources to implement development activities influenced or decided by local citizens come mainly from two sources: central allocations and local revenues. A common barrier for citizen participation in decision-making is the control of financial resources by higher levels of authority and the meager resources available locally.

Insufficient political commitment

Another barrier to strengthening participation involves the absence of a strong and determined central authority to provide and enforce opportunities for participation at the local level, as well as the lack of political will by local government officers in enforcing the legislation that has been created for this purpose.

Difficulties in the ability to recall elected representatives

While in many countries legislation exists to recall elected representatives, this process can prove difficult in practice, given the time and organisational costs involved.
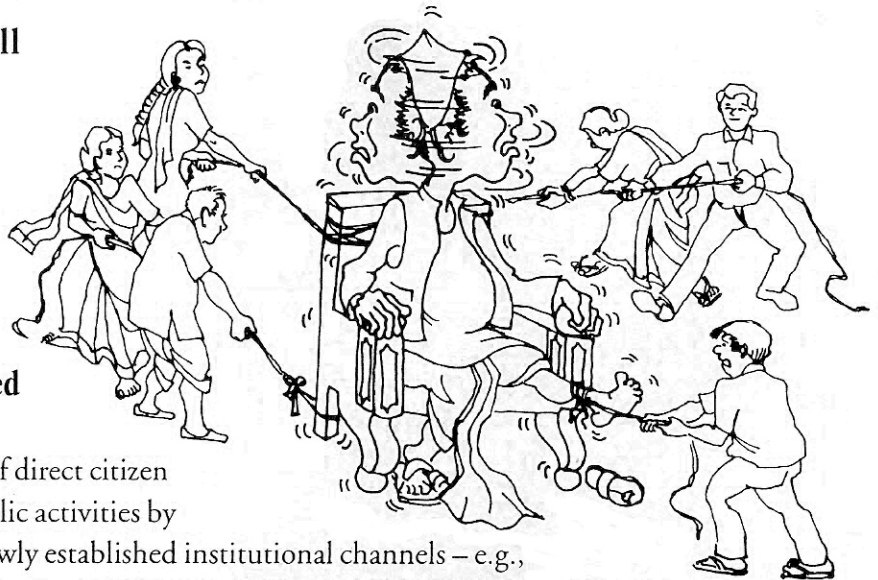
Participatory structures underutilised

Strengthening of participation in local governance requires the strengthening of direct citizen involvement in decision-making in public activities by individuals or groups, often through newly established institutional channels – e.g., monitoring committees, planning processes, etc. However, at the municipal level, the majority of these mechanisms have a consultative nature, where participation is associated with stages of plan formulation or execution of programmes, but not with decision-making. In other cases, legislation may exist which recognises the rights of civil society organisations to access information and address demands and petitions, but, the formal spaces created to allow these groups to participate are not widely used.

Overcoming the Barriers: Strategies and Approaches

Despite these significant barriers, the message is not that efforts to strengthen popular participation in local governance should be abandoned. Indeed, around the world we can find a number of important innovations and interventions which promise to make a significant impact in enhancing citizen participation in democratic local governance.
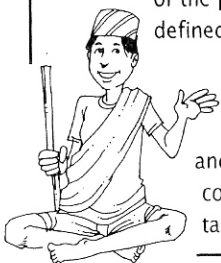
Participatory planning

In a number of countries, notably the Philippines, India, Senegal, Uganda and Bolivia, new legislation offers possibilities for new processes of participatory planning to influence the priorities of local governments.

Citizen education and awareness-building

Another set of strategies has involved using popular education and communication methodologies to strengthen the awareness of local citizens of their rights and responsibilities under new local governance legislation.

Training and sensitising local officials

While some participatory education strategies have focused on building up the awareness and capacity of local citizens, others have focused on training elected officials and government staff. These strategies emphasise changing the attitudes within existing institutions and developing the skills of newly-elected citizens.

Advocacy, alliances and collaboration

A fourth set of strategies involve developing new skills of advocacy, as well as building effective alliances and collaborative partnerships, especially those that cut across existing power differences, or those that recognise and involve marginalised sectors of society (such as coalitions of the poor).

Participatory budgeting

Presently, one of the most successful experiences in citizen participation in decision-making at the local level is the experience of participatory budgets. In Brazil, at least 70 cities have

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Participatory Budgeting in Brazil

The participatory budget strategy was initiated in 1989, when the City Hall of Porto Alegre created participatory structures with decision-making power over the allocation of resources for the development of the municipality. The Municipal Council of Government Plan and Budget (MCGPB) is responsible for the coordination and organisation of the process of developing the investment plan, and checking the execution of the planned budget. It is constituted by elected citizens from the 16 areas of the city as well as by government representatives who have no voting right. Through a process involving people from all areas, the investment plan of the previous year is reviewed, priorities are defined and councilors for the MCGPB are elected. An open and elaborate process with the population follows, which ends when the investment plan is approved by the MCGPB and sent by the Executive Power to the town councilors. Subsequently, a negotiation process takes place.

established a participatory budget system which allows citizen participation in decision-making over allocation of resources.
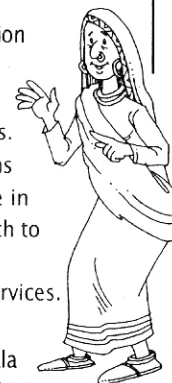
Promoting accountability of elected officials to citizens

While a number of participatory methods focus on enhancing direct participation of citizens in the governance process, others focus on strengthening accountability of elected officials and government agencies to the citizenry. Traditionally, in democratic governance, accountability is thought to be maintained in a number of ways, including local elections, strong and active opposition parties, media, public meetings and formal redress procedures. In the newer and more active forms of citizenship, citizens are developing other accountability mechanisms.

Examples of Accountability Mechanisms

- The women-led right-to-information movement in Rajasthan which demands a minimum level of transparency by local governments.
- Professional advocacy organisations such as the Public Affairs Centre in Bangalore which conducts research to produce "report cards" on local governments in the delivery of services.
- The establishment of "vigilance" committees such as those in Kerala which are empowered to sign off on local projects - inspecting for both quality and for proper use of funds - before final payments are made to contractors.

This paper presents just some of the strategies which are beginning to be used for strengthening citizen participation in the potentially new spaces found in democratic decentralisation programmes. Clearly, their potential for success will vary across contexts and will depend a great deal on broader enabling factors. Further research is needed to learn about the impact these interventions can have in helping to overcome the barriers to full and effective citizen participation in decision-making.

Prepared by:
John Gaventa and
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Evaluating Governance Programmes

What is governance?

Governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. Governance comprises the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. Governance includes the state but transcends it by taking in the private sector and civil society. These are all critical. The state creates a conducive political and legal environment, the private sector generates jobs and income, and civil society facilitates political and social interactions – mobilising groups to participate in economic, social and political activities. Governance can no longer be considered a closed system. (UNDP, 1997)

Experiences from around the world continue to demonstrate that sound and sustainable social and economic development is unattainable without good governance. Consequently, a number of national and bilateral programmes have been developed and implemented to promote the principles and practice of good governance.

Governance programming and evaluation to date has tended to be quite narrow. It has focused primarily on public sector management and performance, thereby ignoring the contributions of civil society in a country's governance. Further, within the public sector, emphasis has tended to be placed on government effectiveness and efficiency (economic and institutional criteria), not on its legitimacy and accountability (political criteria). With the growing acceptance of a broader notion of governance that includes both civil society and the private sector, there is an increased awareness that virtually all development activities could be assessed for their influence on governance. This makes an assessment of the overall governance of a country difficult, given the need to be comprehensive yet responsive to changing local geographic, political, cultural and economic conditions.

These difficulties suggest the need for a multi-level approach to evaluating governance whereby development projects begin to assess their impacts on governance, and where specific governance evaluations consider a broader range of development issues.

The following table developed by Jim Armstrong (April 1999) shows some of the important elements that should be considered when evaluating governance programmes:

Major Interrelated Elements of Governance Programmes			
Criteria (For good governance)	Activities and programmes (To foster good governance)	Relationships (To ensure synergy and sustainability)	Institutions (And processes supporting good governance)
- Transparency - Accountability - Participatory - Rule of law - No/low level of corruption - Equity - Security - Predictability - Effective responsible policy - Incentives for sustainability - Decentralisation - Political leadership, support and commitment - Efficiency - Legitimacy	- Courses and workshops - Mentoring - Study tours - Coaching/Partnering/ Twinning - Learning from alliances - Publications - Diagnostic tools, gap analysis, organisational planning, institutional establishment, change management and other consulting–like interventions	- Government and governed - Level of trust - Degree of participation - Central and local governments - Inter–institutional - Inter–sectoral - Civil society organisations - Inter–development agency - Network support - Recipient ownership	- Legislatures - Judiciaries - Security (police, customs, military) - Electoral bodies and systems - Financial accountability (financial management, audit regime, auditor general) - Markets - Service delivery mechanisms - Professional public service (reformed, efficient, policy capacity, meritorious, high level of integrity) - Local governments - Public participation - Individuals
Targeted goals and objectives Need to be "home grown" carefully developed and refined with recipients to reflect their circumstances and needs. Need for flexibility and responsiveness. In context of a country's needs, culture and history.	**Impact assessment** Activities and programmes as a means to an end, part of a wider set of clear objectives rather than supply-sided approaches.	**Data research, surveys, interviews** **Promote c**ooperation, involve different types of organisation, assess ownership	**Institutional arrangement tools** Emphasise organisational procedures, structures and cultures

Building Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

Promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships is one important mechanism in enhancing the participation of a larger and more representative grouping to provide inputs into an activity or project. Real and meaningful participation cannot be achieved by involving only a few key groups. In most development activities or projects, partnerships are often limited to a few stakeholders, e.g., donors, government and/or non-government organisations (NGOs) or people's organisations (civil society organisations (CSOs), or community-based organisations (CBOs). This is now changing with a greater appreciation of the value and advantages that partnerships among wider groupings bring into the development scene.

Value of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

■ **Better information**
Key actors from various sectors provide critical inputs to the formulation of the framework and context for development assistance or the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of projects.

■ **Representative perspective**
Varied groups and sectors, rather than only a handful of so-called experts hired by donor agencies or by governments, help ensure a wider, more representative, even if divergent perspectives and approaches.

ENHANCING OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY: A RESOURCE BOOK ON PARTICIPATION

■ **Wider ownership**
Multi-stakeholder partnerships enhance sense of ownership of the outputs of the process.

■ **Democratisation**
Multi-stakeholder groups also promote and strengthen democratisation processes. A multi-stakeholder approach in conceptualising, identifying, implementing, monitoring and evaluating a project or an activity, ensures wider ownership, shared responsibility and collective accountability than would be otherwise be possible.
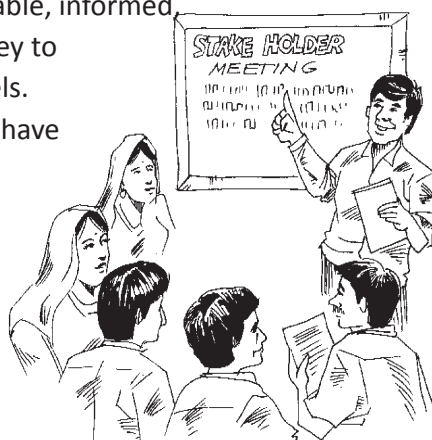
Multi-stakeholder partnerships and approaches should be promoted at the following levels:
■ policy formulation at national and local levels; and
■ projects at local level.

Building such partnerships and networks at any level, can be a formidable task, fraught with risks if the right stakeholders are not properly involved or if important stakeholders decide not to participate in the process of networking. It is, therefore, essential to be guided by certain principles that make for effective multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Principles for Effective Partnerships

Principles for Fostering Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships
1. Proper groundwork
2. Skilled/quality staff
3. Proper identification of stakeholders
4. Clear aims of part-nerships
5. Commitment of stakeholders
6. Determining level of partnership
7. Active participation of stakeholders
8. Availability of human/finan-cial resources
9. Regular communication
10. Capacity building
11. Inclusiveness
12. Documentation

1. **Proper groundwork.** In depth groundwork is necessary, including the following:
   – adequate briefing of all parties concerned;
   – providing them with enough background information and materials;
   – allowing sufficient time to develop the networking; and
   – enabling parties to feel they are all – to some extent – owners of the process.

2. **Skilled/quality staff.** Knowledgeable, informed, committed and skilled staff are key to building networks at varying levels. Important skills that staff should have include:
   – conflict management and resolution;
   – community organisation;
   – group-building;
   – communication;
   – facilitation; and
   – documentation.

3. **Proper identification of stakeholders.** Stakeholder analysis is essential for ensuring a balance in representation of sectors/groups as well as a balance of power relations and dynamics among the groups and individuals *(stakeholder analysis is discussed on page 102)*.

4. **Commitment of stakeholders:** Clarification of commitments of stakeholders to the process needs to be made, particularly of government which can affect the outcome of the activity or project.

5. **Clarification of aims of partnership:** The objectives and purpose of building a multi-stakeholder network/partnership must be clear to all parties concerned.

6. **Determining level of partnership:** Level and extent of partnership envisioned with various stakeholders should be determined.

7. **Active participation of stakeholders:** Active participation of key parties, particularly primary stakeholders, (the poorest of the poor and the most marginalised) should be ensured.

8. **Capacity-building:** Working with primary stakeholders who are the poor and marginalised entails also developing their capacity to voice their views and opinions to wider groups without fear of intimidation.

9. **Availability of human/financial resources:** Networking and partnership-building need time and investment in human and financial resources to be effective.

10. **Regular communication:** Regular communication among different stakeholders is a key element in building partnerships.

11. **Inclusiveness:** It is important to keep inclusiveness in mind while forging multi-stakeholder partnerships to ensure participation and sense of ownership of the process among the widest group possible.

12. **Documentation:** At all stages of building partnerships, documentation should be an essential element to assure a continuing learning process for everyone concerned.
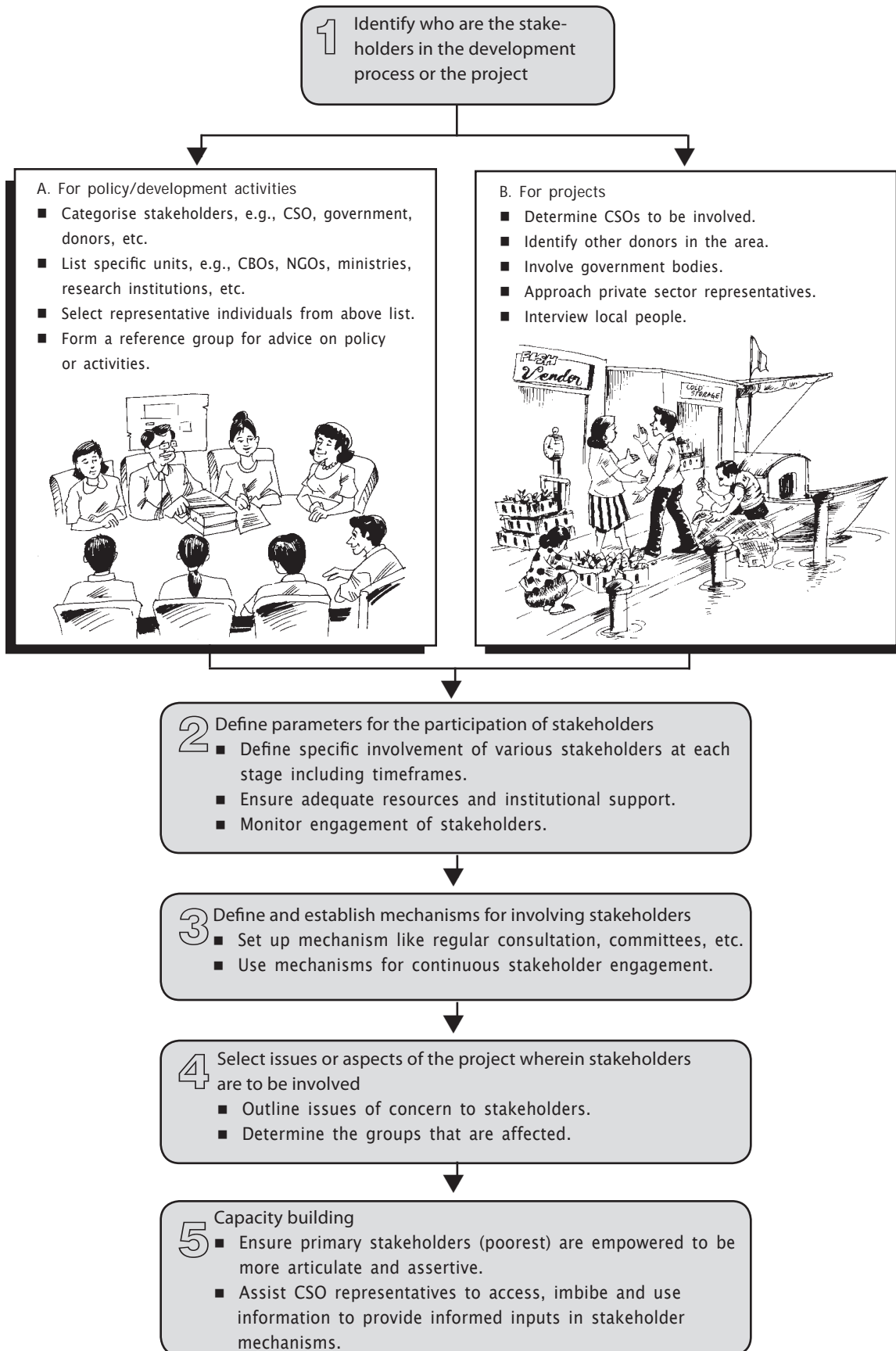

Value of Consultations

- A way to involve all stakeholders, particularly at the initial stages to explore possibilities for future collaboration and mechanisms for furthering the collaboration.
- Avenues for seeking opinions on issues that can affect policy or projects.

## Process for Facilitating Multi-Stakeholder Consultations

An important mechanism for promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships is through multi-stakeholder consultations. Ideally, these should be held regularly.

The aim and objectives of consultations may be viewed differently by different groups. Consultation involves a two-way communication where stakeholders have the opportunity to make suggestions and express their concerns. However, they have no assurance that these inputs will be used. In many cases, stakeholders do not give their inputs into the agenda or process.

ENHANCING OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY: A RESOURCE BOOK ON PARTICIPATION

1 Identify who are the stake-holders in the development process or the project

A. For policy/development activities
- Categorise stakeholders, e.g., CSO, government, donors, etc.
- List specific units, e.g., CBOs, NGOs, ministries, research institutions, etc.
- Select representative individuals from above list.
- Form a reference group for advice on policy or activities.

B. For projects
- Determine CSOs to be involved.
- Identify other donors in the area.
- Involve government bodies.
- Approach private sector representatives.
- Interview local people.

2 Define parameters for the participation of stakeholders
- Define specific involvement of various stakeholders at each stage including timeframes.
- Ensure adequate resources and institutional support.
- Monitor engagement of stakeholders.

3 Define and establish mechanisms for involving stakeholders
- Set up mechanism like regular consultation, committees, etc.
- Use mechanisms for continuous stakeholder engagement.

4 Select issues or aspects of the project wherein stakeholders are to be involved
- Outline issues of concern to stakeholders.
- Determine the groups that are affected.

5 Capacity building
- Ensure primary stakeholders (poorest) are empowered to be more articulate and assertive.
- Assist CSO representatives to access, imbibe and use information to provide informed inputs in stakeholder mechanisms.

Essential Elements for Successful Multi-Stakeholder Consultations

- Sufficient lead time for preparations
- Funding and other logistical support for pre-paratory work
- Prior circulation of documents in a simplified/sum-marised format (this includes the use of tables and diagrams and use of the local language)
- Involvement of a lead CSO or CSO network in the planning and preparation for the consultation
- Finding the "right mix" of participants among all stakeholders
- A separate, prior meeting/s among a few key stakeholders to clarify the consultation objectives, the agenda and expected output or even technical concepts
- Immediate clarification of the purpose, expected outputs and "ground rules" of the consultation
- Skilled facilitation and participatory discussions
- An immediate on-the-spot summary and feedback on the key points discussed, including all the major points of agreement and disagreement
- Post-consultation feedback to participants
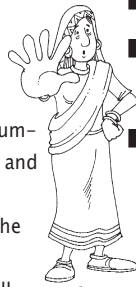
Distinctions need to be made between and among the following:

- meeting – can be of a general nature;
- consultation meeting – has a more defined objective/s; and
- consultation process – involves a more drawn-out process of possibly several meetings/consultations, with informal discussions taking place outside the formal meetings.

The scope and purpose of the consultations must be made clear to all concerned at the start of the process. In this way, expectations among stakeholders will not be overly high and cynicism can be avoided. Transparent processes and methods must be communicated to everyone concerned, staff involved in the networking must be sincere and determined in pursuing the networking, despite constraints such as lack of interest, skepticism, even cynicism among some stakeholders.

Preparing the consultation process

- As government agencies at local or national level are key stakeholders in project or activities, ensure that there is adequate government awareness and commitment to the process; also clarify the extent of government involvement.

- Inform and convey clearly the aims, objectives, and scope of the consultation exercise to all parties concerned.

- Ensure that there is:
  - adequate budget and resources for the process, including follow-up if needed;
  - adequate time provision to prepare for the consultation meeting/process; and
  - sufficient and appropriate human resources, including adequate knowledge, skills and expertise, particularly for facilitators.

Prepared by:
Tina Liamzon
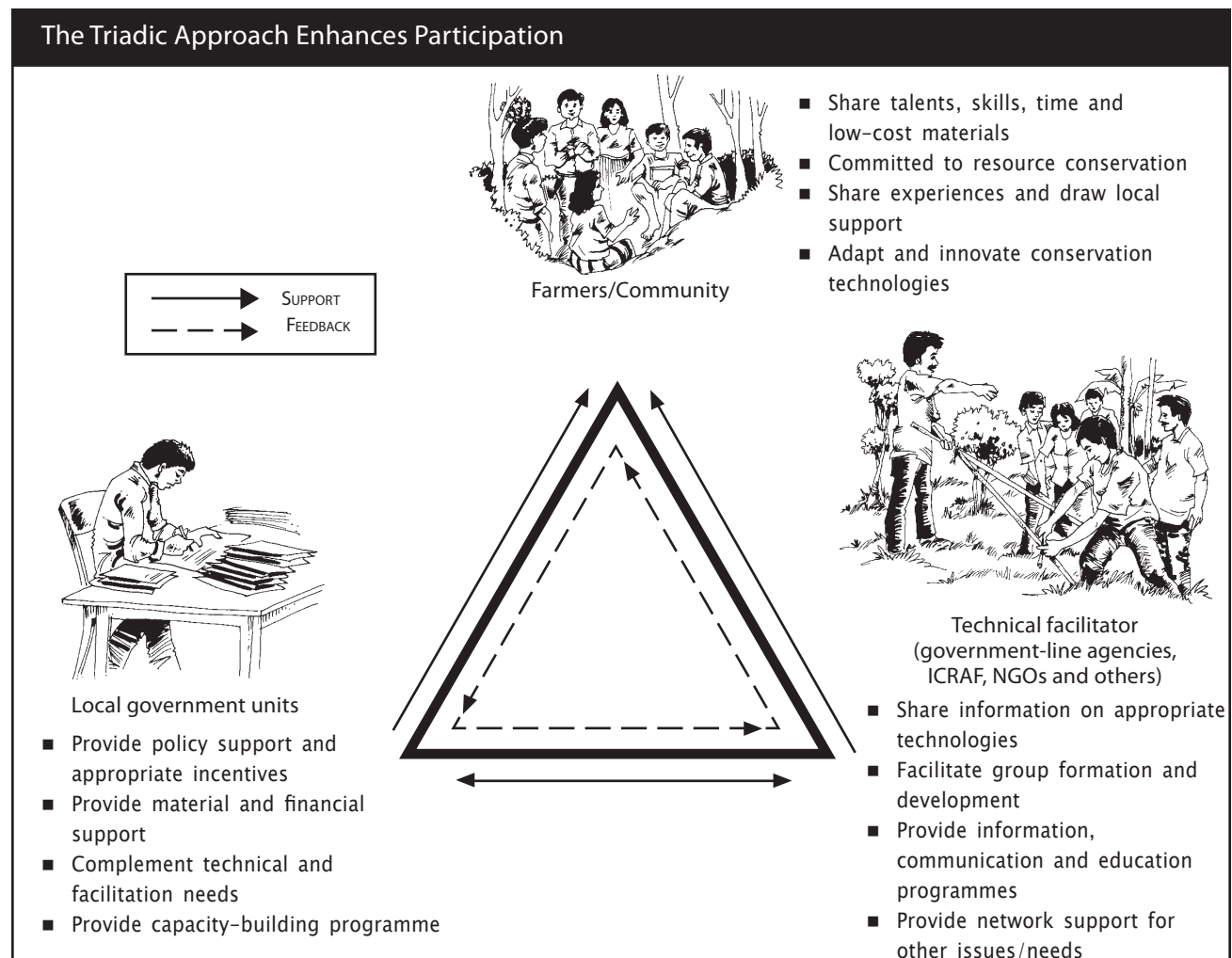
With inputs from:
S. Haralambous
and D. Marquez

Selecting participants

- Ensure that the participants to be invited are credible and that they are representative geographically.

- Seek advice from key informants in other organisations/sectors who may be familiar with CSOs, etc.

- Ensure transparency in the selection process which must be made available to anyone interested.

The Triadic Approach:
Some Experiences in Landcare, Philippines

L andcare is a movement of farmer-led organisations supported by local governments and technical service providers to promote sustainable and profitable agricultural activity on sloping lands while conserving natural resources. This key institutional innovation for technology dissemination is a participatory process with everyone working together, depending on each other and supporting each other for the long-term benefit of the land and environment. The success of Landcare stems from the strength of a tripartite or triadic relationship of the three key players – the farming community, the local government and the technical facilitators.

The Triadic Approach Enhances Participation

SUPPORT
FEEDBACK

Farmers/Community

- Share talents, skills, time and low–cost materials
- Committed to resource conservation
- Share experiences and draw local support
- Adapt and innovate conservation technologies

Local government units

- Provide policy support and appropriate incentives
- Provide material and financial support
- Complement technical and facilitation needs
- Provide capacity–building programme

Technical facilitator
(government-line agencies, ICRAF, NGOs and others)

- Share information on appropriate technologies
- Facilitate group formation and development
- Provide information, communication and education programmes
- Provide network support for other issues/needs

Participation in Landcare

- Takes many forms (policy, time, skills, money, material, strategies, etc.)
- Varies among and between groups
- Is more than just numbers, it is quality of inputs and outputs
- Can be locally engaged
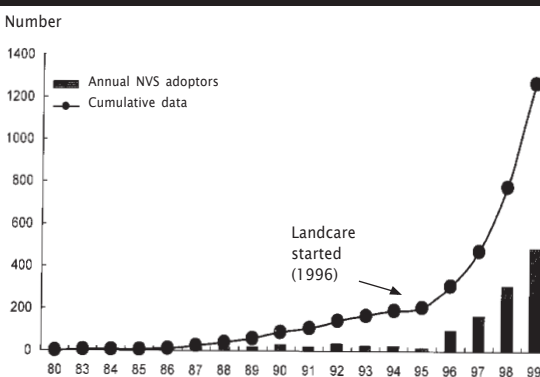- Is a process, not an activity

In the triadic approach, farmers are centered in the triangle because they are the ultimate reason why Landcare exists. They practise sustainable agriculture and provide their own share for community activities in the form of labour, time and resources with low monetary costs. They share experiences, knowledge and skills with other farmers within the group. Local government units provide some materials for their projects, capacity-building programmes, support policies and complement the technical and facilitation needs of the groups. Technical service providers, on the other hand, backstop the technical, training and facilitation needs of the groups. In the end, the costs of implementing Landcare activities are shared by the three key players and both the direct and indirect benefits are shared by them.

Landcare has boosted farmers' adoption of soil conservation technologies and agroforestry practices including the production of seedlings. It promotes participation of the three key players because they make up the triad reflecting an interdependent relationship. Today, Landcare is evolving in the Philippines as a community-based experience designed to effect change in complex and diverse situations. Effective local community groups, in partnership with local government units and technical service providers constitute the core of the Landcare model. These groups respond to issues that affect them and are more committed to find solutions and implement them in their own ways rather than those imposed by external agencies. Landcare is about people; their success is based on how they interact and work together to build social capital for the improvement of their natural assets.

Landcare Impact on Seedling Production in Claveria (Philippines)

Effect of Landcare on Natural Vegetative Strips Adoption in Claveria (Philippines)
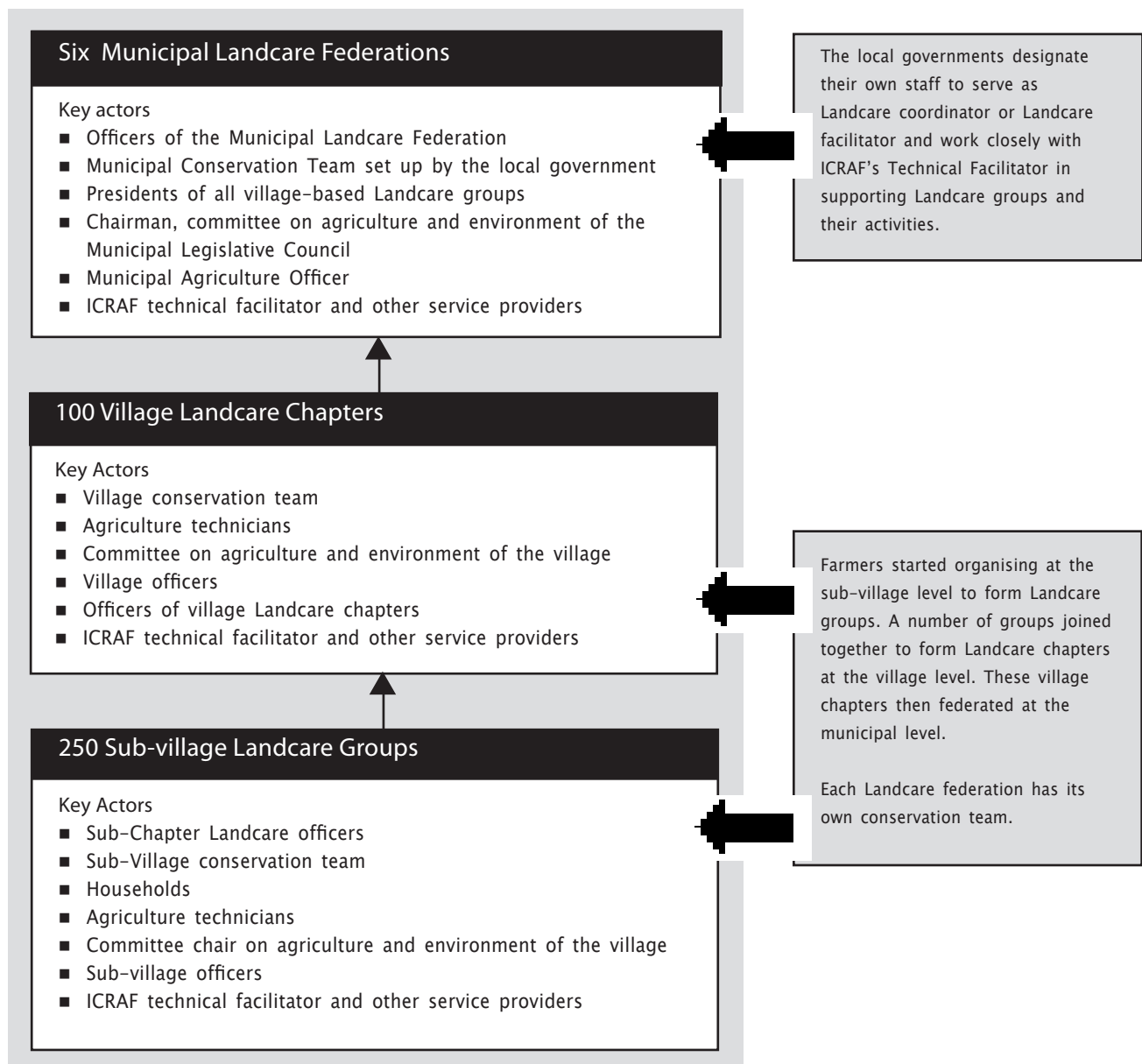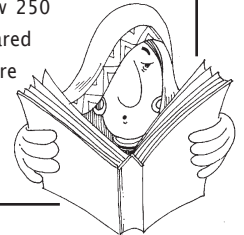

Making Landcare Work

Landcare is a demand-driven experience. It started as an informal group with unstructured planning and group management. As it developed, the village-based groups federated at the municipal level to formalise their structure and build their synergy. They sought representation in the local government for recognition and to access support. Now, Landcare operates from the sub-village to the municipal level and is registered as a legal farmer-based institution. Village groups still operate informally, but with

a set of norms and a culture. From shared labour at farm level, they have initiated a number of community-based activities such as stream rehabilitation, buffer zone management, draft animal distribution, farmer-to-farmer education and training, participatory action research and other small-scale agri-based livelihood projects. Support for these activities was largely drawn from external agencies working within the area who are anxious to support grassroots initiatives.
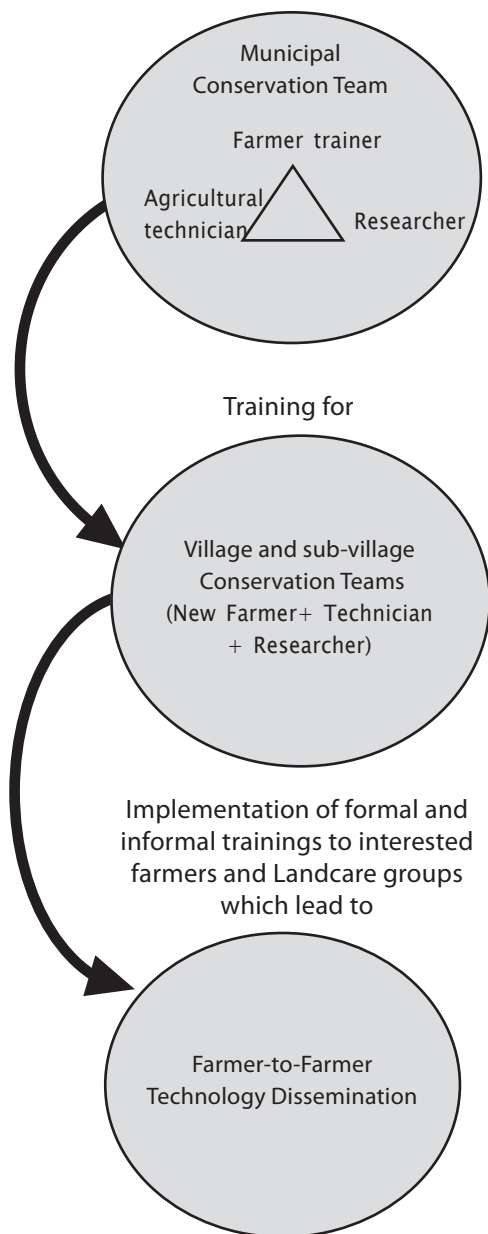
Evolution of Landcare

In 1996, 25 farmers from Claveria, Misamis Oriental, Philippines, requested a training from ICRAF on soil and water conservation technology and formed a group to share the technology with other farmers. This group evolved into a dynamic voluntary movement with more than 5,000 farming families. There are now 250 Landcare groups that have successfully shared conservation farming technologies with more than 3,000 farmers and established 300 household and communal nurseries for fruit and timber trees.

Six Municipal Landcare Federations

Key actors
- Officers of the Municipal Landcare Federation
- Municipal Conservation Team set up by the local government
- Presidents of all village-based Landcare groups
- Chairman, committee on agriculture and environment of the Municipal Legislative Council
- Municipal Agriculture Officer
- ICRAF technical facilitator and other service providers

The local governments designate their own staff to serve as Landcare coordinator or Landcare facilitator and work closely with ICRAF's Technical Facilitator in supporting Landcare groups and their activities.

100 Village Landcare Chapters

Key Actors
- Village conservation team
- Agriculture technicians
- Committee on agriculture and environment of the village
- Village officers
- Officers of village Landcare chapters
- ICRAF technical facilitator and other service providers

Farmers started organising at the sub-village level to form Landcare groups. A number of groups joined together to form Landcare chapters at the village level. These village chapters then federated at the municipal level.

Each Landcare federation has its own conservation team.

250 Sub-village Landcare Groups

Key Actors
- Sub-Chapter Landcare officers
- Sub-Village conservation team
- Households
- Agriculture technicians
- Committee chair on agriculture and environment of the village
- Sub-village officers
- ICRAF technical facilitator and other service providers

Conservation Team

Conservation teams are formed by the local government from the municipal to sub-villages levels. They are trained and tasked to implement formal and informal trainings to Landcare groups in coordination with the Landcare facilitators and Landcare officers.
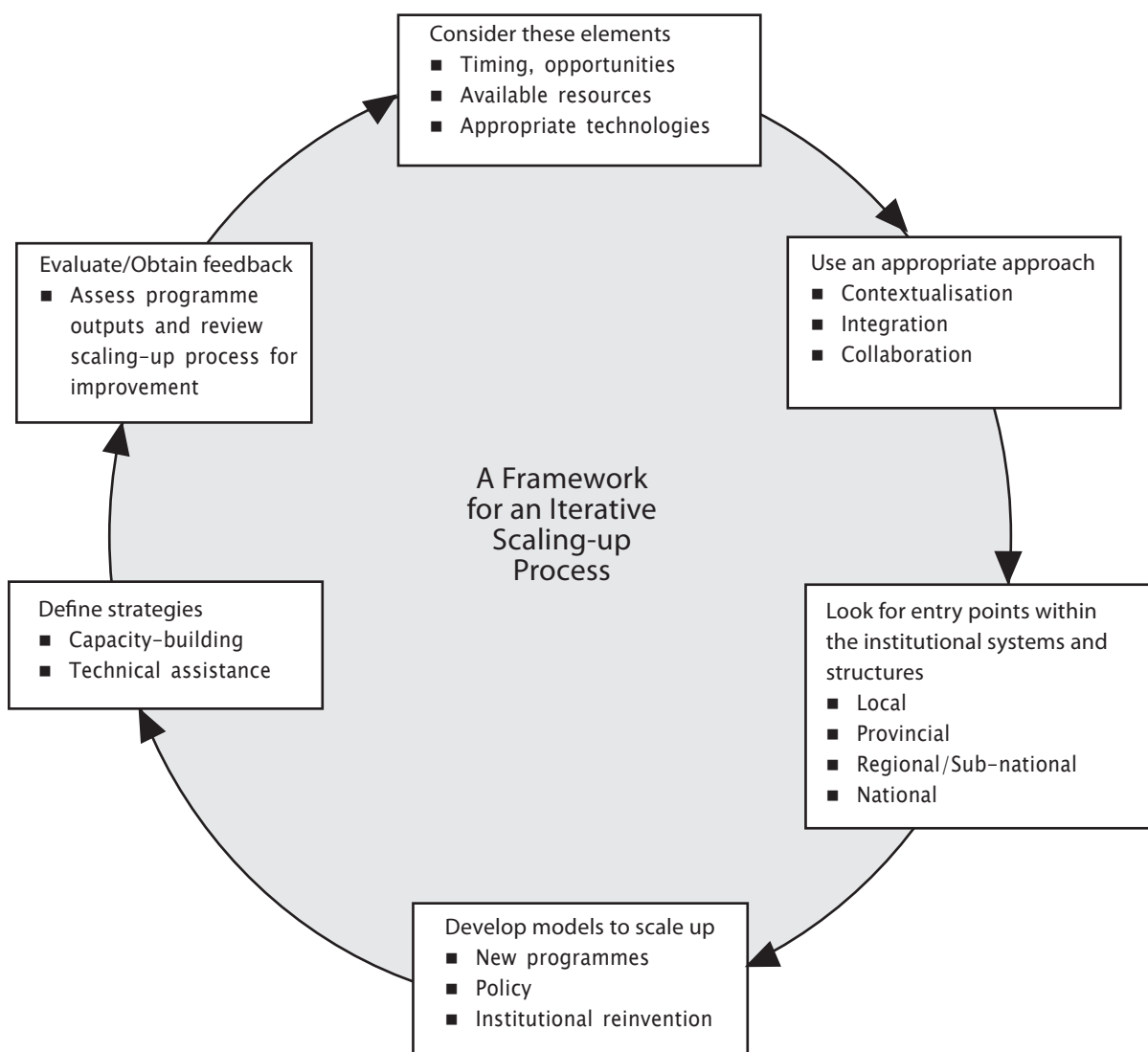
Municipal
Conservation Team

Farmer trainer

Agricultural
technician   Researcher

Training for

Village and sub-village
Conservation Teams
(New Farmer+ Technician
+ Researcher)

Implementation of formal and
informal trainings to interested
farmers and Landcare groups
which lead to

Farmer-to-Farmer
Technology Dissemination

Features of Landcare

- Farmer–driven
- Triadic approach
- Interdependent relationship
- Issue and knowledge–based
- Reduces farmers' risk
- Provides benefits to:
  - Individual farmers
  - Groups
  - Communities
  - Local governments
  - Local agriculture, forestry and watershed extension service
  - Research and development groups

- Promotes:
  - Sustainable and profitable agriculture
  - Soil conservation
  - Environmental protection
  - Equity in participation
  - Self–help initiatives
  - Farmer–to–farmer extension
  - Networking/linkaging

- Builds up:
  - Public trust
  - Commitment
  - Ownership
  - Motivation

- Improves the natural assets
- Develops:
  - Social capital
  - Farmer extension service

- Harnesses:
  - Self–help
  - Mutual help
  - Public support
  - Policy and financial support from local governments

Challenges and Dangers of Scaling-up

The challenge to scale up Landcare is enormous because the approach, the processes involved, or both, can either be enhanced or corrupted. Landcare is faced with the dilemma of diluting the strength of the triadic approach once it is introduced on a large scale and the focus is shifted to meeting externally-driven targeted outputs, and away from the process of social capital formation that enables farmers to adapt appropriate technologies at their own pace. To replicate a demand-driven process is problematic, but it can be compromised by "creating" a demand which results in motivated participation.

In creating new arrangements, the issue of "projectisation" may surface and may weaken the triadic approach. This requires clear understanding of Landcare by all stakeholders at the inception period. The cost-effectiveness of Landcare as an extension approach provides a promise for wider application elsewhere. The proposed framework given below can reduce the risks of a deteriorating participatory process when scaling-up Landcare.

Consider these elements
- Timing, opportunities
- Available resources
- Appropriate technologies

Use an appropriate approach
- Contextualisation
- Integration
- Collaboration

Evaluate/Obtain feedback
- Assess programme outputs and review scaling–up process for improvement

A Framework for an Iterative Scaling-up Process

Look for entry points within the institutional systems and structures
- Local
- Provincial
- Regional/Sub–national
- National

Define strategies
- Capacity–building
- Technical assistance

Develop models to scale up
- New programmes
- Policy
- Institutional reinvention

Some Dos and Dont's which may be Helpful in Engaging Community Participation in Landcare	
DOs	DON'Ts
- Specify aims and expected outcomes. - Treat all participants as partners, not beneficiaries. - Keep processes clear, quick and simple. - Maintain open communication and regular feedback of progress, problems and solutions taken. - Maintain enthusiasm and momentum by two–way communication flow. - Make decisions by consensus. - Use effective facilitators for trust and relationship–building. - Disseminate timely results, progress and accomplishments. - Promote local resource mobilisation.	- Avoid dole–out system. - Do not use the word "project" as nomenclature. - Do not encourage extrinsic motives.

Lessons Learned

When more resources are made available to project management, we seem to be more liable to corrupt the participatory process in favour of pre-set quantitative outputs within a given timeframe. In such case, the initiative tends to be projectised so much that it compromises community ownership and sustainability. When financial resources are limited, there is a greater tendency to adopt participatory approaches to build partnerships with a range of stakeholders for project implementation. We are aware, however, that neither of the two extreme conditions guarantee high quality participation. It is not the case of either-or, but rather, of fully exploiting every opportunity to tap the potential of participation to the greatest advantage in order to obtain the desired quality of output and outcomes. It is our experience that a symbiotic environment is created by the tripartite interaction of the farmers, technical facilitators and local government units and that it fosters participatory planning, implementation and evaluation in a win-win situation, with spin-off benefits to the land and natural resources.

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Understanding Resistance to Change

Development brings change and when change disturbs the status quo, it brings about resistance. On the other hand, there is no learning and no change without resistance. Change is disconcerting: it makes people anxious, as the future becomes uncertain. When changes are pending, as a rule, three groups form: the pros, the indifferent, and the cons. Changes – whether technical, methodological, organisational, economic, social, political, or cultural – are always potential sources of conflict. Even if redistributions of power are not addressed openly, but are tacitly ignored, resistance is stimulated.

Poor people are the most vulnerable to the consequences of any externally induced change. They eke out their livelihoods from fragile ecosystems; they have little or no assets; they have limited opportunities. One bad harvest alone could wipe out a lifetime of savings and sink a poor family deeper into a chronic cycle of debt and misery.

Farmers' Resistance to Agrarian Reform

For hundreds of years since the Spanish colonial period, sugar-workers in Negros and Panay, Philippines have toiled and lived in hacienda plantations under powerful landlords. When agrarian reform was first introduced to these provinces in the mid-1990s, there was stiff resistance not only from the landlords, but also among landless sugarworkers. Many workers even refused to be identified as potential beneficiaries. To poor sugarworkers, agrarian reform meant cutting-off their dependence on the landlords, who were seen as local "gods", and their main source of loans, favour, patronage and sense of security.
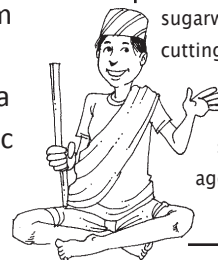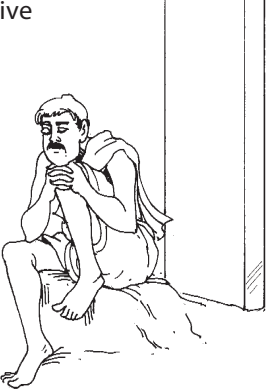
Poor people resist change because they feel that it exposes them to greater risk and vulnerability. On the other hand, other people in a community may wish to preserve the status quo and the security and benefits that it brings them. Indeed, the greater the pressure of time to implement a change, the more of a problem and the more of a burden the resistance seems to be. Yet, resistance indicates where energy is blocked. Conversely, this means: Where there is resistance, energy can be released. In other words, resistance is not just a source of interference, but also a source of energy which we need to tap for changes.

Understanding Resistance

Resistance is often diffuse: We notice that something or other is "not quite right". Suddenly things clog up, everything turns stop-and-go, there is endless debate over insignificant issues, the "thread" is lost, a sense of helplessness and disgruntlement prevails, an awkward silence develops.

The expressions of resistance are many and varied. The matrix below can be used to structure one's observations and possibly compare them over a longer period of time. The verbal and non-verbal behaviours of individuals and groups are listed in the matrix as active or passive expressions of resistance.

Expressions of Resistance		
	Verbal (speech)	Non-verbal (actions)
Active	Resistance ■ Counterarguments ■ Accusations ■ Protests ■ Threats ■ Suspicion of others gaining advantage ■ Polemics ■ Stubborn ■ Formalism	Agitation ■ Unrest ■ Disputes ■ Intrigues ■ Rumours of negative consequences ■ Formation of cliques ■ Sabotage ■ Boycotts ■ Withholding of information
Passive	Evasion ■ Silence ■ Trivial debate ■ Debasement of individuals ■ Ridiculing and debasement of new ideas ■ Belittlement ■ Fooling around ■ Jibes ■ Sarcasm	Apathy ■ Bad moods ■ Sulkiness ■ Inattentiveness ■ Anger ■ Fatigue ■ Absenteeism ■ Withdrawal ■ Sleepless nights ■ Fear for one's economic position ■ Sickness

To understand resistance, the following general rules may be applied:

■ All resistance contains encoded messages which we need to decipher. We cannot do that without entering into direct contact with the persons and groups concerned. In this context, understanding means trying to see behaviours from people's point of view.

■ The various forms of expression of resistance mutually reinforce each other. Over time, this produces a climate of mistrust, which we can carefully attempt to break down by adopting an inquiring attitude:
  – What objectives and questions do the actors have?
  – What is especially precious and important to them?
  – What are their interests, needs and concerns?
  – What might happen if we proceed as planned?
  – What ought to be prevented in their view?
  – What alternative do they themselves see?
  – How should things proceed in their view?
  – What is acceptable and appropriate to them?
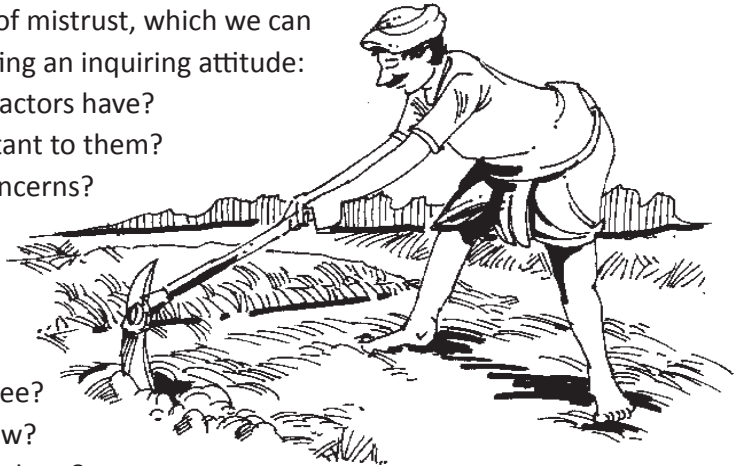
■ To prevent different groups from reinforcing each other's resistance and forming alliances, it is important to work with them separately according to their respective interests (= principle of separation of perspectives). In attempting to understand resistance, actions are guided by two rules:
  – We must encourage and support people in expressing and explaining their resistance.
  – We must transform non-verbal and passive forms of resistance into verbal active forms.

■ We must transform resistance into dialogue. The field of energies between advocates and opponents of a change, between negative and positive forces for change, can be captured and illustrated by a simple chart:

Positive arguments, actions and behaviours		Actors who influence the change	Negative arguments, actions and behaviours	
+	++		− −	−

Dealing with Resistance

The art of dealing with resistance is related to the Japanese martial art of "aikido". Instead of launching a frontal assault on it, we have to absorb the energies enclosed in it. If we wish to reduce actors' loss of control, help resistance be expressed and get the people on board, then we need to tread several paths at the same time. As seen in the flowchart overleaf, all paths lead to the common goal of learning from resistance by taking account of the experiences and arguments of the actors.

Inform
The purpose of the change is made known clearly and sustainably – route and methods are known – target situation is made clearly evident.

Support
The actors are taken seriously – their concerns are listened to – they are given a forum to present their experiences, interests, fears.

Involve
Affected persons and groups are involved early on according to their capabilities – their experiences are taken into account in implementation.

Learn from Resistance

Change the environment
The actors are given an opportunity to look beyond their garden fence: they become familiar with other ways of working and other environments.

Try out new social forms
The actors work in working groups which cut across existing boundaries within the organisation – they establish new relationships.

Observe critical fields of conflict
Example: loss of wages or other material benefits; loss of personal relationships; fear of being overstretched; loss of decision–making authority; constriction of scope for action; poor prospects for development and learning.

Change triggers conflict which takes the form of resistance to change. Understanding and observing the open and discrete forms of resistance can help one to adjust the change process to the given circumstances and the actors' standards of acceptance and help steer it accordingly.

Understanding and Dealing with Conflict
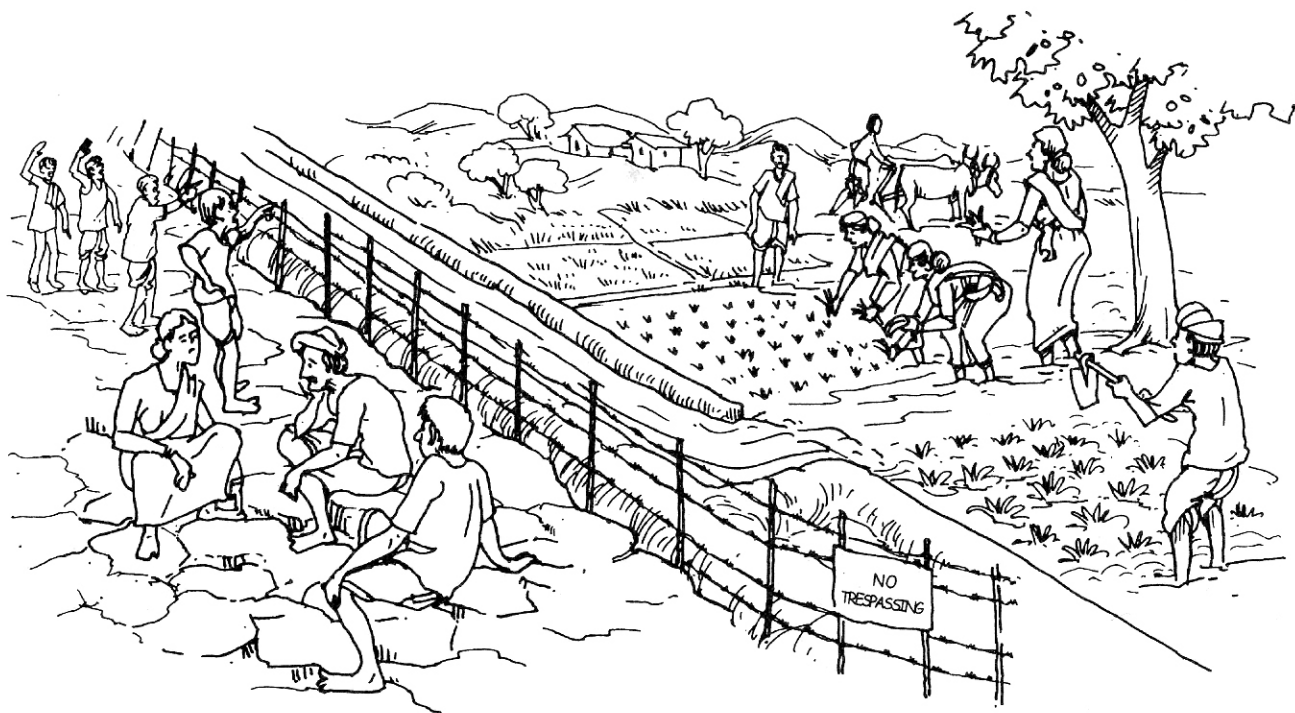
Projects may trigger conflicts and fuel them unintentionally. They may draw new lines of conflict in the community, make conflicts more visible or accentuate existing tensions through targeted changes. For instance, a new land-use strategy may ascribe to women a new active role, shift the relationship of dependency between small tenants and landowners in favour of the farmer, or require a change in the prevailing land-use system. This may arouse tension between women and men farmers, heighten landlord-tenant conflicts, or create anxiety among users' groups (i.e., forest gatherers) whose livelihoods may be affected. In another instance, the construction of a new irrigation canal may arouse conflict among different water users' groups.

> Many natural resource management projects aim implicitly to redistribute power – e.g., over access to land and management of scarce resources – and thus, they may trigger local conflicts. Yet, project actors often tend to underestimate the social forces underlying those conflicts. There are several tools for conflict management. Among them is the intergroup conflict management (ICM) method described briefly in this paper.

Conflicting claims on scarce resources place different interest groups in a competitive situation which can end in a life-and-death struggle. If the conflict remains unrecognised, it can soak up a considerable amount of energy and become costly. Competition becomes rivalry, perceptions narrow down, communication lines break, and misunderstanding becomes firmly established in the form of "enemy stereotypes".

Where users compete for scarce resources, questions arise: to what extent are we, ourselves, part of the conflict? And to what extent should we become actively involved in solving the conflict?

Intergroup conflict management (ICM) has proven successful in a variety of practical situations. It reduces competition and selfish parochial group politics, creating greater scope for communication. The method steers the parties towards the following questions:

- What do we really want?
- How are we different from each other?
- What are we able and willing to communicate about?
- Which modus vivendi do we wish to achieve?

ICM is based on the following working hypotheses.

- Equality: Parties A and B are equal partners in terms of their right to express their own viewpoint.
- Differing perspectives: Parties A and B have differing perspectives of themselves and the other party which can be put forward and exchanged.
- Openness: The ability to listen, an effort to understand other viewpoints and the willingness to see things from the other's point of view can be learned and acquired more easily when the communication is structured by certain rules.

ICM consists of a planned sequence of conflict resolution conferences (CRCs) that last one-half to two days each. The objective is to establish direct dialoque between the parties through external moderation.

The tool CRC is based on the assumption that:
- the moderators are accepted by the involved parties;
- the parties wish to resolve the conflict;
- the groups are not larger than 8–10 persons, primariiy those directly involved and with a major stake in the conflict;
- the parties are willing to invest time for an ICM process; and
- the moderators introduce and steer the process carefully, and insist on adherence to the schedule and rules adhered to.

The initiation of the process of dialogue is deliberately highly structured. Initial steps include:
- a preliminary discussion between the moderators and two representatives of the parties to the conflict, to lay down the ground rules;
- the representatives of the two parties inform their groups of the purpose and structure of the ICM process;
- the moderators hold one-on-one discussions and then prepare the first workshop; and
- the first CRC (workshop) begins.

Between the CRCs, the parties need time to digest the confrontation: to learn new things, to unlearn things, and to deal with unpleasant information that has been said.

Conflicts are a source of interference because they frustrate our plans. We are capable only to a limited extent of understanding and predicting the consequences of our actions and the actions of others.

We may tend to seek rash solutions. For many conflicts, however, there may be no final solution in the given time span and social framework. We may have to smooth them over or postpone them, even at the risk that they might erupt again. Or we may have to play an active role as mediator.

It is beneficial to examine the **positive** aspects inherent in such conflicts:

- **Signal effect:** Conflicts point to symptoms and open up new questions as to their underlying tensions.
- **Interests:** Conflicts reveal where people's real interests lie.
- **Stimulus:** Conflicts make self-observation more acute.
- **Cohesion:** Conflicts consolidate social relationships.
- **Change:** Conflicts push forward reforms and changes.

Understanding Conflict

Conflicts develop in several phases and can escalate through several stages.

Presentiment

The parties to the conflict are aware of their differences yet are unable to articulate them. Outsiders are already able to identify growing conflict potentials.

Consciousness of differences

The parties become conscious of their differences, yet refrain from addressing conflict-related issues due to social and cultural barriers. They avoid direct encounters, form cliques and actively seek allegiances, especially among individuals with power and influence.

The Stages of Conflict

Conflict escalates through stages. And unless there is negotiation or mediation, it spirals out into one or several sub-conflicts.
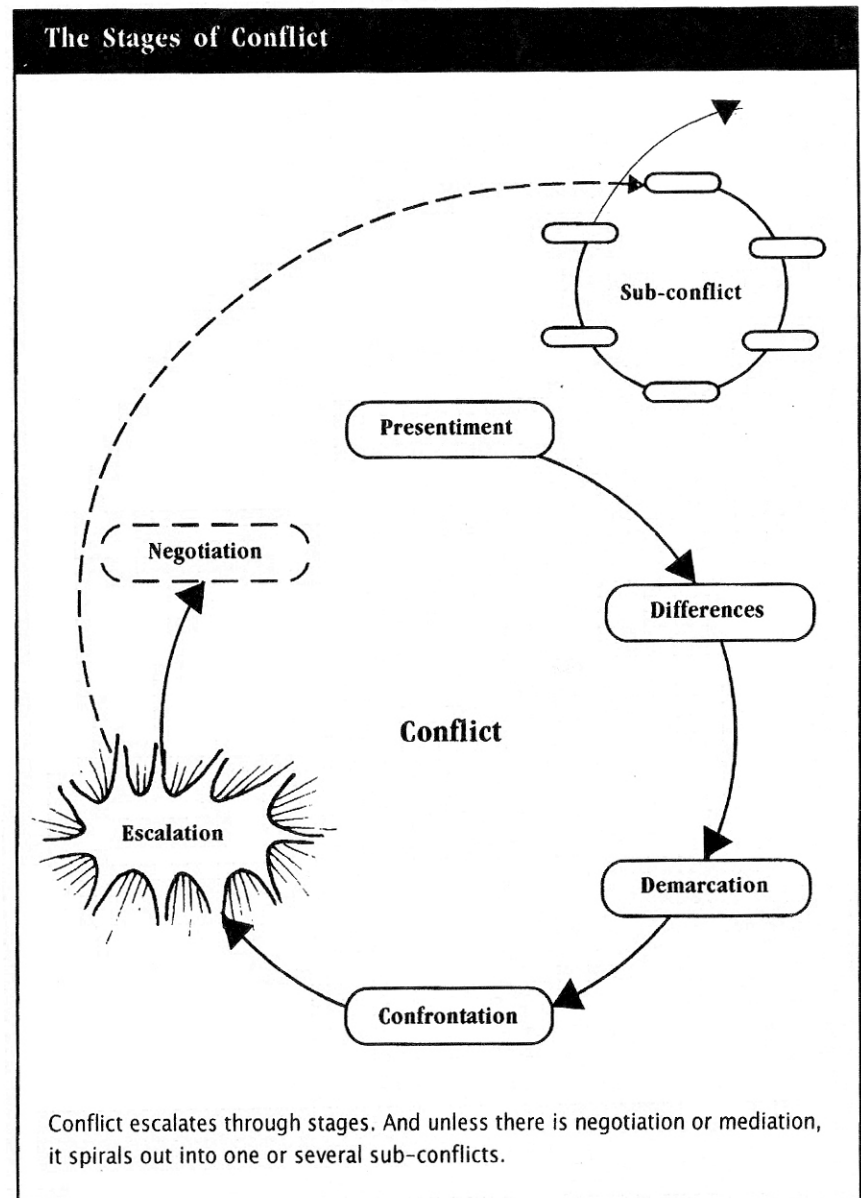
Demarcation of the arena of conflict

The parties mark out the arena of conflict with a selection of opinions, arguments and interests. They try to play down the importance of their adversary, or blot out the conflict.

Discussion and confrontation

The parties try to defend their own standpoint and interests in an uncompromising game of win-or-lose. This cripples the forces for compromise. Unless external mediators are called in (e.g., an appeal to civil or criminal law, or a decisive verdict by someone in power), the conflict escalates.

Types of Sub-Conflict

Conflicts become suppressed, deferred, or poorly resolved when the parties remain unclear as to the sub-conflicts of which it is comprised. Within a field of conflict, we can observe different types of sub-conflicts:

- **Conflict of values:** The parties judge causes and effects of situations differently, which in many cases is attributable to incompatible values.
- **Conflict of cultures:** The actors hold incompatible values as a result of their different cultural, religious or ethnic backgrounds. These values include ways of encountering people and ideas from other cultures, and the "constructions" placed on those other people as handed down through one's own traditions.
- **Conflict of distribution:** The parties do not agree on access to and the (fair) distribution of scarce goods and services.
- **Conflict of goals:** The parties pursue conflicting goals, which may be detrimental to the other party.
- **Conflict of roles:** The mutual expectations of the parties are incompatible with the respective conception each side has of its own role.
- **Conflict of information:** The parties try to prevent each other from obtaining information, withhold information, or defame the information sources and the reliability of the information they supply.
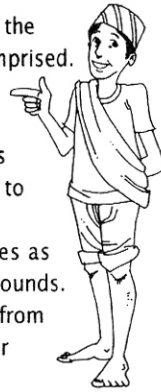
Escalation

The further the conflict escalates, the more difficult and complicated it is to manage.

Negotiation

Unless there is negotiation or mediation, the conflict spirals out into one or several sub-conflicts.

Dealing with Conflict

Conflicts are often based on issues of the distribution of goods, resources, and power. In many cases, they only become conflicts because of the **different interpretations** people have of these issues. Field experiences show that it is often logical and easier to deal with conflicts on a **personal level**, and that we can best try to understand the underlying issues by looking back at their history from different people's perspectives. Yet at the same time, this poses a dilemma as it is more difficult for us to remain detached and to define the actual points of conflict.

There are a broad selection of possible ways to act in conflict situations. These range from observation, via inquiry, to active conflict moderation. Actions may be directed with differing degrees of intensity at the **causes** of the conflict, the **progress** of the conflict, and/or the possible **impacts** of the conflict.

The ability to recognise conflicts in good time, to influence them such that the damage is limited, and to steer the parties to the conflicts to reach an agreement on solutions, requires a great amount of social skill and life experience.

Role of the Moderator

If some form of mediation is deemed necessary, then conflict management requires professional expertise and a level-headed assessment by the moderator of his/her own role. The task confers prestige and power, but also entails risks.

Possible Ways to Act in Conflict Situations

Actions: / Directed at:	Causes of conflicts	Progress of conflicts	Impacts of conflicts
OBSERVE			
Become aware and observe	☹		☹
Ask questions	☹	☹	
Observe the areas of conflicts	☹		☹
Examine the history from different perspectives	☹	☹	
MODERATE			
Suggest a dialogue		☹	
Establish a dialogue	☹	☹	
Define roles		☹	
Ascertain expectations		☹	☹
Share emotions	☹	☹	
Sound out scope for solutions		☹	
Elaborate solutions	☹		☹
RESOLVE			
Evaluate solutions		☹	☹
Negotiate solutions		☹	
Reach agreements or compromises		☹	
Monitor impacts of agreements			☹

Conflict management aims to establish a process of self-observation among the parties to the conflict, and to halt or reverse the narrowing of perceptions. The role of the moderator shifts along the continuum between the two opposite poles of an **intervention by force**, which might be necessary under certain circumstances, and an **observational role of process facilitation**. Between the two lies the role of providing intermediary services and consultancy on request.

Getting around the Limits to Participation
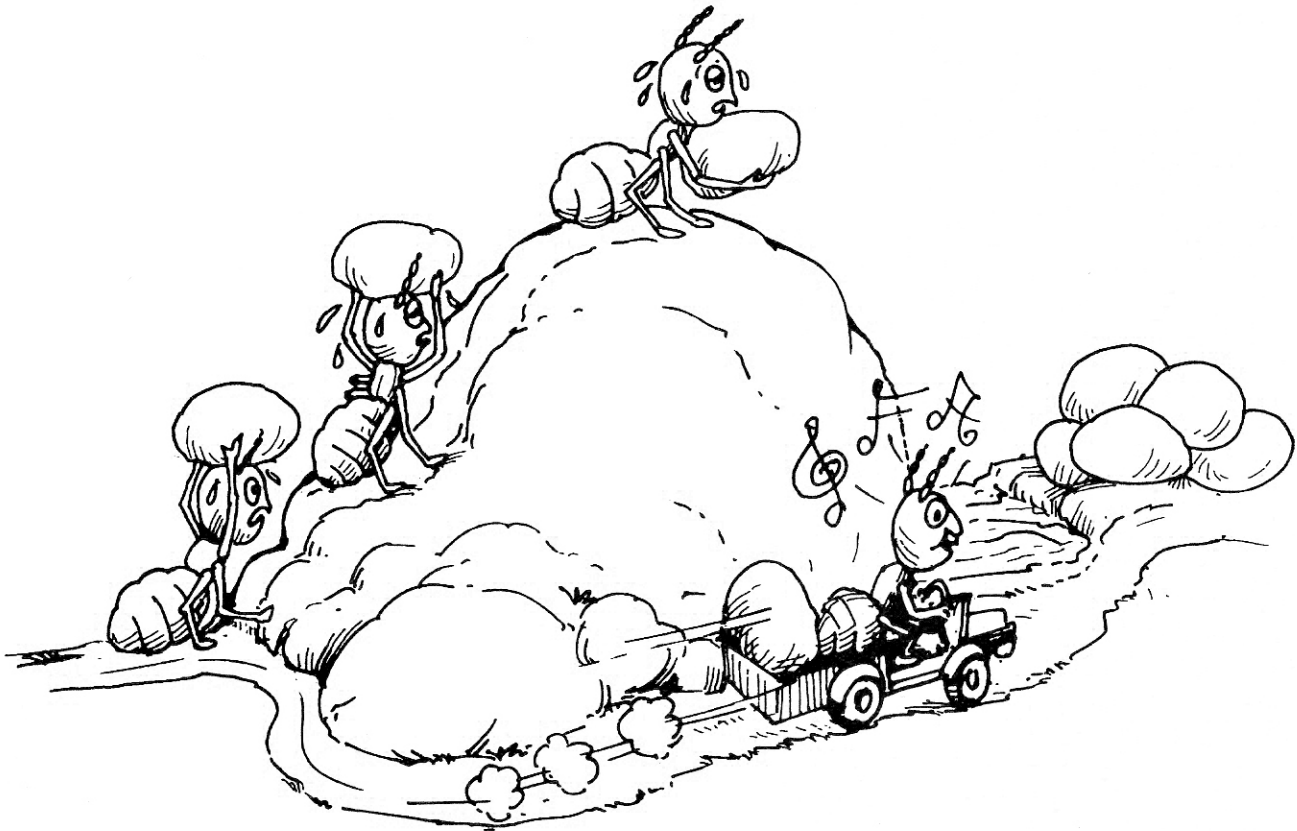
What is a System?

- A system is an entity that maintains its existence and functions as a whole through the interaction of its parts.
- Single atoms, cells, organs, organisms, families, projects, societies, the earth, the solar system and the universe are all systems.
- In essence, we are systems who live in a world of systems.
- The behaviour of a system is more than equal to the sum of its parts and interactions. **Change the structure and the behaviour changes.** Hence, we cannot break a system in two and expect to find two smaller but fully functional systems akin to the larger one; we get two damaged heaps. The arrangement of the parts is also crucial; they are connected and work together.

Participation within Systems

Participation must be understood within the perspective of the environment in which an initiative operates. Stakeholders will behave differently depending on the system they find themselves in. Certain structures enable participation, while others make it challenging or even impossible. Several factors limit participation. The key to sustaining stakeholder interest in any development initiative lies in robust analysis of the environment and locating areas of leverage. Enabling participation requires creative solutions.
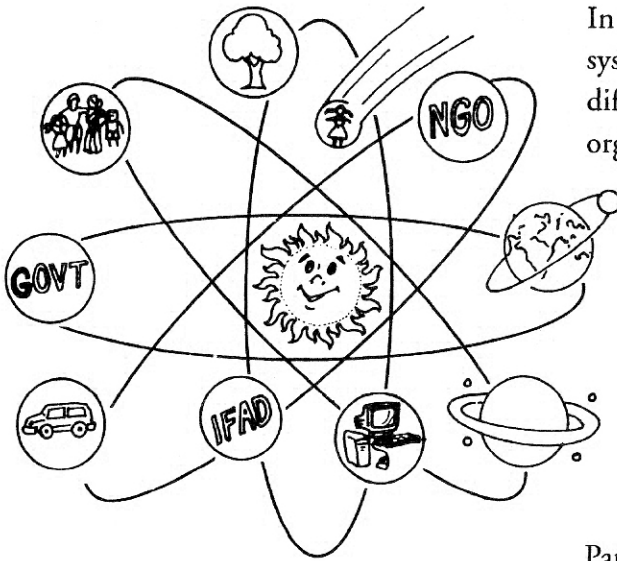
In development work, a project can be considered as a system. A multilateral/bilateral project as a system is different from a project run solely by a non-government organisation (NGO); other contrasts are:

Government partner	◆▶ NGO partner
Women	◆▶ Men
Indian village	◆▶ Andean-Peruvian village
Empowerment projects	◆▶ Agricultural development projects
Hierarchical organisation	◆▶ Matrix/decentralised organisation
Armies	◆▶ Country clubs

Participation relates to interrelationships between various actors in a system.

Systems Behave in Typical Ways

Systems display typical behaviour consisting of reinforcing cycles, balancing cycles and delays.

Reinforcing cycles

Reinforcing cycles are processes that move uncontrollably in set directions and are commonly called virtuous or vicious cycles, snow-balling effects, or chain reactions. Often, systems in the development context also exhibit this behaviour.

Money compounds in a bank

Let us take a simple example in participation. A group of women, if involved in a project, feel elated and confident of implementing activities. Therefore, they perform well and build their confidence further. This is an obvious case of partici-pation leading to more participation.

Reinforcing Cycle in Action

Women participate well in their group → Women's group implements its activities effectively → Women are appreciated →

Balancing Cycle in Action

Actual time spent on project activities

Cut time on project activities

Family norms

Tasks at home left undone

Balancing cycles

Nature loves a balance. Systems do not like runaway processes. They find their own equilibrium. Therefore, any process will encounter a limiting factor and slow down. Such processes ensure stability and resilience in this world. A system has its own implicit goal, e.g., keeping to traditions (stability) in society. Men may not want to share power or work with women. If women spend more time on project activities, some of their work at home will either be left undone or will fall on the men. This may lead to conflict. Women who find that taking care of their reproductive and nurturing roles must be done to keep peace at home will cut down their involvement in project activities.

Balancing Process with Delay

Delay

Training leads to better participation

Capacity building of project community

Desired level of participation

Participation gap
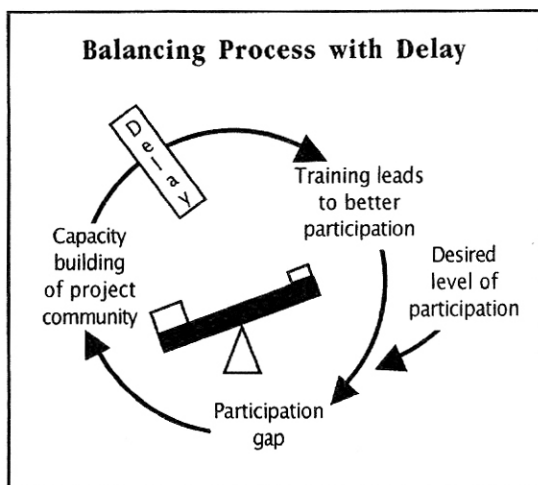
Delays

Cause and effect are separated in time. A headache vanishes 20 minutes after taking an aspirin. But delays raise doubts and reduce interest; if extended, they result in knee-jerk reactions. For example, if the aspirin takes a whole day to cure a headache, we are tempted to take more for quick relief, but then we are unsure of what really cured the headache. Development projects also encounter time lags between activities and benefits. If a project perceives that the level of participation in the community is low, it may invest more in capacity-building programmes. After a while participation improves, but the delay raises questions of attribution. Was it really the project's training that helped improve participation or was it media influence?

The Language of Systems: Recurring Themes

Reinforcing cycles, balancing cycles and delays work in various combinations to produce systems archetypes. The basic archetypes are limits to growth and shifting the burden. The archetypes could in turn combine to form more complex ones.

Other Systems Archetypes

- Tragedy of commons
- Fixes that fail
- Escalation
- Growth and under investment
- Success to be successful

Limits to growth

A poor farmer discovers the use of chemical fertilisers. The more he uses them, the greater the yield. Three years later, he realises that yields have dropped. He increases the fertiliser dosage, but finds the crops charred. There are limits to growth. *Crop yields cannot go up with indiscriminate use! Could the farmer opt for integrated nutrient management?*

Similarly, processes in development, once started, take off quickly, but soon they plateau and sometimes drop. Typical examples are participation of women in project activities and replication of certain development models.
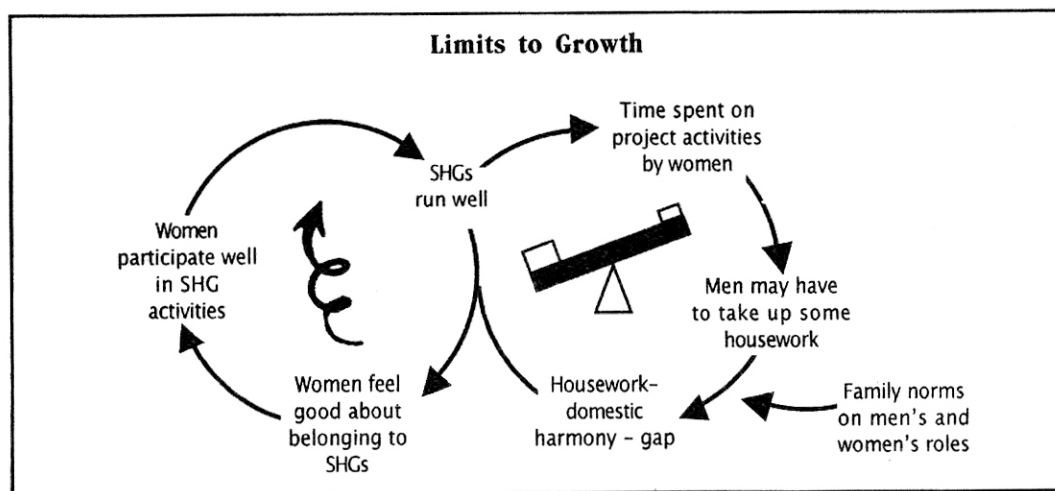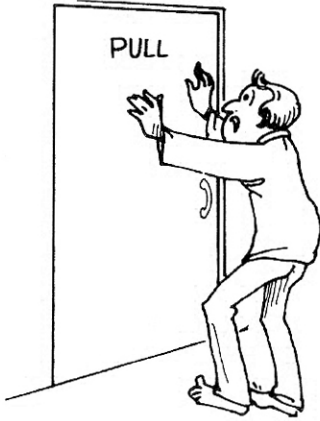

Limits to Growth

Example of Limits to Growth			
Growing Action	**Condition**	**Slowing Action**	**Limiting Condition**
Participation in self-help groups (SHGs)	Better functioning SHGs	Time taken off for housework	Family norms regarding women's and men's roles
Women's interest to develop income-generating activities (IGAs)	Increased incomes from IGAs	Slow movement of goods produced	Women's capacities to market goods
Participatory natural resources management	Healthier environment/ better livelihoods	Slow pace of activities/ no critical mass of uptakers	Capital availability/lack of clear titles on land/ social structures
Participation in multilateral projects	Better project management	Uncoordinated effort	Compartmentalisation of roles/adversarial attitudes
Bickering partners (this is a vicious cycle)	Project collapses	Joint reflection workshops	Commitment to project (prevents its downfall)

Even in the most beneficial interventions, there will be obstacles. Members of SHGs realise that they cannot spend more than a certain amount of time on the activities of their group without resistance from family or society in general. The reinforcing cycle –participation leading to more participation – will have to deal with the amount of free time they have. Participation in other meetings or training programmes may suffer.

Normal reactions of the development agency

When the women in SHGs do not spend enough time on group activities, the project schedule suffers, the staff panic and quite obviously try to improve participation by various means; e.g., incentives are given to attend training programmes, subsidies are given to groups, staff call women from their houses to the group meetings, etc. These measures may work up to a point, but growth never really peaks.

Management principle for limits to growth

Do not push growth; remove the factors limiting them.

Changing men's (or the family's) attitudes may be the key to increasing women's participation. Attitudes may change eventually as tangible benefits from the women's membership in the SHG reach the family. Simply pushing participation may only force women to drop out or retard their own initiative. In some projects, the design of various institutions may need to be reviewed.

Why is it tough to address the limiting factor?

The leverage in limits to growth comes from effectively tackling the limiting conditions. But these are very often subtle and definitely hard to break. Also, once we clear a set of limiting factors, we are bound to encounter another. In human systems (families, societies, organisations), these limiting factors have often to do with the mind. People's beliefs (mental models) about possibilities, roles and sanctioned behaviour need to be looked at. We need paradigm shifts.

Shifting the burden

Farmers use pesticides on crops to protect them. But pesticides also destroy natural controls. The pests come back stronger and in larger numbers, and higher doses of pesticides are used. Everything is ruined. When a project manager finds that participation of the community is lower than desired, the "participation experts" are called in. Project staff continue to work in non-participatory ways but begin to feel that "participation" is for the NGOs/'participation experts' only and not for them. The problem remains; the situation has become worse.

Management principle of "shifting the burden"

Symptomatic measures may provide short-term relief, but problems only get worse over time. Gradually, we may find ourselves incapable of taking up fundamental solutions.

In the shifting-the-burden scenario, a two-pronged solution is required.
1. Strengthen the fundamental response (build a participatory culture in the project itself and train project staff in participatory processes)
2. Weaken the symptom response ("So, let's avoid the consultant this time and try it out ourselves!").

To find solutions in shifting-the-burden archetypes requires a shared vision among all stakeholders, long-term orientation as well as skills to analyse clearly the cause-and-effect relationships. Finding root causes is difficult; that's why the shifting-the-burden archetype is so common in life. But participation itself may support the rigorous analysis required to deal with this. Also, there could be more than one solution in any scenario.

Shifting the Burden

Experts on "participation" called in to support participatory processes — Symptomatic solution

Problem symptom

People do not participate

"Participation is the experts' business" say project staff

Delay

Side effect

Fundamental solution

Build capacities and a participatory culture within the project
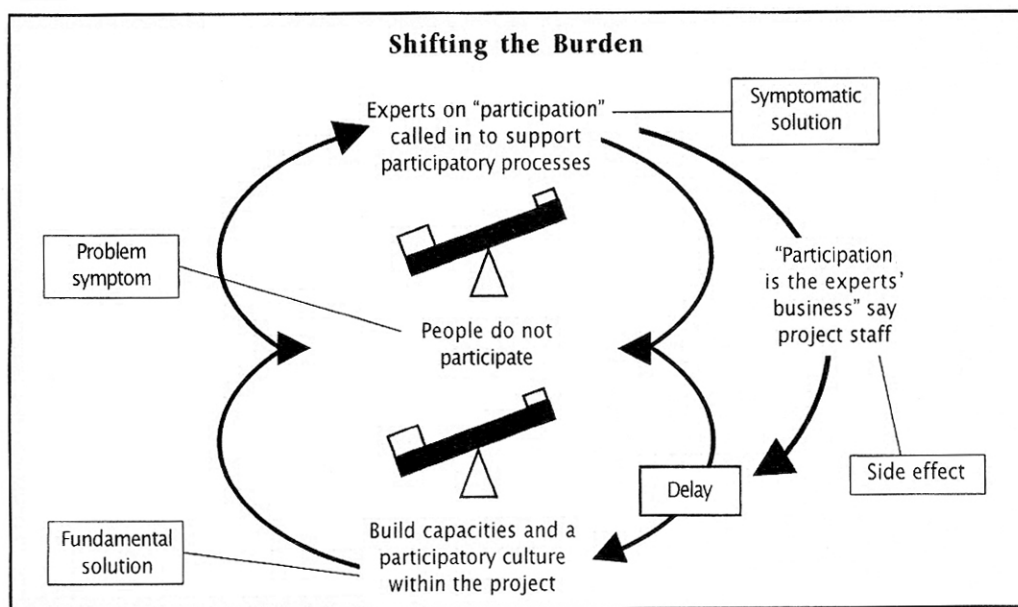
Other Examples of Shifting the Burden in Development			
Problem Symptom	**Symptomatic solution**	**Side Effect**	**Fundamental solutions? There cannot be just one of them…**
Low attendance at SHG meetings	Staff personally call the meeting	SHG loses initiative	Training/counselling, deeper analysis of women's time and timing of the meeting?
Lack of capital in poor households	Subsidies and grants to poor households	Dependency on outsiders	Credit and savings programmes? Institution building?
Project partners do not see eye to eye	Remove some of them	Mistrust develops in other partners	Dialogue? Change the institutional structure of the project?
Many poor do not participate in the village meeting	Put some on the executive committee of the village association	The well-to-do leave, but their participation is also crucial	Sensitisation? Capacity-building of the poor? Institutional representation of the poor?
Household incomes do not increase	Reduce project's standards for achievement	Lesser efforts by project commensurate with new standards	Study livelihood options in more detail? Study market?

The Choice of Solutions

When we encounter problems in our work, we often resort to symptomatic relief measures. Working on symptoms often makes the underlying problem worse as the side effects may add to the intensity of the problem. Fundamental solutions need to be found.

Structure influences behaviour

Limits to participation could arise due to social and institutional structures, capacities of all stakeholders to work in participatory arrangements, abilities to analyse, synthesise and find solutions; expectations (implicit or explicit); fatigue or any other. They are a part of the system in which the project functions. To know the system and to find the leverage in our work is a challenge that requires continuous learning and application. It is like a tough game of chess! It requires us to learn and act together in ways that are not ordinary.
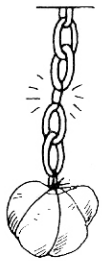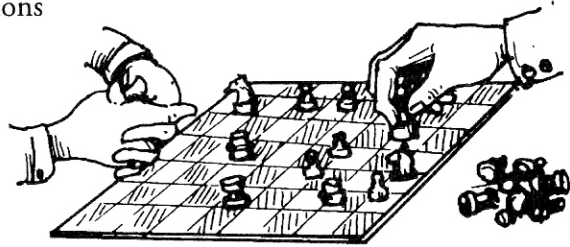
The weakest link

A system is as good as its weakest part. In larger development contexts, institutionalising participatory processes could be a place to start. We should look at areas under capacity-building and advocacy too. Can the quality of relationships between various stakeholders be addressed?

Too good to be true?

An equitable distribution of capacities between constituent parts supports a system better. How can we build these capacities? We may need to invest on good institutional designs to enhance participation.
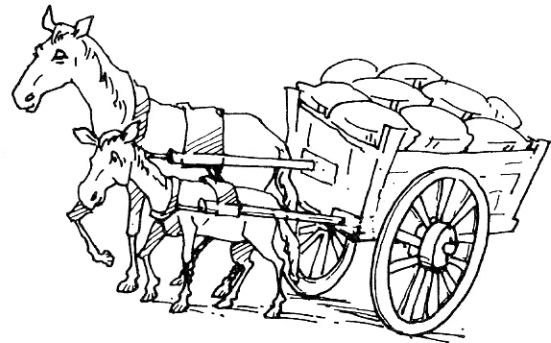
The key influence

It is useful to target the part that influences the system the most ("opinion leaders", ministers, "head offices", clerks, children, parents, teachers, husbands and mothers-in-law). The experts say that the mind is a good place to start. But in systems, we must be prepared for surprises.

Thinking in circles

There are no linear relations in systems. Cause-and-effect relationships are circular. Learning how relationships work is key to finding leverage. The dynamic nature of interventions becomes obvious when we see the connections to learning and action, participation and capacity-building, participatory organisations and their effectiveness on the field.

Being proactive

We must envision the changes in the system, and project our "feel" into the future. We must see the possibilities before they happen. But in getting the facts right we must work effectively. Monitoring our situation and making sense of all the reams of paper requires the ability to see the big picture and collective effort. Participation itself could help get that complete picture.
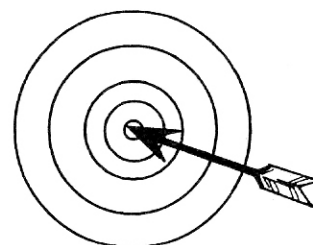
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Prepared by:
Saleela Patkar

Creating Spaces for Partnerships to Work: NGO Involvement in Multilateral/Bilateral Projects

Participation
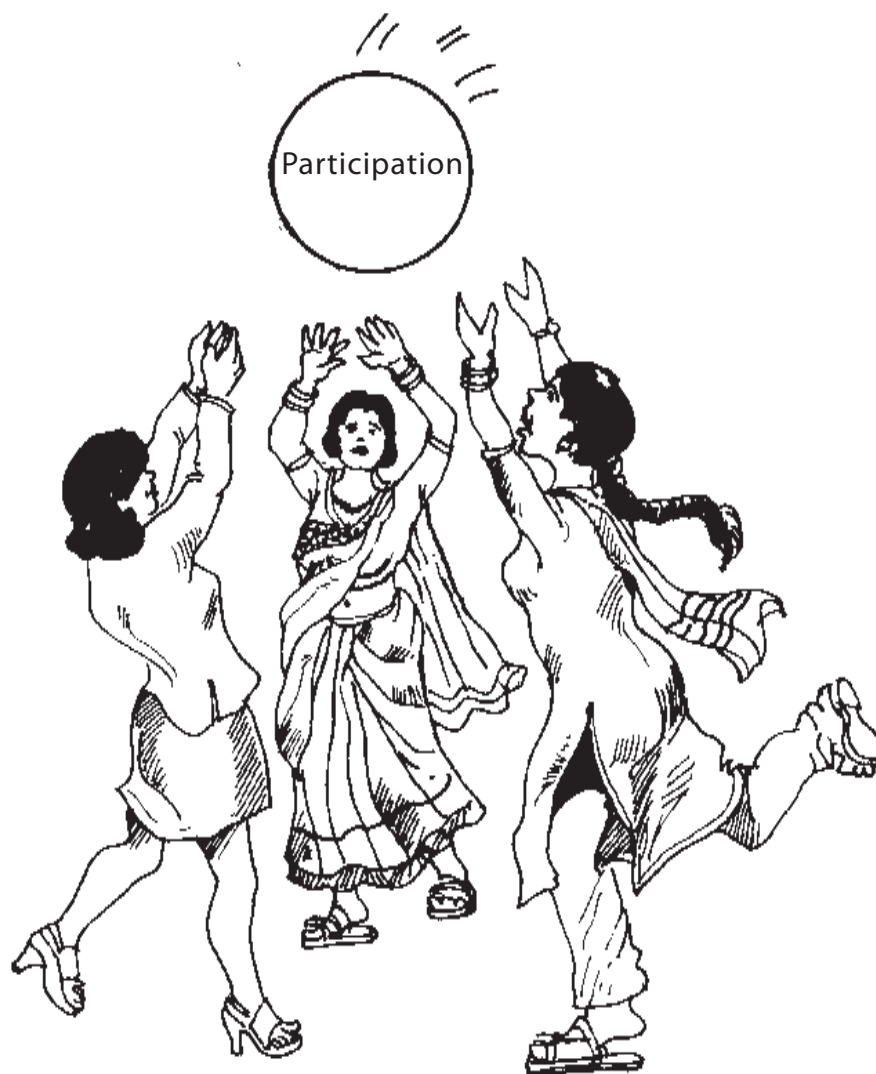
This paper is based on the experiences of MYRADA, a well–known Indian NGO, in partnering with the government in several multilateral/bilateral projects. It represents an NGO viewpoint.

Traditionally, multilateral/bilateral (M/B) agency partnerships have been with in-country governments (national/local) to include NGOs in joint partnership agreements and transform a dyadic partnership into a triadic one is a fairly recent development. Such projects now have three sets of interveners:

1. M/B agency;
2. in-country government; and
3. NGO partner.

Prerequisites for Successful Multilateral/Bilateral Partnerships

Critical to the success of M/B partnerships is the belief that they are preferred because of the comparative advantages that each partner can bring into the programme. It is important that all three partners share this belief. More specifically, it requires that the partnership be governed by certain conditions:

- That each partner recognises and respects the advantages that the other partners bring to the programme.
- That one intervener does not "muscle-in" to take the lead in an area where another intervener has proven expertise.
- That all interveners interact frequently and at all levels with one another to exchange feedback on programmes and resolve issues that arise during the project cycle.

NGO-Government Partnerships

NGO partnerships with governments are at times viewed critically as a strategy that makes the NGO vulnerable to being "co-opted" by the government. It is important, therefore, to make distinctions between:

- partnerships where NGOs are contracted (usually, though not always) through a "bidding" process to deliver certain goods and services; and
- partnerships where NGOs are sought out because of the particular advantages that they can bring to a programme in terms of experience and skills.

Although the former may make the NGO vulnerable to "co-option", it is assumed that the latter are guided by the intention of taking advantage of the cutting edge of the NGO rather than neutralising it.
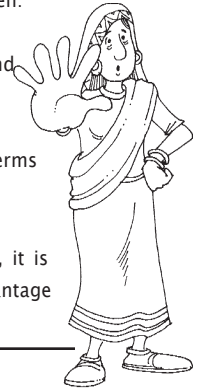
Other critical prerequisites to achieving synergy that should be fostered within all three interveners, include:

- the ability to absorb and institutionalise participatory strategies;
- organisational support for flexibility and innovation; and
- transparent work processes.

These attributes do not come easily – they must be fostered over a period of time. This calls for leadership of a high order in all the partners – one that has respect for collaborative relationships and a willingness to learn from them; leadership with vision, experience and commitment.

The Reality Today – Unequal Partnerships?

In most partnerships, however, project management structures and systems are set up mainly by the government in consultation with the M/B agency; the NGO partner has little say in them. The structures and systems, therefore, are conditioned by the organisational culture and operating norms of only two of these partners. Project functioning is conditioned by the pressures that the two interveners have to cope with – both from within their own systems and from the wider context within which they are placed. There are other characteristics of partnerships that are not inclusive of the NGO and which make the NGO an unequal partner in the triadic relationship:

- There are direct communication channels between the M/B agency and the government between the government and the NGO but not between the M/B agency and the NGO.

■ Governments and M/B agencies have a long tradition of working together, leading to the growth of relationships and of a good understanding of one another. NGOs who are new entrants to the partnership still have to establish their status.

■ M/B agencies and governments work within the context of sovereign agreements that locate their relationship in a particular project within the broader context of mutual over-arching interests. NGOs do not share the same background and do not understand it very well.

■ Governments and M/B agencies are likely to have greater ownership over the programme, since one of them is the lender and the other the borrower of the project funds. Government's position (though not often expressed in so many words) is that NGOs have no right to space of their own since they have no obligation to repay.
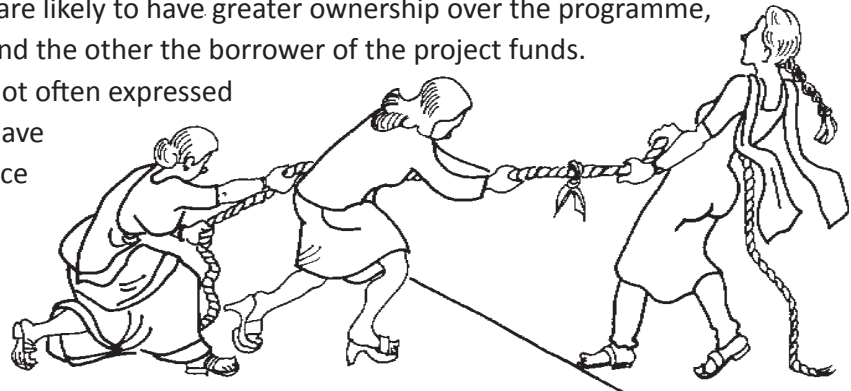
At the operational level, the NGO's "different-ness" is further emphasised by:

■ Its exclusion from meetings between the M/B agency and government, except those where "NGO issues" are the subject of discussion.

■ Its preference for (time consuming) participatory processes as against a straightforward delivery of materials, subsidies and services.

Tenures and Distortions

In M/B programmes, it is not uncommon for borrowing governments to give in to political compulsions and short–term interests in the investment of funds. Reviews are based on quarterly targets achieved, funds spent, and beneficiaries reached. Although quality aspects are discussed, they are not measured as often, or as regularly. Senior level government staff are often transferred. It is the NGO staff, the bank staff and lower level government staff, who face the consequences of distortions resulting from decisions taken under political compulsions and to promote short term interests. For example, the World Bank supported drinking water project in Karnataka included several villages that already had enough water for their needs. Refusing to contribute to the programme, one group of villagers said "You are offering food to someone who is already too full to eat". Yet to drop these villages was to challenge political choices and the NGO was criticised for not motivating the villagers to contribute.
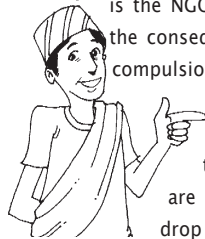
Meeting the Challenges of Participation

Participation is a concept that is subject to a variety of interpretations. A truly participative strategy influences all stages of the project cycle, places empowerment above other project objectives and focuses on building local people's institutions with the specific objective of handing over the lead to them. The demands of such a strategy can often be uncomfortable and disturbing. It is not enough that planners accustomed to traditional planning tools start getting more comfortable with the newer and more participatory tools; it is not enough that "beneficiaries" are enjoined to become more aware and contribute to the planning process (participation after planning is quite well accepted). For participation to be effective – especially in a society where a small number of people hold economic, social and political power – requires structural changes in the socio–economic relations within society. This structural change is what the interveners must be prepared to address. To facilitate this, interventions often become necessary in the organisational culture and systems of the interveners themselves. Otherwise, one may foster participation up to a certain level and withdraw from meeting the challenges it generates.
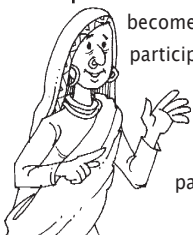
- Its inability to understand the need of governments to standardise structures, systems and schemes irrespective of variations in local conditions.
- Its willingness to put faith (and funds) in "informal" institutions without insisting that they acquire a legal status through registration: an obligation that serves little purpose but seems to enhance their credibility in the eyes of other institutions, particularly governments.

Creating Synergy in Multilateral/Bilateral Partnerships: A Few Operational Suggestions

Experience indicates that it is possible to create more synergetic partnerships between the NGO, the M/B agency, and the government. How does this happen? Synergy stands a better chance if:

- The organisational structure at the interface between the three partners has a blend of government and non-government staff, with different experience and expertise. This helps build stable working relationships. These staff must be assured of longer tenures – thereby ensuring a longer duration of accountability and commitment to the project, its outcomes and impacts.
- Emphasis is given to the capacity-building aspects of the programme (this includes staff of the NGO and the government at all levels as well as people's institutions). This requires at least a year of preparation before funds are disbursed. Capacity-building must focus on enabling a more consultative style of functioning, clearer job descriptions and transfer of skills needed for the job.
- Governments and M/B agencies are prepared to explore alternate funding and implementation logistics such as working through special institutions set up for the project purpose (e.g., District Societies in the North-east, India and KAWAD in Karnataka, India) or working through Development Corporations, etc.
- The pressure to disburse funds and achieve physical/numerical targets is balanced with greater emphasis on quality indicators (e.g., equity, empowerment, productivity). All parties must agree in advance that strong sanctions will be applied when these objectives are given low priority.
- All communication is open and documents are shared with all stakeholders. During supervision missions, workshops may be conducted in the project area in which all stakeholders participate.
- Dissemination of the results of all workshops helps improve communication to a large extent.

Consistency in Review Mission Feedback

A peculiar problem is created by review and supervision missions wherein one Mission makes suggestions contrary to those suggested by the previous mission. There must be consistency of thinking on how a project is expected to work.
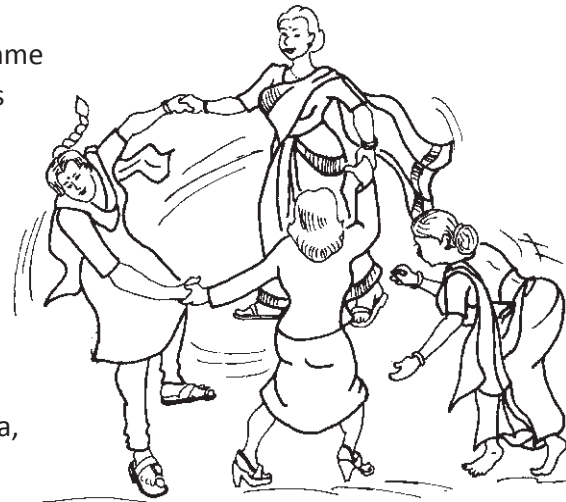
Prepared by:
Vidya Ramachandran

Mapping of NGO Initiatives: Building from Existing Experiences
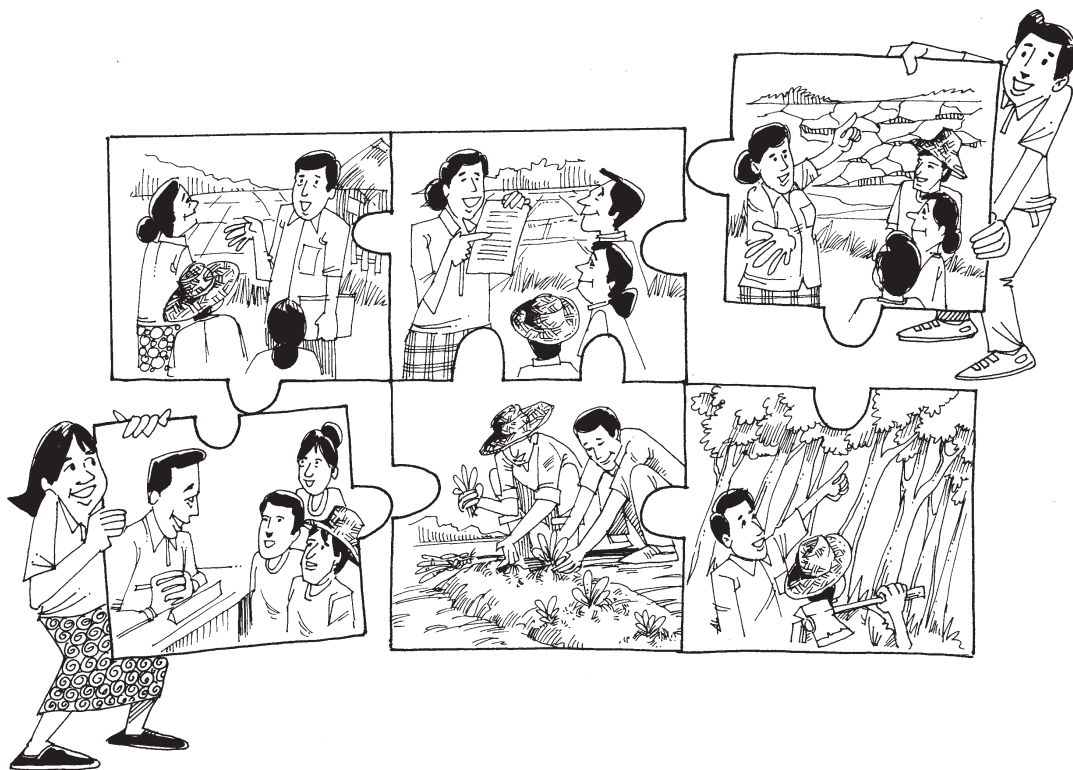
M ultilateral development agencies often seek the involvement of local non-government organisations (NGOs) in their programmes and projects in collaboration with government. In involving NGOs, many multilateral agencies and governments have utilised them as:

- sources of independent feedback and information;
- sources of innovation and experimentation;
- alternative delivery channels of development services, or as "change" facilitators in mobilising target poverty groups.

Distinct Abilities of NGOs

The built-in flexibility, complemented by committed staff and orientation to grassroots participation, have often been cited as the main strengths of NGOs. Yet, when it comes to implementing large-scale, public sector programmes, the comparative advantage of NGOs (i.e., capacity to scale-up, cost-effectiveness) has been much debated – notwithstanding the few exceptional "NGO star-varieties" that are often cited in development literature.

In terms of project implementation, a comparative review between government-led and NGO-led programmes (in the Philippines) shows that the niche of NGOs lies in two distinct abilities:

- First, the ability of NGOs for "nuancing" – that is, their ability to adapt programmes to specific local conditions or target groups. In the process, NGOs not only implement, but also experiment and innovate. In contrast, government-led programmes tend to be based on generalised "standards" (e.g., the conditions in a "typical" community, common perceptions of problems) and to apply standard delivery systems and procedures. Centrally-planned programmes are designed with *all* communities in mind, and *not* any *single* community. The need for "nuancing" is most pronounced, for instance, in work among different tribal or indigenous communities.

- Second, NGO participation is especially crucial when project outcomes (their post-intervention sustainability) depend heavily on community ownership of a project. An example is that of a community forestry project where upland communities are organised (and are expected) to undertake forest protection and resource management long after the project is completed.

However, successful collaboration with NGOs can only take place where governments create an enabling environment which encourages their formation and active involvement in development efforts.
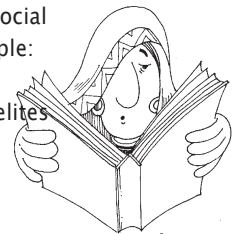
> ### Restrictive Policy Environments
>
> In Asian countries, government policy restrictions against NGOs take several forms, for example:
> - Anti-human-rights policies (against basic freedoms of speech and association)
> - Non-recognition, or strict registration and accreditation requirements for NGOs
> - National Security Acts, Internal Security Acts
> - Stringent controls against foreign funding
>
> Other constraints come in the existing social environment at the local level, for example:
> - Internal conflicts
> - Dominance by well-entrenched local elites
> - Religious and cultural restrictions
> - Criminality
> - Attitudes of local officials
>
> In restrictive policy environments, many NGOs may even refuse to be identified.

Criteria for Selection of NGOs

Invariably, multilateral development agencies use three broad criteria for identifying NGOs with whom cooperation is desirable.

- **Skill and capacity**
  NGOs with a proven track record, the necessary administrative and operational capacities, and the desired thematic, sectoral or geographical expertise.

- **Governance**
  NGOs that are reliable and well-managed, well-developed in terms of accountability and transparency, with built-in participatory management, and free of nepotism.
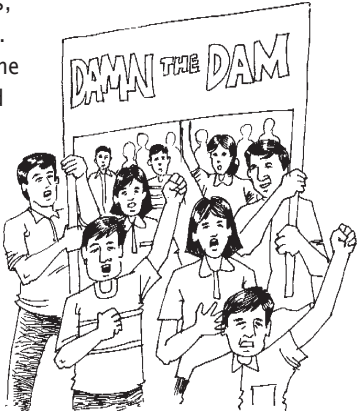
■ **Legitimacy and credibility**
NGOs that are acceptable to the target group and their organisations, with knowledge of the local situation and the target community, able and willing to dialogue with government and local power structures, with the necessary legal status, and that legitimately represent target beneficiaries or development interests.

■ **Other donor criteria**
There are two other (often, unstated) criteria used by multilateral development agencies in selecting NGOs – which NGOs themselves tend to question. These are outlined in the box below.

Donor Criteria	NGO Arguments/Views
"Acceptable to the government"	■ This criterion is unacceptable to NGOs. Often, NGOs who work for social change encounter problems with government officials and the local elite.
"Preference for developmental rather than advocacy NGOs"	■ The categories may not apply to grassroots NGOs, who integrate both advocacy and field operations. Thus, what is more important is to ensure that the issues being advocated are directly linked to field action and realities. ■ Advocacy NGOs have an important role in the project cycle (beyond direct service–delivery and project implementation) as independent sources of information and feedback. ■ Advocacy NGOs tend to be more articulate and visible. Thus special efforts must be made to identify and involve grassroots NGOs and SHGs.

General Considerations for Promoting Cooperation with NGOs

Successful collaboration with NGOs depends on much more than the selection of capable NGOs and the preparation of an acceptable workplan. Two underlying facts about NGOs need to be considered:

1. NGOs often evolve in the context of social or grassroots movements as both critiques and alternatives to the top-down approaches of government;
2. People often create or join NGOs precisely to escape the stifling bureaucracy of the government system.

These bring about three working principles:

1. NGOs are likely to continue to take a critical stance, even within the context of a collaboration with government, performing their roles as watchdogs or as public interest groups.
2. NGOs are likely to resist attempts that fit them into pre-determined roles where they feel that their flexibility, autonomy and independence are compromised (non-cooptation).
3. The ideal relationship is one of equal partnership.
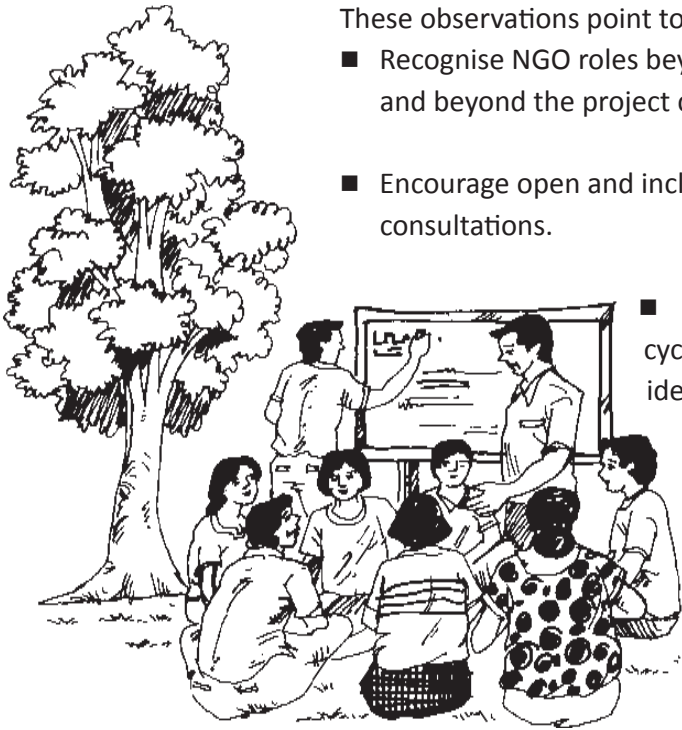
These observations point to the following needs:

■ Recognise NGO roles beyond their service-delivery functions – both within and beyond the project cycles.

■ Encourage open and inclusive processes, such as public dialogues and consultations.

■ Involve NGOs in other phases of the project cycle, especially during the early phases of project identification, formulation and appraisal.

■ Ensure public access to information.

■ Institute forms of direct feedback, beyond the usual monitoring reports, and inform NGOs on how their feedback is being addressed.

Practical Problems in Identifying NGOs/NGO Initiatives

NGOs come in all shapes and sizes. Thus, the identification, screening and selection of NGOs are practical issues often raised by project officers. Specific concerns include:

■ where to find reliable data on NGOs, particularly at the grassroots, due to the general lack of systematic information at country level;

■ how to develop NGO selection criteria;

■ how to distinguish development NGOs from "quasi-NGOs"; and

■ how to find the right NGO for specific target sectors or project areas.

NGO Hybrid Varieties

NGOs often monitor their own ranks and have developed monickers for different "hybrid types", as follows:

■ GRINGOs: Government-Initiated NGOs
■ CONGOs: Consultancy firm NGOs
■ BINGOs: Business and Industry NGOs
■ COME 'N GOs: "fly by night" NGOs
■ NGIs: Non-governmental individuals

Mapping of NGO Initiatives

NGO mapping consists of a collection of brief institutional profiles of NGOs and self-help groups (SHGs) within a given target sector or target area. It shows the resources and self-help initiatives that already exist, and identifies which could serve as "building blocks" for development interventions. This could be undertaken as part of the existing project cycle.

Mapping exercises of NGOs have been undertaken for different purposes, at many stages of the project cycle. Some experiences are detailed in the next pages.

1. Country assistance strategies

- Documenting NGO initiatives with a potential for scaling up. Pilots rarely go to scale. Innovation and scaling-up are often separate processes. While designers hope that government or local people will replicate successful model programmes, scaling-up often remains largely rhetoric. Once the "book is published", the "award is given", or the "conference is held", successes tend to be forgotten. While successes are very informative and sometimes inspiring, others tend to want to do things their own way. Identifying NGO innovations can lead to new project designs. Existing NGO initiatives with "capacity for scaling-up", can be documented and used as the basis for the design of new projects. This also serves another purpose – i.e., as a counter-balance to government project proposal submissions and emphasis on top-down service delivery.

2. Project identification and formulation

- **Mapping of existing NGOs working within a target sector and/or area, e.g., as part of environmental scanning.**
  Project identification and formulation missions tend to overlook the existing work of NGOs and SHGs. Individual NGO initiatives may be small and scattered but their efforts are often locally networked in some formal or informal way. Most grassroots NGOs shun *"big-ness"*, and prefer networking as the mode to achieve a level of scale and impact.

  The mapping of local initiatives often requires the assistance of a knowledgeable local NGO or network. It may be done as part of the terms of reference (TORs) of project missions, or separately, as external inputs into missions. NGO-mapping exercises can be done through individual and group interviews, or with the use of "web-mapping" exercises.

3. Project appraisal

- **Making an inventory or directory of NGOs, for identifying potential sources of information, and understanding the local development context.**
  Unlike project identification missions who come with broader development perspectives, project formulation and appraisal missions are often composed of technical specialists and consultants from different fields (e.g., livestock, credit, agroforestry, institutions, etc.). On 3-4 week missions, these external experts have little time to acquaint themselves with the local situation, so they tend to focus narrowly on their specific fields of expertise and interest.

At the point of project formulation and appraisal, NGOs are valuable sources of information and experience – especially for understanding the local context, the existing power structures and relationships, and what works/ doesn't work within the local community setting. NGOs could also arrange visits to local projects and communities, to give a clearer understanding and appreciation of micro-level realities.

4. Project start-up and implementation

Pre-screening of NGOs and identification of potential partners.
Knowledge of the local NGO sector requires certain investments of staff and resources over time. NGOs often make the following three main observations:

- the project, itself, must explore broader parameters for cooperation with NGOs beyond the usual sub-contracting arrangements;
- the NGOs, themselves often do their own self-selection and tend to work out compromises among themselves; and
- the NGOs, themselves, should actively participate in drawing up criteria for cooperators, as well as the "terms of engagement" with the project.

Identifying Potential Cooperators

In identifying potential project cooperators, a combination of approaches may be used:
- NGO networks may be consulted as initial sources of information – to identify potential partners, or to provide lead contacts.

- As a starting point, existing databases could be used as initial references. For specific geographical areas, however, identification is best done on-site
.
- Where few or no NGOs operate in a given area, other institutions may be tapped (i.e., universities, research and training institutions, farmers associations, village development councils). Sometimes, it is useful to tap NGOs operating in neighbouring districts or provinces, using the project as a means for NGOs to expand their scope for services.

- In some countries, it has been an increasing practice to engage the services of NGO networks for NGO selection and accreditation, project coordination and monitoring. Even where NGOs have been contracted on an individual basis, they have tended to band together to create their own project-based "sub-networks".

NGO Mapping in the Project Cycle

In summary, various types of NGO mapping may be introduced in different phases of the project cycle.
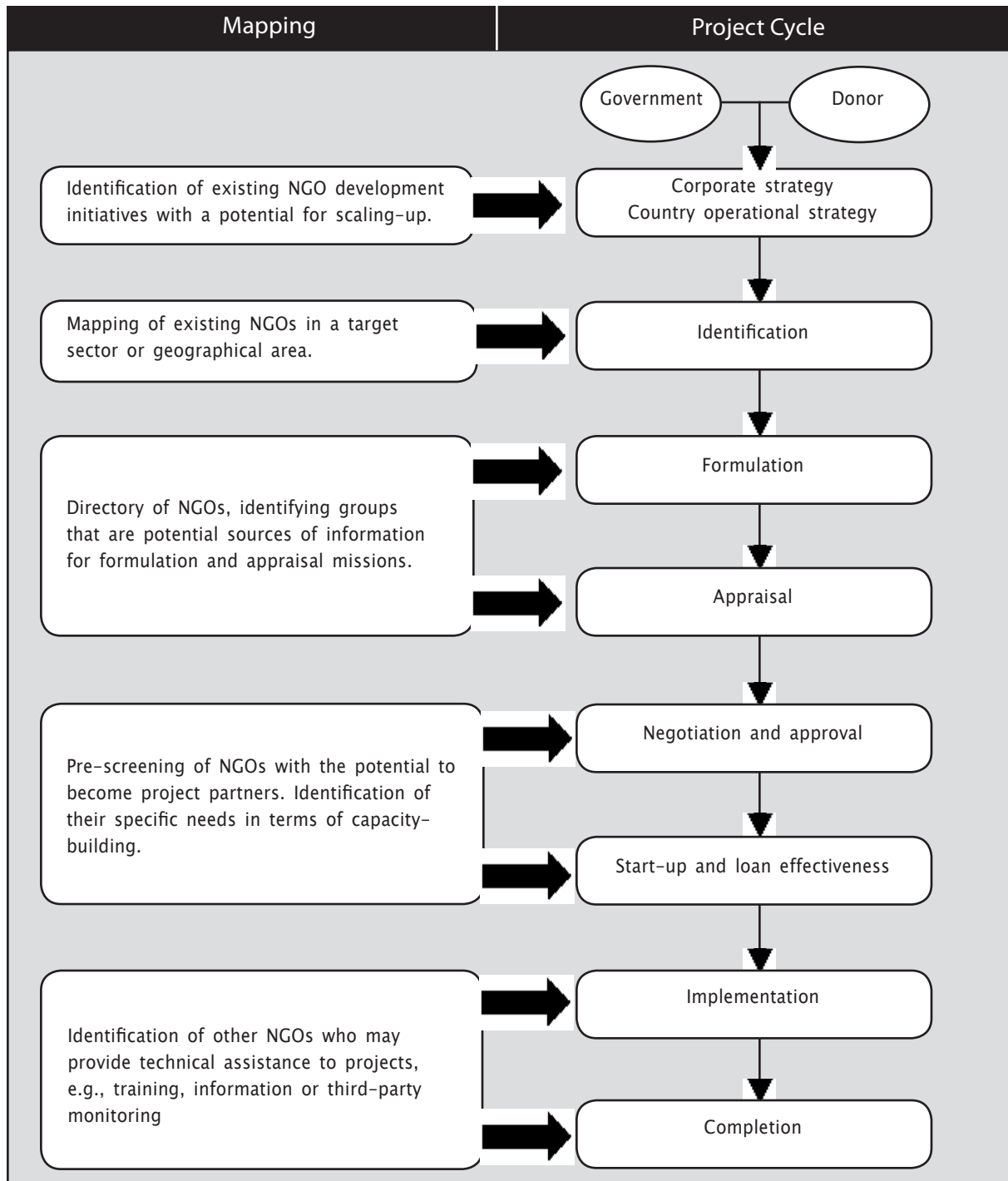
Mapping	Project Cycle

Mapping	Project Cycle
	Government ── Donor
Identification of existing NGO development initiatives with a potential for scaling-up. →	Corporate strategy Country operational strategy
Mapping of existing NGOs in a target sector or geographical area. →	Identification
Directory of NGOs, identifying groups that are potential sources of information for formulation and appraisal missions. →	Formulation
→	Appraisal
Pre-screening of NGOs with the potential to become project partners. Identification of their specific needs in terms of capacity-building. →	Negotiation and approval
→	Start-up and loan effectiveness
Identification of other NGOs who may provide technical assistance to projects, e.g., training, information or third-party monitoring →	Implementation
→	Completion

Prepared by:
Antonio B. Quizon

Learning Participation from NGO Experiences in Asia

P articipatory approaches have gained increasing acceptance in official development cooperation over the last few years. Often rooted in the self-help and community development tradition of non-government organisations (NGOs) and self-help groups (SHGs), these approaches emphasise decentralised decision-making, joint learning and an orientation towards action and process. Development is seen as empowering people to help themselves and to participate in decisions which affect their lives. The people themselves, their needs and capabilities, are the focus of the approach, rather than the funding and operational procedures or the organisational realities of external agencies.

> Most NGOs see development as empowering people to help themselves and to allow their communities to influence initiatives and decisions which affect their lives.

Among NGOs, participatory approaches are seen as more than just a new set of methods and techniques. NGOs emphasise the importance of changes in personal values, reversal of roles and institutional re-orientation, especially for the external agent or development agency.
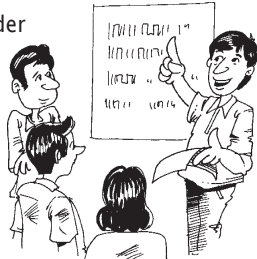
What particular lessons, methods and approaches from NGO experiences in participation might be useful and relevant to a multilateral development agency? What exactly can be learned or adopted

from NGO experiences? How could such experiences be integrated into a project cycle? In the Asian context, these lessons can be grouped into three main categories:

1. **Strategies and approaches**, including: community-organising strategies, networking, the building and mobilisation of SHGs, and alternative development approaches that emphasise various forms of community empowerment.
2. **Practical skills, including facilitation**, negotiations and the handling of public consultations.
3. **Methods and tools**, such as the range of field-tested PRA practices and methods.

Learning Areas from NGO Experiences in Participation

Multilateral agencies might find it relevant to examine and learn from NGO experiences along the following five broad themes:

Learning Areas/Themes	NGO Experience
I. Participation in Policy Formulation	
Civil society initiatives and participation in the formulation of development strategies	NGO initiatives in the formulation of development strategies, utilising a broad-based participatory approach. These include area development planning or sectoral planning work involving primary stakeholders or influencing country assistance strategies of bilateral and multilateral institutions. Of interest here, are the methods and processes involved in data-gathering, analysis and consensus-building; GO-NGO policy consultations; experiences in the creation and functioning of joint GO-NGO policy bodies.
II. Participation in the Project Cycle	
Stakeholder participation in the project identification, appraisal and design process	PRA poverty diagnosis; identification of target groups; local needs assessments; pre-appraisal studies; GO-NGO project consultations and workshops; joint project designing; participation in official project formulation and appraisal missions; negotiations; influencing the attitudes of officials and bureaucrats.
Enhancing stakeholder and beneficiary participation in project implementation	Decentralised systems for project implementation, project delivery and decision-making; GO-NGO institutional working arrangements; participatory implementation; the role of beneficiaries in decision-making; capacity-building for local institutions; participatory approaches to scaling up local initiatives; developing local ownership within projects.

Learning Areas/Themes	NGO Experience
Beneficiary monitoring and impact assessments	Methods, tools, systems and approaches for introducing beneficiary monitoring and impact assessments among poor communities and creating institutionalised systems for community feedback and response. Of specific interest here, are approaches for developing meaningful impact indicators; identifying primary stakeholders; building community capacity for local–level participatory planning and monitoring
III. Working with Special Target Groups	
Enhancing participation among particular target groups	Enhancing and developing meaningful participation among particular target groups, especially rural women, landless and migrant rural workers, shifting cultivators, indigenous peoples, coastal fisherfolk communities, discriminated castes, internally displaced people, and the informal sector. Of special interest here, are practical tools and approaches in: (a) targeting development interventions; (b) overcoming specific cultural, religious and institutional constraints; (c) motivating, animating and sustaining interest and participation among the different target groups; and (d) negotiating and resolving conflicts at the local level.
IV. Working within "Problematic" Contexts	
Promoting participation in restricted policy environments	Introducing beneficiary and stakeholder participation within restricted policy environments, in areas with authoritarian or highly centralised governance structures, or in situations of conflict. Key items of interest include: identifying the "right" project partners; dealing with public officials; developing decentralised project designs and motivating primary stakeholders. Adopting the best practices for negotiation, facilitation and advocacy.
V. Learning from NGO and Community Innovations	
Initiatives and participatory approaches in the mobilisation of target groups	The ability to mobilise and empower communities is a distinct strength often cited of NGOs and people's organisations. Of special interest here are experiences that highlight: (a) how local initiatives are multiplied or scaled up to achieve broader coverage and impact; (b) approaches to community motivation, education and local resource mobilisation; (c) innovative organisational systems and structures; (d) enhancing self–help and local initiatives; and (f) the use of alternative media.
Participatory initiatives and approaches in agricultural development and resource management	NGOs and people's organisations have undertaken various initiatives in agricultural development and resource management. NGOs utilise participatory approaches that depart from the existing paradigms and top-down formulas of highly centralised official bodies. These include innovations in, e.g., farmer-based extension, community-based resource management, environmental education and protection; agroforestry, forest resource protection and rehabilitation; watershed development; community-based health and education; local governance systems; agricultural research and development; fisheries development; promotion of agrarian reforms; resource and tenurial rights; dealing with resource conflicts.

Constraints to Adopting from NGO Experience

In the view of multilateral agencies there are many constraints to adopting NGO experiences. Two such limitations commonly cited are: questions of scale and working through governments.

Questions of scale

Most of the NGO successes in participatory approaches have been implemented at the scale of a village or cluster of villages. Thus, donors have raised questions about NGO organisational capacities, the replicability of particular experiences, and the applicability of specific tools when participation is pursued over a broader area or target group.

Indeed, many NGOs by choice prefer to make an impact in a small sector or area. Others see their role as piloting developmental innovations rather than scaling-up. On the other hand, many large Asian NGOs have successfully implemented PRA and participatory approaches on a wide scale, especially in forestry, anti-poverty and food security programmes, soil and water conservation, watershed management, water and sanitation, and urban programmes.

Going to scale also necessarily raises concerns about quality – due often to the rush to meet external targets for villages covered, project accomplishments and sums disbursed. The problems include: one-off extractive appraisals without community analysis, planning or action; the routine use of methods; and insensitivity to local cultures and social processes. The required corrective measures include: giving more time for participation and institution-building especially in the early stages of programmes; changes in project procedures; greater flexibility in targets; and giving greater priority to behaviour and attitudes in trainings.

An alternative approach to scaling-up participatory approaches in projects might lie in building on small-scale successes, through existing networking systems since "networks" have been the primary vehicles by which smaller NGOs are able to share skills and resources and scale up their operations. This networking approach has proven useful in carefully designed programmes that emphasise decentralised implementation and decision-making (e.g., targetted poverty alleviation programmes, dispersal schemes, micro-credit on lending schemes, and infrastructure- and service-delivery programmes directed at community-identified priorities). Networking could be institutionalised within project designs.
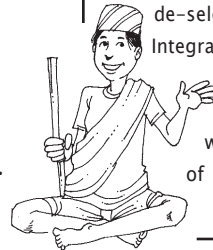
> **Networking**
>
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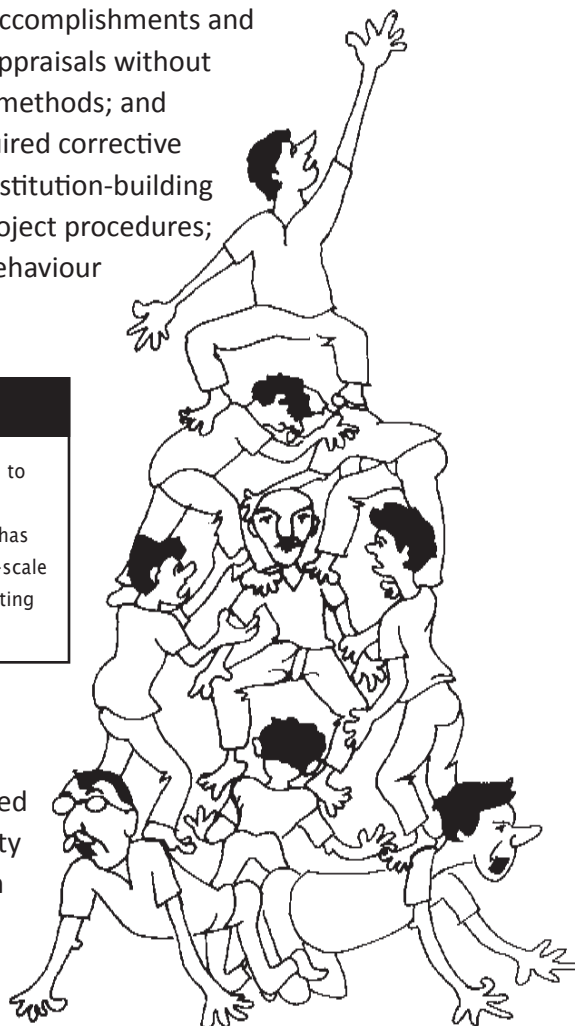
Ultimately, however, the key decision will be where to act in the continuum between the "small and beautiful" and the "big and blotchy". Small can be secure, personally satisfying and professionally safe, but impact is limited. Seen another way, the question facing NGOs is whether to go for big changes in small programmes, or for small changes in big programmes. Trade-offs between quality, scale and impact have to be part of responsible decisions about where to work, and what to do.

Questions of working through governments

Multilateral agencies work through governments and tend to have a reduced role once project implementation begins. The very nature of development assistance affects participation. Often, there is greater flexibility in implementing grant-based technical assistance projects than there is for loan-based financial assistance projects. Loan-based projects which are implemented through (usually steep) hierarchies of borrower-governments have to go through stringent bidding procedures and financial auditing requirements. Thus, questions arise as to the extent to which participatory approaches or NGO involvement can be introduced in the project by multilateral agencies when it is the borrower-government that will take over direct responsibility for implementation.

Benefits of Participatory Approaches to External Developmental Agencies

- More appropriate and timely interventions that fit the needs of the community and users of local facilities
- Better implementation, sustainability and local ownership of project initiatives
- More complete utilisation of services provided
- Greater project efficiency and improved productivity
- Better match between human capabilities and capital investments
- Improved transparency and accountability
- Increased equity and benefit-sharing
- Willingness of local communities to share costs, and awakening of interest in sustaining the benefits
- Strengthened local capacity to initiate other development activities
- Improved learning and greater personal and professional satisfaction on the part of the external agency
- Improved cost-benefit ratio in the long term
- Reduced costs of development programmes

There are major differences between the institutional cultures of NGOs and governments. This must be taken into account when attempting to transfer participatory concepts from one institutional environment to another.

Further, the prevailing policy environment in each country often limits how far relationships can be built between NGOs and the government.

For sure, participatory processes have to be introduced into projects early on in the project cycle, and may need to be strengthened in negotiations with borrower-governments. Lending institutions could play an important role in seeking greater recognition, roles and "democratic space" for NGOs and peoples' organisations, vis-a-vis government. One option is to introduce participation as a loan conditionality.

This may be relevant and useful, but it may not altogether be sufficient. Experience shows that there is a tendency on the part of government implementors to go through the motions of participatory exercises.

It is important to provide for an orientation and training phase for project staff as well as beneficiaries to introduce participatory practices in government-led projects. During project start-up, there will be a need to invest in "social preparation" and initial targets for physical achievements should be low. Otherwise, some people may later use the project as proof that "participation does not work". Experience also suggests that the use of short-term consultants at this point may be of limited usefulness. Instead, what may be needed are persistent "change agents" coming from outside the project staff who are available over a longer period of time. NGOs within the country could fill in this role.

Bridging Institutional Cultures

- Major differences between institutional cultures of NGOs and governments must be taken into account when attempting to transfer a new concept from one institutional environment to another.
- It is important to provide for an orientation and training phase for project staff as well as beneficiaries.
- During project start–up, there is a need to invest in "social preparation" and targets for physical achievements should be low.

Presently, most practitioners of PRA and participatory approaches come from NGO backgrounds, and many tend to be overly critical of the attitudes and behaviour of government officials (seen as "wrong", "too slow" or "unable to change"). While this view might be justifiable, it could also show a lack of willingness on the part of some NGOs to understand and accept people in their present state. Thus, the best framework for moving forward and for building NGO involvement in a participatory government-led project may be to construct it as a "joint learning exercise". Further, in instances where there have been limited experiences in GO-NGO cooperation, some piloting may be necessary.

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