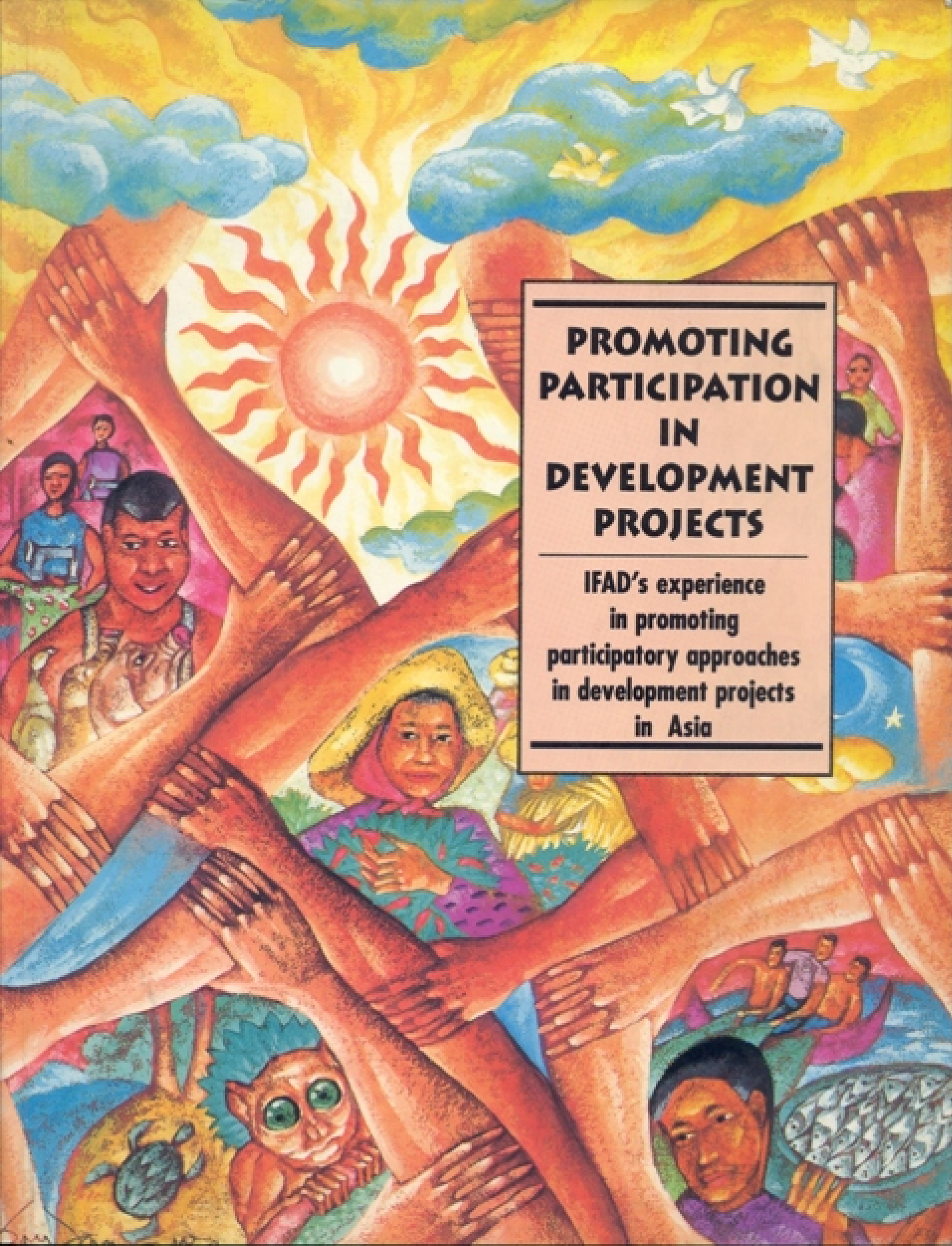

PROMOTING PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

IFAD's experience in promoting participatory approaches in development projects in Asia

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International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)
Southeast Asian Rural Social Leadership Institute (SEARSOLIN)

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Preface

This publication is a review of a two-year project commissioned by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and undertaken by the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) to evaluate the participatory approaches and tools that had been used by IFAD in its projects in Asia during the 1990s.

Part I provides an overview of IFAD's experience in participatory approaches in Asia. It was prepared by Cristina M. Liamzon, ANGOC liaison officer in Rome and former national coordinator of PhilDHRRA, a Philippine NGO engaged in rural development concerns.

Part II, which discusses NGO practices in participation, was written by Antonio B. Quizon and Rachel Polestico. Mr. Quizon is a former executive director of ANGOC and is now a boardmember of this organization. Ms. Polestico is the associate director of the Southeast Asian Rural Social Leadership Institute (SEARSOLIN).

In publishing this review, IFAD hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the issues and dynamics of participation and thereby enhance its own efforts to strengthen the promotion and practice of participation.

This publication gives voice to the conviction, now shared by IFAD, that development requires the partners to move almost in lockstep through all the stages of a project. IFAD thus commits itself to moving in tandem with those whom it purports to serve.

Part I

Participatory Processes

in Development Projects

A review of IFAD's Experience in Asia

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Executive Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Critical Issues within IFAD

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

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

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

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

For IFAD Management:

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

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

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

For the Asia and Pacific Division:

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

Some definitions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction

Background, Context and Purpose of TAG Project and Review Paper

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

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

The project involves several components:

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

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

Project objectives

Specifically, the project aims to:

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

Objectives of the review paper

This review study seeks to:

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

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

Methodology

Data gathering: constraints and limitations

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

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

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

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

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

Contents and organization of the report

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

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

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

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

Basic Issues in Participation

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

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

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

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

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

Objectives of Participation - Participation for Transformation and Empowerment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

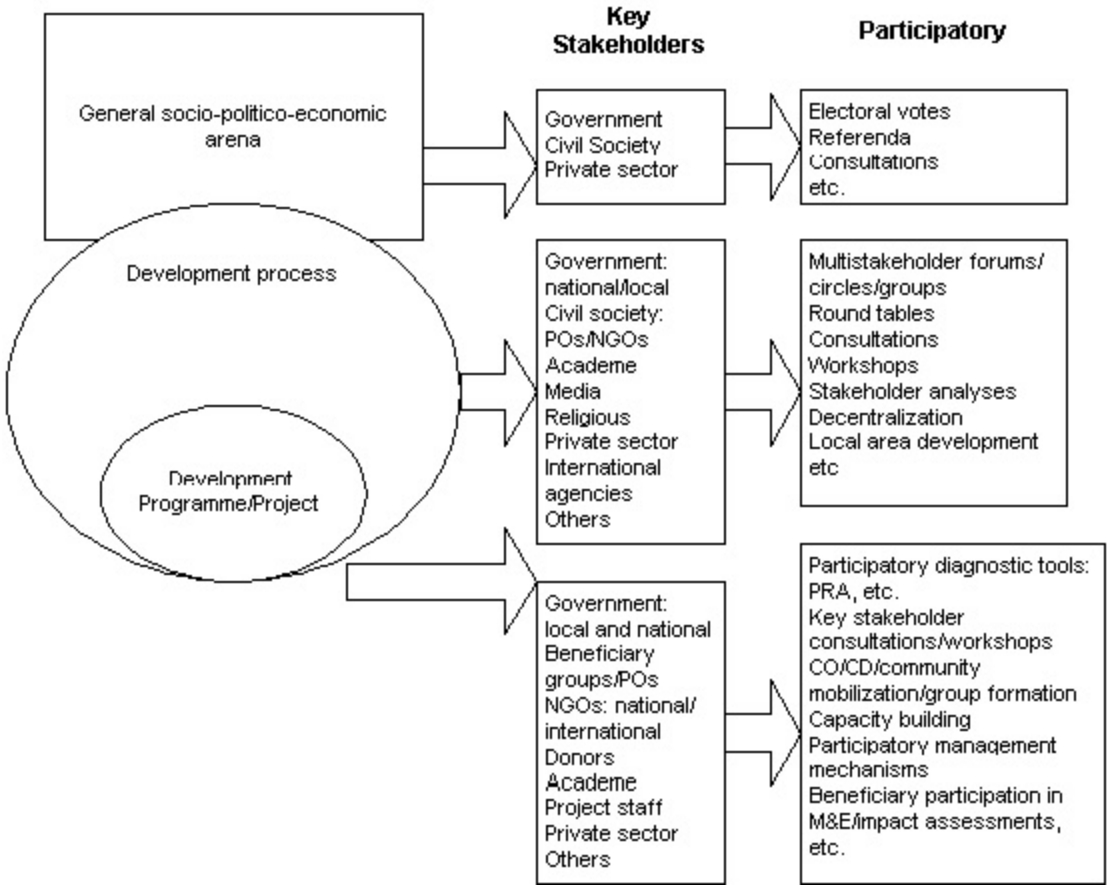
Clearly, participation involves a complex set of dynamics that needs to be continuously analyzed. It is necessary to find ways to ensure that people are empowered to control and direct their lives and destinies, even within a project setting.

Participatory Approaches and Methodologies

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Participation and the Development Catalyst

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

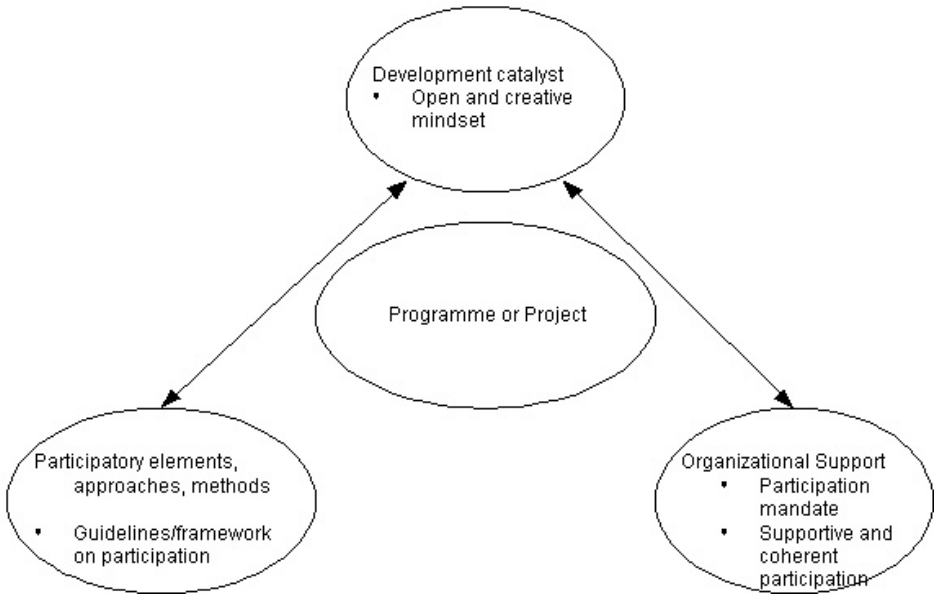
Helping the poor build up their organizations and their capacities to decide, implement and manage development projects, as well as sustain their initiatives, takes much time and effort not only from the local organizations, but also from those working directly with the poor. It is not possible to rush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

Participation and Capacity Building

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

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

Fig. 2. Key Elements of an Effective Participation Framework



covered in development projects.

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

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

Participatory Development and Selected Multilateral Organizations

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

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

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

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

Perspectives, policies and programmes involving CSOs/NGOs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1. NGO Participation in Projects in Multilateral Financial Institutions

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

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

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

from involving CS in its project activities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

to find ways and means to overcome these difficulties.

CSO/NGO and Multilateral Agency Mechanisms

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 2. Data on NGO Relations with Four Multilateral Agencies

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

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

IFAD Framework on Participation

Corporate Mandate on Participation and Mechanisms for NGO Involvement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Overview of IFAD's Experience in Participatory Processes

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

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

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

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

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

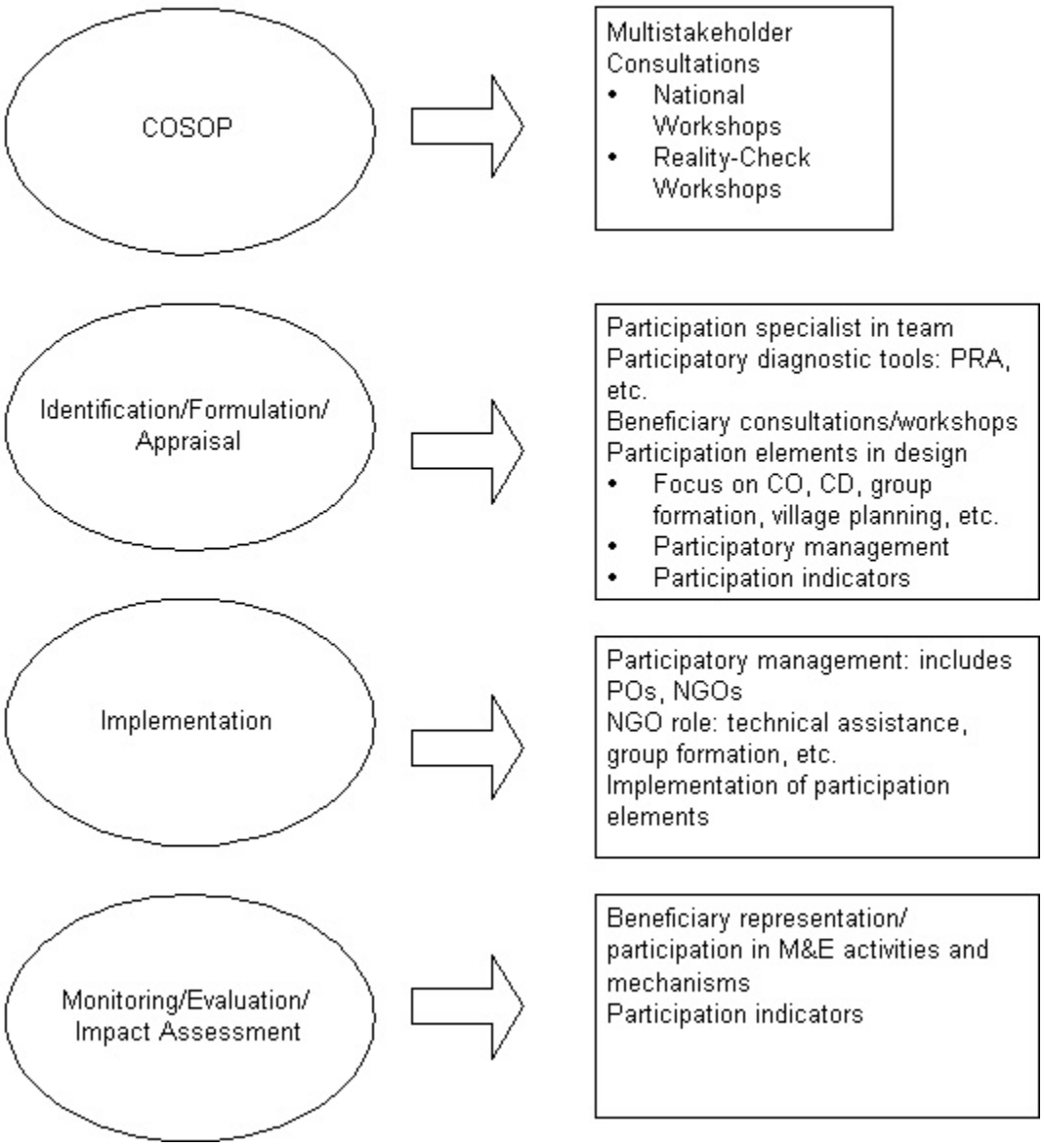
COSOP and the Project Identification Stage

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

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

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

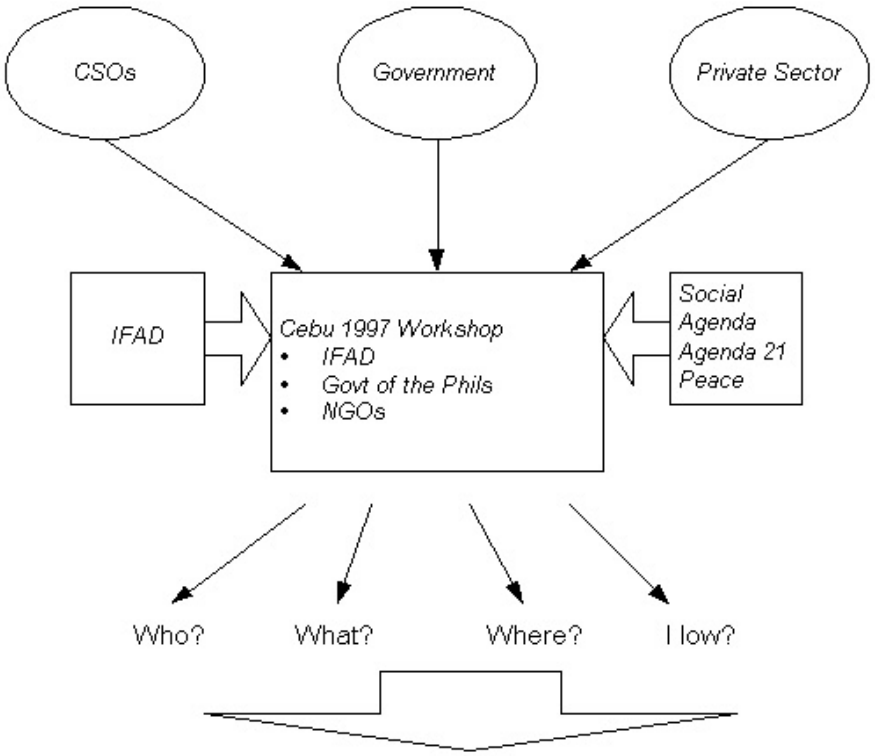
Fig. 3. Current Areas of Participation in IFAD Project Cycle



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

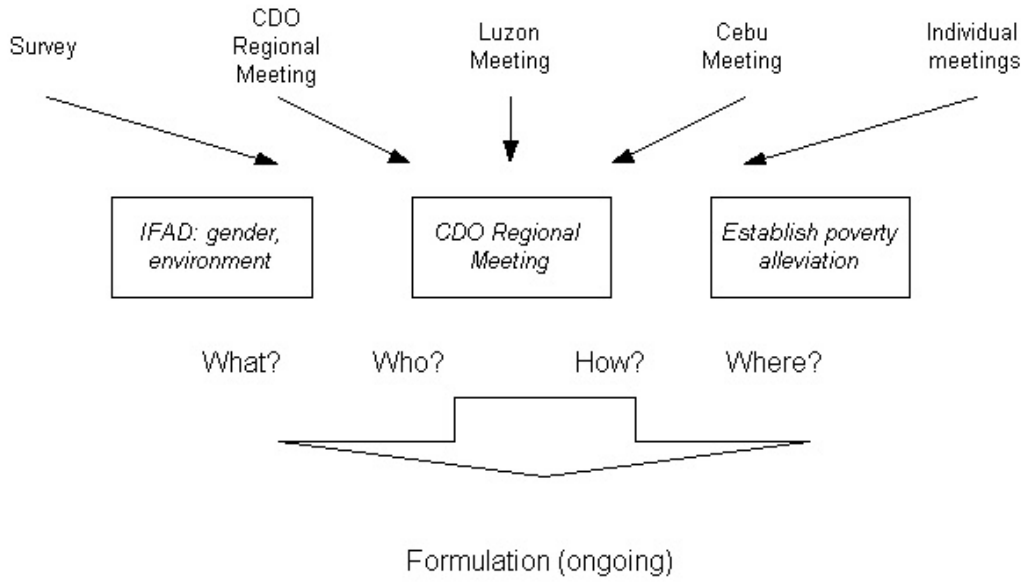
These participatory initiatives, which were highly appreciated by the participating stakeholders, have helped to develop a constituency for IFAD that did not previously exist within the countries. Participants reported that the

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



Western Mindanao Community Initiative Project

(1999)



Formulation (ongoing)

Source: Brian Baldwin

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

Stakeholder analysis:

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

Consultation/ Workshop preparation:

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

Consultation/ Workshop proceedings:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Participation in Design of Projects

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Targeting in Projects

Table 5. Type of Project and Use of Participatory Tools

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

Targeting in Projects

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

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

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

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

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

Participation in the Implementation Stage

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

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

Table 6. Project Target Groups and Use of Participatory Tools

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

Many of the projects indicated several target groups.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 8. Types of NGO Participation in IFAD Projects

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

NGO participation can comprise several types of activities

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

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

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

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

Role of CSOs/NGOs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Issues on NGO Participation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Role of Group Formation and Community Organization and Capacity Building

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Factors that Facilitated/ Constrained Participation

Within Countries

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Within IFAD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Critical Issues within IFAD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recommendations

For IFAD Management:

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

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

For the Asia and Pacific Division:

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

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Notes

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

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

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

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

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

Part II

NGO Practices in Participation: Asian Experiences

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Discussion paper prepared for the project "Participatory Processes: Learning from NGO Experiences in Asia (PLEA) implemented jointly by IFAD, CIRDAP & ANGOC.

Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)
Southeast Asian Rural Social Leadership Institute (SEARSOLIN)

Introduction & Background

Over recent years, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has taken conscious steps to integrate participatory approaches in various stages of its project cycle. These have included expansion of the participation of civil society groups, particularly target beneficiaries, in its projects. In 1998, IFAD defined its two most important scorecard objectives for its work programme as: (a) emphasis on beneficiary-driven projects; and (b) development of systems for periodic impact assessments.

Beginning in the last quarter of 1998, the IFAD Asia and Pacific Division initiated a two-year project (1999-2000) entitled *"Participatory Processes: Learning from NGO Experiences in Asia (PLEA)"* — with the objective of widening its knowledge base on the range of experiences in participation. Managed and implemented jointly by the Centre for Integrated Rural Development in Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), this PLEA project seeks to review existing experiences, possibilities and constraints on participatory approaches within IFAD. It also examines the possibility of learning/sharing from the participatory approaches of NGOs and other civil society organizations (CSOs) that can be applied or adapted within IFAD's Asia and Pacific Division.

The project involves several components: (1) a review of the participatory approaches in IFAD; (2) a documentation of NGO best practices in participatory approaches, which is the subject of this paper, and from which lessons and approaches could be adopted; (3) NGO interventions in four selected countries in a specific phase of the project cycle; and (4) a directory of institutions involved in poverty-related training in Asia. The final activity would be a workshop in Rome for an exchange of learning among IFAD staff and the NGO participants involved in the project activities.

Specifically, the PLEA project aims to:

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

This Study, *NGO Practices in Participation: Asian Experiences* is one of three studies under the PLEA project, with the other two studies being: (a) a review of IFAD experiences in participation; and (b) a directory of institutions involved in poverty-related training in Asia.[1]

Objectives of the Paper

Specifically, this Paper seeks to:

- Present an overview of NGO participatory approaches and tools practiced in the Asian region in the 1990s;
- Contribute to a better understanding of the context, issues and dynamics of participation, as seen from an Asian NGO perspective; and
- Present a few selected NGO case studies, as well as participatory tools and approaches that might be able to assist IFAD in strengthening the promotion and practice of participation, especially within its project cycle.

Working within the broader objectives and process of the PLEA project, this particular draft Study is issued as a discussion paper for the Second Steering Committee Meeting being held in Hanoi, Vietnam on 11-13 July 1999. Further documentation on NGO experiences may be undertaken as a result of the discussions. As such, and as a corollary objective, this draft Study seeks to provoke further discussion and thinking on two general sets of questions:

- What would constitute "NGO best practice"? from which perspective?
- What particular lessons, methods and approaches from NGO experiences in participation might be useful and relevant to IFAD?

METHODOLOGY

Data Gathering

Data for this Paper was gathered mainly from secondary sources, supplemented by discussions, and phone and e-mail interviews with NGO networks and practitioners in Asia. From these, a better understanding was culled on the broad range of participatory experiences of NGOs in the Asian region.

Further, a two-day, roundtable discussion was held with 12 NGO agriculturists/community organizers from four NGOs in the Philippines - to gain a better, first-hand insight into some of the practical issues in participation from a field-based perspective.

For the case studies, a three-part NGO Case Study Guide was formulated and initially circulated to 31 known NGO practitioners and trainors on participatory approaches, as well as possible informants (mainly national NGO networks) from the Asian region. From this list, eight potential cases were identified, and four cases are briefly described in this Study. (These NGO case studies are issued separately as handouts.) In an attempt to explore other media formats for discussion, one case - Land Use Planning in Infanta, Quezon, Philippines - has been produced in VHS video format.

Limitations

This Paper faced several limitations, especially the lack of analytical first-hand accounts of NGO practitioners directly writing about their own field experiences. Most of the existing NGO literature (on participation) were found to be either: (a) written by NGOs in the form of donor/ project reports that gave more attention to broad participatory processes, rather than to specific details; or else (b) written by academics and focused on an array of tools and methodologies, but with limited descriptions or else divorced from their particular contexts.

Moreover, the huge volume of materials from the latter *(item b, above)* focused almost entirely on participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques and experiences, as if to equate the entire NGO experience in participation itself to the practice of PRA. On the other hand, there were few analytical studies available on broader NGO participatory approaches and strategies, such as on community organizing, the building of self-help groups, networking and public advocacy. Further, to most NGO field workers, the term "participation" covered the entire process of their work and they could only narrate this as a sequence of events, without the labels; others had difficulty in extracting whatever constituted "participatory approaches, tools and techniques" without feeling that their own field experiences were being diluted in some way.

Further, there was little opportunity to interact face-to-face with IFAD CPMs and staff, necessary for the researchers to be able to better understand and to grasp - from IFAD's own perspective — their specific needs, priorities and constraints in adopting participatory approaches.[2] Thus, the bias of this Paper has been to present the broad range of NGO experiences from an Asian NGO perspective, and to include a few selected NGO case studies. As mentioned, this Paper is issued as a discussion paper, so that subsequent documentations can focus on particular topics or sets of experiences.

Content and Organization of this Paper

This Paper is presented in four parts. Part I gives an overview of NGO participatory experiences in Asia, while providing an overview of

the Asian NGO sector and the policy environment in which they operate in selected countries.

Part II discusses the range of participatory approaches and tools as practiced by NGOs in the Asian region. This section also attempts to provide a useful matrix or framework by which to analyze the broad spectrum of NGO participatory experiences, while providing a few illustrative examples.

Part III is on selected NGO case studies on participation. It briefly describes four NGO case studies - two from India, and two from the Philippines.

Part IV suggests a framework on how an organization such as IFAD could adopt participatory approaches from NGO experience. This section presents three useful diagrams that help synthesize the process of adoption and practice of participatory approaches - in the context of the project cycle, as well as the broader context of the institution and the individual.

Overview of Participation in the Asian NGO Experience

Participatory approaches have gained significant acceptance in official development cooperation over the last few years.

Often rooted in the self-help and community development tradition of NGOs and CSOs, these approaches emphasize decentralized decision-making, joint learning processes, and an orientation towards action and process rather than output. Development is seen as empowering people to help themselves, and allowing them to influence initiatives and decisions which affect their lives. The people themselves, their needs and capabilities are the focus of the approach, rather than the funding or the organizational realities and operational procedures of external agencies.

Thus, participatory approaches are seen as more than just new sets of methods and techniques. They emphasize the importance of changes in personal values, reversal of roles and institutional re-orientation, in particular for the external agent or development agency *(Reiner, ed 1996)*.

Brief Overview of the NGO/ CSO Sector in Asia

Diverse origins

Asia's civil society sector today sprang from various and diverse origins - *e.g.*, the Gandhian movement in India, the Bangladeshi struggle for independence and its post-war reconstruction efforts in the 1970s, social movements in the Philippines, and the growth of Buddhist self-help societies in Sri Lanka and Thailand. Each grew and took shape within its unique historical and socio-cultural context - driven by culture, faith, nationalism, ideology, idealism, service and survival.

Modern-day NGOs and People's Organizations (POs).

Most "modern-day" NGOs and voluntary agencies in Asia, however, began to emerge in the early 1970s, driven in part by the growth of ODA worldwide and in the Asian Region. Although many retained their traditional roots, new characteristics emerged - *i.e.*, the entry of middle-class professionals, foreign funding, and use of the project approach (along with its methods and tools). These changes gradually brought about the need for a new self-distinction to be made between "NGOs" and "people's organizations" (also called LSM in Indonesia, or "self-help groups", SHGs in India). With increasing legitimacy and recognition, NGOs and POs gradually grew to cut across almost all sectors and areas of development in most countries of South and Southeast Asia.

Influence of the Legal/ Policy Environment

To a large extent, the growth, shape, priorities and approaches of the CSO sector in each country have also been shaped by their prevailing policy environments, and by their chosen responses to it. In certain countries, NGOs developed as part of popular resistance movements; in some, as appendages or extensions of government; while in others, they developed as a distinct and separate sector. Presently, countries with the most highly restrictive policy environments for NGOs (and weak NGO sectors) include China, Malaysia, Pakistan, Myanmar, Vietnam and Singapore. Next are Sri Lanka, Nepal and Thailand. The most open and highly favorable policy environments today are in India and the Philippines - countries where one might also find the most vibrant civil society movements in the Region and in the world. Interestingly, in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Cambodia, where restrictive policies do exist, NGOs have been able to carve out political space for themselves - precisely from those particular crisis situations that have

diminished their governments' capacities to rule.

NGOs and the Search for Alternatives

But whether Asian NGOs emerged as community expressions of self-help, or as part of social and political movements working for democracy and social justice, they all came to bear a common thread of shared values and characteristics — a desire to work among the poor and disadvantaged; a value for process; and a critical view of the "establishment" and of conventional top-down approaches. As part of their natural evolution, Asian NGOs in the 1970s began to more consciously explore various alternative ways of looking at, and of working in particular contexts. At first, there was emphasis on sectoral approaches to appropriate technology, community-based health, social forestry, micro-credit, community media and adult education. Along with this came various experiments with social technologies - particularly organizing strategies and approaches, and the setting-up of various forms of area-based community and sectoral organizations. Common to all such approaches was their emphasis on participation, the community, organized and collective action, and ultimately, empowerment. In the mid-1970s and early '80s, simultaneous efforts then began to appear in exploring cognitive processes associated with development, giving rise to participatory action-research, alternative lifestyles, women's rights and issues, and recognition of indigenous knowledge systems (as especially applied to sustainable agriculture and alternative health care).

Upscaling and mainstreaming

A few years later, different forms of civil society protest and positive action would converge in some way - as NGOs began to realize the need to upscale and mainstream their efforts, which erstwhile still remained at the margins. The "small is beautiful" concept came under scrutiny. Thus, starting in the mid-1980s, many NGOs also began to scale-up their efforts through three main avenues - through direct expansion, through networking with similar groups, and by linking-up field activities with policy advocacy work (micro-macro linkages, and the use of mass media). With growing recognition, some NGOs opted to work more closely with government and with international aid agencies. Integrated approaches came into fashion, around integrated area development (IAD) approaches, and community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). Working for policies (advocacy/conflict model) no longer meant the opposite of working on projects (development work/consensus approach), and vice versa. To a growing number of development NGOs, doing on-the-ground alternatives itself became a form of advocacy and nonviolent protest — *i.e.*, "by building an alternative now to the society that we ultimately want to change."

Facing up to the new challenges

Since the early 1990s, two major issues (and perceived threats) became more pronounced in the consciousness of NGOs and development agencies - continued environmental destruction, and the globalization of markets. Paradigmatically, and to many NGOs, these two issues came as a direct affront to the fundamental values that they stood for - particularly, their values for life and for community-led processes. Thus, the very concept of participation itself took on additional organizational forms in global networking - including the use of the latest in information technology. The 1990s, for instance, saw the rise of "cyber-networks" among NGOs, in addition to area-based and sector-based alliances. New forms of popular advocacy and protest also emerged.

Nevertheless, until today, most Asian NGOs still practice and consider participation in its original context 25 years ago - that of a (slow) process of empowerment, in direct face-to-

Table 1: The NGO Sector and the Policy Environment for NGOs in Nine Asian Countries

Country	Description of NGO Sector	Policy on NGOs
Bangladesh	20,000 NGOs of various types are registered in the country. Largest national NGO network is ADAB, with nearly 800 NGO members.The number of foreign funded NGOs registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau is 1151 (1997 data). The estimate is that NGOs work in 78% of the villages in Bangladesh.	Most NGOs are registered as voluntary agencies with the Ministry of Social Welfare, but significant numbers are also registered with the Registrar of Societies, with the Courts (as Trusts) with Ministries of Religious Affairs, Youth, Women & Child Affairs, Cooperatives & Health & Family Welfare. Foreign-funded NGOs must be registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau. While there are many jointly implemented GO-NGO programs, levels of mutual mistrust persist. This is partly due to the fact that many donors prefer to channel their assistance through NGOs.
Cambodia	There are more than 250 local NGOs and over 200 international NGOs operating in the country. While international NGOs have operated since 1979, local NGOs are relatively new, created after 1990. For 1994 (mainly international) NGOs disbursed some $74 million.	International NGOs are registered with the NGO Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Local NGO registration is confusing, although most NGOs pass through the Ministry of Interior. There is a draft law on Associations and NGOs.
Indonesia	There are an estimated 8,000 NGOs across the country, mostly established starting in the late 1970s. Further, there are many earlier-established organizations, usually charitable in nature (e.g. Islamic organizations).	*No new data available after sudden changes in government in 1998-99.*
Laos	Mostly international NGOs operate in the country (60, as of 1997). INGOs spent about $11.6M in 1995. There are no local NGOs, although there are informal forums among local Lao staff of international NGOs. Local groups consist mainly of mass organizations, which are closely linked to government.	Government has no legal framework for local NGOs. Thus, the term "NGO" is used to refer to foreign NGOs. Generally, the gov't does not see the importance of local NGOs, as there are mass organizations operating from central to village level.
Nepal	By early 1997, 5,040 local NGOs registered with the Social Welfare Council. Most operate in the area of "community development."	Laws considerably liberalized after the introduction of democracy in 1992. The Social Welfare Act of 1992 reconstituted the former SSNCC (formerly under the Queen) into the Social Welfare Council, under which NGOs need registration. Most supportive laws for NGOs are contained in 3 Acts of 1991 that seek to devolve power to local government units. Government remains concerned about the accountability of NGOs, but lacks capacity to monitor NGO activities.

Table 1: The NGO Sector and the Policy Environment for NGOs in Nine Asian Countries *(Con'd.)*

Country	Description of NGO Sector	Policy on NGOs
Pakistan	Estimated number of NGOs is 8,000 to 16,000 (UNDP, 1996) but these refer only to those registered as social welfare organizations. Most are generally weak community-based organizations. A 1996 CIDA publication states that there are less than 100 effective NGOs.	There are five registration agencies operating under 5 different sets of laws, with weak coordination. There were aborted attempts of the government in 1995 to tighten control on NGOs with the proposed passage of an amended Voluntary Social welfare Agencies Registration Act.
Philippines	There are 60,000 "non-stock, non-profit" organizations registered with the Securities & Exchange Commission as of 1995 - 50,000 are "NGOs", while 10,000 are people's organizations. In addition, some 35,000 cooperatives are registered with the Cooperative Development Authority. Development-oriented NGOs, however, are estimated at between 3,000 to 5,000.	The 1987 Philippine Constitution recognizes the role of NGOs and POs in development. Other existing laws & regulations provide a highly supportive policy environment. A system of self-regulation of NGOs was launched in 1998, through the Philippine Council for NGO Certification, created by Administrative Order of the Department of Finance. Meanwhile, some 17,000 NGO & PO representatives officially sit in various government committees & consultative bodies, although most of these bodies remain inactive. *(Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan, 1999-2005/ May 1999 Draft)*
Sri Lanka	No reliable records exist on the number of NGOs operating, as records are dispersed among national, provincial and divisional authorities. The Social Service department reported a total of 2,192 organizations registered with it in 1990, until such function was devolved to Provincial Councils. Current estimates of all non-profit organizations range from 25,000 to 60,000.	Voluntary Social Service Organization Act of 1980 remains as the main regulatory policy on NGOs, although registration has since been devolved to Provincial Councils in 1990. Also, NGOs are variously registered with different GO bodies under diffferent Parliamentary Acts. While successive governments have made various statements recognizing NGOs as important partners, the actual situation and attitude of officials is ambiguous. Many NGOs continue to look at government with suspicion and mistrust, especially after the creation of the Presidential Commission on Inquiry on NGOs (1990-93) intended to curb the activities of the SARVODAYA Movement.

Table 1: The NGO Sector and the Policy Environment for NGOs in Nine Asian Countries *(Con'd.)*

Country	Description of NGO Sector	Policy on NGOs
Vietnam	Few independent NGOs exist, as most groups are closely linked to government, but operate on the style of an NGO. Term non-profit "NGO" is an inaccurate term, but is often used to broadly refer to: • Mass organizations; • Independent policy research & training organizations; • International NGOs: 175 operate in the country; • Professional & business associations; & • Peasant & ethnic associations & collectives.	Confusing laws and regulations on NGOs. Government as well as international NGOs seem to favor working through mass organizations. No legal framework exists for local NGOs. The few independent local NGOs that exist tend to seek legal registration under Inter-Ministry Circular No

(Data extracted from Pholsena, M, 1997; Kamal, S., 1997; Thacker, P., 1997; Soetrisno, L., 1997a; Soetrisno, L., 1997b; Quizon, A., 1997; Kamal, A., 1997; Sareoun, L., et al, 1997; Dao, V.H., 1997.)

face encounters with the poor and marginalized, in local community settings, with critical analysis and consciousness-raising, and in a context of mutual dialogue. The particular participatory approaches and tools that have been developed and refined by experience, are described in the next Section.

NGO Perspectives on Participation

Today, the spirit of participation as understood among most Asian NGOs is perhaps still best captured and summarized in the Credo for Rural Reconstruction (*Box A*), as formulated Y.C. James Yen, who had started a massive, highly successful literacy campaign for peasants in China in the 1920s. In the given perspective, participation is emphasized to be a two-way street. What is important is not that people participate in projects and programmes, but that it is the external change agent who participates in local community processes.

In most of the literature of the Asian NGOs, participation is also seen in the following contexts:

- It is a process of empowerment, towards self-help and social change;
- It is consciously pursued through organizations of the poor. Organized action is the principal form by which the poor are able to exercise and express their power - through

Go to the people.
Live among them.
Learn from them.
Plan with them.
Work with them.
Start with what they know.
Build on what they have.
Teach by showing; learn by doing.
Not a showcase, but a pattern.
Not odds and ends, but a system.
Not piecemeal,
but an integrated approach.
Not to conform, but to transform.
Not relief, but release.

Credo of the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) NGO Perspective on Participation

their numbers, productive work, and collective will.

- It seeks to enhance the in-built capabilities of the poor, and to heighten their critical consciousness and awareness - both as individuals and collectively, through their families and social organizations;
- It often requires the intervention of a catalyst or facilitator, a role often played by NGOs/CSOs.

Overview of Participatory Approaches and Tools Used by NGOs

By and large, IFAD and NGOs agree on a common vision of development as articulated in the broader objectives of poverty eradication and capacity-building for the rural poor. There are further agreements on the approaches and methodologies needed to address these issues. However, as the review of IFAD's participatory processes in Asia shows, there are also major divergences in the way this common vision is perceived and attained.

What NGOs espouse as participatory approaches has been very much influenced by their concept of what development is all about. Ever since the First UN Development Decade, when people began to realize that economic growth of countries does not necessarily lead to better provision of basic needs for people, there was a conscious move among civil society organizations to ensure that the fruits of development are equitably shared through participation. "Growth with equity through people's participation" was the key message enshrined in documents such as the Peasant's Charter — drafted and adapted during the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) in 1978, and supported by subsequent global commitments to sustainable development.

Many NGOs were established to serve the most disadvantaged sectors of society. To them, these are the small farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, urban poor, women, children, the disabled, minorities, and victims of war, etc. who — through no fault of their own, but simply by being born into a particular race, religion, sex, class, caste, or ethnic grouping - often become condemned to a life that mocks the essence of human dignity. Deriving inspiration and legitimacy from their religious beliefs, ideological persuasion, or from respect for basic human rights and decency, NGOs have worked for the well-being of the poor and have rallied behind the cause of the poorest of the poor.

Decades of working with the poor have made it clear to NGOs that the genesis of poverty can be traced to the poor's lack of access and control over resources needed to produce or purchase what they need in life. The reasons why these resources elude the poor are mainly due to their own incapacity, the inefficiency or unresponsiveness of the institutions entrusted to deliver basic services, and/or because these resources are controlled by a few who in turn perpetuate themselves in power and further consolidate their hold on these resources, to their further erosion and degradation.

Based on such analysis, NGOs have applied several strategies to eradicate poverty and to promote sustainable development; adapted or innovated several approaches and tools that have high potential of empowering the poor; compelled agencies to respond to the needs of their constituencies; and explored alternatives that allow maximum involvement and benefit of the poor in harnessing their own community resources. The following presents the broad range of NGO participatory approaches that have been applied:

A. Organizing the poor

The empowerment of the poor cannot come from the outside, but from themselves. The best that NGOs or outside agencies can do is to facilitate the process by which people understand the causes of their poverty and realize that they can overcome the structural barriers to development through collective vision and action. This requires that they develop themselves through training and by capitalizing on their experiences, as well as by learning to work with others through linking and networking.

1. Focus and Identification of the Target Groups

To focus on the most disadvantaged sectors requires the NGO to make a survey of a wide area. For an experienced NGO, this is sometimes done intuitively and the guess is often accurate, especially when the NGO is familiar with the area, or has undergone an initial process of social integration. Otherwise, this can also be done systematically by using well-designed survey instruments.

In Thailand and in the Philippines, the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) assessment survey has been used to rank different areas and groups. Areas which get the lowest scores in this assessment become eligible as priority target groups of the activities of the external agency or the NGOs. Based on the results of this initial survey, the NGO may conduct a situational or contextual analysis of the data in order to get a general idea of possible interventions, and which activities are appropriate. If the NGO is already engaged in the area, these activities could be done with the participation of some members or leaders of the community.

Once a particular area is identified, there is still a need to narrow down the focus in terms of addressing the most disadvantaged. Even in a small village, certain hierarchies and power structures can prevent the flow of benefits to the very poor. Therefore, it is important to use tools that can help identify the target groups down to the household level. NGOs use PRA instruments to narrow down the choice down to this level. some examples are wealth ranking, demographic profile, analysis of difference, stakeholder analysis, etc.

2. Consciousness raising

The approaches that have been used by NGOs for consciousness and awareness raising are variants of the "action-reflection-action method" used successfully by Paulo Freire in Brazil. This method of empowerment harnesses the real life experiences of the people as subjects for deeper analysis, in order to prime them for more effective action. It is the very experience of doing that teaches people self-confidence that they can regain control of their lives. Over a period of time, small successes in minor ventures can build people's confidence to gradually tackle larger issues of their communities.

Consciousness raising can be done as a deliberate objective of one activity or exercise or it can be organized as a culmination of a series of activities, the reflection from which could help people discern the pattern and overall meaning from a series of interrelated events. A one-event awareness raising activity might consist of a short exposure trip to a slum area or a prison. The participants then later meet to examine the causes of the misery of the visited community. The long-term objective is to make reflecting part of the community culture such that when something happens in the community, the consciousness raising process can be triggered - "action-reflection-action".

Each of the PRA tools derives its power from its ability to trigger awareness raising and other subsequent insights as to how communities should be managed. Conducting the wealth ranking exercise, for example, helps the community define what their measures of wealth are, and the values that they attach to these indicators. They can use these measures to categorize groups in the community and to make a decision to allow interventions to address, first and foremost, those who need help the most. *(Chambers, R., 1999)*

Consciousness raising can be done at the community, national or even at the global level. Consciousness raising at higher levels will require the use of media - print, radio, television or through the intervention of important persons who are able to influence a large number of supporters. The fight for gender equity, the environment, and other global issues cannot be conducted at the community level alone but will have to be addressed in a

wider setting. In some community instances, such issues have been highlighted and presented via street theater, community plays or skits.

3. Group and Organizational Formation

The community should understand the need for organizing. This idea, for example, can be conveyed using the allegory of the broom to show that while one stick can easily be bent, a collection of 100 sticks is almost impossible to break. This notion can be explored further to help people understand the power in working together and how much of the many things that they lack can be compensated for by their ability to share and to work together. Asian NGOs invoke unifying principles such as the Gandhian philosophy, Christian social teachings, or Muslim social obligations to establish common basis for organizing. Thus in community organizing, value clarification and/or value formation that spring from philosophical, humanitarian, ideological, cultural, or religious sources are very important inputs for organizing.

Organizing work has been inspired mostly by the work of Paulo Freire with the *campesinos* of Brazil and by Saul Alinsky with the coal miners in the United States. Their work points to the critical role of a community organizer as the key facilitator of the transformation. Thus the formation/training and the activities of a community organizer are very important. Yet, it is precisely this kind of training that cannot be acquired from conventional education. It is different from conventional education because the community organizer learns at almost the same time as the community that he/she is involved with. It is a journey of transformation taken both by the community organizer and the community. This is a process that needs sufficient time. *(Tagisan Synthesis Report, 1987)*

Key elements or steps in community organizing have been identified as those involving the integration of the community organizer with the community. This is a preliminary step taken for the community to accept the community organizer and for the community organizer to determine whether involvement in this particular community will be worthwhile. Along with integration, the community organizer conducts social investigation to find out what are the major issues confronting the community and who are affected by these issues. If there is a particular issue (*e.g.*, agrarian reform) that the community organizer is supposed to address, then the social investigation can focus on this particular issue. During this time, it helps if the community organizer keeps a process documentation or a diary of all his/her activities and observations. By the end of the period of integration, the community organizer can formulate a tentative plan of activities to help resolve some of the major issues in the community.

The community organizer spends time to conduct groundworking, a process of engaging the members of the community in discussing the issues informally and individually until there are some common decisions that need to be decided during a community meeting. During the meeting, the community organizer initially acts as the facilitator, making sure that the issues are discussed thoroughly and everyone participates in the deliberation and in the decision. The community organizer also mobilizes the community to synchronize all activities towards a common goal by stating and by letting known the details or instructions how to pursue a certain mass action or project as decided upon during the meeting or any collective decision-making process.

The community organizer is conscious that the community learns from its experience of success or failure. Therefore, venues for evaluating what happened and to analyze what went right and what went wrong are important components of collective learning. There are camps or retreats conducted precisely to learn lessons from experience and to reflect on

whether what the community went through has led them closer to accomplishing the common vision. The steps such as integration, social investigation, groundworking, meetings, mobilizing, evaluation and reflection are routine activities initially expected of the community organizer but should later be acquired by the community leaders. These community leaders would then become the core group that could later evolve into a community organization.

4. Formal Organization

The core groups formed during the preliminary period of organizing may be sufficient to carry out the work of mobilizing the community. However, sometimes it is important that in the interest of legitimacy and for greater recognition, the group formed in the community is formally recognized as an organization. This recognition only comes when certain important prerequisites have been met. The organization is known by its vision and mission statement, a set of dedicated and capable leaders, a plan or program of action, constitution and by-laws, assets or track record of laudable achievements, and most of all through its united membership. These may be required before a formal recognition in the form of registration or accreditation can be given to an organization. However, the formal recognition of an organization is not a substitute for the long and tedious process of group formation.

An organized group is the main vehicle for the participation of the community. This is why NGOs invest time in the formation of the organization. The leaders of this organization represent the entire community or sector in various negotiations or interactions where the interest of the group is at stake. Very often, the organized group is regarded as the means towards achieving the objectives of the community. For NGOs, however, the organization is not only the means but also the end or key purpose of their work. That is because the sustainability of the NGO's work in the community depends on how strong and united these organizations are in carrying out the work it started. Organizational formation and strengthening are ongoing processes that employ various techniques and tools where the core values of participatory development are learned, applied, and passed on through the organization.

The organization is the venue through which the leaders and the members learn the skills of leadership and negotiation which would enable them to demand the rights of the community not only within the organization but also in dealing with external partners or opponents. There are many factors that affect how the majority chooses the leader, and skills in participatory and consultative leadership are some of the most important.

Other important activities that can foster participation of the community through the organization are linking and networking. In a network, each member remains autonomous but cooperates with others to achieve a mutually specified goal.

Organizations join networks to increase their reach in campaigns for specific issues, mobilize resources or share physical labor for the network or for the members, increase political support for a candidate or policy, advocate for or against a policy or program that impacts on all the members of the network, share perspectives and information internally among network members. *(CCS and PhilDHRRA, 1997)*

As the relationships and linkages of an organization expand, there is a need to define how different groups should relate to each other or with the other partners they link with. An instrument such as a Code of Ethics jointly formulated and validated by the members can act as a unifying and harmonizing basis for the relationship. In some cases, this Code of Ethics is not written but form part of the applied culture of the network.

B. Participatory Action Research and Participatory Rapid Appraisals

Organizing the disadvantaged groups provides leverage to an otherwise silent majority. If participation is broadly defined as involvement not only in providing ideas but also in the whole process of developing the community, then the community should be involved in the whole project cycle. For this to happen, the methodologies used to operate the project cycle should be familiar and understandable to, and can be managed by the people. Fortunately, such methodologies as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) lend themselves well to simplification and adoption.

1. Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Fals-Borda defined as an experiential methodology for the acquisition of serious and reliable knowledge upon which to construct power, or countervailing power, for the poor, oppressed and exploited groups and social classes - the grassroots - and for their authentic organizations and movements. Its purpose is to enable the oppressed groups and classes to acquire sufficient creative and transforming leverage as expressed in specific projects, acts, and struggles to achieve goals of social transformation. PAR involves collective research, critical recovery of history, valuing and applying folk culture; production and diffusion of new knowledge and combines this research with education and socio-political action.

PAR evolved as an adaptation of agricultural action research that moved out of the laboratory to farmers' land to test new agricultural technologies, a practice that became popular among agricultural researchers in the 1950s and the 1960s. It led to the realization that the insights of the farmers improved the quality of the product while the utility of the research validated the usefulness of folk wisdom or indigenous knowledge systems gained from centuries of observation and guiding the farmers in their sustained use of local resources for livelihood. The conscientizing power of PAR and the highly scientific way in which the community progresses from situational diagnosis, to creative planning, to collective action combined Freirean passion with conventional project cycle management.

In 1983, as part of the WCARRD follow-up, the Asian NGO Coalition for Asia and the Pacific (ANGOC) and the Center for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) conducted village surveys in 10 countries in Asia using the PAR methodology. ANGOC and CIRDAP used the Community Information and Planning System (CIPS). In this approach, the project cycle management was made participatory by enabling an oversight committee within the community to manage the process of conducting the research, planning, and project implementation. A short questionnaire was designed, and a research committee was trained to undertake this survey. The results were presented to the community during the research consultation. The recommendations that came out of the survey became the basis for the plans or programs of the community. If the plans ere approved by the community and resources were mobilized, then the project plans were implemented. *(Polestico et al, 1994)*

Subsequent modification of the CIPS model done in the Philippines in 1988 and later tried in 10 Asian countries through the Model Village for Rural Development (MVRD) project of CIRDAP showed community organizing as central to the CIPS process. The other critical factors that enhance the success of the projects were more simplified tools for research and planning, seed capital for community-identified projects, and the ability of the local people to link and to network with external resource agencies. The CIPS model became better known as the participatory project management cycle. It was supported by external agencies because of its logic and adapted by

communities because of its simple and participatory nature. The CIPS process gave the community entry points to participate in all the steps of the project cycle - from project conceptualization, to planning, resource mobilization, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, including the project oversight. *(CIRDAP, 2000)*

2. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

PRA builds on the techniques of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) pioneered by Gordon Conway and Robert Chambers to involve rural communities in their own needs assessment, problem identification and ranking, strategy for implementation, and community action plans. It is a cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral approach to engaging communities in development through interactive and participatory processes. It utilizes a wide range of tools which are easy to use, graphical in presentation, and uses intuitive approaches that are grassroots friendly. A PRA tool can be used as a consciousness raising device, an analytical tool, a program guide, and a monitoring and evaluation tool all in one. So it could be harnessed in community-based project management cycle.

Very often, the PRA tools are used solely for data gathering and for getting information about the community. However, they have in many case been used to facilitate community discussions held throughout the project cycle. There are specific tools for a particular kind of information and for particular steps in the project cycle. The results of the PRA can provide very important insights as to what the community really needs to alleviate poverty and to address their other problems. Concerns about gender equity or the environment could be asked during the analysis of the data. *(Wilde, V. and Polestico, R., 1999)*

The following examples of PRA are appropriate for particular phases of the project cycle:

Consciousness or awareness raising

- Games, play, or theater to show or highlight a particular problem or issue
- Artistic ways of portraying the current situation as well as possibilities of the community

Overview of the situation

- contextual or situational analysis
- wealth ranking
- trend lines and time lines
- sketch map

Participatory research

- Household dynamics
  - demographic profile
  - gender analysis matrix
  - seasonal calendars
  - census mapping
- Structural/institutional analysis
  - Venn diagram
  - access and control profile
- Resources
  - sketch map
  - credit recording
  - resource mapping
  - indigenous knowledge systems

Participatory planning

- Prioritization using pairwise comparison
- Community action plans
- Web of life analysis
- Cause-Effect Analysis
- Problem Tree
- Objective Tree
- Strength-Weakness-Opportunities-Threat (SWOT) Analysis
- Project Planning Matrix, Logframe
- Gantt Chart
- Budget

Project Implementation

- Participatory methods of training
- Farmer-based extension methods

- Pilot projects
- Grameen banking
- Cooperatives
- Alternative medicine
- Alternative technical methods

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

- Household level monitoring
- House visits
- Community-based monitoring tools based on the PRA survey results
- Periodic meetings and consultations

3. Variants of Participatory Action Research and Participatory Rural Appraisal

Many tools that are coming up everyday may be considered as PRA techniques. Some of these tools are combined in particular ways to address certain issues or strategy. Some well known examples are the following:

a. Participation and Learning Methods (PALM)

PALM was pioneered by MYRADA, an NGO in India. PALM's strong suit is its premise that people can collect large quantities of accurate information, order it, analyze it, and start the process of development. PALM generates data using a variety of participatory approaches. In fact, PALM uses PRA tools such as sketch maps, wealth ranking, transects, etc. The PALM technique combines understanding of traditional practices and systems with highly technical data.

b. Productivity Systems Assessment and Planning (PSAP)

Productivity Systems Assessment and Planning (PSAP) is an approach developed by the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) in the Philippines to make the implementation of agrarian reform in the Philippines very participatory. It involves a people's organization and a community organizer working together on data-gathering and analysis, consolidation of data and analysis of problems and opportunities, through "vision, validation, and planning". It also uses several of the PRA tools but applies the analytical tools used in PAR to develop self-critical awareness and promote confidence in villagers.

c. Methods for Active Participation (MAP)

The MAP approach involves a two-day planning seminar in which participants consider their vision for the programme's activity, their sense of the obstacles to achieving that vision, their views about strategies and tactics which address the obstacles, and specifics of implementation. The Institute of Cultural Affairs, a global network of affiliated non-profit non-governmental organizations developed and promoted MAP.

C. Mobilization of Local Resources

Organizing activities motivate the community to work for the common good; PAR and PRA techniques systematize such activities. For the community to participate fully in the reification of their plans and to contribute resources for the desired improvement, it is important that the techniques, approaches, as well as the material resources for implementation are available locally. Perhaps the main proponent of this philosophy is Fritz Schumacher who expounded this necessity in his book *"Small is Beautiful"*. Although written as a reaction to the development of large scale, hi-technology that is beyond the reach of the ordinary people, *"Small is Beautiful"* set the standard for measuring alternative approaches to big-time development projects that impoverished the disadvantaged groups. *(Schumacher, E.F., 1975)*

Interventions at the community level are measured according to the extent to which they use technologies or approaches that are

culturally acceptable, socially sharable, economically viable, environmentally friendly, and locally manageable. In addition, these interventions should meet local needs first and ensure that the raw materials are sourced locally whenever possible. Another dimension that should be added to this standard is inspired by a message that was popular during the 1985 End of the Decade for Women Conference: "If it is not appropriate for women, it is not appropriate".

One of the results of simplifying and localizing technologies in this way is that the people can participate almost fully in the process because the interventions are something already very familiar and relevant to them. Developing their local resources become an act of creativity instead of a job that needs merely to be done. These are the kinds of alternative ways of developing such resources as land, aquatic resources, credit and markets, and human resources for that matter.

1. Alternative Pedagogical Approaches

People are the most important resource in the community. Therefore, approaches that best harness their potential are both relevant and appropriate. Alternative training methodologies have been explored by NGOs as a reaction to the "banking" method of teaching practised in conventional schools. "Learning by doing", "seeing is believing", "action-reflection-action", "classroom without walls" - are learning adages which are being rediscovered by alternative teaching and learning methods. A popular reinvention of this practical teaching style is the "Training for Transformation" (TFT) series which originated in Zimbabwe and is inspired by the teachings of Freire. The objective of the training is to enable the people to understand the structural causes of the problems. This approach makes use of small group interactions and self-discovery exercises, such as games, role play, drama, and discussions.

TFT is a variant of another training programme called Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action (DELTA) which was popularized by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel in Kenya. It has its roots in Freirean critical awareness, human relations training in group work, organizational development, social analysis, and a conceptualization of transformation derived from liberation theology.

2. Development of Land and Aquatic Resources

Land and water are critical natural resources that are becoming more scarce because of environmental damage and wanton extraction. There is a trend now to preserve the environment and rehabilitate land and water resources.

Sustainable agriculture is counterposed to conventional agriculture which uses chemicals and technologies that are beyond the reach of the ordinary farmer. Sustainable agriculture rediscovers the intimate relationship between humans and the earth and the give and take that make the two dependent on each other. It is a philosophy and a way of life in which the production of food is premised on seeking the permission and cooperation of nature. It adapts the seven dimensions of how technology should be assessed and harnesses anew the indigenous knowledge system that made agriculture a partner and not an enemy of nature. Within this philosophy, there are tried-and-tested technologies that provide an alternative to the destructive green revolution.

Community-Based Resource Management is a holistic way of looking at the interdependence among the upland, the lowland, and coastal areas with the aquatic and marine resources of the community. It uses several of the PRA tools to help the farmers and fisherfolk understand these interrelationships and the mutual benefit from taking care of these resources. Land use mapping, seasonal calendars, trendlines, historical maps and many other tools are very necessary for the community to express their knowledge about these

resources and how they could be rehabilitated or improved to ensure food and water security. *(ANGOC, 1993)*

3. Alternative Economic Resource Generation

Lack of capital is one of the most keenly felt problems in poor communities. To address this problem, innovative ways have been developed to enable the poor to mobilize their own capital and use it for their small enterprises.

For beginners, the practice of auto-savings is used as the first step to train the people in the practice of saving and foregoing immediate satisfaction (mostly vices like smoking, gambling, and drinking). The other credit scheme that is gaining worldwide acceptance is the Grameen Banking, which gives out loans to poor women and imposes minimum requirements like weekly payments and sharing of experiences in exchange for the promise of larger sums of loans. These small loans are usually invested in micro-enterprises.

The cooperative is also promoted for the mobilization of savings and loans. Although cooperative building requires a massive input in organizational development, the people will henceforth learn, if gradually, to manage their money instead of relying on usurers and capitalists in their community. The cooperatives can start as a consumer cooperative and then expand to provide credit. Later, it can take on larger enterprises, such as marketing, housing, transportation, health and other worthwhile investment of the savings of the community. *(Todd, H., 1996)*

4. Intermediate or Appropriate Technology

Many of the community's basic needs, such as food, water, housing, health, clothing, energy, small machines for farming, fishing, trading, food processing can be met using intermediate or appropriate technology. Many development NGOs started by introducing appropriate technology as their main service to the communities. This is because the technology allows people to participate in analyzing the need for such a machine, or designing or improving on an existing technology, and because the technology is affordable, and easy to manage and maintain communally. *(APPROTECH-ASIA, 1992)*

5. Social Audit

Since NGOs look at the other dimensions of development and not just the economic dimension, it is important that their work be measured in terms of how these other dimensions converge to make an overall impact on the community. Fortunately, a technique called Social Audit has been developed to enable the community to measure the gains the interventions contributed towards such concerns as environmental rehabilitation, gender equity, peace and freedom, poverty alleviation, etc.

D. Participation in Institutional Decision-Making

Social institutions like the government, the church, businesses, the academe, the NGOs and civil society, cultural groups, media and etc., are set up in order to safeguard the rights of citizens. Society endows these institutions with the power (*i.e.*, through laws and policies) to control how resources and services are allocated to the members. As long as these institutions are run or managed by those who put the welfare of the people above self or vested interest, these institutions will remain true to their mandate.

If the people's interest is to be prioritized by these institutions, then the people's voice should be heard in decision-making fora of these institutions. The ability to speak on behalf of the poor develops from years of organizing work. But the specific substance and details of the contribution will have to come from participatory action research and/or participatory rapid appraisal activities.

There are several ways in which the people or their representatives could participate in the deliberations. Some of the techniques tried by NGOs are the following:

1. Building People's Organizations

NGOs' involvement in issues that have to do with social institutions is legitimized by the assumption that the NGOs speak for and in behalf of the poor sector. Since the poor sector composes the majority of the population, the NGOs can boast of a mass base whose power derives from their sheer numbers. The effort of NGOs to focus on community organizing is strategic in a sense that the masses of people that could be mobilized anytime for mass action or for mass protest is a powerful leverage in lobbying for certain issues. The issues brought to the table via mass action are acted upon almost instantaneously because of the political and economic implications of not honoring the wishes of the majority.

2. Gaining a Seat or Membership in the Decision-Making Bodies

Because of its achievements or through its advocacy work on certain issues, an NGO or PO may be invited to participate in decision-making meetings or bodies. Their participation may be token, or could actually be meant to incorporate input from the poor sector in decisions that affect their lives. There are many cases where a community leader is voted into office (such as in the local boards or council) and thus gets the right to vote on certain resolutions, particularly concerning resource allocation. Part of the agenda of an NGO in training the people is to develop at least one leader with sufficient leadership, negotiating, and networking capacity to be able to effectively represent the sector in the higher bodies.

3. Form Alternative Groups

When government, business, media, the academe, or other institutions fail to provide for the needs of the majority, NGOs sometimes form alternative groups to respond to the issues. If the local government is completely incapable of serving the people, NGOs sometimes take on the responsibility of providing the basic needs even if only as an emergency or temporary measure. When the military becomes abusive, NGOs can form citizen's security forces to make sure that a neighborhood is protected. When the business sector or when usurers become too exploitative, the NGOs set up business cooperatives to provide capital and market services to the community. If the media becomes hostage to one political agenda, the NGO can set up alternative media so that the voices of the people can be read, heard, and considered in deliberations.

4. Linkage and Networking with other Value-based Institutions

Collusion among the government, big business, and the military often if not always leads to oppression and the repression of basic human rights. In such cases, a countervailing force becomes necessary. Unfortunately, NGOs despite all their organized might do not have enough power to protect the people. power to protect the people. So it is good strategy for NGOs to form a broad coalition and alliance with media, the church, the academe, the cultural groups, and other value-based institutions in order to neutralize and, where necessary, replace the status quo. Recent political history is replete with examples of dictators who were ousted from power by pressure from such a broad coalition.

5. Sustained Effort to Build a Strong Civil Society and Transform the Social Institutions

Mahatma Gandhi called attention to the impact of unresponsive social institutions on the poor majority. He referred to transgres-

sions against the poor as "*The Seven Social Sins: politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, science without humanity, commerce without morality, worship without self-sacrifice.* The only way to redress these wrongs is to build through sustained effort a strong civil society founded on participatory and people-centered values. The bread-and-butter work of organizing, participatory action research, mobilizing local resources, creating alternatives for the people, participation in the deliberations to allocate resources in the direction of the poor, and taking every chance to remind us of the basic value of every human being - all contribute towards building a concerned civil society that when put in a position of power will make decisions in favor of the most disadvantaged sectors of society.

E. Participation in Macro-level Interventions

The last two decades of the 20th century was marked by international summits called either by governments or by the United Nations. These summits were necessitated by the urgency for certain adjustments in our policies, funding allocations, and programs of actions based on new priorities brought about by our new understanding of development. The WCARRD Conference in 1979, End of the Women's Decade Conference in 1985, the UNCED Conference in 1992, the UN Social Development Summit in 1995, the Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, and the most recent FAO World Food Summit in 1996 produced documents that mandated nations to implement measures that could enhance the achievement of sustainable development.

These international events provided NGOs another opportunity to influence macro-level interventions in favor of the poorest sectors of society. This redirection of resource allocation can only occur if there is a major paradigm shift among decision-makers, and if the corresponding laws and policies are formulated and implemented.

These various international gatherings have shown that the NGOs can participate in the formulation of global commitments. Parallel NGO fora were held alongside these conferences to provide immediate feedback and information on the major decisions taken during the official conference. The NGOs worked to ensure that the concerns of the poor, of women, children, and other disenfranchised sectors are included in these documents. The following are processes that NGOs have adopted in order to achieve these gains:

1. Massive Grassroots Consultations or Research on the Issues to be Resolved in the Meetings, Conferences, or Summits

There is a need to gather empirical evidence on how the issues to be discussed in the national or global conferences affect a particular sector. This empirical evidence can be gathered through a participatory research process or through multi-sectoral consultations. With their close contact with the grassroots, NGOs are well-placed to consolidate the learning from experiences that should compel the need for change or to formulate new documents to redress suffering or injustice. The proceedings of these consultations or the consolidated reports of the participatory researches made in preparation for the conferences can be used as inputs to higher level consultations that will follow.

2. Sponsorship of Grassroots Leaders to Participate During the Global Conferences

NGO leaders can speak for the poor but this is not nearly as effective as letting the poor speak for themselves in discussions. So NGOs should try as much as possible to raise the resources to enable these leaders to participate during these conferences. This experience can be very empowering for the farmer or fisherman or woman who takes the responsibility for

communicating the need for change. They in turn inform their constituency of how their message was received or considered during the conference.

3. Writing of Position Papers, Declarations, or Statements Embodying the Collective Thinking and Consensus of the NGO Community on Certain Issues

One of the tools used by NGOs to convey unity in their stand regarding a certain issue - be it the environment, food security, land reform, sustainable livelihood, gender equity, basic rights, peace, etc. - is through the writing of position papers, declarations, or joint statements. These instruments are normally products of assembly deliberations which are put together by a committee and submitted to the general body for approval and imprimatur. These statements become the official stand of the group and are promoted and lobbied for consideration or inclusion in the official documents. Even if the statements do not get included in the official documents, the NGOs still adopt it as their manifesto and abide by the commitments contained therein.

4. Tunneling into Official Discussions

There are some official meetings and deliberations that are off-limits to NGOs. As a result, NGOs are deprived of the chance to provide inputs that could be critical to the decisions related to an issue. Fortunately, most NGO leaders are contemporaries of those who are in the official positions and so are able to get invited to some confidential meetings or gain access to official documents. In most institutions also, there are people who are sympathetic to the cause of the NGOs and are willing to help in their personal if not official capacities. These are examples of "tunneling". Tunneling can also be done by using an influential person who is credible with the establishment to speak for the cause of NGOs. The success of Grameen Bank, the promotion of the use of PRA in beneficiary participation, the attraction of appropriate technology were mainly due to the fact that these concepts are championed by the likes of Dr. Junos, Robert Chambers, Fritz Schumacher. For gender issues, there are the likes of Caroline Moser, Vandana Shiva, and Bina Agarwal who could make even the World Bank and IMF take notice.

5. Using the NGO Culture to Influence Decision Making

NGOs are very flexible and can resort to many creative ways to influence decision making. This was aptly demonstrated in NGO fora held side by side with official conferences during which NGOs conveyed their message via different art forms, such as songs, concerts, sculpture, street art, pamphlets, one-on-one discussion. The fiesta atmosphere at such discussions was a stark contrast to the official meetings which were characterized by monotonous reporting of the accomplishments of governments in helping the poor. Mass demonstrations and pickets are often resorted to by NGOs to put pressure on the power holders to decide in favor of the poor.

G. Linking the Macro with Micro and Vice-Versa

Paradigm change, modifications set out in policies and laws, new programs of actions, and promises of more resources for the poor are contained in voluminous documents and often in a language that is hard to understand. There is a need to translate these declarations of intent to action. There is an NGO infrastructure that facilitates the process of linking the macro with the micro, and vice-versa.

1. Sharing of Resources and Allocations

When NGOs are involved in program deliberations, they are able to lobby for resource allocation for the disadvantaged groups under their management. So the NGOs may be able

Participatory Tools in NGO Community Based Coastal Resource Management

Matrices
- Preference ranking
- Socio-economic ranking
- Problem ranking
- SWOT analysis
- Stakeholder analysis

Visualizing & Diagramming Relationships
- Problem trees and webs
- Venn diagram
- Commodity flow diagram
- Family portrait
- Presenting numeric data in diagram or charts

Surveys & Interviews
- Identification of key informants
- Survey of commercial fish landings
- Semi-structured Interview
- Family food analysis
- Assessment of income from fishery resources

Group Methods
- Focus Group Discussion
- Brainstorming

Temporal Methods
- Seasonal calendars
- Historical lines
- Daily activity
- Historical transect
- Historical narrative
- Trend line
- Flow charts

Spatial Methods
- Manta tow technique
- Using transects to build a coastal profile
- Underwater fish visual census
- Resource mapping
- Participatory coastal zoning
- Quadrat transect
- Random quadrat sampling

Assessment & Monitoring
- Planning for assessment & monitoring indicators
- Mangrove assessment & monitoring
- Monitoring the effectiveness of marine sanctuaries
- Fish catch monitoring
- Mangrove reforestation monitoring

Resource Enhancement
- Conservation & rehabilitation strategies
- Establishing & managing marine resources
- Mangrove reforestation

Education & Extension
- Issue-based environmental education
- Participatory technology development & dissemination
- Study tours

Advocacy
- Legal analysis
- Institutional analysis
- Building partnerships
- Media advocacy

Documentation
- Logbooks
- Making & using case studies
- Process documentation research

Cross-cutting themes
- Building on indigenous knowledge
- Gender analysis & responsive planning

(IIRR, 1998)

to get funding for certain projects or get support to disseminate the results of the conferences. Any document or commitment that will provide land, water rights, credit, market, technology, training, or services will be invoked by the NGO to ensure that these resources are accessible to the poor. The NGO itself may have the organizational capacity to facilitate the delivery of these resources in such programs as agrarian reform, human resource development, technology promotion, etc. This works much more effectively, however, if the NGO itself can monitor and evaluate how well these commitments have been translated to tangible benefits that are accessible to the poor.

2. Sharing of Information/Documentation

Part of knowing which resources to access is finding out where and how these resources could be obtained. Since the NGOs know how the resources are used, they can then provide feedback to the agencies concerned. Documentation is a very important instrument in providing accurate and interesting information. Although documentation is not usually a strong suit of NGOs, there are some which specialize in this and can lend their expertise to other NGOs. Documentation facilitates the sharing of the success of the project to other social institutions, such as government agencies, the academe, media, the church and others.

3. Alliance Building and Networks

NGOs do not have much resources but they are able to make use of the massive social capital they have built up over the years of working on common or specific issues. These alliances sometimes transcend professional dealings and develop into friendship. Such informal networks of NGOs are just as powerful and useful in furthering a common agenda and consolidating support for various causes.

4. Upscaling and Downscaling of Technologies

NGOs create alternatives but these are small scale, peripheral pilot type efforts. This experimentation has tremendous potential if applied on a larger scale. The tripartite partnership of POs, NGO and government agencies, for example, was successful in fast-tracking the implementation of agrarian reform in 10 areas. It was upscaled when it was adopted as a strategy in the organization and development of 1,000 agrarian reform communities in the Philippines. On the other hand, there are large-scale projects which the NGO can downscale so that they become appropriate to the community.

5. The Use of Media and Information Technology

The NGOs can use conventional media to promote alternative ideas or to reach people in unconventional and creative ways. The use of modern information technologies, such as the internet, e-mail, electronic bulletin boards, and electronic conferencing are more and more being used by NGOs to further link the macro and micro.

Summary of NGO Participatory Approaches: A Roadmap to Poverty Alleviation and Institutional Change

In previous IFAD approaches, the emphasis has been on establishing mutually agreed bases for cooperation between two parties--IFAD and the borrower government. With PLEA, the hope is to bring in the third party--civil society as exemplified by NGOs and people's organizations. The commitment of IFAD towards beneficiary driven projects respects the insights from two decades of development experience indicating that only when the beneficiaries are involved in the process would the resources made available by IFAD and other resource agencies make a difference in alleviating poverty.

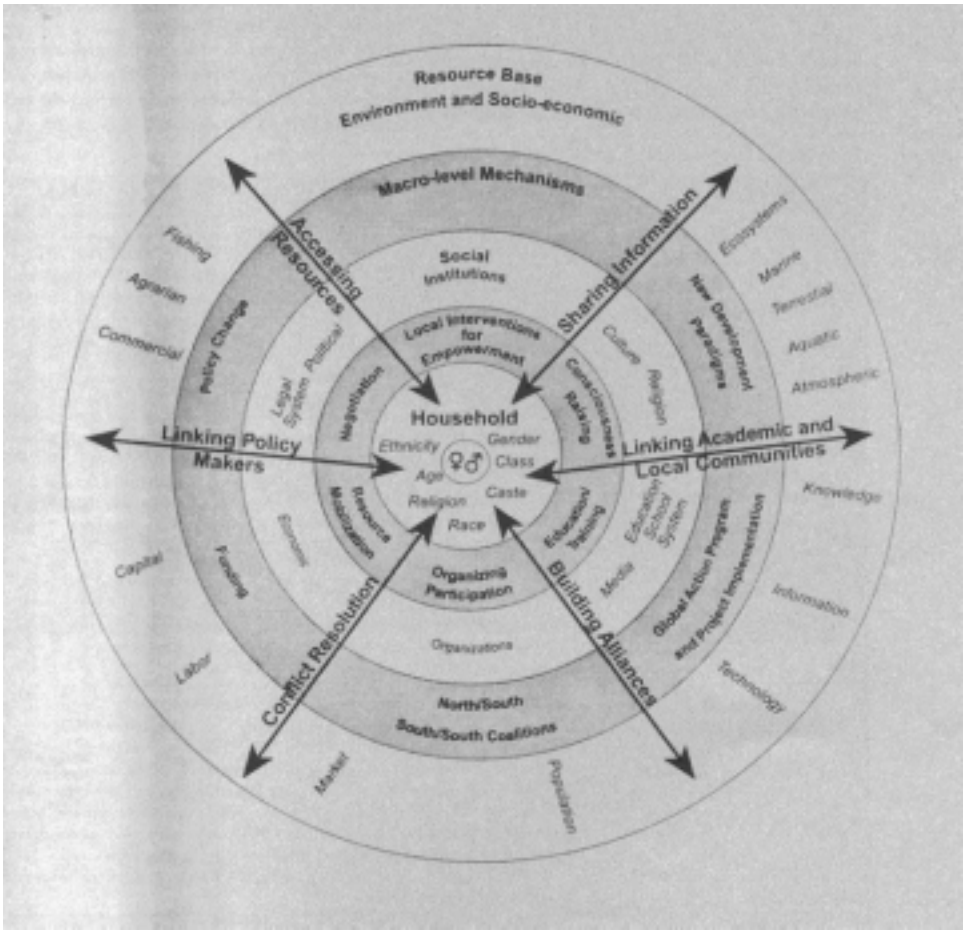
The main challenge of poverty alleviation is how to enable disadvantaged groups to gain access and control of resources. Since access and control of resources are mainly mediated by social institutions and structures, poverty alleviation measures cannot succeed unless directed towards empowering the people, on the one hand, and the transformation of pro-people institutions, on the other.

Central to the concerns of most NGOs is the promotion and enhancement of basic human rights among the poorest sectors of society. The right to food, employment, shelter, education, land (for farmers), and the right to life and freedom are rallying points for NGO advocacy and daily work. Indigenous groups,

the rural and urban poor, people of color, women, and other marginalized sectors suffer disproportionately from the deprivation of such rights.

People could provide for their own needs if they have the resources to generate and satisfy these needs. Resources are however unequally distributed, the greater proportion of which is enjoyed by the minority powerful groups. These groups gain access and perpetuate themselves in power by seizing control of government, economic institutions such as businesses and markets, and structures that manipulate public opinion, such as the media. The concentration of power and the corruption of social institutions were so glaring in some societies that solutions toward freeing the poor required no less than the dismantling of these structures and summary execution of those perceived as power hoarders. The com-

Figure 1: Overview of the SEGA Model Processes Needed to Support Equitable and Sustainable Development



Elements of the Model

The model consists of light and dark concentric bands which are linked by radiating arrows. The light bands represent existing structures (individuals, households, social institutions, resource bases) that produce and reproduce inequities. The dark bands (local-level empowerment/participation, and macro-level mechanisms for change), and the dark arrows (linking external opportunities and local initiatives) represent the processes and interventions that can alter the problematic conditions and structures.

mitment of NGOs to peaceful means leads them to come up with other creative and effective ways to resolve social injustice. The participatory approaches outlines elsewhere in this article are ways of transforming society radically but nonviolently.

The general strategies are time-tested by NGOs. There is a need to empower the people, to make them participate in decision-making, to formulate policies, programs and projects that follow pro-poor paradigms, to develop our natural, economic and social capital in ways that are affordable to the poor, and to hasten these processes through advocacy, networking and direct sharing of information and resources. These strategies are illustrated in the Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEGA) model illustrated in *Figure 1. (Thomas-Slayter, 1995)*

Selected NGO Case Studies on Participation

Selection of NGO Case Studies

Table 2 was formulated to provide an overall guide that would assist NGOs for selecting and preparing case studies. This Table provides four broad categories that were drawn up, based on what researchers perceived as "IFAD's felt needs" - *i.e.*, participation in policy, participation in the project cycle, dealing with problematic situations, and learning from innovative NGO & community approaches. The right hand column then matches the particular kind of NGO experiences from which practical lessons might be drawn.

Table 2: Guide for Selection of NGO Case Studies

I. PARTICIPATION IN POLICY	
1 Civil society initiatives & participation in the formulation of development strategies:	Experiences of CSO initiatives in the formulation of development strategies, utilising a broad-based participatory approach. These include, i.e., country assistance strategies of bilateral & multilateral institutions, area development planning or sectoral planning work involving primary stakeholders. Of interest here are the methods & processes involved in data-gathering, analysis & consensus-building; GO-NGO policy consultations; experiences in the creation and functioning of joint GO-NGO policy bodies; etc.
II. PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT CYCLE	
2 Stakeholder participation in the project identification, appraisal & design process:	NGO experiences in participatory rapid appraisals; 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 & appraisal missions; project negotiations; influencing the attitudes of officials and bureaucrats, etc.
3 Enhancing stakeholder & beneficiary participation in project implementation	Cases of decentralized systems for project implementation, project delivery & decision-making; examples of GO-NGO institutional arrangements; participatory implementation; strengthening the role of beneficiaries & stakeholders in decision-making; strengthening & capacity building of social institutions; participatory approaches to upscaling local initiatives; developing local ownership and initiatives within projects;
4 Beneficiary monitoring and impact assessments:	Methods, tools, systems & approaches employed for introducing beneficiary monitoring & impact assessments among poor communities within development projects and initiatives; and for creating institutionalised systems for community feedback & response. Of specific interest here are approaches utilised for developing key impact indicators; identifying the major stakeholders; building community capacity for monitoring & local-level planning; developing appropriate PRA tools and workable participatory monitoring approaches that overcome/ adapt to existing limitations (i.e., literacy & skills, time & resources) and constraints (i.e., cultural constraints) of target beneficiaries; etc

Table 2: Guide for Selection of NGO Case Stud1es *(cont'd.)*	
III. WORKING IN "PROBLEMATIC" CONTEXTS	
5 Enhancing participation among particular target groups:	Experiences in enhancing & developing meaningful participation among particular target groups, especially of rural women. Others include: landless & migrant rural workers, shifting cultivators, indigenous peoples, discriminated castes, internally-displaced people, & the informal sector. Key areas to highlight, and of special interest here, are practical tools & approaches in: (a) targetting development interventions; (b) overcoming specific cultural, religious, and institutional constraints; and (c) motivating, animating & sustaining interest and participation among the different target groups; etc., (d) how are these target groups given roles as active partners and decision-makers in existing initiatives?
6 Promoting "participation" in restricted policy environments:	Practical experiences in introducing beneficiary & stakeholder participation within restricted policy environments (e.g. China, Vietnam) or in areas with authoritarian or highly-centralized governance structures (e.g. Myanmar). To be documented are "what specific interventions are possible". Key items of interest include: identifying the "right" project partners; dealing with officials; developing decentralized project designs; motivating primary stakeholders; etc. Since experiences in this area are still not well-documented, other key lessons are likely to emerge.
IV. LEARNING FROM INNOVATIVE NGO & COMMUNITY APPROACHES	
7 Initiatives & participatory approaches in the mobilization of target groups:	The ability to mobilize communities is a distinct strength often cited of NGOs and people's organizations. A key word is people's empowerment. Of special interest here are cases (as well as their tools and approaches) that highlight: (a) how local initiatives are multiplied or upscaled to achieve broader scale and impact; (b) approaches to community motivation, education and local resource mobilization; (c) innovative organizational systems & structures; (d) targetting and involving particular poverty groups and sectors; (e) enhancing self-help and local initiatives; and (f) the use of particular information and media tools, etc.
8 Participatory initiatives & approaches in agricultural development & resource management:	NGOs and people's organizations have undertaken various initiatives in agricultural development & resource management. These often utilize participatory approaches that depart from the existing paradigms and top-down formulas of highly-centralized official bodies. These include innovations in, i.e. — agricultural extension, community-based resource management, environmental education & protection; agro-forestry, forest resource protection & rehabilitation; watershed development; community health & education; local governance systems; agricultural research & development; fisheries development; and promotion of agrarian reforms, resource and tenurial rights. While the potential list is long, what we are looking for are those approaches with existing/possible potential for replication or upscaling.

One should note that the fourth listed category - *i.e.*, learning from innovative NGO & community approaches - was included here to reflect the broader range of NGO experiences that are not yet part of IFAD's project cycle nor institutional framework.

Brief Description of NGO Case Studies

Presented below are brief descriptions of four case studies - two from India, and two from the Philippines. This initial set of cases come from three types of NGOs: (a) MYRADA in India is a large development agency that services a broad range of communities in South India, primarily in the State of Karnataka; (b) ICDAI in the Philippines is a small, community-based NGO that works in three coastal municipalities; while (c) PAFID is a medium-sized Philippine NGO that services a particular sector - that of indigenous communities. All three NGOs are well-established, and have been in operation for at

Table 3: Brief Description of Four (4) NGO Case Studies

Case Study	Brief Description
The Role of People's Institutions in the Management of Watersheds	Over the past years, MYRADA, an NGO in South India, has been able to develop a highly participatory programme for micro-watershed development. Presented in the case study is a comparison of two watersheds in Kolar District of Karnataka, India - Lakkenhali and Banahalli - to highlighting the following : ◗ How areas are selected for watershed development ◗ Organizing stakeholders in Watershed Development Associations (WDAs) ◗ Role of MYRADA & WDAs in planning, implementing & monitoring the watershed development programmes ◗ Capacity-building of WDA members in planning & implementing watershed programmes, mobilizing and managing resources, and building linkages Lakkenhali is the older of the two villages. Experience on this helped the staff of MYRADA rework their strategies for enhancing participation on subsequent watershed programmes, of which Banahalli is an example. *There is a videotape to accompany this case study. Though not filmed on the same location, the tape details the roles of people's institutions in the management of watershed programmes.*
	The case focuses on how self-help groups (SHGs) play an important role in increasing people's access to and control over their own money. What begins as a process of savings and credit management can, and often does, lead to economic and social empowerment. The case of the Ranabeeramma Women's Self-Help Group, Village Dasegowdanoor will be used to illustrate this point. The case study covers: ◗ The process of Self-Help Group (SHG) formation ◗ Stabilization of the SHG (including capacity-building inputs) ◗ Impact of the SHG on individual members, their families, and on their village. ◗ Linkages established by the SHG with other institutions, and resources mobilized by the SHG ◗ The SHG's growing self-dependence and reduced MYRADA involvement in its affairs.

Table 3: Brief Description of Four (4) NGO Case Studies *(cont'd.)*

Case Study	Brief Description
Participatory Land-Use Planning in Infanta, Quezon, Philippines	THE ROAD: A documentary of the land use planning process in Infanta, Quezon, Philippines English; approximately 25 minutes running time This video presentation documents the process that led up to the municipal wide Comprehensive Land Use Planning (CLUP) exercise in Infanta, Quezon and provides a step-by-step description of the actual planning. Infanta's experience is one of the few cases where the land use planning exercise was implemented by the local government in partnership with a non-government organization, ICDAI. This case study likewise provides useful insight into how such an activity can be made as participatory as possible. Despite problems in sustaining the participation of ordinary residents, ICDAI fell back on the consistently active involvement of people's organizations which it built over two decades. Moreover, the Infanta case highlights the importance of a healthy collaborative relationship between NGOs and the local government in implementing development programs.
Mapping the Ancestral Lands and Waters of the Calamian Tagbanwa in Coron, Northern Palawan, Philippines: Using Three-Dimensional Planning in Community Resource Assessment and Planning	The 3-dimensional mapping is a technique developed by PAFID through the years, aimed at helping indigenous communities secure tenurial rights over their ancestral domain. A 3-D map looks like a real picture of a place, as it reflects important land and water marks of a certain place under study. On June 10, 1988, the first land and water claim of the Tagbanwa indigenous communities in Coron, Palawan was approved by the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). This case study tells that story for the first time. Other major accomplishments of PAFID over recent years have been: (a) securing 521,000 hectares of ancestral domains through various land tenure legal instruments; (b) delineating and surveying 568,000 hectares of ancestral domains; and (c) preparation of 40 maps indicating domain boundaries, land uses, conflict areas and overlaps.

least 15 years. *(Note that the Case Studies are issued separately, rather than as part of this paper.)*

This initial set of cases focuses on community-level interventions. It is worth noting here that the perspective of a "community" varies in each case, and consists of: a large watershed area (an ecological unit), a village community (a social unit), a municipality (a political unit), and an indigenous community (an integrated cultural-ecological unit). The respective NGO orientations and responses thus vary, according to their differing institutional orientations and development strategies.

All four examples fall under Category 7 in the previous Table, as leading examples on initiatives & participatory approaches in the mobilization of target groups.

Adopting Participatory Approaches from NGO Experience

When institutionalizing participation, one must be aware that participation is a process of empowerment, not a toolbox. Projects need to develop their own participatory approach, as there is no textbook for all cases.

Thus, the approach most commonly taken by multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank has been to identify specific mechanisms needed to facilitate participation within Bank-led operations. As an example, the Box below identifies the different areas for participation - *i.e.*, mechanisms for information-sharing, consultations, decision-making and empowerment - which are seen as important from the perspective of the ADB. In the same document, ADB bank staff are then directed to refer to the World Bank Participation Sourcebook to select their particular choice (cafeteria-style) from a range of available participatory tools which they deem as appropriate.

Such an approach is useful, insofar as it coaxes and encourages Bank staff to introduce participatory tools and approaches in their work, within internal Bank-led processes and operations. However, it tends to miss out on the larger context and rationale for participation - *i.e.*, people's empowerment — when the actual application of participation is limited to specific tools, such as to PRA methods, or when internal institutional processes themselves remain untouched.

Participatory project approaches have long coexisted with structures, procedures and instruments of development cooperation, which have often proven unconducive for decentralized decision-making, for flexibility and mutual learning processes *(Forster, ed, 1996)*.

Chambers (1996) thus raises the key questions: Whose reality, needs and priorities count

Mechanisms to Facilitate Participation

Mechanisms for sharing information
- Translation into local languages & dissemination of written materials using various media
- Informational seminars, presentations & public meetings

Mechanisms for Consultations
- Consultative meetings
- Field visits and interviews (at various stages of work)
- Town hall" meetings
- Radio call-in shows

Mechanisms for Collaborative Decision-Making
- Participatory assessments & evaluations
- Beneficiary assessments
- Workshops & retreats to discuss and determine posiotions, priorities & roles
- Meetings to help resolve conflicts, seek agreements, engender ownership
- (Public) reviews of draft documents and subsequent revisions
- Joint committees or working groups with stakeholder representatives

Mechanisms to Facilitate Empowerment
- Decentralizing authority
- Delegation of authority for decisions to local organizations or groups
- Capacity-building of stakeholder organizations
- Strengthening the financial and legal status of stakeholder organizations
- Supervised transfer of responsibility for maintenance and management to stakeholders
- Support for self-help initiatives by stakeholders
- Creating an enabling policy environment

Source: ADB. Mainstreaming Participatory Development Processes

anyway? Whose knowledge counts? Whose priorities/ criteria? Whose appraisal? analysis? planning? He notes that, in reality, two simultaneous processes and planning paradigms often occur - that of external agencies, which is top-down with planning blueprints; and that of people, which is bottom-up, with participatory processes. He also notes that oftentimes, personal commitment to a coalition of people may prove in the long run to be much more important than scientifically-adequate project logic, but may require a totally different approach to planning. The question (and challenge), he poses, is whether the management of the project cycle can go far enough in overcoming these limitations and in proposing and legitimizing new ways of going about things.

Thus, within large institutions, changes in structures and planning procedures themselves are required in order to enable people to participate in the decision-making process *(Osteria, Okamura, 1986).*

Adopting participatory approaches from NGO experience

Figures 2, 3 and 4 suggest a framework for IFAD to adopt participatory approaches from NGO experience. *Figures 2* and *3* represent two different, but related perspectives on the project cycle. *Figure 4* presents a separate framework for institutional change — outlining the relationships among institutional, professional and individual concerns when participatory practices are adopted.

Figure 2 focuses on the incorporation of learnings from NGO participatory experiences. The left-hand column lists down the four broad categories of NGO case studies as earlier identified for this Project *(refer to earlier Table 2, Part III).* These four categories include:

a) participation in policy;
b) participation in the project cycle (planning, implementation, monitoring & evaluation);
c) working in "problematic contexts (target groups, restricted policy environments); and
d) learning from innovative NGO and community approaches (mobilization of target groups, alternative approaches).

Each of the four sets of NGO case experiences is then matched to those specific stages of the IFAD project cycle *(Column 2)* where such cases may be most relevant and useful. Lessons from NGO experiences in policy participation, for instance, may be most relevant and applicable in the discussion/ formulation of IFAD's corporate and regional strategies, and in the formulation of the Country Operational Strategy and Opportunity Papers (COSOPs).

Column 3 of Figure 2 then identifies the particular set of participatory tools and approaches that may be learned and adopted from NGO experiences for each stage of the project cycle.

In summary, two key conclusions can be made from *Figure 2*:

First: that participatory approaches can be introduced not just during and within the project development cycle itself, but also in the formulation of broader strategies at the level of the institution, region and country (COSOPs).

Second: that one essential ingredient in institutionalizing participation is a system for constant feedback and institutionalized learning. Whereas the strongest feedback systems are likely to come from established systems of beneficiary monitoring and evaluation, there should also be space within institutions such as IFAD to learn from other innovative NGO and community that lie outside the project cycle. This includes feedback or learning from other experiences - *i.e.*, in the mobilization of target groups, and in alternative community-based approaches (CBNRM, farmer-to-farmer exten-

Figure 2: Adopting from NGO participatory approaches within the project cycle

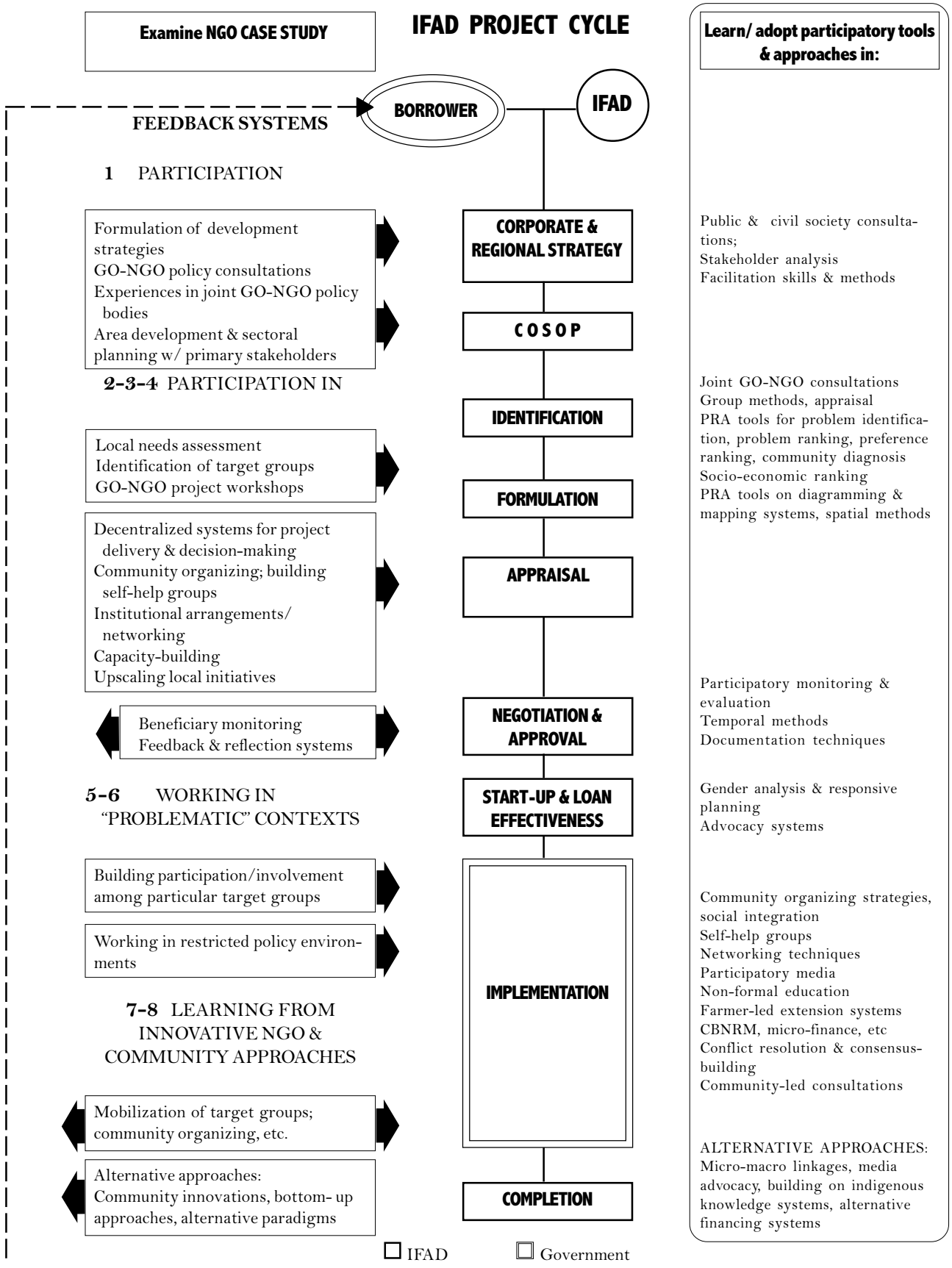
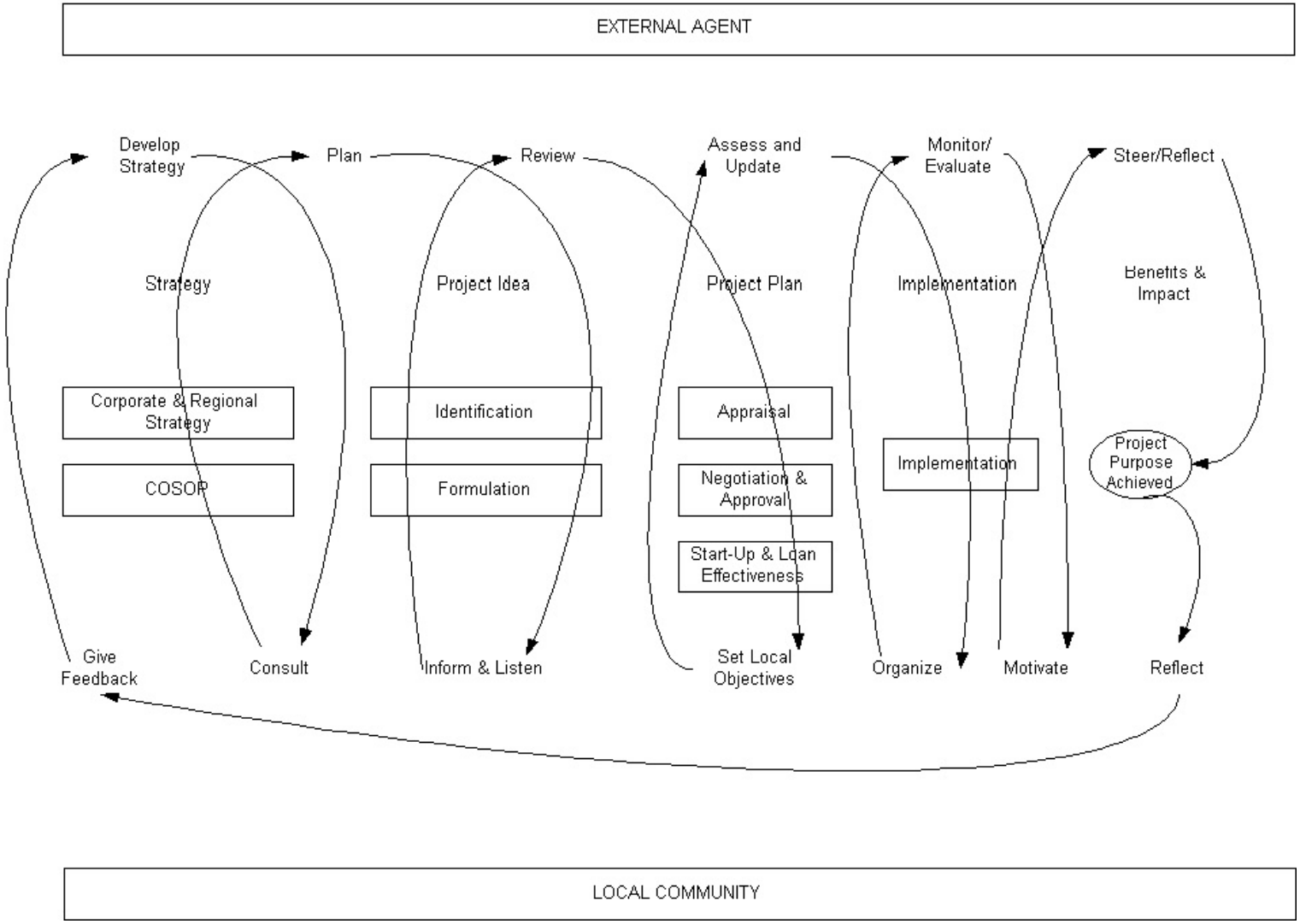


Fig. 3. Another View of the IFAD Project Cycle



Note: Figure 2 was adopted from Chambers, R. (1996). ZOPP, PCM and PRA: Whose Reality, Needs and Priorities Count? In Reiner, F. and Guttierez, M., ed. (1996). ZOPP Marries PRA? Participatory Learning and Action--A Challenge for Our Services and Institutions. Deutsche Geselleschaft fur Technische

sion, etc.) that may lie outside of conventional practice.

On the other hand, *Figure 3* suggests an alternative view or perspective of the IFAD project cycle. As shown in *Figure 3*, each stage of the project cycle can actually be seen as a series of "mini-loops" — of joint learning, planning, consultation and feedback — wherein participatory processes can be introduced. It shows the relationship between top-down and bottom-up processes. The top processes refer to those activities and decisions usually taken by the external agency; whereas the bottom processes refer to those that are undertaken by the local community. In a real participatory approach, there is (should be) constant interaction between the external agent and the local "target" communities at each stage of the project cycle.

Figure 4 then presents a framework for motivating institutional change from within. As earlier mentioned, participatory approaches are more than just new sets of methods and techniques. They emphasize the importance of changes in personal values, reversal of roles and institutional re-orientation, in particular for the external agent or development agency. Moreover, as participation itself is a process of "shared learning," changes are likely to occur at the level of the institution (mandates, internal processes), the individual (attitudes) and the profession (tools, approaches).

In *Figure 3*, the boxed arrows then identify a few of the interventions necessary to induce changes in terms of the institution, the individual, and the profession. The next question to raise here would be: Who then should facilitate such changes?

What are to be "adopted" or "learned"?

What exactly can be learned or adopted from NGO experience? In summary, these can be grouped into four major categories:

- Participatory tools and methods, particularly the whole range of field-tested PRA practices and methods;
- Broad participatory strategies and approaches, including: community organizing strategies, networking, the building and mobilization of self-help groups, and alternative development approaches that emphasize various forms of community empowerment. The latter includes
- Practical skills, including facilitation, negotiations, and the handling of public consultations;
- NGOs, POs and civil society organizations themselves, for experience suggests the importance of long-term engagement between an individual, team or training NGO and any large organization which seeks to adopt a participatory approach *(Chambers, 1995)*.

Some limits to adopting from NGO experience

However, there are limits to adopting from NGO experience. Two are presented below: (a) addressing issues of scale; and (b) working through governments.

Issues of scale

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

Yet, 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. These have included groups such as BRAC, MYRADA, and ACTIONAID, to name a few. Well-being ranking, for instance, was used by MYRADA in the early 1990s in hundreds of villages in South India, and later

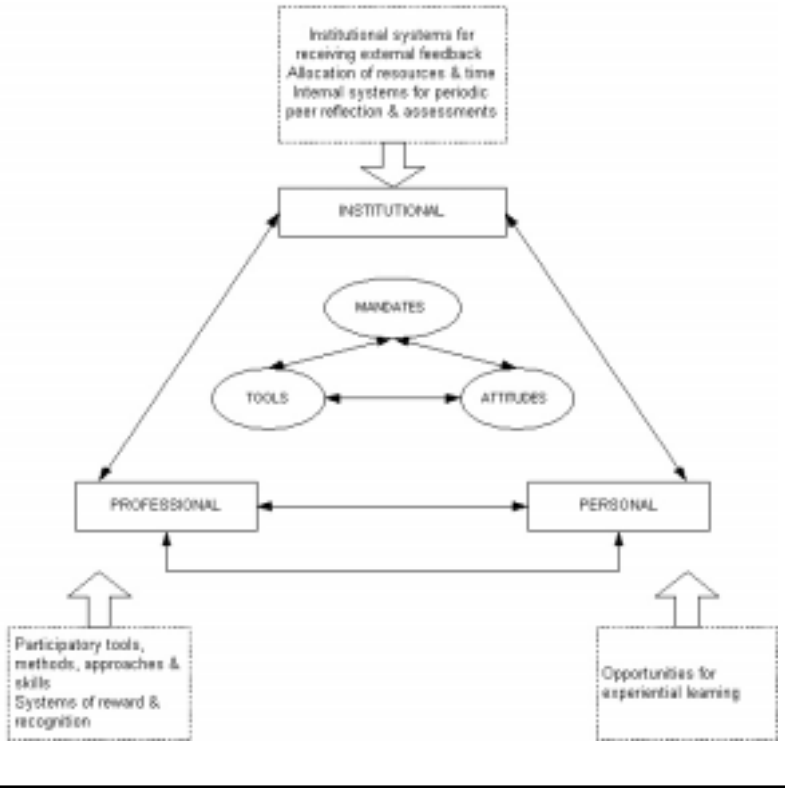
by ACTIONAID for a population of 36,000 in Pakistan to identify the poorest, and to select and deselect households in poverty programmes. In the Integrated Pest Management Programme in Indonesia, where many NGOs were involved, at least 1,500 groups of farmers have made participatory maps which they use to plot the location and prevalence of pests, to plan action, and to monitor changes.

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. These include: one-time extractive appraisals without community analysis, planning or action; the routine use of methods; and insensitivity to local cultures and social processes. These problems will have to be addressed through corrective measures, such as: giving more time for participation and institution-building especially in early stages of programmes; changes in project procedures; greater flexibility in targets; and giving greater priority to behavior and attitudes in trainings.

An alternative approach to scaling-up participatory approaches in projects has been to build on small-scale successes, through existing systems of networking, since "networks" have been the primary vehicles by which smaller NGOs link-up, in order to share skills and resources, and to scale-up their operations. This networking approach has proven useful in carefully-designed programmes that emphasize decentralized implementation and decision-making — such as in targetted poverty alleviation programmes, dispersal schemes, micro-credit re-lending schemes, and in infrastructure- and service-delivery programmes directed at community-identified priorities.

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 is whether to go for big changes in small programmes, or for small changes in big programmes. Thus, compromises will have to be made. Trade-offs between quality, scale and impact have to be part of responsible decisions about where to work, and what to do *(Chambers, 1995)*.

Fig. 4. Participation and Institutional Change



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Working through governments

The very nature of development assistance affects participation. Often, there is greater flexibility in implementing grant-based Technical Assistance (TA) projects than there usually is for loan-based Financial Assistance (FA) projects, which have to go through stringent bidding procedures and financial auditing requirements, and which are implemented through (usually steep) hierarchies of borrower-governments. Thus, real questions arise as to what extent participatory approaches can be introduced when borrower-governments take over direct responsibility for the implementation of projects.

It is well-recognized that there are principal differences between institutional cultures of NGOs and Governments. This must be taken into account when attempting to transfer a new concept from one institutional environment to another. The objectives of these institutions, their institutional cultures and identities, as well as the forces driving them are entirely different. *(Backhaus and Wagachchi, 1995)* Furthermore, the prevailing policy environment in each country determine, to a significant degree, how far relationships can be built between NGOs and Government *(refer to earlier Table 1)*.

For sure, participatory processes will 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 such as IFAD could also play an important role in seeking greater recognition and roles for NGOs and civil society organizations, especially within restrictive policy environments. One option is to introduce participation as a loan conditionality. This may be relevant and useful, but this approach may not altogether be sufficient. Experience shows that even when participation is imposed as part of loan conditionalities, there is a tendency on the part of implementors to merely to go through the motions of participatory exercises.[3] Furthermore, there may be hesitance on the part of borrower-governments to introduce an orientation-phase during project implementation, because they fear a negative effect on a project's cost-benefit ratio *(Backhaus and Wagachchi, 1995)*.

To introduce participatory practices in government-led projects, it will be important to provide for an orientation and training phase for project staff as well as beneficiaries. A solution might be to introduce a TA to set-up a system for beneficiary participation. Also, in the beginning during project start-up, achievements for physical targets and impacts should be low, for otherwise some people will later use the project as proof that "participation does not work." Several studies also suggest that the use of short-term consultants at this point may be of limited usefulness, and that what may be needed are persistent "change agents" coming from outside the project staff who are available over a longer period of time *(Backhaus and Wagachchi, 1995; Chambers, 1996)*. NGOs within the country could fill-in this role.

Presently, most practitioners of PRA and participatory approaches come from NGO backgrounds. However, many tend to be critical of the attitudes and behavior of government officials (seen as "wrong," "too slow," or "unable to change"). While this view might be justifiable from the perspective of rural people and beneficiaries themselves, 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 GO-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.

Costs and risks of participation

It should be noted that from the perspective of IFAD (and of NGOs as well) there are costs

and risks to participation:

- Participation can be organizationally and logistically troublesome.
- It may involve more time and resources.
- It may lead to increased expectations that cannot be fulfilled.
- It requires skilled facilitation — conflicts may be aggravated among groups with different priorities and clashing interests.[4]
- Methodologies used may not be seen by some as "scientific," thus subjecting the outcomes to questioning by experts. It is noted that policymakers have a normal inclination towards hard data (*i.e.*, numerical data & questionnaire surveys) which are relatively easier to interpret.
- Participatory processes may be co-opted by some powerful and more articulate elites, to the exclusion of the poor and disadvantaged.[5]

Further, while participatory approaches may appear to be the "new panacea" to international development assistance, one should be cautioned against "putting the burden of development on the poor". One should constantly be reminded of the structural causes underlying poverty, and that "self-reliance" should not be used as a legitimizing rationale for the wealthy and powerful sectors of society to abdicate their responsibility to the poor *(Castillo, 1983)*.

Benefits of Participation

The local benefits of participation have been well-established from numerous research studies and experiences. Seen from the perspective of an external development agency, however, these potential benefits can be summarized as follows:

- more appropriate and timely interventions that fit the needs of the community and users of local facilities;[6]
- better implementation, sustainability and local ownership of project initiatives;
- more complete utilization 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 an interest in sustaining the benefits;
- strengthened local capacity to initiate other development activities; and
- improved learning, and greater personal and professional satisfaction on the part of the external agency.

Finally, several studies have suggested that participation also helps to reduce costs, and improves the cost-benefit ratio of development initiatives in the long-run. While this may be true, participation does require substantial investment in the beginning. Furthermore, other studies suggest that while participation may lessen the need for certain kinds of external inputs, that cost is actually transferred on to the local community, for it also takes people's time away from their work and livelihoods. And rarely are these local efforts quantified or recognized in agencies' balance sheets.

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Notes

1 The Directory is to be issued in September 2000.

2 It should be noted that the other Study — A Review of Participatory Approaches in IFAD - was prepared simultaneously as this Paper.

3 Instead of mobilizing self-help and increasing self-reliance, government-facilitated PRA exercises have sometimes encouraged high expectations among villagers for project assistance, making some village resource management plans look more like "shopping lists" *(Backhaus and Wagachchi, 1995).*

4 An article by *Shah, P. and Shah, M. K. (1995)* Participa tory methods: precipitating or avoiding conflict? presents and analyzes a well-documented case in Devalia village, Surendragar, Gujarat, India where a PRA exercise led to increased conflicts and violence over water rights. The authors contend that rapid ap praisal tools may sometimes overlook the complexity of existing social relationships, which can inhibit community action and articulation of joint priorities, and thus creating a false sense of a community willing to cooperate. Oftentimes, most researchers are more interested in extract ing information in a very short time, and are absent when negotiation and bargaining takes place, and conflicts arise.

5 Real participation takes time. An interesting case example is provided in an article by *N. Narayanasamy (1995)* of Gandhigram Rural Institute, Deemed University, India. He de scribes a village-modelling PRA exercise conducted in a village called Pillaiarnathan, and noted that in certain cases, some high-caste women tended to dominate discussions, and low caste groups still had many problems that remained unexpressed at the end of the first day's PRA exercise. It was only on the second day that the issues of Harijan women were fully expressed.

6 An illustrative example is cited by *Okamura (1995).* In the Philippines, upland communities often cite the lack of health and education facilities as their primary felt needs. However, these are often not integral components of social forestry programmes. Although they may be seen to "participate" in social forestry programs, their reasons may have little to do with reforesta tion per se, which is the principal objective of government agencies iand programmes in social forestry.