

**Participatory Development:**  
**Guidelines on**  
**Beneficiary Participation in Agricultural and Rural Development**

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## **Preface**

These guidelines provide guidance for policy makers and practitioners how to incorporate group-based, participatory based approaches into large-scale investment projects. They include advice on a range of topics, including: strategies to promote participation, project formulation, group formation, financial arrangements, training, monitoring and evaluation, etc.

They were based on experience gained in the design and implementation of FAO People's Participation Programme projects during the 1980s and prepared by FAO consultant, Bernard Van Heck, working under the technical guidance of Dr. Nikolaus Newiger, Group Leader of the FAO Cooperatives and Farmers Organizations Group and published in March 1990, long before the era of electronic publishing began.

Since many who have used the guidelines in their work have reported that much remains valid and useful even today, we have decided to publish a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the publication, this time in electronic format for easy accessing over the Internet.

The changes that made to the original printed publication have been mostly editorial. No significant new material has been added, except for references to new programmes that use similar group-based approaches and to a series of FAO resource books on farmer group and agricultural cooperative development, both of which have appeared since that date.

Reader comments on the usefulness of these guidelines in helping to introduce more participatory, group-based approaches in larger-scale investment projects are most welcomed.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS	5
3	WHY PARTICIPATION AND WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES?	10
	3.1 Group and Individual Development Approach	10
	3.2 Arguments for Beneficiary Participation	11
	3.3 Constraints of Participation	12
4	STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE PARTICIPATION	13
	4.1 Constraints	13
	4.2 Sensitizing Governments	14
	4.3 Promoting policy dialogues	14
	4.4 Promoting the planning and implementation of participation in larger-scale projects	15
	4.5 Systematic sensitization	15
	4.6 Increasing support	16
	4.7 Actions to be taken by FAO and other UN Agencies	16
5	IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT AREAS, BENEFICIARIES AND THEIR NEEDS	17
	5.1 Identification of Project Areas	17
	5.2 Identification and Classification of Poor Rural People	19
	5.3 Identification of Development Needs and Aspirations of the Intended Beneficiaries	21
6	THE FORMATION OF RURAL POOR GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS	22
	6.1 Need for a Receiving-cum-Delivery System	22
	6.2 Inventarization of Existing Groups and Organizations	23
	6.3 Self-Formation of Small Homogeneous Groups	24
	6.4 Steps in the Process of Group Formation	25
	6.5 Incentives and Disincentives for Group Formation	26
	6.6 Overcoming the opposition of local power holders to Rural Poor Organizations	27
7	GROUP AND INTER-GROUP ACTIVITIES	28
	7.1 Group Activities	28
	7.2 Towards Federations of Groups	31
8	INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION	32
	8.1 Institutions to be Involved	32
	8.2 Coordination	32
9	FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS	34
	9.1 Project's Financial Arrangements	34
	9.2 Group Savings and Loans	34
	9.3 Selection of a Suitable Bank	36
	9.4 Difference in the Design and Operation of the Financial Component	37
	9.5 Specific Seminars	38
	9.6 Project Operations	38
	9.7 Credit	38

10	PARTICIPATION AGENTS/GROUP PROMOTERS	39
10.1	Roles	39
10.2	Selection	39
10.3	Posting and Payment	40
10.4	Expected Performance in Group Formation	41
10.5	Career Prospects	41
11	PARTICIPATORY TRAINING	42
11.1	Objectives and Characteristics	42
11.2	Training Target Groups, Personnel and Committees	43
11.3	Beneficiary Training	43
11.4	Training of Participation Agents (Group Promoters), the Project Coordinator and Other Project Staff	44
11.5	Training of Government and NGO Staff as well as Local Leaders	45
12	PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH	46
12.1	Conventional and Participatory Action Research	46
12.2	Objectives	46
12.3	Surveys	47
13	PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND ON-GOING EVALUATION (PMOE)	47
13.1	Participatory Monitoring	47
13.2	Participatory Evaluation	49
14	ESTIMATED COSTS TO PROMOTE BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION	50
14.1	Cost-Effectiveness	50
14.2	Benefits	50
14.3	Costs	51
14.4	Extra Costs	51
14.5	Field Experience	52
15	PROJECT CONTINUATION. EXPANSION AND MULTIPLICATION	54
15.1	Continuation: Need for Process Approach	54
15.2	Expansion and Multiplication	55
15.3	The Planning of Project Expansion and Multiplication	56
16	HOW TO ENSURE BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT CYCLE	58
16.1	Need for Flexible Project Designs	58
16.2	Reconnaissance Stage	59
16.3	Identification Stage	59
16.4	Project Preparation or Formulation Stage	62

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1.	Participatory Development Programmes Supported by FAO	64
Appendix 2.	Selected References	71
1)	<u>General</u>	71
2)	<u>Women in Development</u>	72
3)	<u>Forestry</u>	73
4)	<u>Fisheries</u>	73
5)	<u>Water Management</u>	73
6)	<u>Training</u>	73
7)	<u>Finance</u>	74
8)	<u>Asia</u>	74

9) <u>Africa</u>	74
Appendix 3. Figures:	
1) Overview Participatory Rural Development Approach	75
2) Participatory Rural Development Project (Component) Phases	76
3) Two Basic Strategies for Rural Development	77

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 These Guidelines are an attempt to indicate how to incorporate effectively beneficiary participation in agricultural and rural development projects<sup>1</sup> in particular those supported by FAO technical assistance.

The Guidelines are meant as a tool for project planners and implementers, in particular for the experts involved in the identification and formulation of rural development projects. The latter can be large multi-component or smaller projects of any type: for example, those dealing with agricultural production, livestock, forestry, fishery, irrigation, land reform, inputs, extension, credit, marketing, research, training as well as those dealing with health, sanitation, nutrition, education and other social fields.

The Guidelines are a first attempt to present a “manual” from which relevant pragmatic indications can be taken to render forthcoming and existing conventional projects (more) participatory. This means firstly that the projects are to the largest possible extent oriented towards the rural poor, and secondly that they include provisions for the formation of self-run beneficiary groups. As explained later, these two essential features do not substitute for but are expected to complement conventional development approaches and efforts.

In more concrete terms: the comprehensive Guidelines hereunder hopefully enable planners of any rural development project to select from the text those issues and elements which are necessary to incorporate in the overall project design specific objectives and workable components or mechanisms for active and lasting beneficiary participation.

This is not a luxury: the lack of feasible mechanisms to attain effective beneficiary participation is still a major deficiency in project designs among several other ones such as too tight schedule, under-estimated costs, production shortfalls, bad management and staff, poor engineering, procurement difficulties, wrong organization and structure, insufficient technical assistance, too many or unbalanced components, over-dimensioning, non-sustainability, inequitable benefit distribution, slow adaptation, insufficient government commitment, and recurrent budget shortage<sup>2</sup>.

1.2 The Guidelines are based on a number of interesting consultations with experts in relevant FAO divisions and units who have experience with participatory projects and programmes. They are also based on scrutiny of relevant documents and reports on twelve FAO People’s Participation Programme (PPP) and Small Farmer Development Programme (SFDP) projects as well as reports on other FAO participatory projects funded by UNDP, by FAO Government Cooperation Programme (GCP) extra-budgetary sources and/or under the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP).

In fact, these Guidelines evolved from a wealth of efforts and experiences gained in the field by UN (in particular FAO), government and voluntary (NGO) organizations. Since the mid-

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<sup>1</sup> In the following, agricultural and rural development projects and programmes will be shortly indicated as development projects or projects.

<sup>2</sup> This list is taken from a recent publication which however does not explicitly deal with beneficiary participation: “Problems in Agricultural Project Design”, an Investment Centre Study, FAO. Oct. 1988. Another interesting report is: “World Bank Experience with Rural Development, 1965-1987,” Operations Evaluation Department World Bank. Oct. 1987; see e.g. Sections 6.32-6.39 on beneficiary participation.

seventies and particularly the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), it was widely recognized that development efforts cannot be successful without the active participation of the people, particularly small and landless farmers, fishermen and other rural poor. Several of the above agencies launched therefore special programmes mostly on pilot basis. In order to test and develop participatory development approaches<sup>3</sup>

In this perspective FAO promoted:

- the programme “People's Participation in Agricultural and Rural Development through the Promotion of Self-Help Organizations” (PPP);
- Community Action for Disadvantaged Rural Women (CADRW);
- Forestry for Local Community Development Programmes (FLCDP); and since 1987 “The Forests, Trees and People Programme (FTPP)”;
- Programme for Small-Scale and Artisanal Fishermen;
- Support Programme for Farm Water Management;
- Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development (FFHC/AD: started already in 1959);

(For some basic data on these participatory programmes see Annex I.)

1.3 All of the above-indicated programmes promote group formation and action strategies designed to demonstrate to the disadvantaged people as well as to UN agencies and member governments the necessity and efficacy of adopting bottom-up or participatory rural development approaches as a complement to existing ones in order to reach the poor and guide them towards self-development efforts. And indeed the main outcome of these pilot programmes is that efforts of beneficiary participation in a project are most successful when the intended beneficiaries are systematically helped to organize themselves into small, self-run groups formed from scratch or within larger organizations. Through such groups they can better meet their economic and social needs, the project and/or delivery system can provide services and facilities more easily and on a wider scale, and the poor can engage much more in poverty alleviating efforts (see Sections 5 and 6).

1.4 Popular participation and thus also beneficiary participation has become a fashionable, frequently used (and misused!) concept which is also often ambiguous, vague and abstract (see Section 2). It is presently applied in many projects in limited forms and manners. However, while considering also minor forms of participation as potentially valuable, it is tried in this guide to indicate how to design full beneficiary participation in larger projects which aim at reaching and involving mainly or exclusively the rural poor. This full participation can only be obtained by means of specific arrangements and/or mechanisms for grassroots institution-building in the form of group formation and action being the essence of participatory rural development.

The latter approach aims at improving conventional, area-based, all farmer or all rural people-oriented projects which lack specific participatory arrangements and consequently yield - as is well-known - mostly benefits to the better-off beneficiaries who have more assets, education

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<sup>3</sup> See e.g. “People's Participation in Agricultural and Rural Development,” FAO paper prepared for the tenth Session of the Committee of Agriculture, held in May 1989.

and better access to the delivery system. Thus, participatory rural development does not replace other UN, government or NGO development policies, programmes and projects and should not be considered an alternative or exclusive development approach. It is instead a complementary approach which is indispensable for effective poverty alleviation (see also the Figures 1 and 3 in Appendix 3).

It should here however be stressed that participatory rural development should not only be regarded as a set of techniques but also as a mental outlook or state of mind favouring a development approach which starts from the people concerned and treat them as subjects and not as objects of development.

1.5 The term participation is debatable because inadequate from the long term perspective. In the initial stages of development and for the time being, the poor must be encouraged just to participate in the economic system of the non-poor and thus raise their standard of living from abject poverty up to at least a reasonable survival level. However, later on the disadvantaged people should engage in self-development efforts and thus gradually also help to contribute to a more equitable socio-economic system of the non-poor which in its present form intrinsically and evidently leads to the exclusion of most have-nots from integral human development.

Another, often overlooked point is that a participatory development approach and project presupposes certain underlying basic values or value orientations such as sharing, cooperation, participation, coordination, mutual trust, delegation and concern, care for the disadvantaged people. For example, to be a valuable, active member of a small production group, of a supporting line agency or of a coordination committee, requires extra commitment and contributions of time, ideas, energy and other resources. A basic question is after all who and what could motivate the poor and also the supporting non-poor people to make these “sacrifices”.

The right motivations needed can apparently only come from certain attitudes moulded by a religious and/or ideological belief system, or borne out of considering well one's own interest and/or out of fear for negative reactions of the grassroot people. The latter may increasingly exert pressure on officials and the better-off to provide (more) means of production, services and facilities, in other words to divide the cake of relative welfare more justly.

1.6 As several successful UN, government and NGO programmes show, we have by now technically valid and well proven solutions to promote beneficiary participation but the main constraint to apply these solutions is indeed the political will in a country or project area to do so. Accordingly, the main problem is how to motivate in practice politicians, officials and elites to support or at least tolerate effective forms of participation of the rural disprivileged people in development.

In fact in order to plan and implement participation in projects (as explained in this guide), a number of strategies are required at various levels to sensitize and convince politicians and policy makers, the staff of UN, government, NGO and donor agencies, the field staff of development projects and the rural elites (see Section 4: Strategies to Promote Participation).

1.7 This guide does not contain specific sections on the wide issue of the participation of women in development, but only certain vital references e.g. to the need for women groups and for female participation agents (group promoters).



As known, rural women have heavy, multiple and vital roles as wives, mothers, food producers and food providers. Particularly the poor women are nevertheless usually doubly discriminated, marginalized and exploited viz. as rural poor within their elite and male-dominated society and also as women in their own household.

They are in general also relatively disadvantaged in comparison with men in the development process. The main reasons are that they have more limited access to education, credit facilities and public life. Development efforts often target men - though not overtly but latently - as the recipients of projects. However, in general it would be inadequate and ineffective to treat women as a separate target group. Women cannot be separated from the family, just as children cannot. In most projects the disadvantaged nuclear or extended family should be taken as a target group.

This approach implies, however, that each participatory project must firstly focus specifically on the identification of the conditions, needs, resources and capabilities of the various categories of disadvantaged women and secondly on the provision of training, extension and other facilities for viable individual and/or group activities of women. The latter should regard not only the conventional but still indispensable topics such as health, nutrition, childcare, home economics as well as workload reduction and small-scale income generation, but also as soon as possible full participation in local development planning, decision-making and efforts. In this way the women will raise their economic and social status and thus their standard and quality of living, not in the least by developing their qualities of leadership and equal participation in local self-development.

Women's problems in the context of rural poverty are thus to be analysed and tackled carefully according to the different conditions of poor rural women in different regions, cultures and ecologies. However, in these Guidelines general statements related to disadvantaged women cannot address properly the complexity of their situation.

1.8 Project planners and experts have now-a-days at their disposal guidelines on various technical topics, some of which are prepared by FAO Divisions. They have however, notoriously time constraints to study and use these materials. It is therefore tried to formulate the present Guidelines as concise and operational as possible, although some basic issues are reiterated for clarity. Thus many items condensed in one or a few phrases, could not be elaborated more and also the necessary conceptual parts were kept at the bare minimum.

For a short overview of the operational steps to be taken to plan beneficiary participation during the identification and preparation (or formulation) of a project, see the Sections 16.2, 16.3 and 16.4).

The Guidelines are inevitably presented in rather general terms in view of the wide variety of economic and social situations and needs in developing countries and thus of the types of agricultural and rural development projects and programmes. In fact, in successive phases more elaborate and concrete additional Guidelines are highly desirable for major types of projects like agricultural production, credit, irrigation (land and water), forestry, fishery and so on.

“The activities undertaken by PPP groups during the implementation have been extremely varied in subject matter and whilst no systematic inventory has been made of the

achievements in different sectors, e.g. food processing, introduction of draught animal power, crop production systems, Livestock keeping, small-scale fishing, etc., there would appear to be a considerable resource of knowledge on a sector by sector basis. If this were collected together from all of the PPP projects and analysed by the FAO Rural Development Division and the appropriate technical departments, it could provide valuable information and a resource for the subject matter specialists who will be called upon to advise on mechanisms for incorporation of participation into large-scale development projects.” (McKone: 1989).

1.9 Alongside these Guidelines a second basic paper entitled “FAO People's Participation Programme: The First Ten Years - Lessons Learned and Future Directions” was prepared by another FAO Consultant Mr. Colin E. McKone. This review document outlines the concepts and principles of PPP, describes its evolution over ten years, examines the constraints of the PPP approach and provides a range of conclusions and strategy options for future participatory development efforts.

Both this Guide and the PPP Review Paper, which complement and enlighten each other, were discussed in-depth and revised during and after an International Workshop on Strategy and Methodology of People's Participation in Rural Development, held in September 1989 in Arusha, Tanzania. The participants in this Workshop included government and donor representatives, FAO and PPP project staff as well as various resource persons.

1.10 These Guidelines need to be improved continuously by all who like to use them. Various topics may require further elaboration after feedback from the field, while other issues may be de-emphasized and new ones be added according to the needs of practical application. For this purpose the active participation in improving these Guidelines by those involved in field projects, is very necessary and highly appreciated

Finally, the author likes to thank very much the many persons in FAO and outside who were consulted and gave appreciable ideas, suggestions and materials for this consolidated paper.

## **2. BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

2.1 Around the mid-seventies there was a growing awareness that various approaches for rural development like community development, integrated rural development and basic needs did not result in substantial rural poverty alleviation. Even subsequent efforts made in some countries such as rural works, concessional credit, rural employment programmes did not improve the plight of the poor on a sustained basis. Economic growth was insufficiently combined with equity or just distribution of benefits.

International, government and non-governmental agencies realized more and more that the main reason of many unsuccessful development projects was (and still is) the lack of active, effective and lasting participation of the intended beneficiaries. Consequently, several agencies started to promote the participation of people, in particular disadvantaged women and men, in development through various programmes, mostly on a pilot basis<sup>4</sup>. The efforts of FAO in this field are indicated in Annex 2.

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<sup>4</sup> An interesting draft paper highlighting participatory rural development and various programmes in this field is: “Participatory Rural Development beyond Micro-Scale”, by Mr. K.P.G.M. Perera, for the Regional

2.2 In these Guidelines the vast literature and considerable experience which by now exist regarding popular participation and participatory rural development in general cannot, of course be reviewed: only some key notes mainly on beneficiary participation in projects are given hereunder<sup>5</sup>

To start with, there is a wide range of definitions and interpretations of participation. For example, it means (1) sensitizing people to make them more responsive to development programmes and to encourage local initiatives and self-help; (2) involving people as much as possible actively in the decision-making process which regards their development; (3) organizing group action to give to hitherto excluded disadvantaged people control over resources, access to services and/or bargaining power; (4) promoting the involvement of people in the planning and implementation of development efforts as well as in the sharing of their benefits; and (5) in more general, descriptive terms; “the involvement of a significant number of persons in situations or actions which enhance their well-being, e.g. their income, security or self-esteem” (Uphoff: 1979).

There is furthermore a wide range of approaches in development projects to bring participation into practice. Some major types of participation found in projects are the following:

- Type I: Induced involvement: the strategy, design and workplan of a project are pre-determined and the intended beneficiaries are encouraged to participate in its activities and obtain certain benefits. In various projects people are invited to make contributions of labour and/or other resources which is also seen as a form of cost-sharing.
- Type II: Transitory mobilization for community development: the people participate in certain specific temporary tasks mainly for the development of their community, but there is no institutional base or structure (groups or organizations) for more sustained participation.
- Type III: Group formation: the project has a specific objective to help create new or strengthen existing self-formed and self-run groups and organizations through which the rural poor gain access to resources, inputs and services and participate actively in the project, also by means of self-proposed actions. This latter type of full participation leads also to empowering of the poor: through their groups and organizations they obtain not only access to resources, but also decision-making and bargaining power as well as a base for sustained self-development efforts.

Self-development and self-reliance should in fact be an outcome of participation. The latter term is actually debatable when it is taken in the narrow sense that the poor should just only obtain a share of the “cake” or participate in the socio-economic system of the non-poor as mostly implied or expressed in a top-down project. A better, wider meaning is that through participation the poor not only gradually practise self-development, but may also contribute to

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Review Meeting on Participatory Rural Development, organized by the UN Inter-Agency Committee on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific and held in Dhaka in July 1988.

<sup>5</sup> Various elements of this Chapter have been adapted from Chapter One of the FAO Publication: “The Monitoring and Evaluation of Participation in Rural Development”, by Dr. Peter Oakley. FAO, Rome, 1988.

modify the existing system of the non-poor which left them out of development to varying extents.

2.3 In accordance with the statement of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) on this key issue and on the basis of the foregoing considerations, by participation in an agricultural or rural development project or programme is meant in these Guidelines that the intended beneficiaries, in particular the rural disadvantaged people, contribute to the planning of a project or programme, participate actively in its implementation and evaluation and share fully in its benefits. There is by now overwhelming evidence that such participation cannot effectively take place on an individual basis but needs a structure consisting of existing and/or new, self-created and self-managed groups or organizations. This implies of course the right of free association and also the full participation of women on an equal basis with men.

2.4 At present there is a widespread consensus that effective beneficiary participation is practically indispensable to render a project successful. However, relatively few projects have an explicit design to attain effective participation. In fact, the existing development projects dealing with rural people can broadly be divided in two categories:

Conventional projects: these include objectives and components for productive and other (supporting) activities such as training, extension, credit, irrigation and try to involve the intended beneficiaries in these activities in order to achieve the project objectives.

The projects of this category have pre-designed project frameworks (objectives, action plans, inputs, outputs and time schedules) mainly based upon top-down planning. Many of them are large-scale, capital-intensive and heavily staffed. The projects are meant for all people in a certain area who are mostly not consulted beforehand on their needs and desires. As the projects focus moreover more on macro-economic than on social aspects and the poorer people's necessities, they yield mainly benefits to the better-off locals (see also Section 1.4).

Participatory projects: these deliberately promote participation which consequently is explicitly incorporated in their objectives, approach and methodology.

The distinction between these two types of projects results mainly from the fact that in practice participation is basically conceived either as a means or as an end and in some cases in both ways.

Conventional projects which by and large still prevail are predominantly production-oriented and participation, when considered in the project design, is regarded as a means to achieve certain productive objectives which are pre-determined by an outside agency.

In a number of less conventional projects there are gradations of a partial participatory approach: the rural poor may have been consulted on their needs, aspirations, potentials and willingness, and may also be involved somehow in project implementation. Basically, they are expected to participate, however, to varying extents in project benefits. These partial participatory approaches are certainly very useful and may help to avoid project failure; it may also lead to increased participation in the future.

In truly participatory projects, participation is seen also as an end and thus taken up clearly in the objectives which however mostly include also productive goals. In fact, these projects

have two legs: participation and production and practice shows that in the long term they “run” or “walk” better.

Given the importance more and more placed on beneficiary participation, no wonder firstly that the number of participatory projects are increasing; they are supported by FAO, ILO, IFAD and other UN agencies, various progressive governments and furthermore to a great extent by NGOs. Secondly, that conventional projects, though easier to design and to manage, are regarded increasingly as out-dated and after all less feasible, cost-effective and prone to be successful.

Finally, it should be stressed that the positive aspects of both conventional and participatory projects should be more and more merged. For example, the economic (feasibility, marketing, etc.) and technical (research, technology transfer, etc.) requirements for the development of certain (sub-) sectors (e.g. irrigation, crop production, livestock, extension, credit) must be fully taken into account also in participatory projects. Top-planning (e.g. by a national body or a district development committee) and grassroot (bottom-up) planning (e.g. by groups or federations which come out with small-scale production plans) must be matched, for example by a workable coordination committee. Indeed feasible forms of vertical integration of development efforts are indispensable (see Section 5.1 on the need for a receiving-cum-delivery system).

2.5. How is participation as an end in concrete expressed in the objectives of participatory projects? The common essential elements in the overall objectives are the following: to raise the family income and standards of living of low income rural people; to identify and apply for this purpose a sub-village development approach for and with the intended beneficiaries by actively involving them in development through the promotion of economic and social need-fulfilling group activities.

The common essential elements in the specific objectives are:

- 1) to help identify, plan and implement employment – and income-generating and other group activities for small farmers, tenants, fishermen and/or labourers;
- 2) to assist the beneficiaries to organize themselves into self-run groups and organizations (or to use existing ones) in such ways that firstly they have (increased) access to programmes of training, credit, inputs, marketing and processing as well as education, health and sanitation and, secondly, they can more and more satisfy their economic and social needs and become eventually self-reliant;
- 3) to assist line departments and other agencies including banks and NGOs to increase their effectiveness to better serve the rural weak, to develop innovative farm and also off-farm income-raising activities, and to encourage self-development efforts;
- 4) to develop a strategy for expanding the successful features of the project in the country.

2.6 The important elements found in the practice of participatory development projects are the following:

- 1) Process instead of project approach: Conventional projects are usually planned too much in detail (“pre-cooked”) over a too short time span to obtain tangible results and spread effects. A participatory project can substantially contribute to solve these problems by replacing or at least complementing the standard project approach by the process

approach and to conceive a project as the first phase of a longer process enacted and sustained by a rolling programme. The project design must accordingly be more flexible and such that It can be expanded and replicated in similar areas with minimal outside assistance and recurrent costs (see Sections 14, 15 and 16.1).

- 2) The target group is predominantly or exclusively formed by the rural disadvantaged people (see Sections 1 and 5.2). However, also non-poor or better-off rural people (local leaders, influentials, etc.) as well as government and NGO officials are to be actively involved in various project actions, in particular to improve the delivery of services and facilities to the target group and to learn from each other.
- 3) Education for participation which is given in addition to the classic (teacher-student) types of training provided in conventional projects to transfer technical know-how. A major objective of the educational process is awareness creation or conscientization: the poor will gradually become critically aware of their economic and social conditions, the causes of their deprivation and dependency syndrome as well as their potentials to change their plight through joint efforts by clustering into small action groups. Participatory education attempts to develop capabilities among the beneficiaries to strive for full participation as well as self-development particularly when the project is over. This education is non-directive, dialogical (two-way) and built upon indigenous knowledge (see also Section 11).
- 4) The structuring of the target group by means of group formation and group action. This entails strengthening of existing groups or organizations and/or the promotion of new, self-created and self-managed ones. The existing groups may be traditional groupings, farmer associations, cooperatives, women's, youth and village groups and/or trade unions. The groups and organizations which may later on somehow federate, form the basis for sustained participation and can be regarded also as a “receiving system” through which the poorer people can mobilize their own resources and be “reached” effectively by any development agency (see also Section 6.1).
- 5) Resource mobilization by group members which includes pooling of know-how, ideas, assets, savings and/or labour as well as obtaining services and facilities like training and credit. This is done in a gradual learning process.
- 6) Economic and social activities. Starting with small, low-risk, well-known income-raising and socio-cultural group activities of any feasible type, the groups will undertake gradually larger, more complex ones, also on an inter-group basis (see Section 7.1).
- 7) The inclusion of group promoters in or attached to the project staff with the following two main roles: a) to help develop the economic and other activities of project groups and facilitate their access to resources and services; b) to help develop adequate participatory education and training activities for, with and between beneficiaries in order to increase critical awareness and stimulate meaningful and increasingly independent group actions (self-reliance). The above roles could best be performed by specific change agents (group promoters or the like) who work exclusively and directly with the beneficiaries and their groups to enhance participation. In projects which unfortunately have no arrangements and/or funds to recruit group promoters, the roles of the latter could be performed in part by ad-hoc trained technical project staff (see Section 10).
- 8) Promotion of self-reliance and self-development. The relationships between supporting government, NGO and project staff and the intended beneficiaries is deliberately shaped in such ways that self-reliance and self-development are encouraged amongst the target

group and dependence on project inputs is gradually reduced. Project staff members encourage the beneficiary groups to identify themselves problems and seek adequate solutions and actions. Self-reliant groups are the main indicator for a successful participatory project.

- 9) The development of coordination and cooperation mechanisms which enable the beneficiaries to participate actively in as many project actions as possible. The latter include identification of needs and potentials, setting of project objectives, planning and carrying out of activities as well as monitoring and evaluation. The project avoids thus by all means to become just only a delivery vehicle.

The above are all important elements in any project design to attain full participation; they are, however, not all indispensable for certain forms of “minor” or partial participation.

### **3. WHY PARTICIPATION AND WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES?**

#### **3.1 Group and Individual Development Approach**

As explained earlier, participatory projects include one or more components or elements of group formation and action but not exclusively: many development activities will continue to emerge from individual initiatives and incentives, in the areas of such projects. Group formation/action is thus not the exclusive solution or panacea for achieving certain development objectives. Groups can be instruments to (better) meet certain but not all needs and/or to (better) perform certain functions. Group formation should of course never be compulsory or a sine-qua-non condition, but spontaneous and voluntary. Freely formed, well-performing groups are “contagious” and have a beneficial spread effect.

In sum, “individualistic” types of involvement in project formulation and implementation can work satisfactorily in various instances. However, it is by now well realized, that only through group approaches the large numbers of marginalized rural people can be “reached” effectively by government and other organizations. There is also overwhelming evidence that the predominantly “individualistic” approaches largely applied by conventional development agencies, bring benefits mostly to the better-off-people. For the types of projects supported by FAO, ILO, WHO and (pre-) investment agencies, group approaches are normally also more cost-effective.

A problem occasionally raised is how “individualistic” people and societies can be motivated for group-wise development efforts. It is erroneously observed that the propensity for group action amongst disadvantaged rural people is significant for social but not for economic development purposes, unless there is a strong and evident incentive (e.g. group credit, irrigation or marketing). However, firstly the economic and social actions of the rural poor are mostly still very much interwoven and less compartmentalized as in modern societies. Secondly, the participatory approach builds wherever possible, upon numerous traditional and other forms of cooperation and groupings found amongst the rural poor including those living in so-called “individualistic” societies. For example, individual profit making makes less sense in traditional societies where profits are to be shared by larger kinship groups. Finally, the activities of group members can take the form of group or individual production or a combination of these: individual operation but sharing of common facilities, joint input-purchasing and/or marketing.

Although the participatory approach has certainly not a narrow focus, it is specifically meant for the economic and social development of the rural poor and thus does not cover in a strict sense wider forms of people's participation such as community participation. The latter refer to the involvement of the entire population of a village or community in the planning and implementation of a project and is thus not target-group specific. Such “holistic” forms of people's participation are certainly required for area-based operations which affect all inhabitants like environmental protection, soil and water conservation, provision of physical, economic and social infrastructures (civil works) and irrigation, sanitation and health schemes. It is also clear that the groups formed under the participatory project approach can considerably facilitate and widen community participation.

### 3.2 Arguments for Beneficiary Participation

Various foregoing points highlight that the participatory approach gives advantages to the rural poor as well as to the agencies which implement or support a project. The main reasons are the following:

- 1) Coverage: to reach and involve on a wider scale the disadvantaged rural people through institution building, that is the creation of adequate “receiving” systems at grassroot level as well as of corresponding “delivery” systems (see Section 5.1);
- 2) Efficiency: to obtain a cost-efficient design and implementation of a project. The beneficiaries will contribute more in project planning and implementation by providing ideas, manpower, labour and/or other resources (cost-sharing). Consequently project resources are used more efficiently;
- 3) Effectiveness: the people involved obtain a say in the determination of objectives and actions, and assist in various operations like project administration, monitoring and evaluation. They obtain also more opportunities to contribute their indigenous knowledge of the local conditions to the project and thus facilitate the diagnosis of environmental, social and institutional constraints as well as the search for viable solutions;
- 4) Adoption of innovations; the beneficiaries can develop greater responsiveness to new methods of production, technologies as well as services offered;
- 5) Production: higher production levels can be achieved while ensuring more equitable distribution of benefits;
- 6) Successful results: more and better outputs and impact are obtained in a project and thus longer-term viability and more solid sustainability. By stressing decentralization, democratic processes of decision-making and self-help, various key problems can be better solved, including recurrent costs, cost-sharing with beneficiaries as well as operation and maintenance;
- 7) Self-reliance: this broad, ultimate objective embraces all the positive effects of genuine participation by rural people. Self-reliance demolishes their over-dependency attitudes, enhances awareness, confidence and self-initiative. It also increases people's control over resources and development efforts, enables them to plan and implement and also to participate in development efforts at levels beyond their community;



- 8) Supporting institutions like UN agencies and NGOs can fulfil better their mandates: e.g. for FAO the WCARRD mandate.

### 3.3 Constraints of Participation

These are mainly the following:

- 1) The political conditions/power structures of the country and project area. These may vary in different forms and degrees from a decentralized, laissez-faire and/or free enterprise system to a fully centralized, strongly planned and/or controlled one. They may vary furthermore in regard to their degree of stability. Accordingly, widely differing situations can be found ranging from full support of the central and/or local government to participation of the poor to indifference and hostility versus this approach.

In fact, in a number of countries the urban and rural elites, particularly the latifundists and landlords, influence the political and administrative structures to such an extent that any policy to encourage genuine participation of rural people is either inexistent, or strongly opposed, and/or by various means neutralized or strained. For example, by prohibitive legislation, exasperating government control, alleged unavailability of funds and/or personnel and so on (see also Sections 6.5 and 6.6).

- 2) Legislative obstacles. In various countries freedom of association either does not exist or only formally; in other ones where the right of association, including of small farmers, labourers, etc., is recognized in the laws, the labour legislation is inadequate and/or scarcely applied in practice. Under the influence of vested interest groups the laws might further be interpreted and/or applied in such ways that (part of) the rural poor are prevented from organizing themselves.
- 3) Administrative obstacles. Centralized public administrative systems that control decision-making, resource allocation and information, may ostracize participation. The staff in such structures frequently disdain people's involvement. Also complex, bureaucratic procedures impede genuine participation as well as one-way, top-down planning performed solely by professionals; the same can be said of rural development planning done in urban centres and hardly based on need assessments in the field.
- 4) Socio-cultural impediments. A serious obstacle is the widespread mentality of dependence, sense of frustration as well as distrust in officials among low income rural people. The latter are frequently dominated by local elites to whom they have to leave key decision-making. All this forms part of the "culture of poverty" of the silent, excluded majority for whom survival is the sole aspiration. Furthermore, the poor form a heterogeneous "group": there are various categories with class, caste, tribal and religious differences and also with different interests, needs, access to resources as well as potentials. Accordingly, also participation must be planned and promoted according to different local contexts and factions.
- 5) Other impediments are: the isolation and scattered habitat of the poor, their low levels of living and heavy workloads especially of the women. Furthermore, their weak health conditions, low level of education and of exposure to non-local information, ignorance of their rights to self-organize groups and lack of leaders and know-how to move in this direction in order to promote their interests.

Some constraints of implementing and supporting agencies are the following:

- 1) There is often pressure from the side of implementing institutions and/or of supporting government or donor agencies to produce visible results quickly: quantity of funding and results prevails over quality. Unlike tangible physical infrastructure works and production outputs, most of the arduous participation efforts remain less visible and measurable as they have to focus - prior to concrete productive actions - principally on training, changes of attitudes and fostering of awareness of local needs and potentials.
- 2) Many implementing agencies are designed for centralized planning, decision-making and implementation; such set-ups do not favour participation.
- 3) There is usually lack of skilled staff to promote participation. It is indeed often problematical to find well-motivated and capable animators for group formation and action. And yet the latter are the key women and men to make a project successful as they live and work directly with the intended beneficiaries. Most participatory projects obtained, however, eventually well-performing group promoters (in various instances from the extension field staff), also through effective training (see Section 10).

Most of the above listed possible obstacles can gradually be overcome as evidenced by practice in many areas. However, the list indicates that for determining the form and degree of beneficiary participation the environmental, economic and social context of a project must be fully taken into account: participation is a site- and project-specific process. Moreover, starting such a process may provoke various predictable but also unanticipated reactions on the side of the intended beneficiaries and also of the local officials and better-off who may see it as threatening their vested interests (see Sections 6.5 and 6.6).

#### **4. STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE PARTICIPATION**

##### 4.1 Constraints

The main constraint of genuine participation is the political will to promote this in a country or project area (see Sections 1.5 and 1.6). This basic problem can be overcome by means of various strategies at international, national and lower levels. The strategies should all aim at informing, sensitizing and motivating various categories of key persons in one way or another involved with rural development efforts such as: (a) politicians and governmental policy- and decision-makers; (b) the top and other staff of government, UN and donor agencies as well as of NGOs; (c) the (field) staff of development projects; and (d) the elites and better-off people in rural areas.

The practical outcome of the strategies must be that politicians, officials, experts and elites become motivated to accept, support or at least tolerate effective forms of participation of the disadvantaged rural people in development. For this purpose it will be of course very useful to demonstrate the experience and successful results of (pilot) participatory projects like the FAO/PPP and their great benefits for the rural poor (see Section 14.1).

Various possible strategies, of which some are described in a recent PPP review paper (McKone: 1989), follow briefly hereunder. It is difficult for certain strategies to indicate precisely who should do what, when and in which way. For each strategy this has to be

planned according to its concrete scope, target groups, location, timing, technical collaborators and materials needed, costs, etc.

#### 4.2 Sensitizing Governments

Politicians, top decision-makers and planners, etc. need to be convinced of the necessity to incorporate participation in rural development policies, plans and programmes. This can be and is done in many ways e.g. by:

- 1) organizing ad-hoc conferences, seminars and missions. These are so far occasionally arranged by UN bodies, donors and NGOs. An example of an interesting huge effort with wide impact is the FAO WCARRD Conference and its on-going follow-up Plan of Action under which so far several missions and other activities were carried out;
- 2) inviting key government officials in field trips and workshops of participatory projects and also in inter-country workshops dealing with participation issues;
- 3) using mass-media and audio-visuals: distributing and showing of concise promotional materials: pamphlets, slide shows, films, etc.

A number of actions indicated in the following strategies will also have direct or indirect sensitizing effects on top government officials.

#### 4.3 Promoting policy dialogues

Promoting dialogue between key officials, planners and decision-makers of national and international development agencies at country level is important. The latter may include one or more UN bodies, international and regional development banks, donors, aid consortia and voluntary organizations such as international NGOs. They could encourage, organize and/or participate in policy dialogues with selected governmental agencies in order to obtain rural poor-oriented economic and social policies and institutional arrangements that are required for participatory projects. The dialogues may indicate the need for a differential strategy as no government is monolithic: certain government agencies may be participatory development-oriented while others may be still rather top-down, centralized, bureaucratic and/or technocratic.

The most important policies required for participatory development regard appropriate legislation for rural people's organizations including full freedom of association or group formation as well as reorientation of the delivery system, in particular the extension services, towards the needs of the rural weak.

Other special policies required include full integration of women in development, decentralization of decision-making, planning and resource allocation, rural poor-oriented input supply, extension, credit and marketing, enhancing non-agricultural income-generating activities as well as just fiscal and pricing systems.

In sum, projects and programmes cannot be implemented with effective (full) beneficiary participation before a minimum of certain favourable national policies have been (or are likely to be) adopted in a country.

In order to obtain strength in policy dialogues, the participation and concerted action is needed of all national and international development organizations which strive to combat rural poverty. In fact, international agencies as well as NGOs can influence a country's policy and institutional framework for effective poverty-alleviation.

Finally, the strategy of promoting dialogues between government agencies and NGOs appears to be particularly useful. FAO, UNDP and other UN agencies are now becoming quite active in this direction; they have also created special units for dealing with NGOs.

#### 4.4 Promoting the planning and implementation of participation in larger-scale projects

In a project cycle various institutions are involved such as one or more government agencies, international development, funding and/or donor organizations, NGOs, etc. The lack of understanding, sympathy and/or experience regarding participatory projects of one or more of these cooperating institutions often makes it particularly difficult to render a project or at least some of its components participatory. The institutions involved may have different, e.g. predominantly macro-economic and/or technocratic views and approaches regarding rural development efforts. Furthermore, experience on how to attain effective beneficiary participation may be lacking as the country's projects are either not participatory or do not properly monitor and evaluate beneficiary participation.

There is thus a wide scope for strategies to motivate officials, project planners and implementers through, among others, the following methods:

- meetings and field workshops at various levels
- periodic informal exchanges of views
- briefing sessions and documents on participatory development
- the inclusion of participatory experts in mission teams
- incorporation of participatory issues in the terms of reference of identification, preparation, appraisal and evaluation missions
- provision of background materials on on-going participatory projects and/or visits to the latter, if any, in a country.

A direct result of the above actions will be that project planners become convinced that participation must be included from the very beginning in all stages of the project cycle. This implies in practice, that they see urgent necessity and importance to start with the intended beneficiaries on their needs and desires by means of pre-project identification or reconnaissance missions (see Section 5.3.2 and 16.2).

#### 4.5 Systematic sensitization

The sensitization of the traditional, administrative and other influential leaders at project area and higher levels (see Section 6.6).

Practice shows that the support of village leaders is crucial for a participatory project. Many villages, especially in Africa, still form very traditional communities which have a closely knit social system of clans, lineages and extended families. The indigenous chiefs are powerful and “their” poor people over-dependent upon them (see also Section 6.6). Will such

chiefs give their consent and support for a project specifically designed for the poorer people? The required support, advice and assistance from the elites is indeed often important. In many cases, local chiefs and elders are prepared to support project actions for rural poor groups as well as for the delivery of the required services and facilities to these groups.

In order to obtain their support, the local traditional, administrative and other influential leaders in the project's entire action area have to be systematically sensitized and motivated beforehand on the participatory project approach through meetings, initiation workshops and other actions. The local leaders have to become convinced that it is in their own short- and long-term interest to support the project: the latter yields viz. economic and social benefits also to the better-off inhabitants. The sensitization campaign(s) must be project area-wide so that it becomes more difficult for non-favourable village and other leaders to oppose the project's special attention to disadvantaged villagers.

Finally, the sensitization of administrative and local leaders involved in a project is also realized through on-going participatory training (see Section 11.5).

#### 4.6 Increasing support

The increasing support of donors and development agencies and banks for participatory projects. Efforts to obtain this support aim mainly at the following:

- to convince donors and agencies which support participatory projects, to continue this assistance until they yield sufficient successful results for demonstration to governments (see also Section 15.1);
- to insist that donors, development banks and agencies will only support a project if a participatory approach is incorporated in it;
- to attain more assistance to developing countries for participatory projects on a large scale up to the point of creating a critical mass.

For these wide scopes donors as well as international development agencies and banks should participate in, initiate and/or organize various of the earlier proposed promotional actions such as policy dialogues, seminars, field workshops and visits to participatory projects. It will be crucial to show the actions and results of participatory projects also by means of good monitoring and evaluation systems. Moreover, case studies on the benefits and cost-effectiveness of participatory projects (see also Section 14) as well as promotional materials will be quite helpful.

Other actions include: studies on the policies and commitments of donors and development banks as well as identification of opportunities for assistance.

#### Actions to be taken by FAO and other UN Agencies

Apart from the active involvement in most of the aforementioned strategies, other very much required actions are that FAO and other UN agencies:

- 1) sensitize on participatory development methods their top officials, the staff of technical divisions as well as mission and project teams;

- 2) strengthen, help, expand and multiply existing participatory projects (see Section 15) and promote new ones including on a pilot basis;
- 3) build up a strong support unit for participatory projects and promotional actions, also to assist technical divisions and to increase the interest of donors to support such projects;
- 4) increase the limited manpower as well as technical and financial resources for participatory development in the technical and operational divisions of aid agencies;
- 5) ask each technical division to review its projects in the light of participatory principles and also to refine the participatory methods in its subject matter areas;
- 6) promote networking amongst UN and other agencies, banks and NGOs which are involved in participatory development projects as well as those which could be involved in such efforts in order to exchange experience, expertise and audio-visuals. Furthermore to organize workshops and field visits and share promotional literature. Periodic meetings of cooperating agencies, donors and project field staff are particularly useful.

Point (4) above needs special attention and action as illustrated in the following:

“There is a limited staff in FAO of specialists who have a wide experience not only of the PPP but of many other participatory forms of development including cooperatives, small farmer organizations and agricultural trade unions. They also increasingly maintain contact and dialogue with a wide range of NGOs. These are supported directly by a core group of specialist consultants with a wide knowledge of participatory development and of FAO's programmes and procedures. A second source of human resources may be found in the cadre of PPP project field staff who have been trained during the implementation of the PPP programme. Many of these trained people are actively working with PPP projects and can be called upon to share their knowledge with others. The third important human resource is resident amongst FAO's staff in various Technical Divisions, and which has not yet been fully mobilized. These are specialists in all the different sectors and disciplines that are normally involved in the large-scale projects and some experts are also involved in participatory projects (see Appendix 1).

Financial resources are in short supply and will have to be increased if FAO is to make use of the accumulated rich experience of the last ten years of PPP. Without sufficient support for a new strategy to further promote participation in agricultural and rural development, FAO will fall behind other UN agencies that are actively involved and will have difficulty in meeting requests from governments and donors for technical assistance involving a participatory approach” (McKone: 1989).

## **5. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT AREAS, BENEFICIARIES AND THEIR NEEDS**

### 5.1 Identification of Project Areas

For an efficient development strategy poor and “better-off” rural areas need to be demarcated in a country. An area is poor when it presents (part of) the following conditions: poor physical resources, lack of physical infrastructure, of trained manpower and of basic services and facilities, inequitable land tenure conditions, production levels below potentials, administrative backwardness, shortage of on- and especially off-farm opportunities,

institutionalized forms of oppression and exploitation of the poor, and/or lack of people's participation in local decision-making.

For the identification of poor areas, data regarding some of the above key criteria may be obtained by means of rapid rural appraisal methods, while information on other ones is mostly hard to collect in a relatively short time span. Other reasonably precise criteria could be applied more quickly in most countries. For example: areas affected by floods, salinity, erosion, desertification, un- and under-employment, relative inaccessibility, areas with sizeable numbers of poor tribal people and/or refugees, zones with strong out-migration, etc.

Additional preferential criteria for starting participatory projects are e.g. areas: a) with above average concentration of one or more categories of poor rural people; b) with a sufficient number of actual and/or potential viable economic activities and also market outlets; c) areas in which the essential services and facilities are present and can be delivered to the low-income people; (This is to ensure that the beneficiary groups once formed, will have a fair chance to have their production and other requirements met in time.); d) areas where these groups can have an influence and multiplication effort on existing projects; and e) which are not too atypical. i.e. have such specific hard geographic, economic, social and/or political (unrest) conditions that a participatory project is likely to become unsuccessful, at least for the time being.

For the identification of initial action areas consisting of one or more village clusters where project field actions for beneficiary participation are to be started, exploratory socio-economic surveys are needed (see Sections 10.3 and 12). Such surveys are to be carried out by well-selected action-research experts (ideally together with the participation agents: see Section 9) on participatory lines. It is very desirable to involve these agents as early as possible in this operation, in particular in the search for suitable village-clusters and within these core villages where the field actions will start.

The village-cluster approach to be adopted in most cases implies that the project's participation activities will start in one or two selected core villages and gradually be spread to the surrounding villages. The advantages of the village-cluster approach include:

- 1) Better handling of the guidance, coordination and supervision of the project activities;
- 2) Rapid spread effect of the project's impact from the pioneer villages to the adjacent ones;
- 3) When the rural poor production groups are located close to each other, they can form a suitable type of federation which will give them more bargaining power (see Section 7.3);
- 4) A cluster enhances economies of scale: it facilitates the provision of input supply, processing and marketing points and facilities, as well as other (health, education, etc.) services.

A final point: the misconception that in poor areas all people are poor is based on insufficient distinction between area and family level poverty. Area-wide or all farmers development approaches are to be applied for certain area-based project components like the provision of physical, economic and/or social infrastructures and water and soil conservation (see also Section 3.1). For other components specifically meant for benefiting the poor people, such as (special) delivery of inputs, credit, training, etc., the identification of the "target group" (the

low-income people: see the next sub-section) and the application of a feasible participatory approach remains a must.

### Identification and Classification of Poor Rural People

Definition of poor rural people: all people who a) live in a rural area at or below subsistence level; b) are dedicated full- or part-time to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, handicrafts and/or related occupations; and c) are over-dependent for work and livelihood on others with more power and means of production.

The main categories of rural poor people are: small and marginal owner-farmers, tenants, sharecroppers, landless labourers, small fishermen, forestry workers, and part of the rural artisans, of tribal people as well as of nomads and refugees. The poor women can belong to any of these categories. Various combinations of the above categories are frequently found.

Given the operational importance of the topic, two other, rather similar ways to classify the rural people are given below:

The rural population consists broadly of five categories: 1) the rich having an abundance of means of production; 2) the middle class having secure and sufficient access to income and assets; 3) subsistence producers having some access to income and assets; 4) the very poor having very little access (labourers, hawkers, etc.); and 5) the destitutes including the handicapped: those who are not able for whatever reason to help themselves (Uphoff: 1987).

The disadvantaged people are also classified as follows: 1) the marginally poor (small farmers), 2) the poor (small farmers-part-time labourers), 3) the very poor (labourers and part-time micro farmer-labourers) and 4) the destitutes (those without an economic base).

The first two categories can be more easily encouraged to self-organization as they have some assets, and can thus profit better from gainful group activities also by means of credit. Instead, the very poor being mainly labourers often migrate for work, have no economic activities of their own, are more indebted and more dependent on their better-off employers (Perera: 88. op. cit.).

Most participatory projects have a specific target group and attempt to benefit only or mainly the rural poor. However, given the various types of poor people and the gradations of their poverty, a project may benefit the subsistence poor and only part of the very poor and the destitutes. In fact, in some projects the subsistence poor form initially a reference group for the “lowest-level” ones who cannot take any risk and certainly not before they see concrete local examples. A project though meant for all categories of the poor, need thus not necessarily start with the most needy people (the very poor and destitutes) who may be attracted and stimulated to engage in development actions by the subsistence poor only in successive phases.

### How to identify poor people

For the identification of the intended beneficiaries firstly available data on the rural population of the country and project area(s) are to be gathered. This could include data on population, land tenure, economic activities, income, (un- and under-) employment, housing, etc. Many of these data are required anyhow for a development project. With this information an overall direct assessment can be obtained of the numbers, proportions, etc., of the various



categories of poor and non-poor farmers, fishermen, artisans et alia when taking into account the following:

- 1) all landless farmers belong to the poor; some exceptions are however, e.g. larger scale tenants or above poverty line regular wage earners;
- 2) the identification of landowning poor is more problematic. Statistical criteria, like area of land owned (all who own less than, say, two or three acres are poor) are notoriously relative and arbitrary as farm productivity on such plots varies greatly. Moreover, land tenure data are frequently lacking or deficient.

For the sorting out of the poor, specific criteria need to be developed as poverty is an area-specific variable and refers to specific economic and social realities. Possible criteria are:

- 1) availability or less of production assets of a family such as types and amounts of arable land, land tenure conditions, labour, animals, equipments, tools, etc.;
- 2) available skills in the family;
- 3) on- and off-farm family income (including of emigrants);
- 4) degree of indebtedness of a family;
- 5) housing conditions; building materials, available facilities, room occupation rates, etc.;
- 6) nutrition: calories intake, nutritional status of children below 5 years, consumption of certain types of food, etc.;
- 7) level of education for women and men: literacy, school enrolment rates, etc.;
- 8) health conditions in a family; presence of handicapped dependents, incidence of diseases, etc.;
- 9) economic dependency rates within the households;
- 10) lack of participation of the poor in formal and informal rural people's organizations and in local decision-making.

Most of the above data are usually available at national, and less at lower levels (no breakdowns).

Examples of identification criteria used in various participatory projects are:

- 1) (near) landless labourers;
- 2) small farmers, tenants and sharecroppers operating plots of land below the project area average, e.g. 3 or 5 acres;
- 3) small, traditional fishermen and artisans;
- 4) the people as under (2) and (3) who largely lack access to water, inputs, credit, markets, education, training, extension and other services (the “rural excluded”);
- 5) the total annual family income is below the average in the area concerned;
- 6) the families' main source of income is agriculture, fishing and allied activities and the family members are the principal source of labour.

The above criteria need to be specified and operationalized for each project area. Local informants and particularly the poor can be involved in participatory identification when needed, that is they may assist in applying the selection criteria and reach agreement among themselves to solve doubtful cases as to who belongs to the poor. In many areas entire categories of people such as the landless, sharecroppers, small artisans, traditional fishermen, tribal and low class/caste families belong to the poor, whereas the non-poor like big and middle level farmers and fishermen, merchants, money lenders, etc. form a well-known minority that easily can be identified.

The participation of the non-poor in a project. When considering the basic question how the rural poor can be “sorted out” in “communal” or tribal societies, it should be reminded that the identification of low-income families in participatory projects concerns only their eligibility for rural poor group membership and for certain services and facilities provided by a project. Consequently the non-poor inhabitants of a project area are to be systematically informed on the objectives and actions of a project and are furthermore to be invited very much - also by the groups -to participate in a project for the provision of advice and moral and other support to the disadvantaged people. For example, in local implementation or coordination committees as well as in various activities such as crop and livestock production, training, extension, research and/or evaluation.

Furthermore, as various projects show, most better-off locals find it below their status to participate directly as members in rural poor groups. However, in some projects exceptions concerning the participation of non-poor locals in groups have to be and are made (see Section 6.3, point c).

Finally, each project must focus specifically on the identification of the conditions, needs, resources and capabilities of the various categories of disadvantaged women (see Section 1.5).

Practice shows that in various projects the application of adequate selection criteria for project areas and in particular for specific target populations is neglected, deficient or watered down. This is mainly due to the following: 1) insufficient information on the basic concepts and methods of participatory rural development; 2) political pressures to include certain categories of better-off people; 3) failure to distinguish between zonal and individual/family poverty; 4) the desire of project and supporting/ donor staff to see quick results; and 5) the influence of local leaders in the selection of project areas and target groups.

### 5.3 Identification of Development Needs and Aspirations of the Intended Beneficiaries

#### Area and Beneficiary Needs

On-going need-assessment is essential to obtain the active participation of the people in project preparation and implementation. For this purpose area and beneficiary needs are to be distinguished. Area needs are related to area poverty encompassing the needs of an entire territory and of all its inhabitants. For example: more and/or better physical resources, trained manpower, economic and social infrastructure, services and facilities. For meeting such needs an area-wide or “all rural people” development approach is required.

Beneficiary needs are directly related to group and family level poverty. They can be divided into physiological (food, clothing, housing, health), psychological (e.g. safety, self-realization), economic (employment, income), and socio-cultural needs (e.g. group belonging,

education, recreation and social recognition). Needs have a certain hierarchy: some are for bare survival, some for sustained and other for dignified human survival. Beneficiary needs are interrelated with one another and also with certain area needs.

Apart from needs, people also have aspirations and expectations: their aspirations may, however, not coincide with their needs as perceived by outsiders. The rural poor are in general quite able to bring up the nature and priority order of their felt needs and desires.

#### How to Identify Beneficiary Needs

Organize project cycle surveys and missions in a participatory way, that is, consult on the needs and desires of as many future project participants as possible, in particular the intended beneficiaries and other village level informants.

The best way is to establish or send to the area prior to project identification missions, or reconnaissance work teams for say 2-3 months (see Section 16.2).

During their field surveys, the team members will cover key topics such as on-going development efforts, felt needs, aspirations and constraints (for further details see Section 16.3). Information is also to be gathered by means of structural observation and scrutiny of relevant, locally available documentation.

The need-assessment should focus on the identification of priority needs as perceived by the low-income people concerned. This is particularly necessary for the promotion of rural poor groups which are best formed around felt priority needs (see Section 6.3).

The information collected, though sufficient to plan a flexible project framework, will still be provisional and usually in part suspect: more reliable and in-depth data can only be gathered by field workers who work with the people for longer periods during project implementation and gain their confidence.

Needs identification, or the search for ways to satisfy intended beneficiary needs, form part of an on-going participatory process and can be done more systematically and effectively when groups and organizations involved in a project bring up their felt needs, among other to perform gainful activities, whereas the delivery staff hopefully endeavours to meet these necessities. Group Promoters are to be trained to help the disadvantaged people to understand their own situations, to win their confidence by closely working with them and getting the poor to articulate their needs. The Group Promoters will also learn to stimulate the delivery staff to help meet these necessities (see also Section 10.1).

## **6. THE FORMATION OF RURAL POOR GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS**

### Need for a Receiving-cum-Delivery System

The existing groups in a certain project area may be farmer associations, cooperatives, women's, youth and village groups, trade unions and other formal and informal groups. In many cases traditional tribal, nomadic, clan or community groupings can be effective vehicles for participatory development. In other cases, these may be so strongly dominated by land-

owners, money lenders and other influential people and elites that new participatory groupings initiated and run by the under-privileged people themselves, are required for adequately involving one or more categories of the poor in self-development efforts.

The existing or newly formed groups involved in a project are to be firstly starting bases for economic and social self-help activities, secondly receiving mechanisms for services, facilities and inputs at the local level, and thirdly instruments for participation in local decision-making and for increasing the bargaining power of the under-privileged through their “pressure groups.”

Through such a receiving system the rural population can mobilize their own resources and be “reached” effectively by any development agency for the delivery of services and facilities to support economic and socio-cultural activities. The economic activities which aim at income and employment generation, could include crops, livestock, fishery, public works, irrigation, agro-processing, transport, marketing, handicrafts, and so on. The socio-cultural activities may regard the fields of health, sanitation, nutrition, education, training, recreation, etc.

The term “Receiving System” is, however, not fully adequate. Firstly, it could give the wrong connotation that the groups and organizations are mainly conceived as passive recipients of services and facilities (likewise also the term beneficiary has a quite passive connotation). Instead, they are to be regarded in the first place as starting bases for self-development efforts to be rendered more fruitful by the effective utilization of the services received, and moreover as instruments for participation in local decision-making.

Secondly, the rural poor are, also through their groups, not only receivers but also deliverers among others, of new ideas, methods and practices for self-development based on their previous experience. They are also deliverers of labour and other means of production as well as of many types of agricultural and other products.

The delivery system consists of government agencies and other (NGO) organizations that provide services and facilities to the intended beneficiaries.

Most conventional projects give attention only to the building of a delivery system from the centre and down to the village and not or scarcely to the creation of an adequate receiving system. A delivery system may be transformed so that it becomes geared to the real needs and aspirations of the rural poor people. A participatory receiving system should become an effective instrument in this transformation of the delivery system. Through mutual adaptation both systems will form jointly an appropriate local receiving-cum-delivery system (see Figure 1 in Appendix 4).

## 6.2 Inventarization of Existing Groups and Organizations

For the planning of beneficiary participation, it is indispensable to identify existing forms of local people's organizations. As indicated earlier, some of the existing groups and organizations may be traditional and some others are “imported” and more modern such as farmer associations, cooperatives, rural workers' organizations or trade unions. The question is whether they do represent the target group. This is only the case when an organization supports in its mandate and activities specifically (part of) the rural poor. Larger farmers' associations and cooperatives have often elite-dominated structures and the involvement of

such well established organizations in participatory projects must be considered with great caution.

For the inventory of existing groups and organizations a distinction has to be made between standard and participatory organizations. The former, usually formal organizations (among others, most cooperatives and farmer associations), are set up, managed or controlled by outside agencies, hierarchical leadership, employed managers and/or other elites. Participatory groups and organizations are started and run by low-income people themselves and have consequently a more active membership and better performance.

The inventory should be included in the project reconnaissance and identification stages (Sections 16.2 and 16.3) and cover all types of groups and organizations existing in a project area. For each organization information is to be collected on the variables mentioned in point (5), Section 16.3.4 on Social Feasibility Studies.

### 6.3 Self-Formation of Small Homogeneous Groups

In project areas where the above stocktaking indicates that participatory groups are lacking, it will be indispensable to promote their formation. This can be done either from scratch or from or within existing groups or organizations. The latter may be either traditional or formal ones like cooperatives. Informal smaller action groups could be formed within or from the large organizations for certain enterprises. Traditional African situations with customary or communal land agriculture may require location-specific approaches for small group formation.

In any case the basic prerequisites for the creation of groups from or within existing groups or larger organizations are, however, that the latter have objectives compatible with those of the participatory groups to be formed, are furthermore not dominated by the better-off, can promote the interests of the poor and lastly give sufficient autonomy to the groups for self-management.

Small homogeneous groups are to be formed by poor people themselves around certain starter income-raising activities. Essential group formation guidelines are:

- a) Viable income-raising group activities are to be identified before the formation of groups.
- b) The beneficiaries must themselves select the members, leaders, activities and rules of their groups. In other words, the groups should be really participatory. Each group selects its own members as they like on one or more of the following bases: adjacent farm lots and/or home plots, family ties, common (community) interests, friendships, religious affiliation, etc.; furthermore, willingness to accept mutual responsibility for group activities. This willingness may regard joining a nucleus enterprise, sharing production aids, possession of special skills or a pool of implements (among labourers) and so on.
- c) Composition: the groups should be homogeneous, that is, consist of members who 1) live under similar economic and social disadvantaged conditions and have close social affinity; 2) accept mutual responsibility and joint liability for self-help activities; and 3) trust each other to such an extent that none of them would dominate or exploit the group. The homogeneity of a group is to be based on these three factors and other ones like

gender, age, neighbourhood, and occupational affinity may be helpful but are not essential.

In certain projects a relative flexibility regarding the participation in groups may be allowed. As an exception and for good reasons based on the local social structure and culture, a project may allow that a group of rural poor includes also a better-off member (as done e.g. in the PPP Thailand). The latter should, however, identify with the poor and share their interests, her/his presence should enhance the attainment of the group objectives and also be acceptable to all other members. The non-poor member should, however, not hold a leadership position in the group.

The promotion of homogeneous rural poor groups is an indispensable core feature of a participatory project. This is because: (a) homogeneous groups facilitate effective communication which develops mutual trust, interest and concern and thus group cohesion and the bond to meet common needs, and (b) experience shows that in heterogeneous groups conflicts of interests are more likely to arise and one or more better-off members may capture the benefits, resulting in group failure.

Members of a group should thus belong to one or more categories of the rural poor who are willing to cooperate with each other on equal terms. A preliminary household survey (see Section 11) should indicate customary patterns of cooperation, preferred co-operators and group activities. The homogeneity of groups does of course not refer to all economic and social issues that concern the potential group members. Moreover, it does certainly not mean strengthening existing class, caste or clan biases. For example, a group of landless labourers may agree on land reform but disagree on irrigation, land use or marketing and the members may belong to different (rival) classes, clans, or political parties. A group of water users may agree on the distribution of water from an irrigation channel in order to make more efficient use of it, but the members may have divergent views on land reform or housing (Huizer: 1982).

- d) Size: the group should be compact, cohesive and flexible, and thus small. The size of the groups to be formed depends largely upon the numbers of farmers/fishermen who will engage in a joint activity and will accordingly benefit from a common source of production or from common facilities. For example, those who could be served by a common tubewell, or who could jointly bring milk to a common milk collection centre, or who could operate a joint processing unit or act as a joint labour team for rural works, etc. (Huizer: 1982). However, the groups should be compact and also flexible to allow free informal discussions and to perform economic activities on a shared basis. Experience shows that the optimal size is 8-15 members, otherwise sub-groups and/or tensions may arise more easily. Other reasons to start with small cohesive groups are that these facilitate communication and dialogue between the members, form optimal learning laboratories and are the necessary “bricks” to build later on well-functioning, larger groupings such as (pre-)cooperatives, associations or federations (see Section 7.3).

#### 6.4 Steps in the Process of Group Formation

These are the following:

- a) collection of relevant information on eligible households by means of household surveys (see Section 11);

- b) organization of informal meetings with prospective group members to discuss, among others, the purpose, methods of operation and benefits of the groups as well as possible group enterprises, joint means of production, etc.;
- c) the self-selection of possible group members: this includes decision-making on whether to form groups only with small-holders, tenants or landless, furthermore only with women or men, or to create mixed groups of women and men and/or small-holders and tenants, etc.;
- d) listing by the group promoters of potential group members and leaders, of possible group activities and required inputs; furthermore, distribution of membership cards or other symbols to the members of each group formed;
- e) group discussions regarding group liabilities, resources and needs as well as recording of the production activities and income of the group members;
- f) group members assign among themselves responsibilities and duties by consensus or formal voting. This includes the election of a chairperson, secretary and treasurer. The rotation of leadership positions is very recommendable as this offers opportunities to members for leadership training and minimizes domination of a group by a few members holding office for too long periods. It promotes also shared leadership;
- g) establishment of group rules including, among others, rules on compatibility of membership of other organizations, how to rotate group leadership functions, how to organize group credit and repayment, how to establish and use a group credit to ensure its repayment, how to establish and use a group savings fund and how to tackle possible land (tenancy) problems. Planning of the required meetings: where, when and with what agenda.

It is clear from the above steps that the formation of viable and stable groups requires patience and sufficient time: for this important process a period of two to six months is usually needed, depending upon the local circumstances. Both too quick formation (e.g. to obtain credit) as well as too much delay (which may kill the interest of the potential group members) should be avoided. When is a group really formed? When it is stable, that is, retains the majority of its members, holds regular meetings attended by most members, carries out beneficial activities and has accrued a reasonable amount of group savings.

#### 6.5 Incentives and Disincentives for Group Formation

Why should the rural poor form or join groups? For most outside development agencies the advantages of the group approach are by now evident (see Sections 2 and 6.1). The incentives for the poor themselves to plan and carry out group-wise development actions are of course situation and location-specific but derive in general from the following three main rural poor group functions.

- a) Groups are attractive starting bases for undertaking gainful economic and social self-help development activities. The members can pool together to varying extents their capabilities, experience, information, assets, labour and other resources and perform successfully certain profitable self-planned actions which cannot be carried out on an individual basis or with much more effort and risk and/or less profit.

The low-income people may also be attracted to groups as these provide new training opportunities, where they can learn from the group promoters and one another to

articulate, discuss and solve their problems, to plan, carry out and record joint enterprises, to keep accounts, etc. Furthermore, they may soon become aware of the advantages of economies of scale by sharing group-wise inputs and production aids. The rural people actually have long traditions of informal group actions and they need no special incentive once they see that they can cooperate in face-to-face groups which are more efficient, fruitful and conducive to their (self-)development. The basic stimulus for the poor to form or join groups is that these can (better) meet certain clearly identified priority needs and aspirations (see Section 4.3). Groups are best formed around priority needs as perceived by the intended beneficiaries, like better use of scarce land and water resources, and (thus) more and better crops and livestock, cheaper inputs, credit and saving, agro-processing, transport, marketing, etc., but also more training and know-how, better technology, education, sanitation, primary health care, housing and recreation.

- b) As explained in Section 6.1, groups are useful, if not indispensable receiving mechanisms for inputs, services and facilities provided by the delivery system to meet the needs of the poor. This is increasingly realized not only by the deliverers in the development agencies who want to reach and serve the poor in an efficient and cost-saving way, but also by the intended receivers and utilizers themselves who feel that individually they will remain out of reach and marginalized.
- c) For the rural poor groups are also attractive as instruments for participation in local decision-making, as indispensable means to gradually obtain bargaining power and to exert pressure to improve their lot. Through their self-run groups the poor become increasingly self-confident and recognized by their wider community and – as experience shows – may even be elected as representatives in local councils or other formal organizations.

The disincentives for group-action to be identified and tackled may be: (a) opposition of local power holders to rural poor organizations (see Section 3.3 and 6.6); ( b) lack of support of village leaders and influentials who feel that age-old patron-client relationships may become endangered; and/or (c) obstruction even by slightly less poor farmers/fishermen who do not accept that their labourers or servants build up group power.

Other disincentives derive from certain obstacles of the rural poor to form groups indicated in Section 3.3.1, such as: their generally weak health conditions, their low level of education and lack of organizational know-how, the bad image they normally have of larger, elite-run organizations, their geographic isolation and scattered settlement patterns and (thus) their low level of exposure to non-local information resulting in lack of critical awareness of their conditions.

## 6.6 Overcoming the opposition of local power holders to Rural Poor Organizations

In various countries and/or project areas, local and national level elites or power holders (political and religious leaders/authorities, landlords, traders, moneylenders, etc.), as well as slightly better-off groups of farmers or fishermen with different vested interests, may overtly or latently oppose any more stable grouping or organization of low-income rural workers (see also Section 3.3). This opposition stems usually from the strong drive of local and other elites to maintain their position and/or to continue their domination and/or exploitation of the poor rural workers, who frequently live in a state of semi serfdom. Most peasants live and work in extreme economic dependence upon bigger landowners, traders and middlemen and may fear



intimidation, manipulation, victimization, or expulsion from their land, etc., when involving in peasant organizations.

The widespread basic problems of antagonism between the better-off and underprivileged people can only be solved by well-dosed and steady strategies at national and lower levels as explained in Section 4.

## 7. GROUP AND INTER-GROUP ACTIVITIES

### 7.1 Group Activities

The project staff and in particular the participation agents (see Section 10), together with potential group members, line staff and ad-hoc experts including knowledgeable local farmers or fishermen, identify a range of possible common productive and other activities in the action area for which groups of disadvantaged people will be formed.

The types of group activities in a certain area depend of course upon the local economic, social and institutional potentials, furthermore upon the needs, desires and capabilities of each group formed as well as upon the design, objectives, staff and resources of a project. The many viable group activities carried out by beneficiary groups range widely but four broad types can be distinguished as follows:

- a) Direct income-raising activities: These may consist of improved and increased production in existing or of new enterprises in any economic (sub-)sector like agriculture, livestock, fishery, forestry, handicrafts, processing, transport, trading, marketing and so on. Practice shows hundreds of different group undertakings which yielded economic but also social benefits. The latter include more skills, risk-taking, group cohesion and eventually self-management. Some examples for illustration are:
  - intensification or improvement of various food and cash crops such as rice, plantains, pineapples, coco, yams, maize, pepper, oil seeds, cotton, vegetables, fruits and so on;
  - development of small-scale animal husbandry activities such as poultry, rabbit, duck, turkey, goat and sheep raising, bee-keeping and so on;
  - development of small-scale aquaculture (fish ponds), riverine fishing, etc.;
  - introduction or improvement of low-cost facilities for processing of produce such as rice, fruits, etc., and also for dairy and fish products;
  - introduction or improvement of low-cost, small-scale irrigation, drainage and/or anti-erosion systems;
  - development of low-cost storage, transport and marketing facilities
  - creation of supply points for inputs such as fertilizers, etc.;
  - establishment of utility stores for farming essentials, household articles, etc., as well as petty trading;
  - development of production and marketing of local handicrafts (handlooms, etc.), cottage industries, trades such as carpentry and blacksmithing, charcoal making, household utensils, production of local building materials and so on.

See also the Small Farmer Development Manual, Chapter 5 on Low-Cost Production through Group-Action, and Chapter 2, Section III, sub-section 4.7 on Productive Employment for the Landless (Appendix 3: Selected Bibliography).

- b) Income enhancing activities<sup>6</sup>: these include:
- cost reduction and income maximizing activities which aim at reducing production costs and/or obtaining better prices, e.g. bulk purchasing of inputs, group transport and/or marketing of products;
  - consumer savings: e.g. obtaining consumer goods at lower prices by joint purchasing;
  - social savings: reaching agreement through group pressure to cut expenditure on costly customs like ceremonies (weddings, funerals) but also on bad habits like unreasonable spending, drinking, gambling, etc.;
  - social insurance: group-wise protection against emergencies or calamities by means of group (welfare) funds or collective insurance arrangements so that group members do not become over-indebted.
- c) Production facilitating actions which create proper conditions for group production, e.g. action for enforcement of land reform laws, for consolidation of holdings for joint production, etc. See on such activities, e.g. The Small Farmer Development Manual, Chapter 7, “Land Reform as a Grassroot Production and Income-Raising Need”, op. cit.
- d) Socio-cultural group activities. Many groups feel the need for social and cultural activities. For example, in the field of health and sanitation (mother and child care, latrines, piped water, etc.), education (functional literacy courses, activities for school-going children and so on), family planning, folk-culture, theatre; village beautification (tree planting) and so on. In many areas there is an acute need for group actions aiming at better nutrition: adequate diet and food preparation, better food storage, proper distribution of food in the family, clean water supply, improved personal and environmental hygiene, utilization of biological waste (biogas), etc.

Many potential socio-cultural activities are suggested in the Small Farmer Development Manual (op. cit.). Chapter 5, “Small Farmer Action for Nutrition and a Better Life”.

Most projects emphasize, at least initially, direct production activities which strengthen the group's cohesion, management skills, and economic base. It is however important that each group identifies, chooses, plans, executes and evaluates as much as possible on its own a feasible activity and reaches self-reliance; the participation agent and other field staff should give guidance mainly in the initial stages and withdraw as soon as possible. Practice shows that the most preferred types of group activities are those that yield clear economic benefits and are based on the felt needs of the group members.

As indicated in section 11, in various cases small-scale feasibility studies could be needed for obtaining workable proposals. The latter should consider also existing (innovative) income-generating and other activities promoted by government or NGO agencies in the area. The identification of viable group (production) actions forms part of the on-going action-research e.g. from the household survey data collected a number of ideas/proposals may emerge.

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<sup>6</sup> See Uphoff, Norman, Collective Self-Help: A Strategy for Rural Development in Ghana, FAO/PPP Report, 1987, Accra.

The income-earning activities in particular for new or “young” groups should be low risk, based on local experience and low-cost, intermediate technology. They must furthermore yield quick, tangible returns and thus be of short duration: in most cases less than one year, so that groups become more motivated and encouraged for further action.

The activities can take the form of group or individual production or a combination of these such as individual operation but sharing of common facilities or joint input-purchasing and/or bulk marketing. Thus certain phases of productive activities may be done better jointly and other ones better individually. It is in the interest of the group members to act jointly when the (sub-) activities are more cost-effective and offer economies of scale.

Each group prepares a simple group production plan which includes: a) the socio-economic conditions, resources and problems of the participating households; b) the plan for the group undertaking including a schedule of operations; and c) possibly the plans for subsidiary on- or off-farm income-raising activities of individual members which may require some group help.

Some major constraints to carry out successfully income-raising activities are: insufficient, inadequate or too late delivery of inputs, lack of training of local field staff and group members in group dynamics and group enterprise management, lack of mobility (means of transport) to help groups in planning adequately their activities and insufficient consideration of the feasibility, cost-benefit and credit-worthiness of a group enterprise. For the provision of group credit, see Section 9.2.

Once a group has performed successfully its initial undertaking, it will undertake additional, more complex profitable activities. All necessary guidance and support for the groups is to be obtained from or through the group promoters who liaise the groups with the local delivery system.

An overall point is that there are two levels of management of group activities. One is strategic management whereby groups must anticipate the impact of occurrences external to them (e.g. new price policies or environmental damage like over-cropping or over-fishing). The other is operational management where groups deal with issues arising from their day to day operations. However, in particular for the latter type there is a great need for instructional manuals on group dynamics, group business management, monitoring and evaluation, savings/credit, etc. (see Section 11).<sup>7</sup>

When is a group mature? The indicators of group maturity and self-reliance are: (1) regular meetings with active participation of all group members; (2) savings accumulated and less dependence on credit; (3) self-sustenance through food production; (4) joint preparation of group production plans; (5) ability to handle inputs and supplies; (6) ability to market the produce profitably; (7) adequate profits and just distribution of these among the group members; (8) effective record keeping (see Section 13); (9) effective links with line agencies and NGOs; (10) involvement in social activities e.g. literacy classes, home management,

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<sup>7</sup> Beginning in 1994, FAO has published a series of field manuals on these topics: “The Group Promoter Resource Book” (1994); The Group Enterprise Resource Book (1995); The Inter-Group Resource Book (2001); and “The Group Savings Resource Book ” (2002), all of which are now available in all four FAO main languages: English, Spanish, French and Arabic and can be downloaded from the Internet at: [http://www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/sustdev/IN3\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/sustdev/IN3_en.htm) .

contributions to community development works, etc.; (11) number of activities successfully undertaken; (12) more women and youth participation; and (13) rotation of leadership.

## 7.2 Towards Federations of Groups

After one to two years well-performing groups may be encouraged to engage in inter-group activities, e.g. for joint input purchase, storage, marketing, processing, training, appropriate technology, etc., not only to obtain economies of scale, but also as a move towards inter-group associations or federations of say 20-25 groups at secondary level. The emphasis will be on functional associations for the economic and social emancipation of the rural weak. In the federations accountability to the primary groups should be maintained as a basic principle. A federation represents thus groups and is not an executive body.

Inter-group associations should have an educational orientation towards their member groups and become a source of technical assistance, economies of scale, managerial guidance and coordination. They can offer training to new groups and even help finance their activities from accumulated savings. Moreover they can serve as reference points and examples for new inter-group associations and eventually perform (part of) the functions of group promoters.

In most cases it is more advantageous and preferable to create multi-activity inter-group associations instead of single-activity ones (e.g. for one crop) in order to meet better certain common needs of the groups: e.g. training, information exchange, and more massive pressure on the delivery system.

The federations may be legalized as (pre-)cooperatives or associations in order to obtain more recognition, legal status and services and facilities.

The groups may also link themselves to participatory, rural poor-oriented cooperatives or other people's organizations, if any, while maintaining their necessary autonomy. It should be stressed here that the groups do not replace cooperatives and other village institutions: they will remain interest groups taking part in production programmes.

The federations of groups and/or linkages to existing organizations will not only facilitate the delivery of services and facilities, but also the consolidation of group plans into multi-group or federational plans to be matched with area and regional development plans through local coordination committees (see Section 8.2). In this way a two-way (bottom-up and top-bottom) planning process will be developed.

Through inter-group activities and federations of groups, the poor become increasingly self-confident and recognized by their wider community; they obtain organizational power and will eventually also be represented in local government bodies.

When groups become more self-propelling, the participation agents will gradually withdraw and become eventually redundant for these groups, which is a main indication for a successful participatory process. They can then give more attention to new groups and may also perform specific functions for associations of groups (see Section 10.5).

## **8. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION**

### **8.1 Institutions to be Involved**

For the active participation of the intended beneficiaries the project needs to involve relevant government institutions such as line departments, banks, training and research centres and/or women and youth councils. Furthermore also NGOs such as rural people's organizations (see Section 6.1), church-related development agencies, national federations of NGOs and/or small rural development-oriented NGOs. The inclusion of selected NGOs is of course important as they have usually more the confidence of the people, are less hierarchic and bureaucratic and provide services more expediently and timely.

Either NGOs or Governments or both can thus be project implementers. But whatever the case, emphasis on overall support by the government is to be guaranteed from the commencement of a project. The continued support of FAO and/or other aid agency is also needed.

Where the political climate is good, governments that are willing should implement a project. In other cases, NGOs with experience at the grassroots level should be allowed to implement it solely or in cooperation with one or more government agencies.

The selection of government bodies and/or NGOs depends naturally also upon the type of project and upon the capabilities and willingness of these agencies to provide the beneficiary groups with the required services and facilities. It should also be considered whether one or more of these organizations are able and prepared to second to the project some of their capable field workers (e.g. extensionists, social workers) as participation agents (see Section 10).

For the selection of training and/or socio-economic research centres (in or outside a university), it should be considered whether these institutions have genuine concern for disadvantaged people and can provide on an institutional or personal basis the necessary expertise for participatory training, action research and evaluation (see Sections 11 and 12).

For the selection of banks, see Section 9.3.

### **Coordination**

In order to obtain the required project support for the beneficiaries workable linking and coordination mechanisms are needed for obtaining effective policies, allocation of resources and delivery of services to meet the various needs of the groups. The main coordination mechanisms are explained hereunder.

Project Coordination or Participation Committee. At project area level this Committee is formed with representatives of: a) all relevant local agencies which deal with and (are to) serve the intended beneficiaries; b) the project staff, in particular the group promoters; c) the beneficiaries or their groups where these have been formed; and d) where opportune, selected local leaders. The Committee aims at promoting beneficiary participation and at solving related implementation problems, in particular the timely delivery of services and facilities to the rural poor groups.

The main functions of a participation (or coordinating) committee include: 1) to provide to the project staff the main orientations and guidelines for the planning, implementation and evaluation of beneficiary participation according to the basic project documents; 2) to help recruit and train the required project staff such as the participation agents (group promoters); 3) to promote effective two-way communication channels between low income groups in the project areas and supporting government and NGO officials at various levels; 4) to obtain the necessary training and support for the beneficiary groups from government and/or NGO bodies; 5) to help administer and control the project funds for group formation and action; 6) to promote the consolidation of the project's participatory actions and their multiplication in other areas of the country; and 7) to perform any other function that will enhance the success of the project.

Where a larger project has a coordinating committee, task force or the like for all project operations, the participation committee could be constituted as a sub-committee or even “coincide” with the larger coordinating committee.

Within the participation committee small technical committees could be created for e.g. the training (see Section 10.2), approval of group loans (see Section 8.5), and monitoring and evaluation.

A larger project may also have a special National Coordinating Committee or Task Force, or be supported by an existing National Committee for similar projects or efforts. It would be very desirable that also such a National Committee has a sub-committee or special task force to deal with participatory issues such as general policies, personnel, finance and other matters of national importance.

In the project itself there is a need to designate a preferably local staff member as the participation coordinator who is specifically encharged to support, coordinate and supervise all agents and operations concerned with beneficiary participation. He/she should be a member or possibly the chairperson of the specific participation (sub-) committee(s) at project area and national levels, brief periodically the members of these (sub-)committees and assist in the selection, training and guidance of the participation agents.

The required qualifications of the participation coordinator are: 1) acquaintance with grassroots realities and motivated to assist the poor; 2) experience in working with field agents such as extensionists and social workers; 3) experience with the operators of government and international bodies at various levels; 4) experience with organizing training activities; 5) academic degree or the equivalent in economics, social or agricultural science; and 6) good knowledge of the local language.

Need for flexible organizational set-ups: Though the above set-up is desirable, the coordination mechanisms may vary according to the conditions, possibilities and already existing coordination bodies of a country and project area as well as to the type of participatory project, e.g. one participation committee may sometimes replace the committees at national and/or lower levels. Moreover, for a project mainly involving government agencies a different coordination set-up may be required than for a project implemented mainly by one or more NGOs. For the latter type of project one or more small Task Forces (at national and/or at lower levels). including representatives of the NGOs concerned and possibly of the supporting government bodies, may (initially) be appropriate for project implementation.

Coordination of project support activities is to be foremost undertaken at the local level. Encouragement and support from national level is however, quite necessary to enhance the local level coordination.

Finally, delegation of responsibility to lower levels should be a disengagement process whereby most higher level functions are gradually delegated to lower levels, e.g. FAO to the implementing agency, which in turn delegates to the group promoters and/or the inter-group associations, and these to the groups.

## **9. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS<sup>8</sup>**

### **9.1 Project's Financial Arrangements**

The promotion of economic and financial self-reliance on the part of the rural poor (groups) and the re-direction of financial institutions towards the disadvantaged people requires that the project's financial arrangements of relevance to the beneficiaries contain the following major elements:

- 1) involvement of the rural poor groups for administering savings and credit.
- 2) Equal priority to credit activities and mobilization of savings to ensure both economic and financial self-reliance and increased production by the beneficiaries.
- 3) Social instead of physical collateral for group loans (see Section 9.2); this group guarantee is a major factor in loan security.
- 4) Placement of a Credit Guarantee Fund (CGF) with the participating banks as an additional security for its loans to the poor and as an incentive for its active collaboration (see Section 9.2).
- 5) Establishment of realistic interest rates on deposits and loans which are normal in the recipient country, in order to foster group financial self-reliance and ensure that the relatively high costs of the financial services (loan delivery and supervision, etc.) provided by participating institutions are adequately covered. Normal rates would also cushion the withdrawal shock when project support terminates. However, in situations where interest rates are too high for small farmers, it would be necessary to negotiate for lower rates.
- 6) Provision of financial (including savings) training for groups.
- 7) Establishment of group emergency funds and food banks as a group insurance system.
- 8) Planning with flexibility to suit the specific financial and institutional situation in each project area.

### **9.2 Group Savings and Loans**

Formal or informal group savings are to be encouraged from the outset because they: (a) strengthen the economic base of the groups and their capacity to increase production; (b)

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<sup>8</sup> Various elements in this chapter are adapted from: "Financing Development Activities of the Rural Poor - Guidelines for Action", by Paul Ojermark, FAO/PPP, Rome 1984 (draft).

discipline the minds of the group members and indicate their commitment to groups; (c) facilitate access to credit; (d) relieve dependency on moneylenders and avoid the danger of over-indebtedness; and (e) foster cooperative spirit and self-reliance.

Group activities should begin with the help of savings rather than credit. Savings may start as a group welfare fund created and controlled by the group itself. Certain rules for managing a group savings fund are necessary, e.g. the ceiling, interest rates and time periods of loans to persons in or outside the group. When a fund becomes sizeable, the group may act against new members. In such cases new members may be allowed access to the fund in proportion to their contribution to the group fund.

It is in most instances beneficial to encourage groups to open a savings account in a nearby bank so that they become familiar with the banking system and can obtain loans in proportion to their savings. In this way savings are linked to loans; they may even be a prerequisite to become eligible for (project) loans. The application of contractual savings - always after consultation with the beneficiaries - is another possibility. In this system a certain percentage (say 10-15%) of a group loan is credited to the group savings account.

A Credit Guarantee Fund (CGF) may be established in a local credit institution (or a suitable substitute like a cooperative, credit union or an NGO) in order to encourage this institution to provide group loans from all its available credit funds. The CGF should ideally thus not function as a revolving fund or form the basis of such a fund created as a special line of credit for low-income people. The credit institution provides loans to groups to finance the inputs for their income-raising activities according to their group plans. An adequate procedure is that the loans are examined and approved by a local Loan Appraisal Committee (see Section 9.6). The loans will be provided against group liability: each member is responsible for the repayment of the total group loan. In other words loans are given with social instead of physical collateral, and as indicated earlier, at locally prevailing and not preferential, lower interest rates.

A Guarantee Fund should be used in accordance with the project document. After the project terminates it needs to be used to finance the same or similar rural poor-oriented participatory projects.

One of the main problems of groups in obtaining a bank loan is the usually considerable time spent to reach a bank and its usually complex credit procedures. On the other hand, some of the main problems of the banks is scarce familiarity with group liability, insufficient savings of the groups, the bank's bad experience with repayment rates in past conventional credit schemes and high transaction costs for a sizeable number of small loans (which are however reduced by giving "package" or group loans).

Practice shows that repayment rates on loans given to the disadvantaged people with group liability are generally higher than those on normal loans to "bankable," non-poor locals. In cases where defaulting occurs, the groups should exert social pressure on defaulting members and not the participation agents who should never perform the roles of loan collectors and controllers.

In various countries, selected banks have convenient small farmer credit schemes which could be tailored to meet the required credit demands for the group activities.



Finally, it should be stressed that the small groups are promoted for self-reliant development and not merely for credit delivery. Loans can only be provided when the groups are cohesive and active and show sufficient self-initiative and capability to prepare production plans.

### 9.3 Selection of a Suitable Bank

The main criteria for the selection of a suitable bank are that the bank:

- 1) has a widespread network of branches in rural areas, in particular in or near the project areas;
- 2) is willing to provide group loans to the so-called unbankable low-income people with social instead of physical liability;
- 3) accepts to incur initially higher transaction costs to attract new clients;
- 4) is agreeable that part of its top and field staff receives training in key participatory development issues;
- 5) is able to provide services through mobile loan officers; and
- 6) has preferably experience in working with low-income rural people.

The establishment of linkages with suitable financial institutions in a project area is difficult and time-consuming as they have no or scarce experience with credit for the rural poor and usually a low level of financial consolidation. Evidence in various countries shows that rural poor groups can administer finance provided training is given to them according to well-defined area-specific guidelines. This role is particularly important where the beneficiary groups carry out jointly an income-raising activity, which requires more elaborate financial management.

In some countries the group savings approach is followed, while in others individual savings are emphasized and individual deposits accepted by the collaborating banking institution.

The initial credit recovery rates vary considerably between participatory projects, but are usually far beyond normal loan recovery rates. This is because loan security is provided partly or totally through social collateral as a replacement of physical collateral which the rural poor usually cannot provide.

The general tendency in participatory projects is to apply statutory or normal interest rates for group savings and credit. In some countries where the project itself operates the credit activities, a special interest structure has been developed ranging from interest free loans for tools to 25 percent interest (including transport and marketing costs) for repayments made in kind.

In any case, in projects where area-specific guidelines for the financial component of a project are absent, the financial training of both group promoters and beneficiaries is reportedly primarily of the ad-hoc, on-the-job type.

There are so far only a few instances of the formation of special group emergency funds and/or food banks for insurance and food security purposes. However, certain groups have retained a large proportion of the surplus generated from group production activities as collective savings or investments. These resources, which cannot be drawn upon for

individual purposes, could be used as emergency funds in case of accident, illness, death or crop failure of one or more group members. With current, unfavourable climatic conditions in many countries, the question of insurance coverage acquires added importance.

#### 9.4 Variety in the Design and Operation of the Financial Component

The differences in the design and operation of the financial component in various participatory projects reflects the necessary adjustment and flexibility in relation to local socio-economic conditions, as illustrated by the following examples.

Particularly at the beginning of the implementation of a participatory project in Ghana, the country suffered from extreme inflation and the shortage of foreign exchange. To facilitate project operations, the guarantee fund was increased and transferred into an Input-Import Fund held in convertible currency outside the country, while the Ghanaian Government allocated funds sufficient to cover most local currency costs. The collaborating bank receives the inputs, which are then distributed to the beneficiaries on credit. The price of the inputs in local currency is determined by an agreement between the government, the project and the bank.

In Sierra Leone, where a participatory project itself provides the required credit, a detailed system has been developed for provision of loans and their recovery in cash or kind. In Kenya credit has also been administered by a participatory project, while in Zambia this is done by cooperative organizations.

Other local level project-specific arrangements include group marketing of surplus in Ghana to bypass middlemen who previously provided usurious loans; the formulation of by-laws to regulate financial and other group operations in Sierra Leone; and preparations for forming local credit unions in Ghana and Lesotho.

The Nimba County Rural Development Project in Liberia has been able to base its local financial activities on a modified form of traditional savings and credit groups (“susu”), thus exemplifying an imaginative adjustment to the socio-economic environment.

In Zimbabwe the Savings Development Movement constitutes a genuine grassroot action, where local people - mainly women - organize themselves in savings clubs for financial self-reliance and self-help production purposes. This movement was found to have an impressively decentralized structure and self-propelling capacity rooted in the local social system and culture, making it an interesting example of local arrangements for the financial component of a participatory project. It is now planned to establish a Savings Development Bank to provide the clubs with safe access to savings deposit facilities and to utilize the savings mobilization of the clubs more effectively for rural development purposes of value to the clubs. The proposed bank structure appears to have an interesting and viable set-up that could provide an example to participatory projects, particularly in their expansion phase, of a large and growing number of groups with expanding savings and credit activities, and which show a considerable degree of financial self-reliance. The participation of savings club members in the design and operations should be structured in such a way that the benefits go primarily to members of the savings clubs, with less emphasis on creating bank surpluses for general rural development purposes. Moreover, club members' savings deposited in such a bank should not be required to cover all credit issued.

## 9.5 Specific Seminars

Selected rural banking institutions are to be sensitized, for example through specific seminars on participatory principles in general, and the feasibility of group-based rural finance operations for participatory projects in particular. The banks should be included to enter into collaboration with participatory projects also by the following means:

- 1) Full briefing about financial guidelines for participatory projects, including the benefits of the group approach.
- 2) Detailed information about the financial arrangements and achievements of relevant on-going participatory projects.
- 3) Channelling group savings to the prospective bank partner.
- 4) Encouraging credit repayment in cash to facilitate an increase in bank deposits.
- 5) In case a revolving fund should initially be necessary, the establishment of a revolving fund account with the bank should be given preference, with a view to transforming it as soon as possible into a fund in support of regular credit for rural poor groups from the bank. If no initial credit relationship with a bank is possible, the operation of the credit guarantee fund as a project revolving fund could be undertaken to show banks the feasibility of group credit.
- 6) Exposing bank officials to participatory project operations by inviting them to participate in field workshops and coordination committees.

## 9.6 Project Operations

Project operations for credit delivery at local level should not begin until the financial arrangements are organized satisfactorily. Clear criteria for credit eligibility, size and duration are to be worked out together with adequate procedures for assessing credit applications based on group production plans. Training should be given to project and bank staff as well as beneficiaries on the project-specific financial procedures.

A small Loan Approval or Credit Committee could be established in the Project Coordination or Participation Committee in order to give technical guidance to prepare group production plans and approve the required loans. The Credit Committee should include the concerned participation agent, extension worker, local bank branch manager and any other technical officer, as and when required.

## 9.7 Credit

Finally, credit from whatever source is essential for participatory development, but should not breed over-dependency on credit or constitute the main incentive for group formation. In order to avoid these risks in various projects groups become only eligible for credit after a certain period during which they show their capacity to form a cohesive group, to work with their own very small resources and to create a group fund from their (tiny) savings.

For further information on group loans and related issues, see the Small Farmer Development Manual, Chapter 2, Section 4.5 on “Total” and group-channelled credit; Chapter 3, Part IV on Funding the receiving/utilizing mechanism, and in particular Chapter 6, Section I, on Credit operations of grassroots groups.

## **10. PARTICIPATION AGENTS/GROUP PROMOTERS**

Participatory change agents may be designated as animators, facilitators, development activists, field action promoters, group organizers or motivators, etc. The terms participation agent and -as practice shows - group promoter are quite adequate and in many countries convenient: they are therefore used mostly in this guide.

### Roles

The group promoters are the key persons to render a participatory project successful. They assist the disadvantaged people in their action area:

- a) to identify viable economic and social group activities;
- b) to form small groups for these self-selected activities;
- c) to obtain - as liaison persons - from the delivery system the required training and support (credit, inputs, etc.) for the group activities; and
- d) to perform the necessary action-research and self-evaluation.

Group promoters are animators, enablers and catalysts of the groups (to be) formed and thus the pivotal grassroot workers for promoting a local receiving system (see Section 5). They work with and not only for the people and avoid leadership roles so that after their departure people are not left “orphanized”.

The tasks of group promoters are different from those of normal extension workers, for the following reasons: 1) government extension workers are responsible for all the people of a village or area, including the non-poor, whereas the group promoters are dedicated only or at least mainly to the disadvantaged people; 2) the group promoters have to live and work with the village people for two, three years whereafter they withdraw, whereas extension workers usually do not live with their target population and enjoy also a more permanent assignment; and 3) the group promoters are (or at least should be) mainly accountable to the rural poor groups, whereas extensionists respond to and are supervised by their government agency.

A group promoter is thus not a typical government official, teacher, welfare worker or leader

### 10.2 Selection

Group promoters should be chosen carefully: the principal qualifications required are:

- 1) experience in working with people and local organizations in rural areas and well-acquainted with the problems of the poor;
- 2) capable, motivated and committed to live, work at least two years with the poor in the field;
- 3) willing to leave any decision-making and leadership to the people, promoting among them attitudes of self-help and self-reliance;

- 4) familiar with the local language and culture; they should thus come preferably from similar rural areas in the same district or from the same ethnic or linguistic group, but not from the project area, in order to be able to better introduce new ideas for action to the people. However, in some cases group promoters can be and are recruited from and posted in their own village or zone of origin. Apart from cost savings, the advantage is that their experience and know-how could be utilized more easily also after withdrawal of a project;
- 5) desirable qualifications are: rural background, a minimum of secondary level education and experience in community or rural development as well as in such fields as social work, elementary economy or sociology, agriculture or extension.

There should be flexibility on the gender. Preference for men or women should be determined by the context. There should not be rigidity on the number of males and of females to be employed as group promoters in a project.

From the above roles and required qualifications of group promoters, it follows that their many-sided tasks require in practice a full-time availability and secondly that beneficiary participation can be promoted much more efficiently and with less cost by locally recruited staff.

In projects which unfortunately have no arrangements and sufficient funds to recruit full-time group promoters, the roles of the latter could be performed in part and, of course, with less impact, by ad-hoc trained project staff who have other technical duties. However, such staff should preferably also be local and their other tasks such that they are to be performed in the field in direct contact with the intended beneficiaries. It is moreover to be stressed that anyhow all project and local staff needs to be briefed and trained on-goingly on the participatory issues and operations of the project.

The search, selection, recruitment, training and guidance of group promoters are important operations in a participatory project. In order to find capable group promoters, which is often problematical, candidates must be recruited from wherever they are available in a country: government agencies, NGOs and/or otherwise. Each source of recruitment has advantages and disadvantages. Several participatory projects obtained well performing field workers from the government extension field staff. This increases project sustainability as the recurrent costs are lower, and may moreover enhance project expansion and multiplication.

In some countries, it is desirable to give preference to candidates with secondment prospects as they will expectedly continue to propagate the participatory approach after they return to their seconding agency. In this way the latter agencies will be sensitized and enabled to better serve the rural poor. Group promoters on secondment from government should be given their annual income increases and seniority promotions. Participation agents need, of course, very much specific initial and follow-up training especially in group dynamics, group enterprise management, savings/credit and other key topics (see Section 11).

### 10.3 Posting and Payment

In the project area(s) a number of village clusters are to be identified during project preparation (see Section 15.4). At least two group promoters (one female and one male) are to be assigned to each village cluster; the female group promoters will of course give special attention to women. Teams of husband-wife couples would be the most desirable field staff.

Ideally the male and female field workers should live in the action villages with the people for constant availability and guidance. Depending upon the local culture, unmarried female field workers may however, have to reside in a nearby centre. Each couple of group promoters starts to work in the core community of a village cluster.

Important is the image of group promoters amongst the locals in their action area. Their role should repeatedly be explained to all villagers and also shown in practice. Through their helpful spirit, kind attitudes, wise considerate manners and patient actions, they will gradually be regarded as animators and guides and not as typical top-down officials or aliens interfering with the local culture and living habits. It will be of primordial importance to build up gradually confidential friendship relationships in their action communities starting with the poor and thereafter with the less poor villagers: otherwise they could be regarded by the poor as being mainly on the side of the better-off.

It would also be strategic to ask the influential and other villagers prior to any action whether they really accept in their community the proposed outsiders as participation agents.

As group promoters have hard pioneer tasks and work often in the evenings and on non-working days when the poor are available for meetings, they should receive just payment: in various projects they receive e.g. a hardship allowance or the like on top of their usually low field worker salary. They should also obtain means of transport (motorbikes or bikes). The latter are best given “on purchase/lease”, that is the (motor) bikes become the property of the group promoters after they have paid them back to the project in say 24 monthly instalments. This guarantees better proper operation and maintenance.

#### 10.4 Expected Performance in Group Formation

For the planning of a beneficiary participation component, it can be assumed that in not too unfavourable circumstances, each of the group promoters can help the beneficiaries to organize themselves into a total of at least 11 groups (on the average 15 groups) over three years. The third year is in particular also needed for consolidation of all groups formed. Each group promoter will thus reach directly over three years some 150 households (taking a rather low average group size of 10 members) which means an involvement of at least 900 rural people (assuming an average household size of 6 persons).

Disengagement of group promoters. While a group promoter is promoting self-reliance of her/his groups, she/he is working towards self-redundancy in her/his action area, so that she/he can be useful elsewhere. Self-reliance can be promoted by: involving the group members in all activities so as to build their capabilities, developing leadership skills through training and rotation of leadership functions, encouraging group-to-group learning, teaching record keeping, helping to establish linkages and to build up savings, reducing visits to groups and ensuring the presence of one or more group members whenever she/he contacts the line agencies, banks, etc. Self-reliance may not always mean total disengagement of group promoters: the latter could be maintained by inter-group associations to perform certain specific functions (see Sections 10.5 and 7.2).

#### 10.5 Career Prospects

Many non-seconded, well-motivated group promoters feel the temporary character of their employment and the lack of career prospects as a serious problem. The participatory approach

implies a long term process and effort in any developing country (see Sections 2.5 and 15.1). Consequently, well-performing group promoters will most likely find opportunities and/or demand to continue working with the poor after their assignment with a project as exemplified below. Employment of group promoters on secondment is of course often preferable to ensure their career prospects.

- 1) The participatory project itself, once sufficiently successful, usually will be expanded. The implementing agency (line department and/or NGO) will then require a number of experienced senior group promoters or coordinators, in particular for the training of new group promoters to work in extended or new project areas (see also Section 15.3, point 4).
- 2) Graduated or anyhow gifted group promoters may desire to follow an academic career, particularly in such fields as applied development sociology and economy, agricultural extension; etc. They conceive the experience gained with the poor as an enlargement of practical knowledge regarding the promotion of self-development of the rural poor. Experience shows that research and training institutions are increasingly eager to employ group promoters, in particular those who gave special attention to action research (see Section 12). Moreover, some projects provide fellowships to selected group promoters for professional advancement. Line departments and banks see this as a useful means for staff development.
- 3) As the magnitude of rural poverty is growing, various governments tend to encharge one or more agencies with the planning and/or implementation of specific rural poor oriented programmes and projects. Accordingly also the demand for capable participation agents will increase. This is still more the case with UN supported programmes for poverty alleviation.
- 4) Although the rural poor groups will federate themselves and become eventually self-propelling (see Section 7.2), they may still need help in or outside the normal government delivery structure for solving production, marketing, processing, etc. problems. Experienced group promoters could perform valuable functions on payment for inter-group associations, primary or secondary level cooperatives or the like.

## **11. PARTICIPATORY TRAINING**

### 11.1 Objectives and Characteristics

The main training objectives are; a) to improve the economic and social conditions of the poor; b) to assist the beneficiaries to become active and productive group members and leaders; c) to encourage group promoters and other supporting staff to adjust their standard training to meet the needs of the rural poor; and d) to stimulate all project participants to develop adequate training contents, methods and also materials.

The essential training characteristics are: 1) participatory; every trainer is a trainee and vice-versa; 2) on-going; the training is conceived as a continuous process and is designed and carried out within the context of any project action to improve the production. income and social conditions of the beneficiaries; 3) pragmatic and problem solving; the training is based on solving immediate and recognized problems; 4) in-service, on-the-job, on-site training, learning by doing; 5) self-learning; individually but also group-or team-wise; 6) reality-

exposure: both trainers and trainees are to be exposed to the realities of the rural people and their living areas; and 7) dialogue and cooperation on equal terms; no we-they dichotomy between staff and beneficiaries.

Conventional training has a top-down approach, is entirely pre-planned and uses mainly the classroom (teacher-pupils) method. Instead participatory training is based on the felt needs of the trainees, recognizes that the poor can also be resource persons, stresses learning from each other, facilitates building of team work and links knowledge much more directly with action and problem-solving.

The innovative training approaches include: 1) stimulation of farmer-to-farmer and group-to-group training to attain self-reliance; 2) the trainees are not passive recipients and objects, but subjects of training; 3) training in specific technical fields is not exclusively given to group leaders (whose workload often hinders proper dissemination of the know-how obtained) but also and preferably to group members selected by one or more groups. This will enhance shared leadership, inter-group cooperation, self-reliance and farmers becoming informal grassroots extensionists.

Moreover, an accounting system of payment for services rendered could be developed by the beneficiaries themselves in order to decrease over-dependence on outside aid, while the delivery system could gradually obtain adequate cost recovery.

## 11.2 Training Target Groups, Personnel and Committees

The main “target groups” are: a) the intended beneficiaries; b) the project staff, including the participation agents; and c) supporting government and NGO staff such as line agency and other (field) officers, but also local leaders and influentials.

The trainers must have practical experience. They include: the group promoters and other project staff, technical officers of the delivery system, experienced farmers/fishermen and also successful groups which enlighten, train and motivate other ones.

A small training committee which would include interested technical officers, group promoters and beneficiaries, could be very useful to assist in the planning, implementation and evaluation of feasible training programmes.

### Beneficiary Training

The types of topics are the following:

- a) Certain general subject matters which aim at enhancing beneficiary participation through efficient group formation and action and should be given to all intended beneficiaries. These matters include group dynamics, shared leadership, planning of group activities, savings and credit, accounting, cooperative management, monitoring and evaluation as well as negotiating and bargaining. In some projects certain basic issues like fostering thrift habits and overcoming bad customs such as irrational spending, drinking, gambling, etc. are also very much stressed.
- b) Specialized training is to be given according to the type of project as well as to the specific, felt group needs. For example, in crop production, small livestock development, soil and water conservation, small-scale fishery, aquaculture, forestry,



group marketing, etc., but also in non-farm activities such as (agro-)processing, weaving, tailoring, pottery, production of house-building materials or of artisanal items in wood, bamboo, metal, leather, etc., as well as maintenance and transport.

- c) Training could furthermore be given in: home life and community development, in particular for women: health, sanitation, first aid, nutrition, child care, etc., but also management, leadership, village development, etc.
- d) Other very useful training subject matters include: legal and procedural matters, e.g. land reform, tenancy rights, mortgaging, wages, employment (rural works programme, etc.), the use of banks, and of local administration etc. Pragmatic information on these topics is frequently not or badly communicated to the poor
- e) Functional literacy for adult women and men, which help them to analyse their problems, plan actions and also to reduce their dependency upon literate villagers or group members.

The training opportunities include: 1) short courses, preferably given at field (village) level; 2) advice and consultation between group members, group promoters and technical officers; 3) information given by knowledgeable successful farmers or fishermen; 4) exposure media: audio-visual aids, radio (rural broadcasting programmes), films, slideshows, public meetings, etc.; 5) demonstrations organized jointly with group members for improved crop cultivations, livestock rearing, aquaculture, handicrafts, etc.; 6) written extension materials; 7) simple newsletters prepared together with the beneficiaries; 8) initial and successive field action workshops; 9) inter-group exchange visits; 10) (inter-)group evaluation exercises; and 11) where appropriate, role playing and socio-drama.

Training equipment and materials. Each group needs at least extension materials, a blackboard and elementary stationery. Each cluster of groups needs a flannel or black board, a camera, folding exhibition boards, transistor radios and possibly a slide-projector and a video-tape recorder. The local production by the groups of simple training materials is to be encouraged.

#### 11.4 Training of Participation Agents (Group Promoters), the Project Coordinator and Other Project Staff

This training, a central project operation, aims at: a) introducing the field workers into the approaches and procedures of participatory development; b) fostering adequate attitudes, motivations and team-spirit; c) experimenting innovative ways of poverty eradication; d) teaching basic technical topics which are needed for group guidance and are also taught to all group members (see Section 11.3, under a); in particular: philosophy and methods of participatory development, group dynamics, savings and credit, accounting and monitoring and evaluation); and e) stimulating group self-learning and self-development of training contents, methods and materials.

The group promoters must obtain in particular management training consisting of: project planning, methods of production planning and implementation (group enterprise management), transfer of appropriate technology, marketing, communication techniques, leadership, team-building, record keeping and report writing.

Also the project coordinator needs of course, to be trained as early as possible by the implementing agency and FAO (or another agency) in all the aforementioned topics.

The initial orientation training of group promoters should be well structured and sufficiently long. It should mainly consist of familiarization with the objectives and operational aspects of the project.

An inception training workshop for group promoters and other project staff is to be given for at least three weeks in or near the project area with not more than 30 participants including the candidate group promoters (half of whom female), the project staff and selected key officials of the delivery system. It is recommendable to invite twice as many candidate participation agents as needed initially in the project in order to obtain a reserve pool of these field workers. The curriculum should be pragmatic and include work experience presentations by the participants and course evaluation exercises. “Sandwich” type training (classroom and field experience combined) is very recommendable.

The group promoters need thereafter initial field training of 2-3 months which is at the same time the starting period for their field action in the project area. They will learn team-wise, among others, to prepare and carry out village and household surveys, to solve work and living problems met in the field, to cooperate with the delivery system and to plan the project initiation workshop.

The follow-up training of participation agents includes: a) periodic (preferably monthly) review and evaluation meetings for group promoters and other staff to evaluate team performance, to identify and solve work problems and to prepare workplans; b) field action workshops; c) refresher courses in such subjects as new rural development policies and programmes, innovative income-raising activities and credit schemes; d) issue of a periodic (project) newsletter; and e) exchange visits of group members, group promoters and officials between different areas of their own and similar participatory projects.

#### 11.5 Training of Government and NGO Staff as well as Local Leaders

This training aims at familiarizing those involved in the project with the approach and procedures of the project and its participation efforts, the handicaps of the poor to have access to the delivery agencies and the roles of the latter to help solve the problems of the rural poor. In many instances, the above mentioned officials and leaders need to be to a certain extent “de-trained” and then re-trained to perform well their participatory roles. On-going exchange of experiences and views particularly in field workshops, is crucial in this learning process.

The training opportunities for the government and other staff consists mainly of their participation in: 1) training courses for group promoters and other project staff; 2) field workshops; 3) briefing sessions with the use of promotional materials; 4) project coordination committees; 5) the programming, provision, and evaluation of beneficiary training; 6) intra- or inter-country seminars related to the objectives and issues of the project; and 7) inter-group and/or inter-project exchange visits.

## 12. PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

### 12.1 Conventional and Participatory Action Research

The essential differences between conventional and participatory action research is that in the latter research the poor are actively involved in all stages: both researcher and respondent are active including in the design of research instruments, interviewing, data analysis as well as in the reporting, evaluation and discussion of the results.

The research results are to be shared with all project participants. Participatory research is to be included in any participatory project as it is indispensable firstly for the collection and analysis of the necessary information on the action areas and the disadvantaged people and secondly for project expansion and replication (see Section 14). It is to be carried out during the entire project period by the participation agents and other project staff together with the local people, in particular the actual and potential group members. Guidance in the design, methods of collection, tabulation, analysis, interpretation and reporting is to be provided by rural poor-oriented economic and social research institutions. The latter obtain in this way also opportunities to learn the participatory development and research concepts and methods. In cases where the services of a research institution prove too costly, it is preferable to obtain the help of well-motivated experts on an individual basis who in many countries appeared to be available.

### 12.2 Objectives

The main research objectives are:

- 1) to select the project area(s) and within these the village-clusters where the group formation actions will start; (see Sections 5.1; 6.3 and 16.3);
- 2) to identify and classify the rural poor and non-poor in the action areas and to obtain pragmatic information on their living conditions, needs and aspirations by means of area, village and household surveys (see Sections 5.2, 5.3 and 16.3);
- 3) to determine whether, how and to what extent the locals are so far involved in development efforts, in particular through rural people's and other local organizations. Where needed, it should also be clarified on one side why most low income people do not actively participate in these efforts, and, on the other side, why most of the local people's organizations, if any, in their present form do not attract them (see Sections 6.1 and 16.3);
- 4) the potentials, efforts and problems of the formation of rural poor groups from scratch and/or within or from existing groups and organizations (see Sections 6.3, 6.4 and 16.3);
- 5) to plan and implement together with the beneficiaries, group promoters, project and line department staff as well as, where opportune, with ad-hoc experts - viable income-generating and other group activities. In various instances small feasibility studies may be needed before engaging in such activities (see Sections 7 and 16.3);
- 6) to plan and conduct appropriate training programmes for the beneficiaries as well as the concerned line department and other staff (see Section 11). Furthermore, to provide grassroots data to the field workshops of the project;

- 7) to develop and sustain a workable participatory monitoring and evaluation system (see Section 13);
- 8) the research may also include case studies of successful and deficient rural poor groups;
- 9) identification and/or development of appropriate technologies for the small farmers or fishermen with the support of the concerned line departments and other technical bodies

### 12.3 Surveys

To attain the above objectives, simplified action area, village and household surveys are needed periodically. This research may be based on the interesting methods and procedures developed in various countries. The surveys will help to establish economic and social benchmarks, which highlight the status of the beneficiaries in the initial phase of the project so that any progress can be evaluated successively by the project participants.

A baseline survey, to be conducted before the field action starts, is useful but only if the grassroot people are really involved. This type of survey may be part of project preparation and serve among other, for target group identification. Sampling of households is to be avoided as this may lead to resentment of those not included in the sample. Only those data are to be collected which are really relevant for project operations. The outcome should be used for discussion by the group promoters and the groups.

Some constraints to conduct a baseline survey early in the project cycle are: a) scarcity of suitable research staff in the initial phase; b) the information obtained on the intended beneficiaries may be insufficiently reliable as their confidence has to be gained first through the project's field actions (see Section 5.3.3); and c) lack of funds for this project preparation action. In fact the survey is to be kept low-cost including by being quite selective in data collecting. Moreover in areas where projects with grassroot people were or are being implemented, many useful data may already be available.

For the conducting of action area, village and other surveys, reference is made to the Small Farmer Development Manual, Chapter 4, Sections 20-26 (see Appendix 3, Selected References).

## **13. PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND ON-GOING EVALUATION (PMOE)**

PMOE should be a management tool above all for the beneficiaries, but also for the project staff, government agencies, NGOs and donors. It is indispensable for securing active participation of all project participants in the assessment of the progress of a project.

### 13.1 Participatory Monitoring

In order to obtain useful information on project progress, successes and failures and to develop a methodology for its expansion and replication, the beneficiaries, participation agents and other project participants should all be involved in developing and applying a locally workable monitoring and evaluation system.

Participatory monitoring is a process of measuring, data collecting, processing and communicating to assist the beneficiaries and project staff in decision-making. The purpose is

to provide all concerned with information as to whether project objectives are being achieved and whether the operations, performance and impact of a project is “on course”. The information should also indicate inadequate operations, shortfalls in performance and discrepancies between planned objectives or predicted impact and those achieved in order to modify inadequate objectives and rectify project deficiencies (Huizer, 1982).

In order to set up a workable participatory monitoring system the beneficiaries are to be motivated in particular and this implies that:

- a) their felt needs, desires and problems are taken into account;
- b) simple, understandable and attractive methods are introduced and repeatedly explained<sup>9</sup>; and
- c) the results are presented to them on a continuous basis and by adequate means including regular group discussions and audio-visual aids.

Participatory monitoring is to be conceived from the beginning as part of the group formation and action process. Therefore, not only the baseline and benchmark data need to be recorded, discussed and kept to be used later, but also effective recording is to be undertaken of inputs, outputs, workplans and progress made in strengthening the cohesiveness of the groups and/or organizations of the beneficiaries.

Records are to be kept of the (bi-)weekly group meetings on major problems discussed, decisions made, actions undertaken. This is to be done by each group with elementary (standard) forms designed with the groups, and contained in some kind of simple log-book. The items of such forms are to be reviewed periodically in order to verify their usefulness. Each group has to learn also a minimum of bookkeeping in order to keep track of inputs and outputs related to credit and savings. This bookkeeping goes parallel with the recording of group loans and repayment by the agency (bank) concerned. A systematic accumulation of data on loans and repayment as well as simple cost-benefit analyses give essential insights into the quality of groups to manage their affairs and improve their conditions.

The group members would also benefit greatly when each of their households would record cash in-and outflows on simple schemes.

Monitoring is usually hard to introduce to (illiterate) peasants. It can be made simple for them by using e.g. symbols, pictures and graphics. Even literate children of group members may be engaged as “secretaries\*” in groups in which none of the members is literate. Training of group members in functional literacy remains of course, of utmost importance.

Monitoring could give much satisfaction to the beneficiaries and also considerably facilitate benchmark and/or other studies including on the “thorny” issues of income and expenditure of households.

In sum, the main tools of participatory monitoring are: 1) recording of group meetings, workplans, progress made, problems met, etc. in group log-books; 2) group bookkeeping for inputs, outputs, credits, savings, etc.; and 3) action-research (see Section 11).

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<sup>9</sup> I/ A useful guide is e.g. “Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: Handbook for Training Field Workers”, by Alexandra Stephens and Kees Putman, FAO, Bangkok, 1988.

## 13.2 Participatory Evaluation

On-going evaluation is the systematic analysis by beneficiaries and project staff concerned of the monitored information with a view to enabling them where necessary, to adjust or redefine the project's objectives, policies, institutional arrangements, resources and activities (Huizer, 1982).

Participatory evaluation should also take into account the needs and desires of the beneficiaries and include self-evaluation on an individual and group basis by all project participants in order to strengthen local capabilities for self-learning and joint problem-solving. In particular the rural people themselves are to discuss what progress they are making and how to overcome what problems. The rural poor groups should also evaluate the activities of the delivery system in order to improve its performance. This helps groups to “talk back”, to pick up issues which have not been dealt with by the delivery system and to identify its bottlenecks. The results may be brought up in field workshops.

If evaluation is done in the above ways, it will stimulate critical awareness and motivation for better group self-management. The self-evaluation results need to be presented systematically to other project participants at local and higher levels.

The evaluation should include not only the tangible and measurable results of group activities but as much as possible also their spill-over benefits that improve the group members' economic, social and integral human development. For example, acquiring skills in speech, writing, presenting ideas logically and clearly, overcoming shyness in dealing with officials and conducting meetings; furthermore, learning to solve problems including household conflicts through dialogue, inculcating thrift habits, record keeping and money management techniques as well as gradually reducing vices like gambling, alcoholism and gossiping, and also group-wise helping persons in acute necessities like house building or land preparation (Sudath de Abrew: PPP, Sri Lanka, 1987: see Appendix 3, Selected Bibliography).

The main evaluation tools based on those for participatory monitoring, are:

- 1) group promoter log-books containing an overall picture of the group recordings;
- 2) group promoter diaries for the “private” observations and reflections on the process and results of beneficiary participation. In these diaries attention is to be given to possible difficulties, conflicts and setbacks. Logbooks and diaries help the group promoters to learn from each other's experience;
- 3) periodically (preferably monthly) review and evaluation meetings of group promoters;
- 4) periodic (e.g. quarterly) group and inter-group evaluation sessions;
- 5) newsletters in the local language based on information provided by the groups;
- 6) evaluation studies and surveys; and
- 7) periodic field workshops, a total reflection upon the whole field action process by project staff, beneficiaries and concerned outsiders.

The above listed tools should all be used to promote a constant two-way flow of information between groups and the project staff.

## **14. ESTIMATED COSTS TO PROMOTE BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION**

### 14.1 Cost-Effectiveness

The cost-effectiveness of the participatory approach is for the time being difficult to determine as economic and social parameters are only in part adequate to measure costs and benefits. The assessment of the latter is however, important as it indicates economic and financial viability and facilitates communication with officials and experts in government, aid and donor agencies who see development predominantly from an economic point of view.

### 14.2 Benefits

The main direct benefits of rural poor groups include the following:

- 1) income generation,
- 2) employment generation,
- 3) capital formation, also by means of savings,
- 4) accumulation of other (tangible) assets,
- 5) access to credit,
- 6) development of community assets,
- 7) upgrading of skills.

The indirect benefits include:

- 1) on-going exchanges of information, experiences and views,
- 2) better management of group enterprises,
- 3) ability to articulate and solve problems,
- 4) development of grassroot organizations (institution-building),
- 5) more social security through group-belonging,
- 6) prevention or resolution of conflicts at household, group and village levels through dialogues,
- 7) spirit of participation, cooperation, sharing, self-confidence and self-reliance,

other indirect “spill-over” benefits may include:

- 8) skills in speech and writing of the poor, and presenting ideas coherently and clearly.
- 9) overcoming shyness in dealing with officials and conducting meetings,
- 10) inculcating thrift habits,
- 11) acquiring ability in record keeping, money management and responsible spending, e.g. by reducing the expenditure of costly customary ceremonies,
- 12) reduction of vices like gambling, alcoholism and gossiping, and
- 13) group-wise helping persons in acute necessities like house building and land preparations.

The direct benefits can be measured mostly quantitatively to a sufficiently reliable extent, whereas the indirect ones can mostly only be described qualitatively.

A participatory project may very well be cost-effective when also its indirect benefits are assessed adequately and added to the direct, quantifiable outputs. There is however a great need for studies to develop a methodology to determine the cost-effectiveness of participatory projects.

Since the groups in participatory projects select usually low-risk activities, it may safely be assumed that the benefits outweigh considerably the costs both for beneficiaries and implementing government agencies and/or NGOs. Moreover, most governments in developing countries are charged with the responsibility of social uplift of the disadvantaged classes of people. Participatory projects assist in organizing the needy and thus enable the governments to provide services to these people and thus to discharge effectively in part their mandate. The projects offer to beneficiaries, among other advantages, economies of scale and social benefits by building organizational capabilities; they offer above all effective receiving/utilization systems (see Section 6.1).

#### 14.3 Costs

A participatory process is usually supported in its initial stages by external staff and funds from local, national and/or other sources. However, the costs of the specific participatory elements or operations in a larger project are relatively minimal in relation to those of technical and other project components and are also temporary. The very essence of the participatory approach is its strong orientation towards self-reliance which implies, among other things, low and decreasing recurrent costs and cost-recovery by the beneficiaries. Although usually a participatory process thus needs some “start-up” external aid from a development or donor agency (never to be a major actor!), the basic objective is that the process becomes self-propelling as soon as possible and also expandable to larger numbers of poor people with no or minimal outside personnel and funds and thus with no or very low recurrent costs.

#### 14.4 Extra Costs

The extra costs to make a project participatory consist of the following:

- a) Financing in total or in part a relatively small number of locally recruited field workers who act for a limited project period (say three years) as participation agents (see Section 10). The latter could be and in several instances are selected from a country's extension staff and in these cases the field workers need only special training in group formation and action (see Section 10.4) and preferably also some additional “hardship” allowances for their pioneer work. Also means of transport are to be provided to the field workers (see Section 10.3).
- b) Extra funds are required also for one or more inception and follow-up training field workshops on the participatory approach and procedures to be held in or near the project area(s), and some periodic (yearly) follow-up evaluation workshops including at national level.



- c) Some extra funds are moreover needed for training in (beneficiary) participation, particularly in group dynamics and other topics directly related to group formation and action (see Section 11.3).
- d) Finally, some limited funds are to be made available for participatory socio-economic research (see Section 12) as well as for grassroots monitoring and evaluation, both regarding the formation, action, performance and constraints of the groups (see Section 13).

#### 14.5 Field Experience

Various elements which have been taken from field experience and illustrate the above points follow hereunder.

FAO launched under its People's Participation Programme since 1982 twelve self-sustained pilot projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Eight of these projects have a three year period of field actions completed and show the following results and costs.

Over a period of on the average three years in total 864 groups were formed and guided with the help of 77 GPs (of whom 49 or 64% were female); each GP assisted thus in the formation of on the average 11 groups.

The 864 groups had in total 10,557 members: on the average 12 members per group. The eight projects served accordingly in total about 10,557 families and reached at least 63,342 beneficiaries when assuming an average family size of 6 persons.

In conclusion, on the average each project covered in its first three years of field action two project areas with in total ten GPs (of whom six were female). The latter promoted in total 108 small groups with 1,320 members. This means that each project reached in-depth on the average at least 1,320 families and covered thus not less than 7,920 beneficiaries.

The average cost of the donor contribution of the eight projects is about US \$208,000 over three years and this amount covers most of the total project cost as the local contribution to these pilot projects is relatively low. The donor contribution includes:

- 1) Contractual services: (about 21% of the donor contribution) to finance: a) the basic salaries, hardship allowances ("topping up") and travel costs of the project staff (usually one coordinator and the group promoters (when seconded or recruited from the field action villages themselves, these costs are of course, lower); b) action-research on the groups (including small feasibility studies); c) local expertise and skilled, non-voluntary labour as and when required for possible physical works needed for certain selected group activities; d) project evaluation including by an independent institution; e) preparation of reports.
- 2) General operating expenses (about 8% of the donor budget) including part of rental and maintenance of equipment, communications and miscellaneous expenditures.
- 3) Supplies, equipment and materials, first for a Credit Guarantee Fund (about 16% of the budget) as a security for the lending institution to provide from its funds collateral-free group loans for inputs (see Section 9.2). Secondly, this budget item includes also various types of equipment including means of transport (13% of the budget), usually one vehicle for the participation coordinator and motorcycles for the group promoters.

- 4) Training on participation and other issues (about 17% of the budget) of beneficiaries as well as project and other supporting staff (see Section 11). This includes: courses, training materials, field workshops in the project areas and fellowships for well-performing group promoters.
- 5) Personnel services and official travel (about 13% of the budget): the salaries, travel and daily subsistence allowance of short-term local and/or expatriate consultants for technical backstopping (in total for three to six person/months).
- 6) Project servicing costs (about 7% of the budget) and special factor for inflation (5% of the budget).

The proportional sizes of the various donor budget items vary per project of course, and in practice are also in part interchangeable as participatory projects or components need a flexible design and budget.

With the foregoing global indications the order of size of the cost of group formation and guidance can be roughly estimated for any participatory project according to its number of intended beneficiaries and/or of small groups' to be formed as well as to its number and size of action areas.

The earlier indicated data on eight PPP projects showed that on the average each project yielded 108 small groups with in total 1,320 members in an initial period of three years. The total external aid costs for 7,920 beneficiaries (1.320 group members and their family members) was in the first three years about US \$175,000 that is about \$7 per year for each of the beneficiaries and about \$44 per year for each group member.

The amount of \$175,000 includes all budget items of the earlier indicated self-sustained participatory projects except the credit guarantee fund which forms on the average 16% of the donor budget. The credit fund has been excluded from the cost estimates because many larger projects dealing with the rural poor, include already a credit fund or provisions to obtain such fund for income-raising activities of the beneficiaries.

On the basis of the above given costs per project and beneficiary (which refer to small, self-sustaining pilot projects and are thus relatively higher than for other, larger projects). It can be assessed that the cost of effective beneficiary participation viz. by means of group formation and action, is in the initial three years about \$220,000 for 10.000 beneficiaries or about \$162,000 for every 100 groups formed and guided. In subsequent years these costs are far lower as many groups become more self-sufficient and need thus much less GP assistance. Moreover, well-performing groups have considerable spread effects: they facilitate the formation of new groups.

It should also be reminded that the average cost per beneficiary for larger (multi-million dollar) projects with sizeable technical components and target groups may, however, well be lower due to economies of scale.

The above figures are of course to be taken only as very global and rough estimates as firstly the participatory projects or components considered vary in size and design and secondly in each country various factors may considerably affect the specific costs of beneficiary participation as well as the total project costs. For example, the local salary levels of the group promoters, the availability and cost of transport, the experience of the poor with group action

and the accessibility of the beneficiaries. The latter factor is related among others, to the remoteness, geography and physical infrastructure (roads, etc.) of the action areas and the type of local settlement patterns ranging from scattered to concentrated.

In conclusion, to render a conventional project fully participatory some elements like employment of group organizers, working through small groups, training, field workshops, action research and evaluation need to be added. These elements mean however, a far better design and chance of success of a project. The long-term economic and social benefits of such a project will outweigh considerably the relatively low additional costs.

In some instances extra budgetary allocations may not even be needed, but rather a reallocation of existing funds and staff. It is thus in certain cases preferable to reallocate existing funds and personnel to participatory projects or programmes rather than to increase public budgets and employment. Furthermore, as explained, participatory elements will cost comparatively less than self-sustained (pilot) participatory projects in isolation (like FAO's PPP) as there will be economy in administration, coordination, supervision, technical guidance and evaluation.

## **15. PROJECT CONTINUATION, EXPANSION AND MULTIPLICATION**

### **15.1 Continuation: Need for Process Approach**

Projects with adequate beneficiary participation provide the means to self-organized rural people, group promoters and other staff to make full use of their skills and resources for basic rural development. The major building blocks come from the communities themselves unlike many conventional development projects which often require sizeable funds, technical expertise and extensive administrative support including for "reaching" the beneficiaries.

A participatory project aims at institution-building at grassroot level by promoting beneficiary groups and at higher levels by adapting and/or creating delivery agencies which serve effectively the rural weak (see Section 6.1). For this wide scope a project must overcome various constraints and bottlenecks (see Section 3.3) of such a nature that it simply cannot become self-sustaining and illustrative for expansion and widespread multiplication in a few years.

Consequently the conventional project duration of three to five years is too short for a participatory project and can only be considered as the first stage in a complex participatory process sustained by a rolling programme to attain tangible results and spread effects (see Section 2.5).

Another basic point is that the investment in manpower and other resources would be under-utilized, if not actually wasted, if a project is discontinued because of lack of outside support. For all these reasons a participatory project usually requires some additional years of limited outside assistance for a successful continuation and expansion.

At this point the question arises: when is a participatory project as a whole mature to the extent that external assistance to it can be terminated? Although field research on this topic is lacking, some of the characteristics or indicators of project maturity could be the following:

- 1) degree of economic viability and profitability at group and family levels, shown e.g. by mobilization of savings, types and numbers of profit-making activities, continuing access of the poor to the delivery system and economic self-reliance of the groups;
- 2) the types, levels and spread of technical, entrepreneurial, leadership and other skills acquired by the group members; furthermore ability to tap and use technological know-how;
- 3) degree of social development and political recognition, shown e.g. by the maturity of the groups (see Section 7.1), decision-making capabilities, level of participation and leadership roles of women and youth, efficient links with agencies which deliver services and facilities, level of literacy, and participation of group members in local institutions like cooperatives and government bodies.

Other factors to be considered before terminating external assistance include: (1) The self-sustainability of the groups which do not any more enjoy the guidance of the group promoters; the time taken by a group to become self-propelling is of course, location-specific and varies between 3 and 7 years. (2) The capability and willingness of the implementing agency to manage the project and to handle its expansion; and (3) the political will and efforts of a government to incorporate the participatory approach of the project in its policies, plans and/or programmes.

While outside support is normally indispensable in the initial project phases, strong and systematic efforts must also be made to sensitize policy and decision-makers of relevant government bodies and NGOs to provide more and more local support so that a project can continue and expand in a self-supporting way. It is essential to convince decision-makers that participatory projects are basic to enact sustained rural development. In this perspective each country concerned needs one or more strategies to expand participatory rural development (see also Section 4).

## 15.2 Expansion and Multiplication

The wealth of experience accumulated in participatory projects indicates that beneficiary participation can be successfully planned and implemented under a variety of socio-economic conditions and with different types of beneficiaries. However, project planners at national and international levels may still be reserved and this is mainly due to the lack of information on participatory projects and their achievements. Insufficient efforts were made to diffuse participatory experience and encouraging results among key policy and decision-makers. Another reason is that participatory projects have usually a low visibility because they stress - in addition to productive activities - education for participation (see Section 3.3, point 1), and they are furthermore implemented mainly at grassroot level and on a limited scale, except in some countries like e.g. Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Practice shows, that if the beneficiary participation component of a project is designed on the basis of the guidelines of this paper. it can be expanded and/or multiplied with a minimum of outside assistance and recurrent costs (see Section 14).

By expansion of a project is meant hereunder an extension of its operations in new areas which are adjacent to the project's initial ones and by multiplication a propagation of (part of)

its operations in other, non-adjacent areas of a country. By the way, multiplication is a better term than replication which has a connotation of “mechanical” or rubber stamp repetition.

Expansion and multiplication of a participatory project may refer to two different types of cases:

- a) a project as a whole is launched - with an improved design - in one or more adjacent (expansion) or other areas (multiplication) in a country;
- b) only the project's beneficiary participation component (or its successful elements and/or methods) is propagated in the same project area or adjacent ones (expansion) or in other areas (multiplication).

The type of propagation under b) may proceed in two ways viz. either applying the beneficiary participation approach and methods of a project in other projects or programmes, or applying it autonomously under the normal delivery system. The types of propagation under b) are naturally more difficult but still possible, in particular in adjacent zones affected by the spread effects of the field actions of a participatory project.

In all cases where beneficiary participation will be expanded or multiplied this should be planned and done taking into account the guidelines in this paper and furthermore, where relevant: a) the specific geographic, economic and social conditions of the project area(s) as well as the types of intended beneficiaries; b) the type of project proposed; and c) the experience in beneficiary participation gained in ongoing participatory projects which may serve as reference points or examples. The main scope is to avoid the errors in project design and implementation made in older projects.

In this perspective there is a great need for ongoing exchange of information and also cooperation (e.g. pooling of staff, training materials, and other resources) between the participatory projects in a country and outside. This would stimulate the multiplication of genuine beneficiary or rural people's participation which should become an essential part of the overall development strategy of each country (M. Perera, op. cit., 1988).

### 15.3 The Planning of Project Expansion and Multiplication

Given the need of a process approach a participatory project is to be conceived as a first phase of a longer process. Therefore it turns out usually necessary to prepare - as early as possible before a project terminates - a flexible plan (see Section 16.1) for the next phase. The data required for this exercise are to be obtained mainly from the project's monitoring and evaluation system (see Section 13) as well as from an evaluation study carried out by independent experts. A well-devised monitoring and evaluation system is the only way for a project to ensure firstly proper management, and secondly that its participatory trial-and-error efforts can be shared and provide sufficient evidence to outsiders that the project deserves support for its continuation, expansion and/or multiplication in other areas of a country.

With the information obtained it will be possible to improve the design of a successive project phase, that is e.g. to redefine objectives and to plan and coordinate better certain operations, in particular those required for wider and more active beneficiary participation.

For the preparation of an expansion or multiplication plan the following points appear important.

- 1) A first necessity is to engage in dialogues with governmental policy-, programme- and decision-makers at national and lower levels (see Section 4.2).
- 2) The plan should stress consolidation of the project's ongoing institution-building process that is of the existing beneficiary groups and organizations (federations) as well as of the service delivery agencies. Without these consolidation efforts the project may lose its quality during its expansion phase. By quality is primarily meant effective management, solid self-run groups engaging in viable economic and social activities, well-tailored training programmes, qualified and motivated participation agents and other staff, fruitful cooperation with the delivery system, and meaningful research as well as monitoring and evaluation. The risks of expansion are indeed dilution and distortion of the key features of a participatory project (M. Perera, op. cit., 1988).
- 3) The new areas to be covered by a project during its expansion phase should preferably be adjacent to its existing earlier ones. Such concentration facilitates project management and supervision, mutual information and cooperation between actual and potential (intended) beneficiaries as well as service agencies. In other words concentration leads to better spread effects and has eventually a wider and larger, because aggregated impact. The advantages are in part comparable to those of the village cluster approach (see Section 5.1). For the identification of new areas extensive action-oriented field research is needed (see Sections 5.1 and 12).
- 4) Expansion and multiplication implies more field staff, in particular participation agents. In order to maintain project quality the latter should be carefully selected and thoroughly trained. For this training it is very recommendable to engage selected qualified senior group promoters who performed well during the project's first phase, and, where needed, also similar fieldworkers from other participatory projects.

The expansion and more so the multiplication of a project's participatory efforts may require a sizeable number of participation agents. As usually only a relatively small number of exceptionally qualified and motivated group promoters are available in a country, it is a question of realistic planning to anticipate that mostly only average level grassroots workers can be recruited. Such staff can perform reasonably well if provided with solid training, attractive incentives and where possible with study and/or career prospects (see Section 10).

It is a sound policy - also to keep the (recurrent) costs of an expanded project as low as possible - to recruit as many group promoters as possible on secondment from public and private organizations such as extension agencies and NGOs including religious bodies, and preferably from those operating near the new project areas. This policy implies of course, the redeployment, relocation and re-training of part of the field staff of line agencies and/or other organizations concerned (see also Section 10.2).

In certain instances expansion or multiplication may grow out to such magnitude that a project must arrange timely internal cadres which are recruited from the action areas. For example, in some ongoing participation projects well-performing groups are encouraged to select each a few members for in-depth training not only to impart the know-how acquired to their peers, but also to help establish and guide new beneficiary groups. In other cases internal cadres are gradually formed by recruiting suitable locals on a (part-time) voluntary or semi-voluntary basis. These multiplying agents perform (part of) the functions of group promoters. The major advantages of such policies of forming internal cadres are that they reduce dependency on outside aid, are cost-effective and imply low recurrent costs.

- 5) Inter-group associations can play an important role in project expansion: they can assist in recruiting internal cadres, in the process of the formation and training of new groups and associations, in the dissemination of improved technology and in meeting other needs (see also Section 7.2).
- 6) For the establishment of fruitful linkages in the expansion phase it will be indispensable to obtain pragmatic information on existing groups and organizations of the intended beneficiaries in the new project areas and furthermore on the public and private agencies as well as relevant ongoing projects and programmes with which the expanded project could cooperate or coordinate efforts (see Sections 6.1, 6.2, 8, 16.3 and 16.4).
- 7) As transpires from the foregoing points, for the planning of an expanded project and particularly of its beneficiary participation component, various operations of the project identification and preparation stages indicated in Section 16, are to be carried out again. This needs, of course, to be done in modified ways: e.g. data collection can be more selective as considerable information is already available; furthermore socio-economic reconnaissance work, in particular field surveys, can be better organized as the experience at grassroot level gained by the project to be expanded, can be fully taken into account.

## **16. HOW TO ENSURE BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT CYCLE**

The project cycle consists usually of seven main stages: Reconnaissance or Pre-identification, Identification, Preparation, Appraisal, Approval by the supporting agency and Government, implementation and Evaluation. For participatory projects this cycle is (to be) conceived as a flexible and fluid process; for example in some instances one or more phases could be merged or even suppressed.

This Section deals mainly with the operations required for the reconnaissance, identification and preparation or formulation of a participatory component in a project. The main ones are:

- a) collecting relevant information, as explained below;
- b) sensitizing the staff of appropriate Government and Voluntary or Private Organizations (NGOs), furthermore local leaders and representatives of the intended beneficiaries on the nature and need of a project as well as of its participatory approach;
- c) reaching agreements with potential project participants and the authorities concerned on the type of project needed and the best ways to plan and implement it.

Although this Section deals mainly with projects initiated and supported by an external development agency, many points are *mutatis mutandis* also relevant and applicable for projects and programmes initiated in a country without external aid.

### 16.1 Need for Flexible Project Designs

Practice shows that effective beneficiary participation can be incorporated in the design of a project of any type: agricultural production, livestock, forestry, fishery, credit, irrigation, input-delivery, research, training, extension and so on. For this purpose, a participatory project (or at least its participatory component) is, however, to be prepared with considerable flexibility. This should be reflected in the project documents which should have flexible

frameworks. The beneficiaries must be offered sufficient scope and space to help define and implement economic and other activities and to organize themselves around these according to their own needs and possibilities. Thus e.g. participatory preparation of detailed work plans is part of the project implementation and such plans can and should therefore not be elaborated in detail beforehand in project documents. Otherwise the essence of the participatory approach, viz. self-initiative, self-reliance and self-development together with group democracy and shared leadership could be seriously compromised.

The role of agencies like FAO in this is thus to help overcome the constraints of participatory project planning and to create the conditions which facilitate its implementation (including by means of policy dialogues: see Section 4.3).

## 16.2 Reconnaissance Stage

In this stage, also called pre-identification phase, a project idea or proposal will undergo a first examination and elaboration. For this purpose relevant operational qualitative and quantitative data need to be collected. This requires firstly a desk review for the analysis of all available reference materials. Secondly, the data collection requires socio-economic field surveys in the potential project areas of the country concerned. This type of data collection can usually not be carried out satisfactorily during relatively short identification missions. It will therefore be indispensable to establish in or to send to a country before an identification mission, a small team to perform reconnaissance work during a period of two to three months. The team should collect -in particular at the local level - the data required for building in a project efficient beneficiary participation. Although for each type of project and of project area different data are of course needed, in Section 16.3 an overview is given of the information to be gathered in general.

In the reconnaissance stage as much as possible identification work should be done as any amount of data collected prior to the identification mission will contribute not only to less longer and costly as well as more fruitful identification and formulation missions and work but also to far better project designs and thus -what after all really counts - to more successful project implementation and results. It is moreover a relatively cheap but rather fruitful investment to send out a small reconnaissance team and even more so when such team can consist wholly or in part of local experts.

The members of a reconnaissance team or mission should consist of: a) an applied female and/or male sociologist/anthropologist-cum-social planner, and b) one or more experts in agronomy or other fields depending upon the type of project and its prospective action area(s). Wherever possible the team members should be local, at least in part.

The team will carry out pragmatic social and economic studies in the potential project area(s). For the surveys a representative sample is to be taken including spokesmen and -women of the local people, in particular the poor; furthermore, key members of local people's organizations as well as traditional and other leaders and influentials.

## 16.3 Identification Stage

In the identification phase it should be thoroughly examined whether and how a project can be designed in a truly participatory way, in other words whether, to what extent and how beneficiary participation can be built into a project design. For this purpose it is firstly



necessary to obtain a socio-economic country profile and secondly on the basis of this, relevant information on the overall feasibility and, thirdly, the social feasibility of a participatory project.

It is of course understood that part of the above information such as a country profile is necessary for any project and furthermore that the data required for drafting a beneficiary participation component or mechanism depend upon and are to be consistent and compatible with the many economic, technical and other data collected in the identification phase for the overall project design. Just to mention one key point in respect: the social feasibility of a project is to be correlated with its economic, technical and ecological feasibility.

Country Profile. This profile should be concise and operational and contain a number of relevant economic and social data. The latter are usually either already available or can be easily obtained. The information required on the potential project area(s) is to be collected mainly by means of reconnaissance work (see Section 16.2) and concerns only the minimum necessary data for a participatory project.

Firstly, overall geographic, demographic and economic information is of course to be obtained which is usually readily available. The economic data may regard land tenure, agrarian reform and production structures, numbers/proportions of the various categories of farmers, farming systems and income, small-scale coastal and inland fisheries and other relevant economic activities. Secondly, various socio-economic and socio-cultural data need to be collected as explained hereunder.

#### Overall feasibility of participatory approaches and projects in a country.

In order to determine this feasibility, information is to be gathered on relevant policy and institutional issues which may imply the following key topics.

- 1) The political environment: Is the government de facto in favour of assisting rural poor people and in particular of the participatory development approach? This implies: do relevant government agencies fully, partly or not endeavour to: a) identify and classify poor people and poverty areas, and b) give them preferential attention by means of specific policies, institutions and programmes? Furthermore, in what forms and to what extent are people's participation, self-development and self-help part of the government's policies?<sup>10</sup>
- 2) Has the country the required supporting legislation regarding rural people's organizations? This includes: freedom of association and group formation, adequate interpretation and application of the rights of association, possible restrictive provisions (e.g. in some countries registered cooperatives are the only rural people's organizations allowed) and appropriate labour laws.
- 3) The forms and degrees of decentralization of public administration, planning as well as resource allocation and control. Among others: do government agencies at local levels have sufficient space and delegation of power to help implement a participatory project? What about the stability of the government system?

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<sup>10</sup> See e.g. "Participation of the Poor in Rural Organizations: A Consolidated Report on Studies in Selected Countries of Asia, the Near East and Africa", by Bernard van Heck, FAO, Rome. 1979, page 56 et passim.

- 4) Policies to strengthen women's roles in rural development particularly in agricultural and other productive activities.
- 5) Policies concerning rural poor-oriented training, extension, credit, input-supply and marketing.
- 6) Policies to increase non-agricultural income- and employment generation opportunities for the rural low income women, men and youth.
- 7) Are fiscal, pricing and other key national policies consistent with poverty-oriented projects?
- 8) Foreseeable political, financial and other support to participatory projects at national and lower levels: to what extent is the government prepared to support the creation of an adequate receiving system in addition to the strengthening of the existing delivery system and gearing it to the needs of the rural weak? (see Section 6.1).

### Social feasibility studies

The overall feasibility information and the country profile form the main basis on which one or more participatory projects as well as possible project areas can be identified. In this exercise, the emphasis should be on seizing opportunities to build on ongoing local development efforts and promising local initiatives. For participatory projects not only economic/technical but also social feasibility studies are indispensable. In the latter studies priority attention is to be given to the following:

- 1) identification and classification of the rural poor people: how defined and identified by government and other bodies, average incomes, poverty line(s), changes over time, etc.; the main categories of the low-income people and their numbers and proportions, also per region/zone; furthermore summaries of studies, if any, on the poor in the country including on their needs and aspirations (see Sections 5.2 and 5.3);
- 2) identification of potential project areas on the basis of data under 1) and the criteria indicated in Section 5.1. The following topics refer mainly to these potential areas;
- 3) the local traditional and modern (usually dual) power structure; among others; types and influence of local power holders and groups as well as the forms and degrees of (over-) dependence of the poor upon them;
- 4) other relevant aspects of the local social structure and culture such as: ethnic and/or tribal groups and their mutual relationships, traditional social units (extended families, lineages, clans, etc.), prevailing values, norms, customs and taboos which could affect a participatory project;
- 5) the delivery system at local and district (provincial) levels: the structure, functions, policies, programmes, staff, resources, activities, performance, external relationships and constraints of Government agencies and NGOs which could be involved in a participatory project;
- 6) the relevant formal and informal, standard and participatory rural people's organizations (see Section 6): their genesis, history, objectives, membership, leadership, activities, results, and constraints. Furthermore, their external relationships to: national and district level units of the same organization, other local people's organizations, government and/or NGO bodies and local power and vested interest groups;

- 7) the numbers and percentages of rural people, particularly poor and disadvantaged groups, who are not organized in formal and/or informal organizations conducive to their economic and social development, and why;
- 8) existing forms and levels of locally available technical knowledge regarding project-relevant fields such as farming, fishing, handicrafts, self-organization, group-management, etc.

#### 16.4 Project Preparation or Formulation Stage

The information needed for the preparation of a beneficiary participatory component in a project is to be obtained among others, through Project Preparation Missions but also, when needed, follow-up feasibility studies. The information regards mainly the following:

- 1) identification and description of the government agencies and NGOs which could effectively be involved in the implementation of beneficiary participation in a project (see Section 8.1);
- 2) selection and detailed operational profile of the institution(s) to be responsible for the above implementation; moreover, its/their position in the local administrative and organizational network as well as its/their image and prestige among the poorer locals;
- 3) pragmatic proposals to establish the minimum required (or to make use of the existing) coordination mechanisms at national and lower levels for project implementation (e.g. a National Coordinating Committee and one or more Project Implementation Committees: see Section 8.2);
- 4) workable proposals for the financial arrangements required for a participatory project such as agreements with one or more cooperating credit institutions, establishment of credit funds for (group) loans, and (group) loan conditions including social liability and interest rates (see Sections 7.2 and 9);
- 5) manpower resources for locally recruited project staff. In particular to recruit the required participation coordinator and group promoters (see Sections 8.2 and 10);
- 6) identification - by means of exploratory surveys - of initial action areas (village clusters) within the project areas where the group promoters will start their field actions (see Sections 5.1, 10.3 and 12);
- 7) potentials and strategy of group formation: a key issue is whether to promote the self-creation of small groups of rural poor people within existing rural organizations, and/or on the basis of existing informal groups, and/or from scratch (see Section 6);
- 8) group activities: potentials in the project area for viable income-raising enterprises in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, processing, handicrafts, marketing, etc. Furthermore, as and when required, preliminary planning of small-scale feasibility studies on certain potential group activities (see Section 7);
- 9) participatory training; identification of training needs and preparation of a programme for (a) the intended beneficiaries, (b) project personnel, and (c) supporting government and NGO staff; furthermore search for suitable training institutions, personnel, methods, opportunities and materials (see Section 11);
- 10) participatory action research: types of pragmatic socio-economic research needed, search for institutions and/or expertise to assist in research design and execution (see Section 12);

- 11) participatory monitoring and evaluation: outline for workable local systems (see Section 13);
- 12) organization of project initiation, training and other field workshops in or near the project area(s) to discuss with all potential project participants, especially the intended beneficiaries and supporting staff, the participatory development approach and project

Once the earlier indicated overall and social feasibility data as well as the above information is obtained, the beneficiary participation component(s) and/or elements can be formulated taking of course, into account the other economic, technical and ecological components or features of a project.

For the phasing of a Participatory Component in a project workplan, reference is made to Figure 2 in Appendix 3.

### PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES SUPPORTED BY FAO

People's participation has become an increasingly important component of FAO's programmes and projects for agricultural, fisheries, forestry and human resources development. In this Appendix, the main participatory efforts promoted by FAO up until the early 1990s are briefly described.<sup>11</sup>

#### 1. People's Participation in Agricultural and Rural Development through the Promotion of Self-Help Organizations (PPP)

The People's Participation Programme (PPP) is a concrete follow-up of the Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) held in 1979 (see Section 1.2). The Programme which started in 1980, was in part based on the ongoing FAO Small Farmer Development Programme (SFDP) carried out in various Asian countries, as well as on the FAO Rural Organizations Action Programme (ROAP) implemented in various countries worldwide.

The main objective of PPP is to develop and test through pilot field projects an operational method of people's participation through the promotion of self-help organizations which method would hopefully be used in larger rural development programmes and projects. The main specific objectives are firstly to help identify, plan and implement income-generating and other group activities for small farmers, tenants, fishermen and/or labourers. Secondly to assist the beneficiaries to organize themselves into self-run groups and organizations or to use existing ones in order to engage in income-raising activities and to have access to services and facilities so that they can satisfy their economic and social needs and become eventually self-reliant. Thirdly, to assist line departments and other agencies including banks and NGOs, to better serve the rural weak. Fourthly, to develop a strategy for expanding the successful features of the project.

The basic elements of the PPP approach are:

- focus on the rural poor
- the formation of small, homogeneous groups around common income-raising activities
- the stimulation of self-organization and self-reliance by eliminating undue dependencies and encouraging group savings
- the use of local group promoters as catalysts for group formation and guidance
- the involvement of NGOs

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<sup>11</sup> One interesting effort not mentioned by the author is the FAO Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Programme. The IPM Programme began in the late 1980s in Asia and has now expanded to Africa utilizes a similar participatory group approach, called "Farmer Field Schools," but with a specific focus on pest management problems. For more information on this programme see their Internet site: <http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/AGRICULT/AGP/AGPP/IPM/Default.htm>

- participatory training, action-oriented research and monitoring and evaluation
- orientation towards expansion and multiplication by developing linking mechanisms
- seeking preferential policies for the poor
- obtaining sustainability by combining low cost with effectiveness.

PPP projects are funded from various government and other sources; the main donors were so far Sweden and the Netherlands. FAO provides administrative and technical support from its own staff and budget; ESHA is PPP's major supporting unit. The projects are small-scale and have an average donor contribution of about US \$200,000 over three years (see Section 13.3).

The PPP has thus far been implemented in 12 countries viz. 8 in Africa, 3 in Asia and 1 in Latin America. It involved in early 1989 over 10,600 small farmers as direct beneficiaries and when including their family members, over 60,000 rural people of whom 44% are women. The farmers organized themselves with the help of 85 group promoters in over 850 PPP groups and 112 inter-group associations. Three PPP projects (Sri Lanka, Ghana and Zambia) are presently in a second three year phase. Various successful national and international workshops on the PPP have been held.

For more details on the PPP see: FAO People's Participation Programme - The First Ten Years: Lessons Learned and Future Directions, by Colin McKone, FAO, Rome 1989 (mimeo).

## 2. Community Action for Disadvantaged Rural Women (CADRW)

This Programme was initiated in 1981 in the ESH Division in response to the mandates of the WCARRD as well as the World Conference on the UN Decade for Women to give direct attention to the needs and priorities of disadvantaged rural women - the landless, dispossessed, abandoned and malnourished - as determined by rural women themselves.

The basic innovative aspects of the Programme were: 1) to take into account women's multiple roles as food producers, providers, parents, and partners in family and community life; 2) to promote support activities that address the women's multiple needs in an integrated way; 3) to promote village based rural centres for demonstrations and other activities of the community's choice; 4) to involve the community, men and women, in identifying their needs and improving their conditions; 5) to develop women's groups for income-raising activities; 6) to assist governments to adopt policies and strategies to provide women with access to resources and services.

The rural centres were to become focal points for attracting women leaders and for promoting women groups engaging in income-raising and other activities like new farming practices, nutrition, leadership, literacy, legal right courses, group child care and appropriate technology.

The Programme which ended in 1984 has been implemented in Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Sri Lanka and Zambia with original funding from SIDA (Sweden) and later on from other sources. The projects succeeded to varying extents in reaching their targets by promoting women's groups and activities; they were also useful in drawing

attention of Governments to the needs of the poorest women and in promoting solutions by the beneficiaries themselves. The projects were, however, less successful in generating long-term economic benefits also because the viability of certain activities were insufficiently considered.

A basic difference between the CADRW and PPP is that the former applies a village wide approach to reach the poor women. However, in such approach most actions and benefits are usually taken by the not so poor or better-off women (see also Section 4.1).

### 3. Community Forestry Programmes

The FAO Special Action Programme entitled “Forestry for Local Community Development (FLCD)” was started in the Policy and Planning Service, Forestry Department and carried out from 1979 to 1986. The SIDA-supported Programme was conceived as a means to stimulate awareness of and establish the basis for community forestry.

Under the Programme forestry managers from 62 countries participated in three Regional Seminars in Mexico, Thailand and Senegal. Some 51 countries took part in study tours to visit community forestry projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In-depth evaluations of the programme were carried out in Korea, India and the Philippines. Publications were prepared including on assessing people's needs, monitoring and evaluation, legislation and extension.

FLCD supported furthermore 44 field projects in 37 countries. Initially help was provided mainly to assist countries to define what to do, establish pilot projects, and train core groups of people in community forestry approaches. The emphasis was mainly on fuelwood, and on meeting other household and farm needs from self-help tree planting and management programmes. Later on income-generating activities became increasingly a major objective. Various countries were assisted in solving particular problems in on-going programmes. For example: the evaluation of the performance in the Social Forestry Programme in Gujarat (India), development of strategies to help people introduce trees into small farm systems in Malawi and into grazing systems in Sudan, and the development of a monitoring and evaluation system for use on all state social forestry projects in India.

With the successful outcome of the FLCD Programme, there was a need for wide-spread replication and adoption of community level forestry. Accordingly a catalyst follow-up programme called Forest, Trees and People (FTP) was started in 1987. The FTP Programme aims at enabling people -through their own efforts - to benefit more from forests and trees.

The Programme's specific objectives are: 1) to assemble, analyse and disseminate information needed for planning and implementing sound participatory forestry projects and programmes; 2) to contribute to rural development based on trees and forests for food, fodder and other products and for environmental stabilization; 3) to develop strategies, systems and methods by which people's participation is promoted in tree growing; and 4) to encourage donors to support participatory forestry activities in developing countries.

A solid information base is being built up by gathering data from literature, in-depth studies and field activities. Of the eight FTP field projects, four are SIDA-funded, FAO Trust Fund projects (Burkina Faso, Nepal, Thailand and Zambia). Two projects (Tanzania and Vietnam) are bilateral and coordinated by the Swedish University of Agricultural Services (SUAS), and two projects (Ethiopia and Kenya) are run by Swedish NGOs. Both FAO and SUAS provide technical support to and learn from the 8 projects.

The FTP field projects are located in countries where the chances of participatory tree growing on a larger scale are high. Baseline studies focus on factors such as people's need for trees and how trees can be integrated into local production systems, furthermore on nutrition, fuelwood availability, employment and social conditions. The projects stress participatory monitoring and evaluation and also effective two-way communication between villagers and field agents. Public awareness is raised by using media such as radio, and utilizing school and informal educational facilities. Forest-based small-scale forest enterprises are very much encouraged.

#### 4. Programme for Small-Scale and Artisanal Fishermen

In the seventies it was increasingly realized in FAO and outside that the conventional economic or business approaches were not effective for the development of the world's artisanal fisheries. Consequently various attempts were made to focus on the poorer fishermen rather than on profits. In some cases the efforts were combined with concerns for the environment, food security, employment and intermediate technologies. In the FAO South China Sea and Bay of Bengal Regional Programmes, FAO started to explore alternative artisanal fisheries development policies. The 1984 World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development formulated on the basis of this new thinking a strategy with principles and guidelines for small-scale fisheries development. This strategy reflected the recognition of the need of the latter sector, of its value (production of over 20 million tons of protein food per year), and of its provision of employment (10 million full-time and 10 million part-time jobs). The Programme for the Development of Small-Scale Fisheries, based on WCARRD and the above-indicated conferences, concentrates on assistance for the integrated development of fishing communities. The Programme is based upon: 1) an integrated approach taking into account both technical aspects of development and the socio-economic needs of fishing communities; 2) active participation in development planning actions by small-scale fishing communities; 3) mobilization of local and national resources, skills, finance and markets for the development efforts, so that outside support remains supplementary and catalytic; 4) long-term technical support and in-service training; 5) a continuing and assured share as well as management of the fishery resources for small-scale producers; and 6) explicit attention to enhancing the economic and social role of women in fish production and marketing and in family maintenance.

The Programme activities are being carried out through regional and sub-regional small-scale development teams. The latter provide assistance and advisory services to national teams working on integrated small-scale fisheries development. They establish - where possible together with NGOs - also demonstration projects for in-service training, assist governments to identify the needs of the small-scale fishery sector and to formulate projects. The teams also liaise with bilateral projects, promote technical cooperation and training, encourage the adoption of appropriate technology, evaluate social and other



factors affecting small-scale community development and improve village level capability in project planning and implementation. In all this due attention is given to the participation of women. For this purpose the Fishery Department published in 1988 Guidelines for Women in Fishing Communities. The Programme includes the location of Small-Scale Fishery Development Groups in 9 different zones. The Programme approach is furthermore applied in the FAO Regional Programmes Bay of Bengal and Integrated Development of Artisanal Fisheries in West-Africa (IDAF). Under these Programmes also small, informal fishermen groups are being promoted.

#### 5. International Support Programme for Farm Water Management

This Programme which started in 1980 in FAO's Land and Water Development Division, as a follow-up of WCARRD and other international meetings, had the following objectives: 1) to identify the specific needs of individual countries in water management improvement; 2) to promote and formulate national action plans; 3) to coordinate support to and collaborate with the national action plans and projects; and 4) to monitor, evaluate and provide means for the dissemination and exchange of experience.

The plan of action comprised at the farm and village level the implementation of pilot improvement projects cum training programmes. The activities included: diagnosis of deficiencies and constraints, creating awareness of improvement potential, preparation of frameworks for implementation, operation and maintenance of irrigation systems, backstopping and follow-up services, and training of field extension assistants.

At the national level the activities focussed at build-up of research capacities to handle technical and socio-economic field problems, the promotion of institutional arrangements for the development of water management improvement policies and the implementation of these through the creation of irrigation extension services and the introduction or strengthening of teaching programmes in water management. For broad support an Advisory Panel was established in 1981 which included administrators and specialists from donor and developing countries.

Key components and results of the Programme which ended in 1986 were:

- 1) Field projects implemented in several countries. These were characterised by farmers' participation, simple technology, use of local manpower and resources, and low-cost implementation.
- 2) Training: Education and training programmes carried out for farmers as well as irrigation operators, advisors and technicians; furthermore study tours for farmer leaders and the preparation of several information materials. Also various international and national workshops and seminars were conducted, among others, in Pakistan, the Philippines, Surinam, Kenya, Indonesia and Sierra Leone.
- 3) Institution building: The capacity to plan and carry out water management improvements were strengthened in a number of countries, specifically through setting up irrigation Services at national level.

The Programme has actively dealt with a number of technical, socio-economic and institutional issues and problems at grassroot and higher levels. In particular with those

of farmers' participation: e.g. with water users associations, farmers' involvement in irrigation development and water management and technical constraints of farmers' participation in water management at the tertiary level. In fact, at the request of several countries, the Programme contributed considerably to the study and promotion of irrigation farmers' participation in a number of different irrigation zones. In the latter case studies were conducted of potentials, successful efforts and constraints of participation. Moreover several recommendations to increase farmer participation were made to government agencies and donors, including in workshops and publications. Some of the latter deal in-depth with participation problems in water management and provide suggestions for pragmatic solutions (see Appendix 2: Selected References).

#### 6. Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development (FFHC/AD)

This unique Programme was created, already in 1959, to support the participatory development activities of NGOs with special focus on the rural poor, as well as to promote public debate and exchange on development issues. Over the past three decades the FFHC/AD Unit in FAO has built up a network of relations with NGOs operating at grassroot level in Africa, Asia and Latin America. At the request of its NGO partners, FFHC/AD carries out several activities which are complementary to those of the NGOs as well as of governments and include the following:

- Training: FFHC/AD organizes training courses for NGO staff and field workers on various aspects of participatory development, from skills training to project formulation and management, to communications and cultural forms of expression.
- Exchange programmes: FFHC/AD helps national NGOs and local people's organizations to visit and learn from each others' experiences, within and between countries.
- Networking: FFHC/AD supports NGO partners' efforts to build up networks of communication and collaboration at country and regional levels. It provides funds to enable them to meet, discuss and plan together, and to study problems and issues of common concern.
- Project support: Over US \$8 million in NGO donor assistance is currently being channelled to projects which FFHC/AD has helped partner organizations in 35 countries to formulate. At the same time, FFHC/AD works with NGOs in the South to improve the quality of their project work by assisting them to evaluate their programmes, training their staff, helping national NGOs to build more continuous links with community-based groups and giving NGOs access to FAO's technical expertise.
- NGO/Government relations: Because it is part of an inter-governmental organization and because it has won the confidence of NGOs in the South, FFHC/AD is in a good position to facilitate dialogue between governmental organizations on the one hand, and NGOs and their field workers on the other. FFHC/AD also helps to provide support and legitimacy to local groups vis-à-vis the governments of their countries.
- North/South solidarity: FFHC/AD provides a forum for dialogue and discussion among NGOs in the North and in the South about how to improve the quality and the effectiveness of their relationships. FFHC/AD also helps Northern NGOs to identify valid partners in Third World countries, and vice versa.

- NGOs and inter-governmental organizations: FFHC/AD constitutes a channel whereby the inter-governmental community can learn from the experiences and insights of NGOs in the field of participatory development.
- Information and documentation: FFHC/AD publishes two regular bulletins “Ideas and Action” (recently discontinued due to financial restrictions) and “Development Education Exchange Papers”. It maintains a documentation centre with materials of particular interest to NGOs, and provides Southern NGOs with advice on improving their own documentation work. Collection and dissemination of documents of interest to NGO field workers is also carried out by FFHC/AD staff in the regions.

The small FAO FFHC/AD team consists of seven professionals of whom four are based in the field (Accra, Addis Ababa, New Delhi and Rio de Janeiro). The Unit has full access to FAO's wealth of technical expertise and its network of representatives in 74 countries. FFHC/AD does not receive funds from FAO for field projects; It helps Southern partners to formulate projects but they are funded by Northern NGOs.

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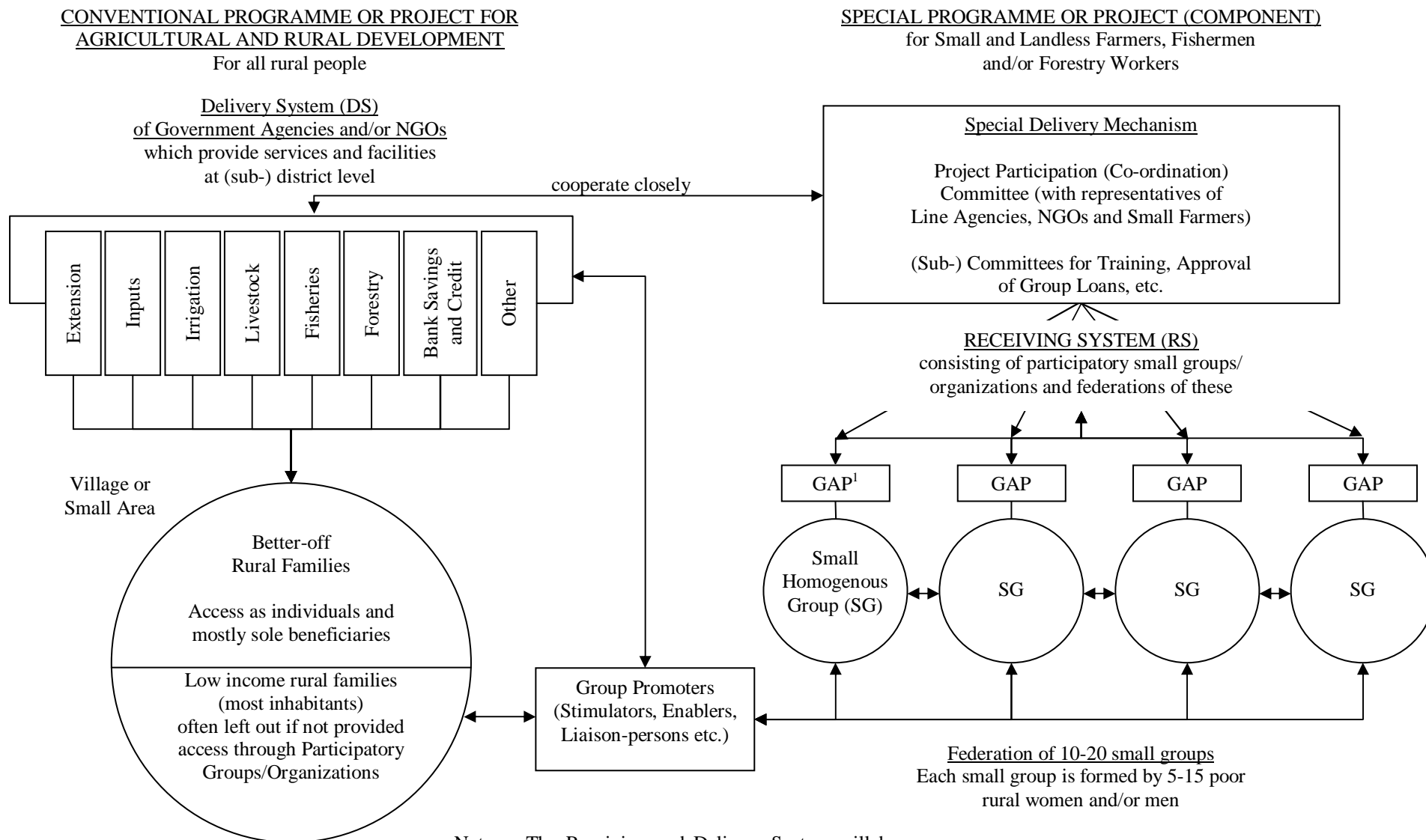
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**Figure 1 – OVERVIEW PARTICIPATORY RURAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**



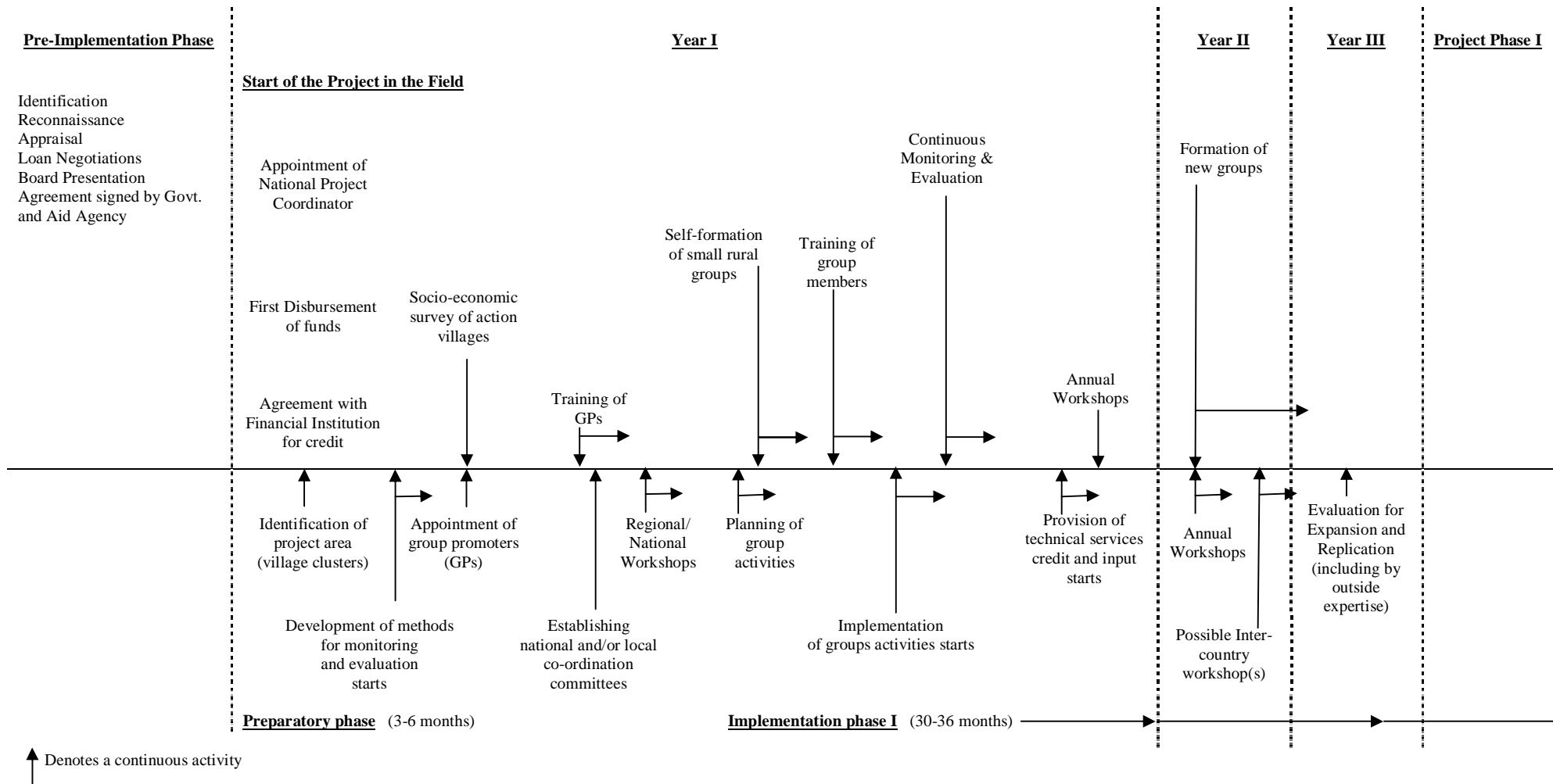
Note: The Receiving and Delivery System will become gradually a Receiving-cum-Delivery System and eventually a Local Self-Development System (see Section 5.1)

Adapted from (Source): FAO/RAPA 1981 Rome, May 1987

<sup>1</sup> GAP = Group Activity (or Production) Plan

**Figure 2 – PARTICIPATORY RURAL DEVELOPMENT (PRD) PROJECT PHASES<sup>1</sup>**

(Before Expansion Programme)



<sup>1</sup> A PRD project can either be a component of a larger agricultural, rural development or other project or a specific self-sustained project. Adapted from (Source): FAO/ESH 1981

Elements		Conventional Standard Approach	Participatory Approach
1.	Scope	Village-wide or area-wide and for all inhabitants	Rural poor identified as eligible group participants other locals participate as development supporters
2.	Agents of change	Extension workers	Group promoters; eventually indigenous facilitators and enablers
3.	Operational unit	Formal organizations with written by-laws and officers; registered with a government office	Small, informal homogenous groups; later, associations or federations of these
4.	Type of activities	Various purposes; economic, socio-cultural and/or socio-political	Income and employment raising at first, but also non-economic group activities
5.	Financing	Credit with physical collateral; or collateral-free credit according to uniform specifications	Guarantee-cum-risk fund used as a base for a credit line for loans with social instead of physical collateral; occasionally, “total” (family) credit; promotion of group liability together with group savings
6.	Government’s delivery	Piecemeal, by line departments (and/or NGOs) with some overlapping	Integrated according to specific needs and desires of groups/federations or rural poor
7.	Administrative structure	Vertical line of supervision from central to local offices	Coordinating committees at local and national levels ensure integrated approach
8.	Training	Standard training of the lecturer-student type	Participatory, ongoing, pragmatic, in-service, on job, on-site <u>learning by doing</u> including farmer-to-farmer and group-to-group training
9.	Monitoring and Evaluation (M&F)	Progress reports from local to regional to national offices	Participatory M&E including multi-level field workshops, by the rural poor, group promoters and supporting government and/or NGO personnel
10.	Data collection	“Objective” research methods	Participatory action-research
11.	Political backing	“Class-less”; programmes designed to benefit whole rural community	“Biased” towards the rural poor; preferential policies, programmes and projects

Adapted from (Source): “350 Million Rural Poor – Where do we start?” by Antonio J. Ledesma, ESCAP, Bangkok, 1980