

PART THREE

Managing a Decentralization Process

This part analyses three aspects of decentralization. The first aspect concerns the change of functions and the restructuring process of Agriculture and Rural Development ministries. In fact, the mandate of these institutions is less and less focused on production and trade and more and more concentrated on specific functions such as guidance, enforcement of rules and control.

The second aspect concerns the increasing role of the region, which is supposed to reinforce the process of State withdrawal in rural development. The process is analyzed, and, in particular, constraints and possible solutions are identified.

The third aspect concerns the role of specific rural organizations, such as Chambers of agriculture and specific actors of civil society. These actors are called to play relevant roles at the regional level and to ensure the transfer of functions that were previously State-specific functions.

Chapter 1. The Restructuration of Rural Institutions

Interventions in developing countries have increasingly sought to support public institutions in the rural sector to adapt to the new economic context and to the establishment of new relations with farmers and other actors of civil society. Partners in development have been able to define and improve methodologies, analytical instruments and models of organization (after testing them in real situations) that respond to current objectives of food security and sustainable economic and social development.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, an increasing number of countries have made requests to institutions engaged in development support. These requests have been for support in the restructuring of public institutions, and for the building of professional agricultural organizations.²⁴

The Ground Work: Redefining the Role of the State

Policies aimed at establishing market economies lead to a review of the role of the state. This is achieved through refocusing it exclusively on its public service mission and through enabling it to do so in the most cost-effective manner.

This public service mission corresponds to the following major functions:

- the guidance function: gathering of useful information for the agricultural sector, macroeconomic analysis, and forecast of the sector's development, proposals for agricultural policy, monitoring and coordination of development actions.
- the regulatory and control function: preparation and adaptation of laws and regulations seeking to encourage development, preservation of the general interest in different institutional areas, health, veterinary capacities, the quality of agricultural products, production factors and the assurance of their implementation by all the players involved.

²⁴ The following text comes from analyses that have been carried out and implemented by the rural development division of the FAO.

- natural resource conservation function: taking stock of resources, determining and implementing with citizen participation, planning for their rational development and conservation.

in the three State functions of...

1. orientation and coordination
2. regulation and control
3. preservation of natural resources

...with some precautions:

- affirmed political will for restructuration
- benefiting participation and civil society
- a total reconstruction of the institutional environment
- decentralization of powers and responsibilities
- organization of the agricultural profession and linkages
- better governance can be sufficient
- a change of attitude in the public sector
- a global approach to development

Beyond these three exclusive functions, the State has an important role to play alongside other actors, in contributing to technical support for production, technical assistance to farmers (especially through agronomic research), extension, and agricultural training.

Definition and Basic Principles

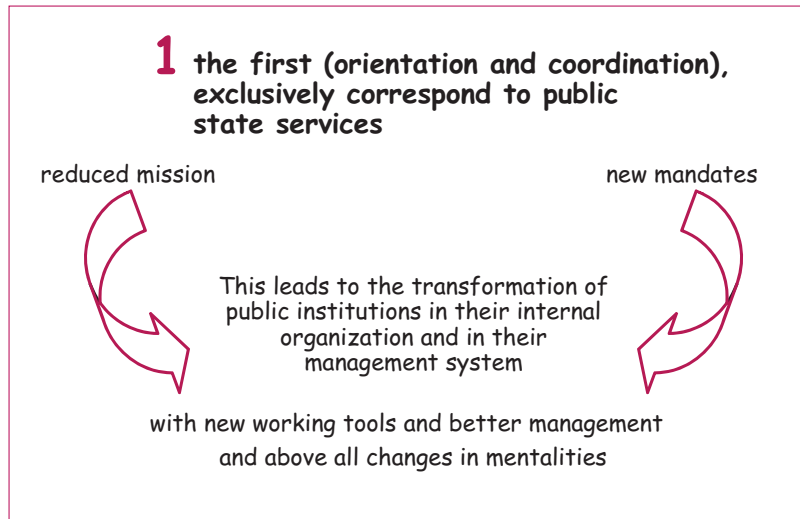
Restructuring is based on the new role of the State and it involves a complete structural transformation, including dismantling, revamping, and the creation of new types of institutions. It takes into consideration problem solving, especially personnel problems, which its implementation causes.

The underlying restructuring principles are:

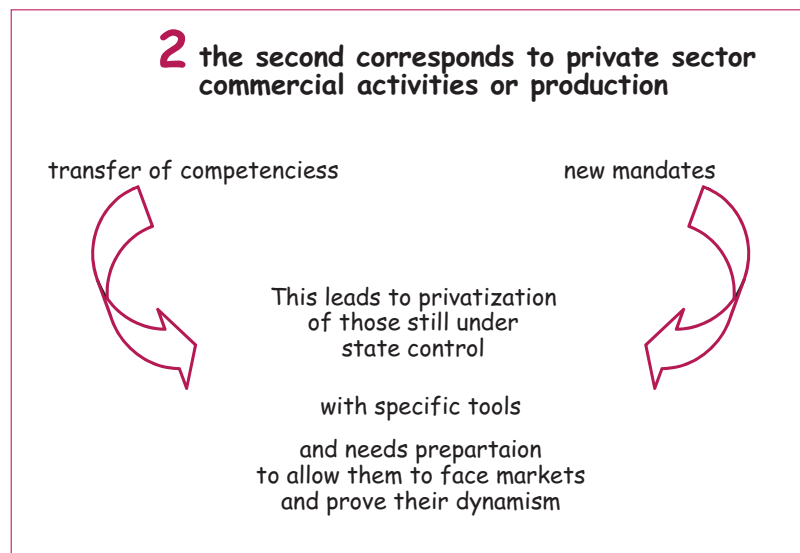
- a clear separation of public service functions from those of the private sector, the establishment of new types of relations between the two sectors based on consultations and favoring the participation of civil society in the choice and implementation of development policies;
- a general reconfiguration of the institutional landscape based on the new assignment of the State, and a greater role for representative organizations of civil society;
- decentralization of powers and responsibilities, giving local representative organizations more freedom, decision-making powers and means to carry them out;
- organizing the rural profession and its institutionalization to create an autonomous and associative sector capable of reconciling the general interest and economic efficiency;
- a change in attitude by the public sector toward actors of civil society, replacing centralized planning methods with dialogue and collaboration;
- a broad approach to development, integrating all factors (agro-ecological, human, economic, time, etc.);
- rational management of financial and human resources based on continuing evaluation of results and improvements on performance.
- a restructuration request which emanates from actors (including civil society) and is well established and structured.

The restructuring of rural development institutions is envisaged along three interdependent lines:

1. the first, which relates to the focus on public service functions, concerns the transformation of public institutions, with parallel attitude changes;



2. the second concerns the commercial or productive activities which belong to the private sector. It leads to the privatization of commercial or those types of activities still carried out by the state. It involves the preparation of personnel to compete in the market, and demonstrate dynamism;



3. the third is collaboration between the public sector and civil society, with strong participation of producer organizations. This collaboration leads to the creation of new types of institutions and enables both producer participation and the establishment of a framework for dialogue between public and private partners and the agricultural profession.



Important precautions must be taken into consideration during restructuring:

- restructuring must at all costs avoid the break down or deterioration of the provision of goods and services relating to agricultural production. This means ensuring that the form and pace of privatization make it possible to respond to producer needs and allow them to participate;
- with regard to reduction in personnel in the public sector, care must be taken on the one hand, to avoid abrupt dismissals leading to social problems, and on the other, loss of personnel having received valuable training;
- For public institutions, the risk would be to think that restructuring stops when new services are put in place. Restructuring would not be considered successful if it did not change attitudes. It will not achieve its goal if it does not bring about a change in behavior in an irreversible way, and if it does not instill management methods which favor the constant improvement of human resources, and the continuous adaptation of structures to the needs of development.

Pitfalls to be avoided

in agricultural production	avoid rupture or deterioration in the supply of goods and services by arranging necessary replacements
in managing staff who have to leave their posts	avoid the creation of social problems through straight redundancies and the loss of ready trained human potential
with public institutions	avoid the creation of human problems and foresee training, financial incentives and improvements in working conditions

Methodology for Restructuring Public Institutions

The process of restructuring takes place in three main stages:

- basic institutional analysis and the design of the master plan;
- detailed preparation of the restructuring plan;
- implementation.

Without being considered a stage as such of the process, an evaluation of the impact of restructuring on development must be undertaken two or three years after implementation, in order to make adjustments or to integrate additional inputs.

Institutional Analysis and the Design of the Restructuring Master Plan

The first stage is the basic analysis, which helps to bring out the necessary elements for the design of restructuring proposals to be submitted for discussion and decision by all actors involved.

The analysis basically includes:

- the activities of agricultural public institutions, to identify those public services which must continue to be provided by the restructured institutions, and those which must be transferred to the private sector;
- the institutional aspects of existing agricultural public services: their organization, internal and external relations, decision-making process, monitoring of implementation, human, natural and financial resource management, etc. and the evaluation of their technical capacity;
- the performance of institutions which depends largely on the capacity of their personnel and on its distribution and tasks assigned to it. Particular importance is given to knowledge of personnel, to its continuous evaluation and management, in order to improve its capacity so that it can continue to be useful. Data banks on human resources enable automatic comparisons revealing the quantitative and qualitative disparities between current personnel and the needs of restructured services. Thus, they allow the measure of disparities and to correct them by appropriate measures reassignment, training, dismissal, redeployment, and in some cases, hiring;
- Producers' evaluation of services provided by public institutions, and the nature of relations they wish to have with the latter, as well as knowledge of their needs and aspirations in terms of development support.

The three main stages

1 Institutional analysis and design of a master plan	
with the common diagnostic of current and future activities	without omitting consultation with different partners concerned
2 The preparation of a detailed restructuration plan	
with legal details	without omitting financial costs and the pace of change
the management of information and capacity building	

Restructuring proposals are designed to respond especially to production systems considered on a microeconomic scale, which take into account their diversity and that of their closest agro-ecological and socio-economic environment. They are then put in a macroeconomic context, integrating them on a regional and international scale.

After being designed, these proposals are presented and discussed at all levels before being submitted to the authorities.

Following consultation with their development partners, the authorities put together the definitive document. Informing all interested actors, including farmers, civil servants, development partners and ensuring their participation in consultations is essential as it prevents the risk of misunderstanding on the objectives of restructuring, and gains their support, which is necessary for implementation.

The overall organization of services at different levels and a preliminary general estimate of its impact are presented as a master restructuring plan. It is intended for national authorities, to allow them to make their choice after consultation with their partners.

Preparation of a Detailed Restructuring Plan

The detailed plan for restructuring is prepared on the basis of the choices made by national authorities after extensive consultations on the proposed master plan with the relevant actors, and their partners in development. It includes:

1. a reminder of the role of the State and the presentation of the total institutional set-up, indicating the position of different actors in agricultural development;
2. the details on the way structures are organized at different levels, and the legal status and the financing mechanisms of the institutions resulting from restructuring;
3. the principles related to ways of working and the type of internal and external relations, in a spirit of the decentralization of responsibilities, and producer participation to the decision-making process;
4. the assignment of the different units and the detailed description of staff profiles at all levels, in the form of standardized filing systems, describing the major activities of each position and indicating the qualification and experience required to carry out assigned functions;
5. quantitative evaluation, qualitative composition, and geographic distribution, of required workers by department;
6. an outline of the training plan for the personnel of the restructured institution and the technical assistance needed for mastering the new methodologies;
7. evaluation of the need for extra equipment and the budgets required for the effective working of the departments and for ideal working conditions for personnel. This evaluation is carried out in a deconcentrated fashion for each responsibility center;
8. the major channels of the technical and managerial information system, including the decision-making process, and the set-up of programming, monitoring, and control of implementation of activities;
9. the basic rules for streamlined management of human resources, allowing for its continuous adaptation to the requirements of the jobs to be done, continuous staff development, and improvement of working conditions and job performance;
10. human and financial implications of restructuring. The implications for human resources defined by comparing the results of analyses and evaluation of current personnel, carried out at the first stage, with the personnel needs determined at the second stage. With regard to budgets and equipment, impact is also evaluated by comparing the current resources with future needs of the restructured departments. Moreover, an evaluation of the cost of restructuring is carried out. It consists of:
 - the cost of redeployment of personnel no longer needed after restructuring;
 - the cost of putting the new structures in place, as well as that of building them.

11. the plan for implementation, established at the last stage, makes all the aspects of restructuring coherent; indicates the preliminary conditions and measures before implementation, and presents the indicative schedule of the major phases of the implementation of restructuring.

Implementing Restructuring

Institutions to be restructured can obviously not be put in charge of implementing their own restructuring. Other public institutions that need to be restructured are not recommended either to properly conduct such an operation. Therefore, it is necessary to put in place ad hoc structures that can implement the restructuring, hence avoiding bureaucracy and unjustified influences.

3 Restructuration

through specific
consultation measures

without omitting
accompanying measures
of specific areas
(Research, extension,
rural credit, etc.)

and above all avoid effects on the poorer
farmers and attempts by the richer
ones to take all the benefits

The structure set up for this purpose would be composed of political authorities and a technical body. The role of political authorities is to determine the direction of the different phases of the implementation process and to make the important decisions, especially concerning the future of personnel and what will become of privatized activities.

This authority can be a national restructuring committee composed of the ministries concerned by restructuring decisions, representatives of staff from institutions to be restructured, and representatives of the agricultural profession. This committee meets periodically to examine the reports and implementation proposals prepared by technical services.

The technical services responsible for the implementation of the restructuring plan have the role of informing the political authorities about the process, to prepare decision-making elements for their attention, and to supervise their implementation by the relevant actors. These bodies are composed of a national and several regional implementing cells, with the necessary means to decentralize the restructuring process, and to resolve the problems that restructuring entails, especially regarding personnel.

Each cell is organized into two sections:

- the section on human resources;
- the section on activity/function transfers and privatization.

The implementation of the restructuring plan requires two types of support:

- financial contribution for the expenditures that restructuring entail;
- equipment and technical assistance for putting the new organization in place.

Accompanying Measures

Restructuring cannot by itself bring about agricultural development. Its effectiveness depends on supplementary measures taken to transform the overall legal, institutional, and economic framework, in order to create a more favorable environment for agricultural development. Among the measures that must be taken to support the restructuring process, it is important to note:

- the reform of legislation on professional agricultural organizations and associations;
- the establishment of an agricultural credit system capable of mobilizing rural savings, to be administered by rural producers, and responding to the needs of different producer categories;
- the restructuring of agronomic research, to better take producer problems into consideration;
- the reform of agricultural education and training; including the continuous adaptation of program contents, methods and modules in response to rural development needs;
- the restructuring all public institutions, civil service reform and the reform of the way budgets are formulated and implemented.

How to choose between five forms of Decentralization

Excerpts from the document on the Reform and Decentralization of the agricultural services, A Methodological Framework (FAO series: Agricultural Policies and Economic Development, No 7 Rome 2004).

Appropriate choices

appropriate options

- 1 the deconcentration of public administration
- 2 delegation to public or private organisms
- 3 devolution
- 4 partnerships with civil society organizations
- 5 privatisation

...but some key points:

- a clear separation of public and private functions
- a prior study on the effectiveness of different options
- political feasibility study for decentralization
- rigor in resource management
- the search for better service provision
- less high supply costs
- capacity on the part of new linkages to assume transfers
- a well planned approach and an appropriate pace

Is deconcentration an appropriate solution?

Under which conditions?

- 1 The administration wishes to keep control over some or all services including financing
- 2 The centralization of service provision turns in to real economies of scale
- 3 The differences in local needs require flexibility

...but some key points:

- determine the competencies to be deconcentrated (which functions, which levels, which follow-up modalities)
- analyze capacity building needs at all levels
- identify ways of maintaining service provision without disturbing the receivers

Is delegation a justified solution?

under which conditions?

- 1 The administration wishes to conserve the necessary control over service provision including subsidies
- 2 The delegated organism is more flexible in managing human resources, political choices and administrative procedures

...but some key points:

- prior consultation among interested parties
- existing organisms and their capacities (human and financial) to ensure the delegated services
- the creation of new structures and their profitability
- acceptable procedures for service receivers

Is devolution an appropriate solution?

under which conditions?

- 1 The central administration wants territorial communities to be in charge of certain services
- 2 No possibility of an economy of scale
- 3 Beneficiaries of service provision are the main payers

...but some key points:

- which functions and which levels?
- are there conflicts of interest between partners concerned by devolution?
- how can good quality services be ensured?
- are financial procedures clearly defined?

Is partnership with civil society an appropriate solution

under which conditions?

- 1 The central administration would like civil society organizations to control certain services
- 2 Local organisations are present and accepted
- 3 Beneficiaries are ready to pay for these services or finance their associations

...but some key points:

- the promotion and encouragement of associations
- clear definition of partnership rules
- accompanying and strengthening measures
- an a posteriori monitoring and control system

Is privatization the preferable solution?

under which conditions?

- 1 The conditions for private production are possible
- 2 Market size is sufficient for national production or with external financing
- 3 Market actors are present and reliable enough

...but some key factors:

- progressive capital transfer mechanisms
- calls for tender, preferential sales or auctioning
- rent and management contracts
- protection mechanisms for employees and excluded clients

Some examples of Institutional Restructuring

Restructuring of agricultural institutions using this method with the support of FAO can be classified according to three cases, the one of Benin, the one of the Ivory Coast and the one of Togo.²⁵

1. The case of Benin

The restructuring of the Ministry of Rural Development and Cooperative Action (MDRAC) in Benin was the first of its kind using this methodology. It was prepared by FAO in 1990 and was implemented from 1991 to 1995 with the assistance of several partners, including the World Bank.²⁶

It limited itself to the Ministry of Rural Development and Cooperative Action (MDRAC) and only indirectly affected professional agricultural organizations. These were constituted in this case by the only pre-cooperative groups of which only those of cotton producers had a real existence and an activity limited to cotton.

MDRAC was made up of Central Services and Centers of Regional Initiative in Rural Development (CARDER) at the regional level. In addition to its mission of public service, it exercised in a quasi - monopolistic way the upstream and downstream activities of cotton production. In collaboration with the State Cotton Company (SONAPRA), it controlled the provision of inputs to cotton producers, marketing and transportation, rural cotton credits, as well as mechanical repair activities and rural works. MDRAC was also solely responsible for extension and support to farmer groups.

The agricultural profession was poorly structured. Its organization was limited to the local level in the form of producers' groups acting under the guidance of CARDER with very poor farmer participation.

Strongly centralized, the MDRAC did not succeed in accomplishing any of its public or private service

activities, and its operating cost was very high.

The restructuring re-defined the functions of MDRAC - that then became Ministry of Rural Development (MDR) on its solely public service mission. All other activities were privatized and some of them were taken up by staff leaving the public sector to take up activities in repair shops, transportation or rural works.

Activities regarding credit, marketing and input supply were entrusted to producers groups in direct relation with the cotton export company.

The function related to extension and advice in organization and management is shared between CARDER and the producers groups with the participation, whenever possible, of other partners such as NGOs. In any case, the programs and the assessments for this function are conducted with producer participation.

The services of the MDRAC, now MDR, were reorganized, giving more importance to the local and regional levels. The heavy structures of statistical analysis and forecasting were strengthened at the regional and central levels. A Human Resources department was created to ensure continuous training of personnel and its adequacy to the evolutionary needs of the services, and to help orient agricultural teaching toward the needs of rural development.

The restructuring entailed the departure of about 3 000 agents from the public function. Those that wanted it benefited from support that enabled them to set-up private activities. A Guidance and Advice Office was created in every region so that problems could be solved locally.

This restructuring had very positive effects on the Ministry by redefining its role and organization in a more decentralized way, while giving the personnel new and more appropriate activities. It also modified

²⁵ The main other cases of restructuring prepared with the support of FAO are:

- Similar cases in Benin: Burkina Faso, Sudan, Cambodia with particularities and to a certain extent Mali.
- Case of the Ivory Coast: Senegal
- Case of Togo: Haiti

²⁶ -UNDP - FAO/BEN/89/024 project in preparation of restructuring CARDER (1989-1990).

- World Bank -FAO/UTF/BEN/090/BEN project in preparation of restructuring central services of RAC (1990).

- World Bank project of Restructuring agricultural services PRSAS (1990-1995).

- UNDP - FAO/BEN/90/007 project in support of the implementation of restructuring rural development institutions (1990-1992).

its relations with farmers by encouraging participation and autonomy for their professional organizations.

However, it was not fully implemented, particularly regarding the recommendations on human resources. Thus, it could not fundamentally change the methods and internal working relationships in the Ministry. The administrative and financial mechanisms remained subject to general public service and finance regulations, which also require deep reforms.

The agricultural profession remained outside of the restructuring process. The cotton producer groups certainly saw their roles and responsibilities increase with more autonomy. However, their activities remain little diversified varied and subject to the cotton export company, of which they are more or less the and executing arm. They do not participate in company matters; which prevents them from being informed and voicing their views on cotton marketing and its results. The other non-cotton groups stayed very weak and are poorly structured.

In spite of the creation by the administration of an Agriculture Chamber, there are no truly representative autonomous institutions of agriculturists, capable of voicing the farmers' viewpoints and enabling their participation in the formulation and implementation at all levels of agricultural policies and programs.

In conclusion, this restructuring in Benin had incontestable positive effects insofar as it redefined the role of the Ministry, improved its organization and its working methods, gave more autonomy to agriculturist groups and transferred commercial and production activities to the private sector.

On the other hand it remained limited because it did not touch the agricultural profession directly. This organization therefore needs to be reviewed and strengthened.

It has not ended in that some improvements still have be carried out at the very heart of the services of the Ministry and reforms of rules governing public finances.

An assessment of the results of this restructuring and the complementary initiatives to prepare and implement is more than advisable at this stage.

2. The case of the Ivory Coast

The case of Ivory Coast differs from the one of Benin in that it concerned not only the services of the Ministry of Agriculture but also the main rural development companies (SATMACI, SODEVI, SODEFEL, SODEPRA, Palm - Industry, Office of Seeds and Plans, etc..).

Besides the restructuring of departmental and regional agricultural services, the creation of a specialized institution was proposed for agricultural extension and organizational management to farmers and to their associations.

This proposal met the need to regroup extension and counsel services dispersed in the services of the Ministry and rural development organizations, whose action was little effective and expensive, in spite of the supports brought by the World Bank project on agricultural extension (PNVA).

The restructuring plan prepared by FAO, with UNDP financial support and in concordance with the World Bank was developed in the framework of the World Bank project.²⁷

It succeeded in reorganizing the departmental and regional services of agriculture. Their new role was defined along the lines of public service as in the case of in Benin.

The function of extension and advice was given to a new institution called the National Agency for Support to the Rural Development (ANADER).²⁸

This Agency is a mixed status company in which the State participates, together with producers groups, private tradesmen, inputs suppliers and agricultural product exporters. Its organization is decentralized at regional level to enable agriculturists, public and private local actors in agricultural development, to participate in project formulation, use of resources and the assessment of results.

²⁷ -UNDP - FAO/IVC/92/001S projects and 92/005 in preparation of restructuring plan for support institutions in agricultural development and conditions for its implementation.

- UNDP - FAO/IVC/93/007 project of support for the implementation of restructuring.

- PNASA, national project in support to agricultural services mainly financed World Bank and other partners.

²⁸ ANADER: setting up beginning 1994 and supported by the PNASA project.

This restructuring entailed the dissolution of several state companies whose actions were dispersed, even contradictory and were largely ineffective, such as, SODEVI, SODEFEL, SATMACI, and SODEPRA. The ANADER benefited from part of their heritage and human resources.

The creation of the ANADER is the main difference with the case of Benin where the agricultural advice function remained in the Ministry. It constitutes progress in relation to the case of Benin in the sense that it offers producers the possibility to participate in the management of the agricultural counsel function with a greater decentralization of responsibilities.

The evaluation of its application in reality remains to be seen and the progress accomplished from year to year needs to be measured in terms of decentralization and participation of the farmers in influencing and controlling ANADER activities at all levels.

The agricultural profession that was not part of the field of restructuring is in the same situation as in Benin, with the same need of structuring, autonomy and strengthening.²⁹

The case of Togo

Togo is the first country where restructuring was done according to the method indicated in this report. It concerned the Ministry of Agriculture and the agricultural profession simultaneously.³⁰

The proposals made by FAO concerned three complementary aspects:

- the restructuring of central and regional services of the Ministry on the basis of their new role;

- the creation of a mixed statute institution responsible for agricultural advice (ICAT), similar to the ANADER in Ivory Coast ;
- the organization and set-up of a network of Chambers of Agriculture made up of decentralized autonomous regional chambers and an umbrella association of these chambers to facilitate the exchanges cooperation between them to the national level.

The huge progress accomplished in the case of Togo in comparison to Benin and to the Ivory Coast is that the agricultural profession was taken into account. The profession needed to be institutionally represented and have the right to participate in policies and programs in agricultural development at all levels.

This representation of the profession materialized in the creation, by the Law 97-12 of 09/07/97, of the decentralized professional network of chambers of agriculture, founded with the farmers through a series of dialogues and workshops from the local to the national level.

This network corresponds to the principles defined in the report "Agricultural Chambers: Representative Model and Participatory Tool for Farmers". It was set- up according to modalities indicated in this same report. It is at the final stage of its installation with elections that must take place in December 1997.³¹

Togo undertook the application of this general restructuring during the year 1997. This experience, the most comprehensive of its kind, deserves all necessary support and an attentive follow-up to act as a complete example to other countries of the region and beyond.

²⁹ Organization of the agricultural profession is limited to pre - cooperative producers' groups whose situation is the same to Benin. As in Benin, a Chamber of agriculture requiring deep restructuring to really become professional, to represent the farmers in their diversity and be completely decentralized and autonomous.

³⁰ FAO-TCP/TOG/4451 project for preparation of restructuring plan in rural institutions, 1995. This plan proposes the restructuring of services from Agriculture Ministry, the creation of ICAT and the organization of Chambers of Agriculture' network. The first two relative aspects to the Ministry and ICAT are taken over for their realization by World Bank's PNASA project implemented in 1997.

³¹ The preparation of the Chambers of Agriculture' network was made with the support of AO/TCP/6611 project of the same name. This project that defined the mission, organization and operation of the Chambers of Agriculture as well as the necessary support prepared all its proposals in consultation with farmers in the framework of local dialogues along with regional and national workshops.

Chapter 2. Territorial Decentralization

Decentralization is often approached in **institutional terms** and affects to the balance between government levels (from national to local) or in certain cases between sectors (public institutions and civil society organizations). Decentralization mechanisms primarily concern decision-making power and are **information based** (management and share of). The RED-IFO model follows this principle since it constitutes the backbone of decentralization analysis.

In our approach, institutions are not simply structures with certain responsibilities. They are perceived as a **system** made up of interdependent elements. This system has its functioning logic, it has exchange mechanisms, capable of reproduction and the system can also be subject to malfunctioning. In these conditions, decentralization can be approached through considering other **flows** than those related to information even if they are the main ones. Indeed, it is possible to examine financial flows to analyze the degree of decentralization. **Fiscal Decentralization** focuses on just that. This is considered the most advanced degree of decentralization since it is in the transfer of resources that the independence of decentralized structures can be judged.

Questions about territories

Some basic rules:

- institutional forms are linked to places
- inter-actor relations concern different institutional levels
- decentralization is about managing territories
- management is done collectively
- the size of the territory varies according
- the approach is always similar
- participation, sharing, negotiation between actors
- partnerships and maximization of potentialities

...three dimensions are envisaged

- 1 evolution of the process
- 2 obstacles and needs in local development
- 3 possible solutions

Another important dimension is that of **Territorial Decentralization**. In the majority of cases, the dimensions mentioned above could fit into a space or territory where institutional relations are established between levels, structures, flows and decision sharing. All modalities related to decentralization could be linked to the management of a territory.

By territory, we mean any space (of any size) managed by a group. It can be an agricultural perimeter, a municipality, a district or a province, or a small region. The modalities of the analytical and management approach can be adapted according to the size in question, but the principle remains the same: shared

diagnosis of actors and the institutional environment, historical trajectory, negotiation on existing constraints and feasible solutions, activities aimed at improving certain situations, and at valorizing potentialities of the territories and their peoples.

The Role of the Region

- At the institutional environment level
- At the partnership level
- At the regional process level

We have divided the work into 3 series of questions as regards the definition of the role of the Region in a decentralization process

- What are the present developments?
- What are the obstacles and needs to support the local development?
- What are the possible solutions to overcome these obstacles and to answer these needs?

What are the current developments?

- a) Regarding State withdrawal: in what way can the current process of State withdrawal constitute linkage opportunities for civil society and / or a better service to producers? Are there problems in some services because of the vacuum created by withdrawal? Has this resulted in a mobilizing process at local level? What characterizes these processes? Can one speak of a broader local development process following State withdrawal?
- b) Concerning decentralization: what are the main functions assigned to the decentralized entities? In what way can the existing decentralization processes constitute opportunities for local development? What are its limits? What are its risks?
- c) At the level of civil society organizations: are the existing civil society organizations better prepared for a decentralized and local development approach? What type of partnership exists between civil society organizations in a same territory? What are the relationship problems between the local governments and civil society organizations?
- d) How is the cultural dimension of development taken into account in civil society organizations?
- e) What is their capacity to mobilize financial resources (local savings, financial partnerships with institutions, international support, NGOs, etc.)?

What are the constraints and needs?

- a) The new institutional environment and its functioning: what are the needs concerning jurisdiction?
- b) What type of support is preferable on the State's part so that the process becomes participatory?
- c) How to go from paternalism to partnership? What type of awareness and training needs to be implemented to achieve this?
- d) How does the problem present itself at different levels: local, regional, national? How can a link be ensured between these levels?

What are the possible solutions to go beyond these limits and answer these needs?

- a) Solutions for partnership between the State and civil society: What types of solutions are foreseeable regarding the partnership between the State and civil society? Institutional solutions (such as the creation of local partnership structures) human resource solutions (awareness and training). Are local development associations and agencies a possible answer?
- b) Territorial approach for development: is the territorial approach for development a reality? Can it become a reality? Can GTV approaches developed over the last 10 years be a starting point for a territorial approach?

The Three Levels of Questions

A. How can Decentralization be Facilitated by the Institutional Environment?

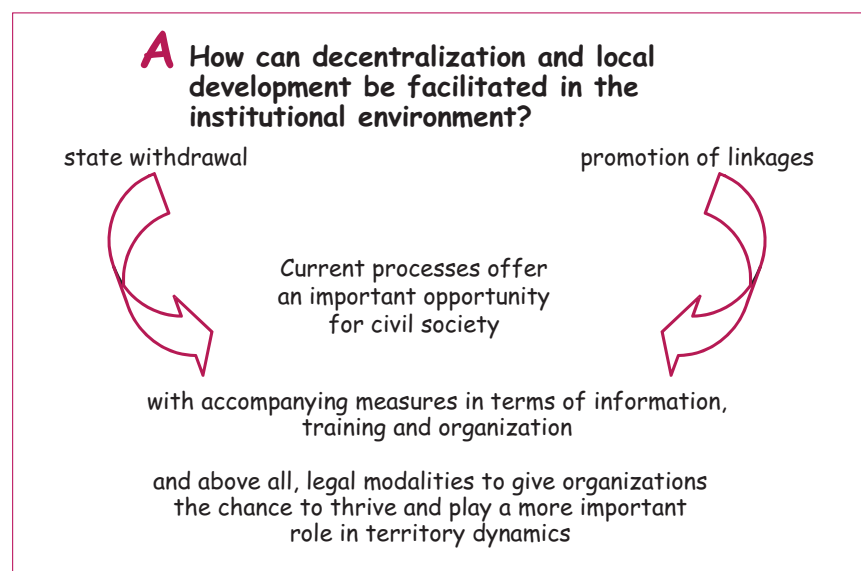
I – Current Developments

a) At State Withdrawal Level

Withdrawal processes are essentially about activities related to production, commercialization, transformation and work implementation, which do not usually fall under exclusive public service missions. These processes mostly appear in the framework of deep reforms and are achieved to the benefit of those operators, traders, producer organizations, etc. who are inclined to or capable of ensuring better effectiveness and efficiency.

Withdrawal processes offer linkage opportunities for civil society.

- They concentrate on the harmonious pursuit of activities for as long as they are necessary, while instituting new initiatives and transferring expertise to those taking over the activities (in this case producers organizations) through training, and by following a cautious and if needed stepwise process. In Benin, for example, the transfer of the input management to producer organizations was spread over four years, with the implementation of a suitable training program to the benefit of the members of the those organizations.
- They enable the emergence of a dynamic private sector by supporting liberalization measures.
- The redefinition of the role of the State on public service missions, concomitant to withdrawal, enables it to better support rural areas. It also encourages growth in productivity and incomes, and hence makes the State more capable of facing material and financial needs that imply the taking over of those activities in which the State disengaged itself.
- State withdrawal to the benefit of producer organizations generates additional collective income, hence reinforcing their self-financing capacity regarding collective communal infrastructure capacity for better management.



Problems have emerged when the State withdraws itself from an activity without handing over preparation or without ensuring that it happens smoothly. For example, in the case of Benin, withdrawal of the Regional Action Centers for Rural Development from rural engineering works led to the emergence of only one private enterprise that did not have the necessary resources to face all the existing demand.

When initial measures are taken, State withdrawal mobilizes rural communities more easily. Due to substantial gains expected in the activities involved, mobilization sometimes creates impatience at community level. Caution in the withdrawal process has in most cases given way to a structuring dynamic inside candidate organizations which to meet the requirements.

Incipient evidence of local development is visible at the level of economic interest groups, which democratically decide to achieve communal infrastructure (repairing of tracks, construction of stores, schools and health centers, etc.) using non distributed collective incomes. However these actions are selective and circumstantial. They do not fit into a coherent and coordinated framework due to insufficient structuring of the groups concerned who do not have any necessary resources for programming of activities and promoting real local development.

b) In terms of Decentralization

Existing decentralization processes are of different scopes and are currently at different stages of development. Generally speaking, the regional level is made responsible for planning, programming, regulation, and implementation and follow-up, whereas the lower level is entrusted with the implementation of programs and natural resource management.

Existing decentralization processes offer opportunities for local development by reinforcing democracy and creating favorable conditions for local communities to become responsible for their own development through increased participation in identification of their needs as well as in the programming and implementation of actions.

The limits of these processes are essentially in the non-preparedness of communities to exercise their powers, because they lack human, technical and financial resources, and because of sociological problems.

These processes imply serious risks of monopolization or domination by local elites or by the sometimes-retrograde traditional powers that have been able to grasp a certain level of leadership at various levels.

c) At Civil Society Level

Today, most civil society organizations have a professional, economic or political character and increasingly enjoy recognition of the authorities to the benefit of the democratization processes. They participate in public debate and are widespread with differing levels of development in most countries.

With some exceptions (e.g. the National rural people consultation council that became extremely powerful in Senegal in decision-making and the implementation of programs of interest to them), civil society organizations (rural producer organizations in particular) mostly lack maturity, are not well structured enough and do not have the necessary resources to reach their objectives.

As an asset, these organizations are formed in the context of democratization and liberalism, often generated by the valorization of various countries' strengths, and sometimes supported by the international community. However, a number of them are limited in their capacity to carry out the role of real counter-power to authorities for the above-mentioned reasons.

II – Obstacles and needs

Decentralization and local development initially assume a strong political will and must take shape in a clear institutional environment, without vacuums or conflicts. Their success is conditioned by an appropriate *deconcentration* of services at regional and local levels and emergence at all levels of well-structured civil society organizations. In terms of needs to be satisfied for the achievement of decentralization and real local development, the following elements can be considered:

a) *Jurisdiction and Legislation*

- The need for clear legal texts on decentralization showing the different levels and their respective expertise, as well as resources enabling them to function effectively.
- The need for applicable tenure laws that take into account the countries political, economic and sociological realities.
- The need for documents favorable to the emergence of civil society organizations that have real autonomy

Apart from certain exceptions noticed in a few countries, legal documents exist but are not applied because they are not relevant to current conditions or are ignored or disapproved of by citizens.

b) *Training*

This involves making local governments and civil society organizations capable of efficiently participating in local development while improving their organization, programming, management, communication and follow-up expertise.

c) *Information*

Information for civil society must be provided through all channels (written, oral and televised press) and be accessible to all, which assumes adequate community literacy, creation and strengthening of rural radios with programs adapted to the needs of target groups. Information must focus on extension of legislative and authorized texts difficult to apply due to citizens' ignorance.

d) *Organization*

Local governments must benefit from resource support at all levels to be able to take on their missions effectively.

III – Possible solutions

Reforms undertaken in different countries show more or less advanced experiences, which give indications on how to successfully overcome problems. For example:

- the land law of Senegal, dated 1964, enabled the State to hand over the management of the lands in rural zone to “Communautés Rurales” through the rural counsel that ensures the assignment to operators. Some conflicts naturally exist between legitimacy of the traditional system that has not entirely disappeared, and the legality of the modern system, needs to be improved with sociological factors in mind;
- the agrarian and fundamental reorganization in Burkina Faso, which has application difficulties because of it overlapping the traditional land rights regime. To overcome these difficulties, traditional chiefs as well as representatives of civil society have been involved in the reappraisal of the related law;

- laws governing farmers' organizations in various countries, some of which need to be updated to guarantee higher institutional autonomy;
- training actions often taken in the framework of projects that restructure agricultural services in the various countries, for the benefit of farmers' organizations as well as for the benefit of agricultural service agents, making them more capable of supporting producers in organization, management, programming and follow-up evaluation;
- the experience of rural radios, which must be generalized with programs in local languages discussing questions of importance for local communities. Other types of support are possible such as literacy of local citizens in their own language.

With regard to the legislative framework, it is indispensable to fill institutional vacuums and review various texts with application problems in view of the adoption of objective conditions in various countries. Extension of these texts at citizens' level must also be ensured.

B. How can Decentralization and Local Development be facilitated in terms of Local Partnerships and Participation?

I – Current developments

National and international environments have favored State withdrawal and decentralization since the end of the 1980s. This is shown by the following factors:

a) *At the Local Level*

- GTV approaches exist and have made some progress.
- Local groups exist and others are forming amongst partners with similar interests (associations, cooperatives, townships).
- The implication of civil society associations in local development processes is increasingly strong.
- The associative movement is spreading and diversifying, and is increasingly interested in local development.
- There is a tendency towards professionalizing the associative and cooperative movement.

b) *At a more General Level*

- An increasing interest by authorities and financial partners in participatory approaches and local development.
- A tendency toward multi-sectoral approaches.
- An increasingly strong movement of regional and national producer federations, representing a strong lobbying and consultation capacity at national level.
- An increasing interest in rural development by city-dwellers, resulting in the creation of local development associations in rural areas.
- Direct cooperation is set up between producer organizations, townships (twinning), cooperatives, associations, etc.



II – Limitations

In spite of this generally positive outlook one has to note that:

- local partnerships still remains weak or non-existent;
- territorial approaches to development remain few;
- intervention capacities for cooperative and associative movement remain limited.

III – Obstacles and needs

- Townships and municipalities do not necessarily have the necessary resources and their capacities to mobilize local resources are limited.
- Little access to financing and notably to State subsidies, credits and to individual contributions. These obstacles are bound to the legal frameworks of concerned parties, their capacity to formulate projects and negotiate and their level of knowledge of the institutional environment.
- Insufficient management capacities, that is poor working resources and shortage of qualified personnel.
- Lack of infrastructure for human resource placement in necessary activities at the local level.
- The organization of the civil society is confronted with politicization and blanket solutions.
- Attitude of distrust towards the types of organization in civil society in relation to a lack of transparency and to some practices contrary to the associative and cooperative spirit.
- This distrust towards the types the civil society organization also exists with administration executives. This often stems from the lack of transparency of some practices which are contrary to the cooperative spirit.
- More generally, lack of partnership culture, including within government administrations.
- Lack of transparency and clarity in consultation forums and government administrations.
- Some donor approaches do not allow project participants to express their well-thought out demand to them.

- The acceptance of this attitude by the national authorities for reasons external to the projects (e.g. national budgets and payment balance).
- The tendency to want to take advantage of available funding without previously verifying real needs.

IV – Possible solutions

1. Broad actions

- Strengthen democracy and freedom of speech at the local level.
- Encourage local initiatives and collective expression about needs and projects common to the local level.
- Take into account local needs in regional or national programs.
- Facilitate access to financing resources for local participants.
- Reinforce mobilization of local financing resources.
- Encourage transparency and partnership spirit.
- Strengthen solidarity between institutions and implementing people at the local level.
- Promote professionalism in grassroots organizations.
- Ensure NGOs participation in local development projects.
- Enable civil society components to know each other and to get know.
- Diffuse and development the associative and cooperative spirit.
- Sensitize and train executives on partnership development and participatory approach.
- Work towards changes in executives' mentalities.
- Ensure stability for executives on national and local structures.

2. Concrete Solutions

a) *Improve information for local actors*

- Introduce accounting and management procedures likely to ensure better transparency for local actors.
- Develop media implementation in rural environments (rural radios, functional literacy).

b) *Reinforce Solidarity and Exchanges of Experiences*

- Encourage collaboration between entities with common interests at the local level and between the different levels (local, regional, national).
- Encourage partnerships between organizations of different sectors (examples: environment, hygiene and health, literacy, etc.) and their counterparts in different countries.
- Exchange experiences and visits between actors of different countries on local development and its' financing.

c) *Improve expertise*

- Promote professionalism in associations by encouraging permanent teams.
- Formulate and set-up training programs to benefit associations, cooperatives and townships in project formulation, management, knowledge of institutional and legal environments, communication and negotiation.

- Ensure greater responsibilities and stronger engagement by executives, while taking into account incentive and filed experience while creating conditions for long-term partnership.
- Create awareness and train executives in new approaches to local development.

d) Introduce new means of Intervention and Financing

- Review collaboration modalities to facilitate expression and accounting of local demand with financiers.
- Encourage the emergence of local initiative and projects in local development using financing towards the strengthening of communication, awareness, training, information and exchange of experiences.

C. How can Decentralization be facilitated at Regional Level?

I – Recent developments

The review of the country situation shows that the present regional organization is the result of centralism inherited from colonization, of local appropriation. More recently, restructuring of rural areas has experienced marked tendencies favoring regionalization, as shown in the strategic orientations of different countries.

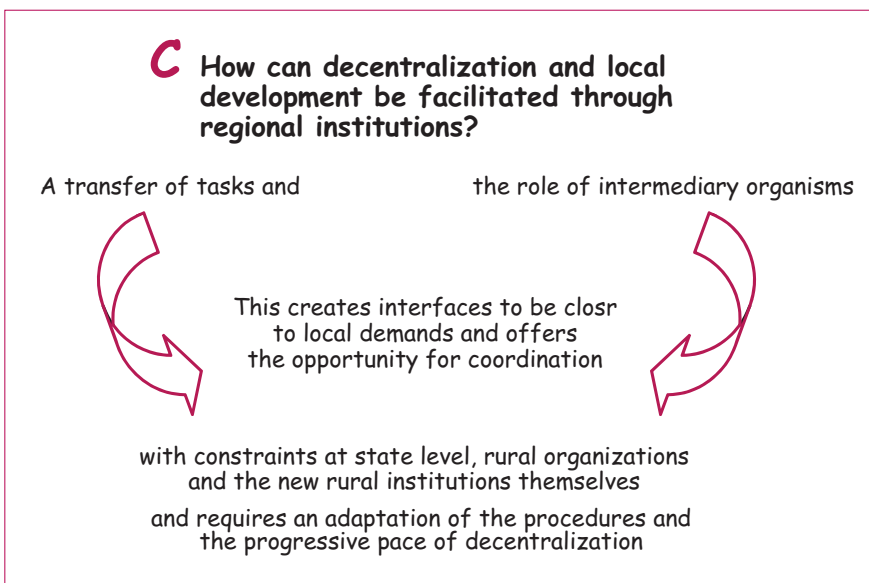
a) Origin of Decentralization Process

There are multiple factors that influence the way the decentralization process takes place such as concern over State withdrawal from certain functions, along with internal and external pressures, financial problems, increased implication of citizens, etc.

b) Objectives of the Regional Interface

Contrary to what happens at the central and local levels, it appears that because of the recent character of regionalization experiences, their objectives, modalities and results are presently less known. While partially disengaging the central level, they aim to reinforcing the local level within the specific context of each country.

c) Structuring of Rural Areas



In the institutional environment and according to the way countries have evolved, the limit between regional and local levels is not always clear. In some countries, administrative structures or technical support will have a reduced territorial coverage whereas in others, they could call on the regional level. Under these conditions, a sub-regional level can be distinguished. Just as within the local level and in order to differentiate townships village for example, there will be local and micro – local levels.

II - Roles of the regional interface

a) *There are four types of functions in these different Regional entities:*

1. those representing central services and administrations in the regions and are therefore directly involved in the process of State withdrawal;
2. those representing citizens and producers, which are concerned by the emergence of civil society;
3. those related to the coordination of the regional level per se, which aims at strengthening the role of the region;
4. those capitalizing from experiences and methods at the regional level.

b) *Limitations of the Interface and Possible Solutions*

The first limitation of this new institutional distribution is marked by the concern of national cohesion to avoid risks of federalism and the State's disintegration. Other limits can be analyzed as being constraints in the framework of a better operation in these different regional proceedings.

Main identified constraints

A - Constraints linked to the State's operation and its support services

1. Habits inherited from centralism
2. Frequent changes in institutions, programs and people
3. Sharing of powers between the central and regional levels.

B - Constraints related to the emergence of the civil society

1. Weakness of the private sector
2. Social behaviors
3. Weak capacity to manage new functions.

C - Other operating constraints in regional proceedings

1. Origin of the process
2. Non-adapted or non-existent legal framework
3. Cost and financing of the process.

III – Possible solutions

To overcome these different constraints, the following proposals are put forward. They assume the existence of a democratic regime, a firm political will, awareness and strong citizen's adherence. Finally, such a process can only be formulated in the framework of a permanent consultation between partners for joint preparation and implementation.

■ Regarding habits inherited from centralism

A stepwise process is necessary in the implementation of decentralization to allow appropriation of its mechanisms. The missions and mandates of the central structures such as the new regionalized entities must be adapted to the new context while staff must have a workable framework favorable to the new procedures. Likewise, adequate work tools and training are to be foreseen.

Particular attention must be given to information of all the actors and partners in order for them to participate in the different stages of these processes, more especially in the actual conceptualization of decentralization.

- **Regarding frequent changes concerning institutions, programs and people**

Continuity in the processes is needed. Hence, the functioning of technical entities should be independent from the political arena. Furthermore, the introduction of a results-based evaluation system would ensure better stability for technical positions. The multiplicity and frequent changes of strategic executives should be avoided since they are a source of disruption in the progress of these services ex. PNLCD, PAFT, PNGRN, PNAE, national plans, etc.

- **Regarding power sharing between central and regional levels**

Grant higher autonomy to decentralized entities with a progressive transfer of responsibilities including financial aspects and types of budgetary allocations. Offer attractive conditions along with career valorization.

- **Regarding the weakness of the private sector**

The hand over is made difficult by the fact that often, the private sector is not present or because there is a lack of expertise and financial resources. It is important to encourage the emergence of an effective and dynamic private sector using favorable actions (legal framework, incitement, regional preference, training and access to credits, etc.).

- **Regarding the risks of appropriation of power by some groups**

Ensure better follow-up of the regional level by the central power in order to reduce this risk.

- **Regarding weak management capacity in new functions**

A clearer and more precise definition of the different partners' roles would enable better understanding of the needs and organize appropriate training programs. Sometimes associations and NGOs carry out the role of interface at national and regional levels.

- **Regarding constraints bound to the origin of the processes**

Since an imposed process is more difficult to implement, more efforts will be needed to ensure extensive dissemination of information through for example, use of rural radio, participation of partners in decentralization exercises, etc. It is recommended to reinforce the consultation and harmonization between internal and external intervening parties.

- **Regarding the absence or inappropriateness of legal frameworks**

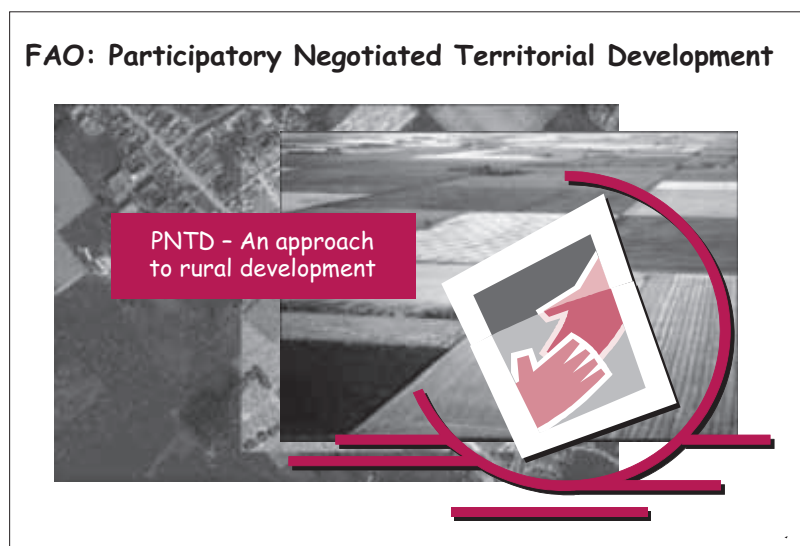
Review the texts, adapt them, complete them and create conditions favorable to their application.

- **Regarding the costs of the process and financing problems**

When the policy has been jointly defined the State and local entities can be engaged in the financing of its application according to the framework of contracts and conventions agreed between these different partners.

An example of Territorial Decentralization

Excerpt from: Participatory Negotiated Territorial Development (DTPN), FAO 2005



Why use a territorial approach?



To reduced asymmetries and induced power through access and legal control of resources, information and capacities.



To stimulate and /or initiate change processes and ensure their assimilation.



To support socially legitimate agreements by involving all actors and by supporting their voluntary commitment and their appropriation of the development process.

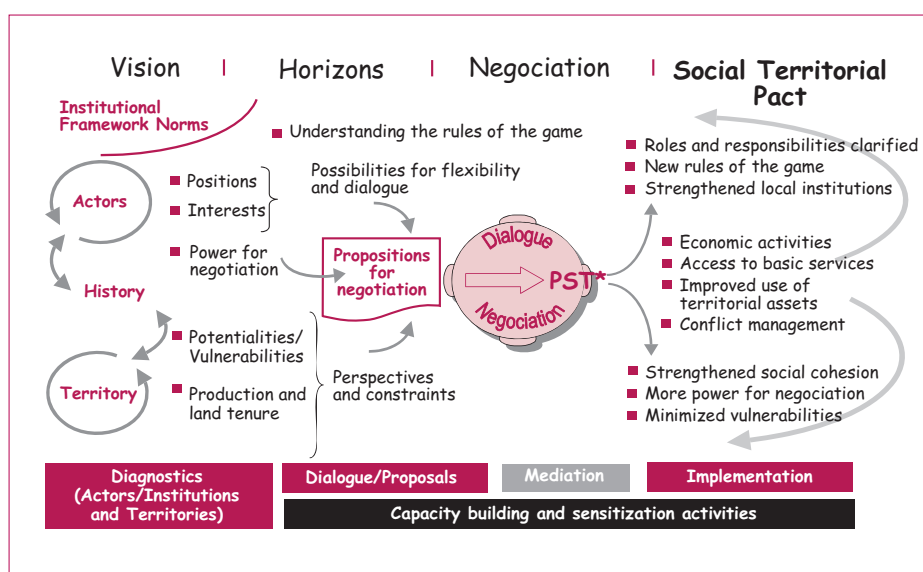
What are the basic principals?

Coherent and relevant, to be effective and efficient keeping in mind the availability of resources.

Iterative and progressive, to allow reconsideration of a given problem and formulation of new hypotheses, analyses or evaluations to re-launch dialogue and to result in agreement negotiation

Flexible and evolving, in time and space with continued adaptation to changes or cultural, social, context, etc.

Learning process, the methodological approach is not results orientated but focuses on the sustainable reestablishment of social dialogue.



Horizons

- 1 Support actors to conceive coherent and feasible plans for the future development of their territory.
- 2 Help actors to be conscious of all main issues on their territory.
- 3 Encourage the formulation of proposals for territory development, as a basis for negotiation.
- 4 Organize a negotiating table that considers the chances of flexibility of each partner, their openness to dialogue and the power to negotiate.

Negotiations

- 1 The use of the term negotiation does not only refer to conflictual situations
- 2 Dialogue is a means to allow aggregation of the diverse interests of territory actors
- 3 Negotiation rules and procedures that have been accepted by all interested parties and rendered operable by a credible and legitimate third party

Outlooks

- 1 Analyze diverse visions of territorial actors;
- 2 Constitute a coherent framework for the positioning of actors' interests strategies and potentialities and vulnerabilities of their territory;
- 3 Identify the causes, existing constraints and tendencies for progress and evolution through historical analysis;
- 4 Promote dialogue between actors;
- 5 Inform all actors on territorial questions and their issues;
- 6 Analyze the specific political and institutional context, the legal framework at regional, national and international level that influences local development.

Social Territorial Agreement (STA)

- 1 Thanks to a participatory process, this agreement includes an activity / initiative plan for local development, in the short, medium and long term;
- 2 It mentions indispensable needs and resources for implementation;
- 3 It implies solid engagement with regard to activities, institutional arrangements or resource management;
- 4 It helps improve social cohesion through the leveling out of disparities in negotiating power for social actors. Etc.

Chapter 3. The Place of Civil Society and the Role of Intermediate Bodies

Civil society is henceforth called to play a more important role in this new political and economic context. Therefore it needs to organize itself and to strengthen its capacities, which have been weakened by its distance from decision making entities as well as its political and economic marginalization in the past decades.

In the context of decentralization, state withdrawal constitutes an important point. It operates through the devolution of certain prerogatives to new or existing actors who can either represent decentralized state structures or civil society through election or appointment.

In this way, civil society is called to play a key role in the decentralization process. However, it may not necessarily have the capacities required to assume this role and its strengthening is therefore required. These needs are complimentary to the political will to better accommodate civil society.

Producer organizations are the key to obtaining a good dynamic in participatory development programs. They allow the provision of appropriate responses to problems and different constraints faced by local actors (natural resources, institutional pressure, economic environment etc.). The strengthening of these producer organizations stimulates, not only the emergence of local initiatives, but also the creation of exchange forums (for information, techniques and finance) between local and external actors.

In the face of numerous problems encountered in participatory projects, we aim to present those solutions that can help strengthen producer organizations. Firstly, the four important factors, the five fundamental principles to be respected in rural development projects and two important remarks concerning the role of the state in training managers will be presented. Finally we will examine the model of farmer representation through describing how Chambers of Agriculture function.

As far as civil society is concerned, specialized texts can be consulted. In this manual, we will focus on institutional structures which are specific to the agricultural profession.

Professional Agricultural Organizations

Current Trends in Cooperative Development

Today, economies in several countries are subject to mutations designed to allow them to follow market reforms. The implication of the state and para-statal organizations in national economies has been demonstrated as being harmful and consequently, they have been called to reduce their interference and leave the markets to function. In certain countries, state intervention has had a tendency of reducing the efficiency of cooperative organizations.

Cooperatives have often been created exogenously without any real member participation. In several cases such members turned away from these organizations that were not concerned with matters of key interest for them such as commercialization and price fixing. The potential of cooperatives in contributing to rural development based on full participation has been largely wasted and the very concept of self-promotion in cooperatives has fallen largely into disgrace. In several countries a review of the policy on cooperatives has been necessary on the basis of a new approach based on participatory and consultation principles rather than on "interventionism". This does not mean current policies should be entirely rejected; they can be adapted to be more participatory and market-oriented.

The impact of economic and political changes on cooperatives is varied: it has positive and negative effects. The positive aspect is that cooperatives often benefit from the withdrawal of para-statal organizations and better adapt to their environment. Cooperatives also bring a plus to society as “schools of democracy” without state subsidy or support.

Today’s trend is that of decentralization and participation, which give people more responsibilities regarding their own development. This implies the focus be put either on self-promotion and the principle of counting on one’s own means, rather than on state aid. Many states adopt this approach.

The application of these ideas requires a long process of adequate training and better organization in order to develop the entrepreneurial skills required in the market economy.

Although the restructuring process, which is beginning to see the light of day in a number of countries, creates a more favorable environment for the development of cooperative organizations, it also exposes them to the hard conditions of free enterprise and competition with commercial companies.

Thanks to self-promotion, cooperative organizations can constitute strength on the market. With participatory approaches, it is possible to mobilize resources and local knowledge to obtain autonomous development. It is a way of developing a real cooperative movement and an economic system for small farmers. The ownership of the organizations on the part of the small farmers is a sign of success for numerous countries all over the world.

Four Factors to Consider

The Presence of a Multiplicity of Actors

Projects which give up on face to face dialogues with farmers (usually men) and sometimes also reduced to a single productive dimension, should take into consideration the multiplicity of actors which act directly at local level or take decisions (at other geographical levels) which repercussions on local reality.

The use of natural resources and their management are an example of the multiplicity of actors involved. Farmers and animal breeders are privileged users of natural resources but there are other users: artisans (carpenters, masons, potters), hunters and fishermen and external actors who come to exploit local forest resources (charcoal makers, traders interested in fruit products, sawmills, seasonal migrants and pioneers) or transhumant or nomadic animal breeders.

The state, through its legislation, policies, administration, is also involved in natural resource management as well as donors who make the environment an important part of North-South cooperation. The state sometimes delegates certain responsibilities in this area to public local bodies in the context of a decentralization policy (for example, this is the case for the Senegalese “Communautés Rurales” who are in charge of land management in their areas).

In this way the identification of the different actors concerned, directly or indirectly, through planned intervention, how their perception of reality, priorities, and strategies is characterized, as well as the identification of converging or incompatible interests which exist, should be a priority action.

The Interdependency of Actors and Levels

Economic and social reality is characterized by different but intertwined decision-making forums at the level of land plot, village or village group.

Decisions taken in each of these forums are influenced (and sometimes defined) by decisions taken in other forums. The room for maneuver (initiative and autonomy) of

each decision-making forum or level is variable. In this way, the decisions of the smallholder take into account the decisions taken at village and inter-village level, but he can influence the latter levels. The smallholder can impose decisions and practices on those who work under him (women, young people, to whom he allocates land) but he also considers their aspirations. The local level is part of bigger geographical and political realities (region, country, etc.) where other decision-making centers can influence the practices and management of lower levels.

Each of the above-mentioned forums corresponds to a decision-making level and often several existing or potential decision-makers, which complicates the perception of local reality for projects. For example, before proposing changes in the use of natural resources, it is important to identify the concerned areas and the decision centers which govern them as well as the relationships between these areas and decision centers.

Tenure Systems in Transition

In many countries, land tenure systems seem to favor practices that are not so conducive to conserving the natural environment. However, even if it is not the responsibility of state agents or representatives of producer organizations to modify existing land systems, they must nevertheless know and understand them and consider them in the proposals they make. They must also indicate the adjustments or revisions which seem necessary.

- At village level, farmers who benefit from the land on a temporary basis cannot undertake long term actions. The establishment of land laws based on 'the land belongs to he who works it' shortens the length of loans and makes land improvements impossible.
- The co-existence of two types of ownership rights (according to the state and the traditional authorities) often causes contradictory evolutions. On the one hand, the right of the "tiller" prevails over all other user rights, in particular pastoral ones and also evolves towards western style ownership rights (for example through sale and the pawning of land in suburban areas). On the other hand, the respect for authorities and traditional rules concerning clearance and user rights (fruit-picking, hunting, pasturing...) on collective areas is weakened.

Leaving the Initiative to Local Structures

Certain political contexts constitute an obstacle for participation. Participation is, in effect a democratic practice which is not very compatible with authoritarian regimes. How can people express their needs and priorities, make their voice heard, negotiate the nature of projects that concern them if their rights of expression and organization are seriously limited? In many cases, the processes of democratization of public life as well as of liberalization of the economy create a more favorable context for civil society initiatives. However, limitations still exist:

- with uniform models of organization defined at national level and enforced on local reality;
- with difficulties to consider socio)cultural diversity;
- with the presence of obsolete legislation and procedures, etc.

A correct assessment of the real power of initiative left to local actors allows definition in a given place and time of realistic objectives.

Five Orientations and Principles for Action

New Balances

Development work should aim to create new balances between physical environments and societies that value them. Legitimate concerns related to environmental conservation sometimes lead external actors to value it more than those who live in it. We are faced therefore with an environmental deviation, which consists of protecting the environment against the action of local people, who are considered predators by external actors.

However, this is to forget:

- that societies have to exploit natural resources in order to satisfy their needs related to food, money, health care, clothing, housing, etc.
- that over-exploitation of natural resources maybe caused by the fact that the old balances are no longer adapted to the conditions created by demographic growth, the increase in monetary needs, etc.

The question of conserving and managing natural resources should therefore be placed in the context of environmental and societal dynamics. This is not about preserving or wishing to return to the old balances, it is about finding new balances based on ways of using resources that allow their regeneration and, if possible, their improvement.

At operational level, respect for this principle can be ensured through rejecting coercion-based approaches and attitudes that lay the blame on farmers. Such approaches and attitudes inhibit reflection, the search for solutions and can instigate defensive behavior and blockages. On the other hand, putting this into practice encourages the use of approaches based on:

- participatory analysis of the noticed imbalances and of their multiple causes (demographic growth, increase in monetary needs, food insecurity, etc.) which lead to the destruction of natural resources and current and foreseeable consequences (lower yields, diminishing ecological potential, etc.)
- multi-sector proposals, which simultaneously manage to: alleviate pressure on natural resources, take preliminary conservation measures for the environment, respond to short term (food and income-related) emergencies and plan to increase people's capacities to adapt to their new living conditions.

The Central Role of Rural People

Rural people must play a key role in the definition of objectives and programs that concern them. The local planning approach, with its multiplicity of variants, is one means which has shown to be adapted to diverse situations. Here, we will limit ourselves to recalling the main steps of this approach.

1. An Agreed Diagnostic Assessment:

This diagnosis is multi-sectoral (the sectors examined are identified by villagers). It includes the evaluation of local natural resources but if raised by villages, it also includes problems related to health, education, collective equipment and infrastructure.

The Agreed Diagnostic Assessment can be made up of 3 components:

- **an external diagnostic assessment**, carried out by the external actor. This must be carried out quickly through a close observation of the local environment, activities, and use people who know the area well. Light surveys can allow a preliminary analysis of the situation, which will be deepened in the subsequent steps;

- **a presentation of the external diagnostic assessment to villagers.** This must be made in an accessible and attractive way so as to allow them to analyze the situation and identify solutions to the problems identified. This presentation is usually made through several meetings held close together, with different homogeneous sub-groups (adults, youths, men, women), at grassroots level (neighborhood, village) to facilitate the participation of a large number of people;
- **a synthesis of the initial diagnostic assessment.** This is made of different inputs from the sub-groups, it aims to underline the main changes and priority problems in each of the examined sectors, as well as local people's capacities and equipment to face them, etc.

2. The Definition of a Priority Action Program

In the short term, this should be the first result of the thought process. This is necessary for supporting the thought process at village level since it demonstrates the concrete nature of the approach, which rapidly leads to concrete actions. The content of the program depends on villagers' priorities and available means (available solutions, existing means etc...). It is important to support those actions which have serious chances of success.

The agricultural field could be the testing ground for a new technique or the coherence of several techniques. The priority could be the improvement of input provision or activities in areas such as water or health.

Certain activities related to the conservation of natural resources can be foreseen in this program. These are often actions which have an immediate visible effect and are requested by the villagers. Other actions can sometimes only be programmed later on:

- because they result in a decrease of available resources (this is sometimes the case for the protection of a certain zone);
- because they require significant rearrangements of a smallholding, neighborhood or village and are therefore conditioned by several prerequisites;
- because farmers must regain confidence (through small successful actions) before embarking on bigger projects (be they material or social);
- because they instigate conflicts or tensions between groups which have different interests whereas these groups do not wish to negotiate a compromise.

3. The Implementation of the Program

The implementation of priority actions and the definition of a short-term local development plan is the third step in the local planning approach. This must be visible and attract as much attention as possible since its success reinforces the credibility of the approach. It assumes that tasks, necessary collaborations, organizational conditions, training etc. be identified with villagers.

This gives villagers confidence and underlines the possibility of shaping alliances at local level. It therefore creates favorable conditions for the participatory identification of a multi-year plan (3-4 years).

4. The drawing-up of a Local Multi Year Development Plan

This implies the definition of priorities that consider the needs expressed by rural people and external constraints and possibilities which, in the end, determine what is possible.

This is not about making choices for farmers and other local actors or about explaining why those choices are the best ones. It is about talking seriously with them about what is desirable and what is possible and the conditions under which the desirable can become possible.

This is also about ensuring the coherence of foreseen actions. Indeed, in looking for solutions to problems, there is a tendency to work at sector level: rain fed agriculture, inter-season crops, animal breeding, health, etc. This can lead to contradictions: diverging objectives, bad timing in terms of seasonal calendar year and use of manpower. Beyond sector coherence (logical progression of actions foreseen in a same activity domain), it is important to check the coherence between the actions envisaged in the different sectors. It should be noted that this coherence can also be sought for through the progressive expansion to different activities of a local service for a given activity. For example:

- the establishment of a forge to make tools (watering can, buckets, rakes etc..) can become a way of maintaining agricultural equipment in good shape;
- a warehouse for inputs related to large-scale crops can have a section for gardening or tree cultivation, etc.
- a savings and credit system based on agriculture and animal breeding can offer the possibility of launching activities related to product transformation and marketing, etc...

Natural resource management is a component of the local plan. The planned actions in the economic domain take into account the objective of preserving and regenerating ecological potential. Conversely, this objective can encourage economic activities that can alleviate the pressure on natural resources (as in the case of diversification of agricultural and non-agricultural activities).

The development of the local multi-annual development plan raises various questions concerning financing (local actors' resources, public or private financing, etc...), programming, monitoring and evaluation and re-adjustment, all of which must be addressed in a participatory way.

The Contractual Approach

The third principle consists of promoting contractual approaches throughout the local planning process. Contracts can be of different types, including:

- contracts which are internal to the rural society between professional categories and also sometimes between social categories;
- contracts between rural people and other local actors. The objectives and the programs of action defined by rural people should be negotiated with other local actors. This implies that the latter be associated in the local planning process. In many cases, experience has shown that it is often around limited yet realistic objectives that concrete, participatory modalities of collaboration can be defined. It is therefore not necessary to try from the very beginning of the process to establish collaboration between all local actors, nor to attempt the establishment of a multi-year contract.
- contracts between villagers and actors from other geographical areas and other decision – making levels are not always easy at the beginning but must remain an objective. They can be facilitated if villagers have representative structures, capable of presenting demands, proposals and concrete offers (which have the support of other local actors) to clearly identified partners (regional administrations, technical services, large regional projects and programs, donors, etc...).

Giving Responsibility to Local Actors

The fourth principle concerns the permanent creation of conditions in which the local actors and above all villagers can effectively assume responsibility. Four conditions appear essential:

1. The organization of producers

Beyond the micro-local level, rural populations can only participate in decision making if they have mandated representative structures.

Faced with the challenges of establishing such a structure, rural societies need to acquire new forms of organization, without relinquishing on their socio-cultural identity. The fact that they need various types of support to do this does not mean organizational models should be imposed on them.

2. The acquisition of new competencies

Rural people can only begin to effectively take responsibility if they formerly receive a transfer of competencies. This implies increased access to diversified information, driven by multiple channels, and considerable efforts in training (support to collective thinking, training, technical advice, management, literacy, etc...)

3. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

The local development program (see box at the end of this section) creates a multi-year referential framework for development actions and the management of natural resources, but it must not become a straight jacket which suffocates initiatives or leads to the refusal of opportunities which are coherent with the defined overall strategies.

Any readjustment of the plan must be thought out in relation to the diagnostic assessment (see box), to the defined overall strategies and discussed with different local actors.

Monitoring and evaluation provide the necessary data to readjust the local plan. These must allow the identification of effectively implemented actions as well as problems encountered, factors explaining success or failure, internal or external malfunctioning, etc. It must also allow the measurement of the effects of the implemented actions and any deviation between the objectives and results obtained.

While monitoring should be permanent, evaluation should be carried out at the end of each phase. Monitoring and evaluation should be participatory. This requires an external quantitative and qualitative evaluation which can be carried out by local program managers and their support networks. It also requires the presentation of the evaluation results to different actors involved in the program.

This dialogue allows local actors to progress in their diagnostic assessment of local realities and the environment. It also allows the opening up of an internal debate to adjust, where necessary, the mobilized means and resources to reach objectives.

4. Enlarging Peoples' Participation

Whatever the effort made to ensure the participation of many individuals, 'marginalization' still occurs. Intervention can strengthen existing advantages, create new farmer elites, who monopolize activities for their economic or political profit, favor opportunistic attitudes and sometimes opacity of accounting.

Such malfunctioning is largely inevitable and can only be reduced through the establishment of mechanisms, which allow increased transparency in decision-making. Several means can be used such as, for example, effective decentralization of programming; sharing of monitoring and evaluation results with different professional and social sub-groups; specific efforts to inform and train the most needy social groups; the establishment of internal control mechanisms; external and regular control of accounting with public dissemination of the results.

All these mechanisms and their implementation modalities should not be imposed on those who are, at the beginning, the privileged interlocutors of the external actors. They should be proposed, debated over and negotiated.

Learning from the Local Perspective

The fifth lesson consists of drawing lessons, in terms of regional and national policies, of actions taken at local level and the results obtained. Although such actions may be still somewhat infrequent, it would be useful for the results of local actions (strengths, weaknesses, favorable factors and hindrances) to be capitalized upon, debated over with higher levels of decision-making and used to influence future choices.

The respect of such strategies and decisions would undoubtedly be increased if local communities were associated (through recognized representatives) as full partners in their definition. There would furthermore be an ensuing strengthening of State authority to have them respected.

Two Complimentary Remarks

The Role of the State

The more important role given to local actors in decentralized development does not mean that the state no longer has an important role to play. Indeed, various measures are necessary for local dynamics to emerge and consolidate themselves and these are essentially related to state policies. Such measures can be for example:

- legislative and regulatory modalities that free up (and stimulate) local actors' initiatives. Among these, the creation and / strengthening of public local bodies should be there. They should have an important future role in local planning, coordination and integration of activities, financial support to local projects, monitoring and evaluation;
- flexible and inciting modalities should be present in local private groupings, associations, cooperative type organizations, etc.;
- legislative and regulatory modalities allowing for true land security would generally be necessary for the sustainable success of actions related to natural resource management.

Moreover, the state should:

- promote a secure and motivating socio-economic context through state support in product organization, price and an economic environment that meets producer needs (e.g. supply of inputs, credit);
- promote negotiated field interventions with stakeholders from the beginning. This requires better focusing of research on producer needs; the establishment of consultation forums, allowing negotiation between different actors; the appointment of qualified personnel to provide advice and the transfer of material and financial resources to local governments but also to producer organisations;
- check the coherence of the implemented actions. This implies that the state should be perceived by local actors as having the most integrity (this is not always the case today) and as constituting a strong moral personality capable of checking the coherence of the implemented actions. Policies on administrative decentralization and regionalization (Senegal) are moving in this direction.

Training Civil Servants

Resources for the training of civil servants are also necessary. The permanent pre-requisite is undoubtedly that of reassuring them by offering them motivating future perspectives.

The transfer of responsibilities to producers should mean a modification but not the disappearance of their functions. On the contrary, what is already changing and what should change more in the future, is the nature of support that these managers can bring to farmers, the modalities according to which this support can be ensured and the type of relationship that should be formed. This does not call into question the need for more effective and diversified support. Indeed, the demand is likely to increase.

Allowing civil servants to improve their understanding of local communities and producer demands is another necessity. Their specialization has sometimes kept them stuck in the past, in sector-based analysis, where reality was perceived through objectives designed by them and tools of their specialization. This is not about calling into question the necessary technical specialization, which guarantees the quality of the support given. It is about presenting it in relation to other analyses, be they sector-focused or global.

Without turning technicians into sociologists or economists, it appears important to provide them with certain tools that will allow them to better understand the organization and functioning of rural societies and analyze any resistance which may manifest itself in the face of their proposals.

It is important to give civil servants methods and tools which are appropriate to reach the set objectives and the means to evaluate their effectiveness and adapt them. Methods and tools exist in that respect, which have been tried and tested in different contexts. It is useful to make an inventory of them and create the conditions for a transfer of knowledge. This last point can be implemented in different ways:

- proficiency classes as long as they have clear objectives for beneficiaries and if they match a previously identified demand of the civil servants;
- long term refresher courses to adapt the profile of the concerned civil servants to new functions;
- increased access to information for extension workers. Visits to innovative sights in Africa and Northern countries, use of films and slide presentations, participation in networks, subscriptions to publications, etc. are all means which can help government workers to raise questions about their own practices and stimulate creativity.

The methods and tools transmitted through training and refresher courses are however rarely usable as they are. They require adaptation to local realities, to different stages of evolution of on-going processes. Civil servants can only contribute to these adaptations if they are involved in their design and evaluation, if they are given responsibility and if their initiatives are valued.

Some Concrete Solutions

Generally speaking, producer organizations are strengthened through improvement in their liberty of expression, the encouragement of local initiatives, the consideration of local needs at higher levels, transparency, the partnership spirit within organizations, solidarity between institutions, grassroots professionalism, sensitization and training of civil servants in participatory approaches and, finally, the mobilization of local resources as well as access to other financing mechanisms.

All these objectives that allow the strengthening of producer organizations can be reached with a certain number of concrete solutions such as:

Improve information for local actors

- Introduce accounting and management procedures likely to ensure better transparency for local actors.
- Develop media implementation in rural environments (rural radios, functional literacy).

Reinforce solidarity and exchanges of experiences

- Encourage collaboration between entities with common interests at the local level, and between the different levels (local, regional, national).
- Encourage partnerships between organizations of different sectors (examples: environment, hygiene and health, literacy, etc.) and their counterparts in different countries.
- Exchange experiences and visits between actors of different countries on local development and its' financing.

Improve expertise

- Promote professionalism in associations by encouraging them to have permanent teams.
- Formulate and set-up training programs to benefit associations, cooperatives and townships in project formulation, their management, the knowledge of institutional and legal environments, communication and negotiation.
- Ensure greater ownership and stronger commitment of executives, while taking into account motivation and field experience while creating conditions for long-term partnership.
- Create awareness and train executives in new approaches to local development.

Introduce new intervention and financing means

- Review collaboration modalities to facilitate expression and accounting of local demand with financiers.
- Encourage the emergence of local initiative and projects in local development using financing towards strengthening of communication, awareness, training, information and exchange of experiences.

The Case of Chambers of Agriculture³²

The professionalization of agriculture contributes to the strengthening of civil society and contributes to the privatization process. Its objective is to give farmers the place they deserve in civil society, by facilitating their access to economic channels and markets from which they were excluded, and by integrating their activities into the economy as a whole.

It consists of a long-term structuring process in the agricultural profession, including:

- the conversion of agricultural economic organizations, such as cooperatives and cooperative groups and changing them into professional autonomous units that abide by efficiency and profitability criteria;
- the set-up of a new type of professional organization whose mission is to represent farmers and participate, in their name, in the development and implementation of policies and programs in rural development.

Up until now, the focus has been on the creation or restructuring of Chambers of Agriculture. For farmers, these represent an institutional model of representation in new policies, and a means of expression and a participation tool.

The Principles Governing Chambers of Agriculture

Chambers of Agriculture must obey the following basic principles:

- **professional character**, which means that only agricultural producers or assimilated groups, such as breeders, fishermen, etc., can be represented by these organizations;
- **universality** according to which all physical or moral person who satisfies the criteria fixed by the status of agricultural producer is automatically part of the organization;
- **representation of the diversity of producers**, according to which every farmer is represented and is able to express his point of view. This principle considers collegial groups corresponding to identified categories of agricultural operators. For example, a collegial group can be planned for women, for pastoralists or for all other categories, because of the specificity of their problems;
- **autonomy**, which relates to the Chamber of Agriculture's freedom of choice in its own development objectives and programs for action and management of its own resources without outside interference;
- **decentralization**, meanings that the representational system for farmers as a whole and the decision making process must start at the grassroots level. This decentralization is the necessary condition for effective participation of farmers and consideration of local realities. Decentralization of Chambers of Agriculture does not mean their dispersion. The institutional framework of producer representation must be set as a series of decentralized structures, constituting a national network that facilitates exchanges and cooperation between them. It should also reinforce the unity of this representative system as a whole vis-à-vis its public and private partners;
- **incompatibility of the representation mission and commercial activities:** Functions of the Chambers of Agriculture must never lead to commercial transactions with farmer members.

³² This text comes from a document published elsewhere by the Rural Development Division of the FAO.

The Functions of the Chambers of Agriculture

The essential mission of Chambers of Agriculture is to represent farmers in order to ensure their participation in the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies and development actions. This mission can be realized through three main functions:

- consultation functions;
- information and training of agriculturists;
- support to professional producers' organizations.

Although recognized by law as the official spokesperson, Chambers of Agriculture do not have exclusive rights regarding this function. Others can indeed take the lead. In this case the role of Chambers of Agriculture is to encourage consultation between all those involved to farmers' benefit.

The Consultation Function

It consists of voicing farmers' viewpoints on their situation and on the agricultural sector. It also consists of participating in the development of agricultural policy measures, and choices to be made in rural development.

This function first applies to the State and results in the information of authorities on the situation of different categories of farmers and their appreciation of economic measures and their application. It should give to the Chambers of Agriculture the right to sit in all decision making entities and debates regarding agricultural matters, from local to national levels. Before any decision concerning equipment and planning programs – as well as regarding industrial infrastructures – it should make farmer consultation compulsory at all levels, in order to look after the protection of agricultural development and natural resources.

To fulfill this function correctly, Chambers of Agriculture must have capacities to:

- follow the situation of different agricultural production activities and different farmer categories and analyze micro and macro-economic factors that control their development, taking into account farmers' viewpoints;
- with farmer participation, formulate proposals for measures enabling the improvement of the situation of different farmer categories and production channels;
- disseminate and promote farmer's viewpoints and proposals in all entities and at all levels, with authorities and their partners from other professions.

The Information Function

This function addresses three types of audiences, with the objectives of facilitating integration of agricultural production in markets, contributing to the improvement in life quality in rural areas and ensuring a better balance between cities and the countryside.

It provides agricultural producers with information enabling them to orient their productions according to market requirements and adapt their activities to the existing economic and authorized context. At the same time, it must support agricultural operators, improve their management and organizational capacities to enable them to better produce and invest and increase their competitiveness. It must also contribute to the improvement of farmers' skills; to complement actions led by institutions specialized in this sector. Chambers of Agriculture must have agro-climatic, technical, economic, commercial and regulatory data banks, constantly updated and easily accessible to farmers and technicians responsible for advising them. Their contents must be about local agricultural activities and must be the subject of wide dissemination activities, while using locally available oral, written and

audiovisual supports and means of expressions, hence addressing the requirements of different categories of farmers.

More broadly, it reaches rural populations through the most accessible media channels such as rural radios, which Chambers of Agriculture should develop and maintain with the participation of different groups, within the context of programs specific to farmers' interests.

It is also oriented towards public bodies and professional organizations of other sectors and activities such as Chambers of Commerce, industry and handicraft. The aim is to inform them on the situation of the rural sector, its problems and priorities and its wishes and proposals to take into account and direct their actions favorably towards the agricultural sector. This type of information is aimed to facilitate integration between agricultural activities and those of other economic sectors, with a better balance between cities and countryside. To this effect, all existing media resources must be used, with a priority on inter-professional information meetings, consultation and workshops on agricultural themes.

The Support Function to Professional Farmer's Organizations

Farmers must create their organizations and contribute to the professionalization of agriculture, the basis of their participation in development and their harmonious integration to the market economy.

Agricultural professional organizations are important participants in civil society and their development contributes to its strengthening. In this way, they acquire an important role in the privatization processes. Indeed, they offer institutional decentralized formulas of state replacement, adapted to particularities of the agricultural world and calling on farmers' participation.

For the Chambers of Agriculture, it is possible to follow and analyze the situation of producer organizations, to propose political and legislative measures taken in support to the development of their activities. It also provides them the advice they need, by mobilizing necessary supports from existing public and private institutions. This function goes hand in hand with the one on information and training. It aims to spread and reinforce structuring at all levels of the agricultural world, and support farmers, especially the youths and women to create conditions adapted to the improvement of their activities.

The Institutional Organization of Chambers of Agriculture

The organization of Chambers of Agriculture includes two types of structures.

- **Elected bodies**, which represent farmers and are the only ones authorized to speak on their behalf. They have institutional responsibilities, which they assume with the support of technical and operational implementation bodies. They hold full decision power as regards the management of the Chambers, the choice of objectives and programs, the allotment and use of resources and the positioning and making of proposals regarding policies and agricultural development to be defended vis-à-vis the authorities and private partners.
- Elected bodies are defined by the texts that create the Chambers of Agriculture. They result from elections and constitute the sovereign bodies of the Chambers. Their nature, their prerogatives and their rules of operation are the same for all Chambers. Their composition can vary according to the composition of the farmers' population of the region.

- **The technical and operational implementation bodies** that act under the authority of elected bodies. Their mission is to assist in the realization of objectives and activity programs, in the management of their resources and in the preparation of their proposals concerning policies and agricultural development.
- Technical and operational implementing bodies make the technical and administrative structure of the Chambers. They can involve similar structures for tasks common to all Chambers such as administrative and financial management and producers' information. Besides, they can have structures for which the organization and resources can differ from one Chamber to the other, according to regional specificities.

The Overall Framework

The Chamber of Agriculture is composed of a set of member agricultural operators and their organizations. The sovereign constitutive bodies of the Agriculture Chamber are formed by their being elected as grassroots members and representing the different categories of farmers and professional agricultural organizations within the circumscription.

To defend farmers' points of view and interests, Chambers of Agriculture must be present at the regional or provincial level and at the national level, which are two strategic decision levels. The overall framework is therefore a decentralized and autonomous regional Chambers of Agriculture that creates an active network managed at the national level by an association of Regional Chambers.

The Constitution of Regional Chambers

To respect decentralization and to reflect local agricultural diversity, the constitution of regional Chambers of Agriculture follows a multilevel process, which is local, intermediate and regional.

- **At local level**, each "grassroots unit" (usually the village) identifies "its grassroots farmers' assembly" which then nominates three representatives for each college. Every college corresponds to a sector of activities, a channel such as cereal cultivation, breeding, lumbering, fishing, etc. or to a category of producers. These colleges are defined on the basis of an agro - ecological zoning early classification, with the participation of farmers to translate the diversity of agriculture and agricultural production units.
- **At intermediate level**, the overall group of these grassroots representatives form "the consular assembly of intermediate level," located between the local level and the region or province. This assembly elects "its consular delegates: within each of its collegial groups for the canton, borough, or prefecture, according to the country."
- **At regional** or provincial level, the overall consular delegates in this intermediate level form "the consular assembly of the regional Chamber of Agriculture" that further involves elected representatives from agricultural professional organizations with cooperative or union character of different levels including the mutual credit funds and agricultural insurances.

This consular assembly elects its "ministerial office" as well as the president and vice-presidents of the regional Chamber of Agriculture. These are assigned to represent the agriculturists, to speak in their name and to manage their regional Chambers of Agriculture for the realization of its functions and its objectives. The management of the regional Chamber of Agriculture takes place under the control of the consular assembly that adopts the programs of activities and budgets, translates farmers' view-points on important issues that concern them, following grassroots consultation, and evaluates the management and results of the ministerial office.

The Network and the National Association of Regional Chambers of Agriculture

The network is institutionalized as a national association of Chambers of Agriculture, responsible for coordinating the activities of the previously mentioned network on a national scale. Its existence does not affect the decentralized and autonomous character of regional Chambers from which it emanates and on which it does not have any hierarchical or tutelage power.

Indeed, this association has a very light structure, constituted by a ministerial office, formed by the regional Chamber presidents who elect among themselves a president of the association and vice-presidents. On the basis of the synthesis of the points of view expressed by the regional Chambers, this office formulates the common positions to be defended at national level in the decision-making entities and by the Government and other public and private partners of farmers. It also manages the association and actions or projects common to several regional Chambers. To remain close to their basic proceedings, members of this association's office continue to exercise their functions of regional Chamber presidents.

This association has an important role as a source of information, above all for farmers on their national and international economic environment and for authorities. The associations can explain farmers' viewpoints. Finally, the association is useful for outside partners who can develop cooperation with the agricultural professions of other countries. Actions in this framework are relayed by regional Chambers and go up to the agricultural development. To this effect they must use all previously mentioned measures while organizing frequent meetings with farmers.

Box no 8 on Senegal: The strengthening of Civil Society Organizations

a) Experiences in local development

The Senegalese Government gave professional agricultural organizations a key role in the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program for the Agricultural Sector (PASA). Sustained agricultural growth and growth of agricultural revenues, food security and the management of natural resources need investments and capacity. For this reason the government is trying to intensify the participation of the private sector. Family smallholdings are an important element in this perspective.

The State decided to undertake a partnership with professional agricultural organizations in order to strengthen their capacities and train them to take on certain tasks transferred to them. Indeed the technical, organizational and institutional capacities of these organizations deserve to be strengthened. The main objectives of support to organizations of rural producers are:

- strengthen the capacities of producers organizations (POs) and their members through on-going training;
- strengthen links between unions and federations through training actions and the drawing up of communication packages;
- strengthen competencies and information management at the CNCR.

Key experiences in capacity building of local community and POs include: 1) The CERP Program for "Communautés Rurales" Development financed by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation has ended its pilot phase in two "Communautés Rurales" (Paoskoto and Dealy). This program has continued in three other "Communautés Rurales" (Niakhar, Koussanar and Sinthiou Malème).

It has allowed the organization of village committees in the target "Communautés Rurales". Rural Councilors and PO representatives have been informed and trained on decentralization and on their responsibilities and the competencies that have been transferred to the "Communautés Rurales". As an accompanying measure, the program has financed micro-projects presented by local POs and has provided institutional support to CERPs at 'arrondissement' level, equipping them with transport (4 wheel drive), office equipment, and a petrol allowance for CERP travel. The training modules focused on decentralization as well as planning and management techniques.

2. The Community Management of Natural Resources Project financed by USAID: its objective is to contribute to raising private sector revenues through rational

exploitation of natural resources. This means improving land productivity. More specifically the objective of this program is to increase the participation of grassroots communities in environmental project identification, planning and implementation.

This project has developed a global approach to community management. A Natural Resources Management Committee under the authority of the Rural Council has been established in each "Communautés Rurales" concerned, with representation from different socio-professional organizations. This strategy depends on the active involvement of the community and its total responsibility in decision-making. It has the objective of improving living conditions and natural resource management. Each activity must correspond to a need expressed by the local population. Thanks to this allocation of responsibility and to the participatory approach, significant results are already tangible.

In this context, media sensitization campaigns are important for awareness raising. Natural Resource Management (NRM) committees, rural councilors and PO representatives receive technical support in participatory diagnostic assessments, territorial management, training in financial and administrative management as well as in communication and natural resource management. Institutional support is given to NRM and CERP committees. The GRN project also finances micro-projects submitted by the GIEs (economic interest groups).

3. PADEN (The Literacy Project for Local Councilors and Traditional Leaders) financed by GTZ, is active in 61 "Communautés Rurales" regarding basic literacy around issues of decentralization. PADEN has already reached more than 1.500 Rural Councilors in 6 regions of Senegal (Saint-Louis, Kolda, Tamba, Diourbel, Louga et Kaolack). The project aims to improve community and local government management capacity. It targets councilors and local traditional leaders as well as PO representatives. In this way it has contributed to the implementation of the decentralization process in Senegal.

The Directorate for Local Governments, the Directorate for Literacy and Grassroots Education and the APCR (Association of Presidents of Rural Councils) are privileged partners of PADEN. The project strives to have regular discussions and exchanges of experience with other projects and initiatives so as to work for the harmonization of literacy activity at community level.

4. The Women's Group Support Project (PAGF) is being implemented in nearly all "Communautés Rurales" to strengthen the capacities of women members of the GPFs. (women promotion groups). Activities focus on

basic literacy, construction and equipping of multi-functional home bases (include children's nurseries, literacy classes, sewing centers, etc.).

The PAGF has managed to render a large number of women literate and to ease their domestic work by equipping them with millet mills.

5. The Program for Agricultural Services and POs (PSAOP). The experimental phase of the PSAOP began in 2 regions with an institutional support for POs. The objective of the experimental phase is to begin this same approach in all 10 regions of the country. The aim of this institutional support component is to strengthen and give responsibilities to rural POs, in organizational economic and financial management issues. This is to be done essentially through training and communication activities.

Local and regional PO consultation structures (CLCOP et CRCOP) have been created at "Communautés Rurales" level. They are decision-making bodies and are concerned with the selection and financing of local training and development projects and inter-village exchange schemes. They facilitate the participation of POs in negotiations at rural council and regional council level as well as vis-à-vis CERP, NGOs and other development projects etc.

Generally speaking, the institutional support component mainly concerns grassroots rural POs. The idea is to strengthen their capacity to undertake their own development process and negotiate with other development actors in their areas.

In order to strengthen capacity and train POs, the institutional support activity also finances innovative initiatives undertaken by these organizations in production techniques, the transformation of agricultural produce and natural resource management. These activities are closely linked to the project's research & development component and they are complimentary to the capacity building component. The financial ceiling set at 300 000f CFA in the experimental phase could be revised on the basis of evaluation of results.

The creation of the National Agency for Agricultural and Rural Advice (ANCAR) brings a new angle to extension services in its support to the new institutional framework as defined in the Agricultural Policy. Indeed, ANCAR provides support and advice and also focuses on improving the management of information and communication capacities between rural producers and service providers.

ANCAR must serve as an interface between POs and State services and encourage synergy between all rural development partners with a view to economic liberalization and increasing the role of the private sector.

The agency aims to fundamentally change the methodological approach in agricultural and rural advisory

services. It aims to involve beneficiaries from the beginning and improve the defining and the diffusion of advisory services, thanks notably to the creation of a tripartite consultation body: ANCAR – Research – Producers Organization.

b) Participation in practice: obstacles to its application

Regionalization made the region a moral persona of public law, endowed with financial autonomy. Local Governments received new responsibilities in areas as important as natural resources, health, education and planning. This constitutes a significant step forward in the decentralization process and in the allocation of responsibility to local councilors.

As early on as 1990, the second phase of decentralization allowed the State to transfer more responsibility to Local Governments. The idea was to increase popular participation in local development. This facilitated the progressive ownership of the planning process on the part of the local populations.

Faced with the extent of responsibilities transferred to the Rural Governments, article 215 of law 96-06 of 5th February 1996 authorizes the President of the Rural Council to make agreements with state representatives at local and regional level for the mobilization of specialized staff for the smooth running of the Rural Council and the "Communautés Rurales". In the same vein, article 9 of law 96-06 of 22nd March 1996 on the Local Communities Code stipulates that in order to accomplish their missions, Local Governments dispose of their own services and rely on deconcentrated State services where necessary. Local Councilors have the right to be trained for the purposes of their job.

At Rural Council level, an average of 8 technical commissions can be found that often correspond to the 9 areas of competency transferred to the Local Governments. They are:

- the Health Commission;
- the Finance Commission (budget);
- the Cultural Affairs Commission;
- the Youth and Sports Commission;
- the Urbanism and Housing Commission;
- the Environment Commission;
- the State Affairs Commission.

Out of these commissions, only two are really functioning: the Finance Commission and the State Affairs Commission. In nearly all rural councils, the President is the only person who is really informed on the affairs of the "Communautés Rurales" and the activities of the Council.

The rest of the councilors, including vice-presidents of the commission are little informed on the activities that concern their institution. There is clearly reluctance on the part of the Rural Council to circulate information. Councilors who should regularly inform local populations are unable to carry out that task. The two most important activities of the Rural Council, which are budget planning and the drawing up of Local Development Plans, are not yet well mastered by councilors. The Vice-Prefect is still the one who carries out the budgetary task and the head of the CERP and his/her team continue to take care of the local development plans. The councilors content themselves with voting the budget and the communication of locally perceived needs. This lack of participation is due to the weak circulation of information and training for councilors and rural populations.

The evolution of the agricultural sector is characterized by the significant development of producer organizations. The combined experiences of these groups constitute favorable tools in the reform process envisaged by the government. In 1995 the 9 federations of producers organizations which are members of the CNCR, created ASPRODEB. The Government subsequently allocated IDA credit funds to them as well as an IFAD loan to support small scale rural investments to promote food security and increase rural incomes. The technical and financial implementation of the project is entrusted to the Project Implementation Agency (AGEP).

The CNCR focuses its activities on improving institutional capacities of producer organizations through offering useful services to members in their every day activities. Furthermore, the CNCR carries out consultation activities so as to take producers needs into consideration in policies, programs, and development projects initiated by partners. At the moment, the CNCR is implementing the following activities:

- small rural investments, through ASPRODEB ;
- special food security program with FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture;
- rural share-holding and entrepreneurial activity;
- financing of rural development and the mobilization of own resources through the promotion of decentralized and autonomous financing systems.

The role of the CNCR in the implementation of all these programs is to promote the participation of producer organizations.

However, the whole of the associative movement suffers from numerous constraints in ensuring its full and effective participation in decentralized rural development. This is mainly due to:

- weak organizational and professional capacity;

- lack of financial means of most federations, preventing them from establishing necessary contacts with the grassroots;
- the strong dispersion of grassroots organizations, of which a large number does not feel represented at federal union level;
- marginalization of women in their contacts with donors for access to financing of their agricultural activity;
- weak organization of youth producer organizations.

c) Possible solutions for strengthening producer organizations

In line with the PASA, the PSOAP has defined a support strategy to rural development services in the decentralization process. Component 3 of this program is called 'Institutional Strengthening of Pos' and responds to the fact that, by definition, be they GIE, GPF or Cooperatives etc., they represent real needs in technical and organizational capacity building. The strengthening of producer organizations must therefore take place at different levels: (grassroots Pos and federations) and through a progressive and participatory approach, involving the different rural development actors.

PO strengthening is essentially based on multi-module training (basic literacy, decentralization, management, credits and savings and specific trainings) on the request of the organizations themselves. These are complimentary activities to those carried out by ANCAR and other rural development programs.

Experience in PO support from the 70s, 80s and 90s, with the support of the World Bank, and CFD (re: technological transfers and promotion of cash crops), bilateral cooperation (integrated rural development projects) and extension projects, have had very limited results. In view of this experience it is appropriate to:

- Raise the organizational capacity of the producers organizations, define structures;
- Work towards a making members more professional;
- Sensitize them so as to encourage them to operate in federations;
- Identify likely means of increasing their financial capacity;
- Train representatives in appropriate financial procedures;
- Plan specific advantages for Pos representing vulnerable groups (e.g. Women / Youth).