

**Beyond the  
Rhetoric of Rural  
Development  
Participation:  
How Can it  
be Done?**

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## PREFACE

This working paper is one of a series prepared under AID contract DSAN-C-0065, The Organization and Administration of Integrated Rural Development, for the Office of Rural Development and Development Administration, Development Support Bureau. The principal purpose of this contract is to assist donor agencies and host governments with the management of integrated rural development (IRD) projects and programs.

Work under this contract supports IRD initiatives by addressing two objectives. The first is to provide field staff with technical assistance with organizational and administrative concerns. The second is to learn more about the most serious problems that occur during IRD implementation and to identify management practices to help alleviate those problems.

This paper on beneficiary participation addresses the second contract objective, based largely on the experiences of field teams working under the technical assistance mandate. The authors have participated in several such field assignments, including work with the two projects selected as case studies for this paper.

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## BEYOND THE RHETORIC OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION: HOW CAN IT BE DONE?

### INTRODUCTION

In 1973 the "New Directions" mandate of the Agency for International Development (AID) stressed that development efforts were to be directed towards reaching the poor majority in the Third World and involving them as active participants in the development process. Over the past decade a consensus has evolved that participation is a necessary condition for meaningful expansion of rural peoples' ability to manage their affairs, control their environment, and enhance their own well being.

Four affirmations summarize the significance of participation in the development process.

1. People organize best around problems they consider most important; community participation in assessing needs and in planning development initiatives is essential for effective local response to such initiatives.
2. Local people make rational economic decisions in the context of their own environment and circumstances. Their willingness to adopt new practices or technologies depends on their assessment of risks and possible rewards, based on very pragmatic considerations which are frequently misunderstood by outsiders.
3. Voluntary local commitment of labor, time, material, and money to a project is both an evidence of participation and a necessary condition for breaking patterns of development paternalism, which reinforce local passivity and dependency.
4. Local control over the amount, quality, and especially the distribution of benefits from development activities represents the ultimate confirmation of participation and is directly related to those benefits becoming self-sustaining.

These affirmations reflect the fact that participation means much more than an occasional meeting in which project staff discuss their plans with local farmers in the usual benefactor-to-beneficiary manner. Participation implies a systematic local autonomy, in which communities discover the possibilities of exercising choice and thereby becoming capable of managing their own development (Miller, 1979). This kind of participation has major implications not only for local populations but for governmental and other personnel involved in the management of development programs as well. Genuine community participation will require new attitudes and behavior among the staff of agencies that deal with the poor. It also may lead to new patterns of distributing power and controlling resources.

Promising attempts to facilitate local participation are being made in a number of development programs throughout the world. By and large, the most successful of these programs are characterized by administrative flexibility and an emphasis on building local capabilities.

This paper seeks to contribute to the continuing attempt to capture the experience of these innovative efforts. In particular, it tries to provide rural development practitioners with operational guidelines for generating effective participation.

The paper begins with a brief, historical review of participatory approaches in rural development. The next section discusses various constraints under which rural development projects must be implemented. The third section, the heart of the paper, proposes operational guidelines for creating participation. Two case studies and a brief conclusion follow.

## PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT<sup>1/</sup>

Participation is by no means a new idea in rural development; it has existed under different names for the past 30 years. What is new is the increasing emphasis--and even faith--being placed in participation by host governments and international donors alike. Therefore, it is well worthwhile to briefly examine what participation has achieved to date--particularly as a result of the three most well-known "movements": rural cooperatives, community development (CD), and animation rurale.

### Rural Cooperatives

The cooperative, an organization controlled by its members, has been one common form of participation. Its track record to date, however, falls short of the high expectations that have historically surrounded the cooperative concept. Donald McGranahan, Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, summarized the three-continent study of rural cooperatives undertaken by his institute in the following forthright manner:

. . . rural cooperatives in developing areas today bring little benefit to the masses of poorer inhabitants of those areas and cannot be generally regarded as agents of change and development for such groups. It is the better-off rural inhabitants who mainly take advantage of the cooperative services and facilities such as government supported credit and technical assistance channeled through cooperatives (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1975: ix).

One reason commonly given for the failure of these rural cooperatives is that they have often been the creation of government or other external agencies, intended to promote government policies and provide government control over markets. Ideally, cooperatives are voluntary creations of individuals who band together to increase their collective market power. In practice, these individuals have usually been those well placed to begin with. This means that cooperatives have functioned well--at least in the economic sense--where the market economy has made its strongest inroads. In Africa, for example, this means those areas producing agricultural commodities for export and not areas characterized by subsistence farming (Hyden, 1980: 11).

## Community Development

Community development started after World War II in India and the Philippines, spread throughout Asia and much of Africa, and was popular on the west coast of South America for a time. This approach was based on the fact that no government could afford to place teams of technicians in every village. The solution was to create the multipurpose, village-level worker. This worker, a person from outside the village and with at least a high-school education, lived and worked with the villagers. He was expected to gain their confidence, organize village groups, and help them identify their felt needs.

In this process, he was aided by funds from the national government, which often came from international donors. In sum:

The local community is the site of CD action, and the major concern is with local projects--all the better if they are locally initiated and executed . . . . This is linked to an interest in the development of grassroots democracy and cooperation as means and goals of CD, along with the aim of increasing self-sufficiency and a desire not so much to change fundamentally a culture as to help the members of a community realize their potential in terms of their own culture (Schwartz, 1978: 238-239).

While contributing to conceptual understandings of grassroots participation, the CD movement was not successful in following up local mobilization with effective action. In general, community ideas and initiatives were not effectively linked to the broader administrative structure, whose support was essential. Thus the roots of individual CD movements withered in time.

## Animation Rurale

In contrast to CD, the French animation rurale movement followed a more rigid, predetermined strategy. The government selected areas that demonstrated potential for self-help and encouraged local villagers to select one of their number, often a young, respected, progressive farmer, to send to a regional training center. His training there as an animateur emphasized the practical: technical skills and how to plan and implement local projects. Returning to his home village, he would put his new knowledge into practice and involve the entire community in decisions concerning local development activities.

However, this participatory approach has also had its share of problems:

Emphasis on "self-help" techniques limited to the local community indicates that the regime either attaches little value to rural development, or believes that symbolic and truncated mobilization can take pressure for performance off the bureaucracy . . . . Meaningful self-help activities, however, imply both dynamic local organization and increasing demands on government services, which are often not appreciated (Charlick, 1980: 6).

## Problems with These Approaches

These approaches all have had certain basic problems which severely curtailed their effectiveness. Among the more serious were the following:

1. While they were originally conceived of as bottom-up approaches, they soon become vehicles for the promotion of existing government programs. This resulted from pressures exerted by the line ministries of the central governments. These pressures transformed the village-level worker from a coordinator into a salesman for line-ministry programs (Heginbotham, 1975: 107ff).
2. Excessive emphasis was placed on the expansion of social services relative to new economic production initiatives. This was not the original intent of participatory approaches, but resulted from bureaucratic jealousies. The technical ministries would not tolerate a Department of Cooperatives or Community Development trespassing on what they regarded as their territory. Hence, these ministries had a bureaucratic interest in keeping such departments out of agricultural programs or public works construction (Uphoff and others, 1979: 23-24).
3. The new initiatives proposed were not sound from a technological standpoint. Technical resources are in short supply in developing countries and are likely to cluster under certain line ministries. These ministries are unlikely to make their best people available to assist with "participatory approaches" unless proponents of these approaches are willing to adopt ministry programs. In this context it is not hard to see why some projects were found technologically unsound, at least in the case of activities using new approaches (Owens and Shaw, 1972: 17-22).
4. The pressure for quick results led to reliance on the local elites and consequently by undesirable patterns of benefit distribution. Certainly none of the original conceptualizers of these three approaches thought they would effect the desired results in a short period of time. Rather, these pressures came from politicians and were passed down through bureaucrats (Charlick, 1980: 6).
5. The basic focus of these approaches was inward, not outward--the reconstruction of an individual village rather than the reconstruction of rural society. In many ways, this resulted in a piecemeal--or "bandaid"--approach that emphasized the individual village rather than the regional economy and society of which it was a part. This was particularly true of community development. In the case of both cooperatives and animation rurale, there was often a hierarchy of institutions from the village to the national capital, which was rarely effectively integrated (Uphoff and others, 1979: 25). Furthermore, a broader perspective on rural development would have risked institutional suicide, lest such development prove successful and come into direct conflict with current political and bureaucratic imperatives.

These are the principal lessons learned from participatory approaches to date. In the section that follows we discuss present constraints to realizing participatory approaches to rural development.

## CURRENT CONSTRAINTS TO EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION<sup>2/</sup>

In many IRD projects, inadequate attention is given to external constraints that may prevent the project from attracting effective local participation. This section presents three major categories of such constraints. The first category--national policies--is the least subject to control by project designers or managers. The second--the bureaucracies of both national agencies and foreign donors--is almost equally intractable. The third consists of constraints in the immediate project environment which may, if recognized, be effectively addressed.

### National Policies

For most donor-assisted development efforts, national policies are taken as given, either because they are not considered important or because to try to alter them would be seen as an intrusion on national sovereignty. Such reasoning can, however, easily create a "head in the sand" syndrome whereby both project designers and implementers choose to remain blissfully ignorant of the national context and thereby seriously jeopardize the chances of project success.

Political commitment at the highest levels of national leadership can, in fact, greatly facilitate achievement of rural development goals. Such commitment may take several forms, such as:

- . Articulating rural development strategies in national policies and legislation;
- . Ensuring a high priority for rural development in routine administrative decisions; and
- . Breaking barriers of entrenched interest in the redistribution of resources needed for rural transformation (Rondinelli and Ruddle, 1978: 46-47).

Frequently, political obstacles arise that prevent governments from adopting and implementing the public policies needed to support particular development efforts. It has also been argued that the difficulties often lie not with governments' intentions but with their inability to implement programs in the territory over which they formally exercise jurisdiction (Anderson, 1966: 237-239). Furthermore, political commitment can be two-edged when it comes to the role of participation. While participation can take the form of widespread rural mobilization to support and implement government policy, it can also serve as an effective tool for government control of the rural population.

Macroeconomic policies may also have an influence on strategies to achieve participation. Inappropriate policies often result in a lack of integration of the rural poor into the cash economy, an overemphasis on exportable rather than food crops, wage and price interventions that discriminate against rural people, and other disincentives for local response to development programs. In Jamaica, for example, certain basic foodstuffs imported by the government compete in the marketplace with locally produced farm products whose cultiva-

tion is encouraged in Ministry of Agriculture projects. Participating farmers have experienced severe marketing problems (VanSant and others, 1981a).

In cases where such national policies do hold the potential to affect local participation and eventual project success, project management has several choices, including the following:

- . Accepting such policies as given and designing the project with the macroconstraints in mind;
- . Influencing such policies prior to project implementation, usually on a gradual basis; and
- . Collecting specific data from the project area to influence policy during implementation or to alter the project design.

### The Bureaucracy

Many people have rightly emphasized the necessity for project and ministry staff to view their role as responding to villager needs rather than simply expecting villagers to respond in a sheeplike way to staff overtures, advice, or commands (Ickis, 1981). Unfortunately, most development agencies came into being long before "local participation" became part of the dominant development paradigm. Such agencies were designed for the more centralized, service-oriented approach, and their structures, systems and norms pose important barriers to effective local participation.

The activities of the poor with reference to government programs are affected crucially by the way the services are administered--how accommodating or inflexible the services are, how satisfying or humiliating their treatment is, how readily the poor get access to services or how much more readily the rich can utilize them, whether government staff adopt a problem-solving stance or a conventionally bureaucratic one, how attuned staff are to the actual conditions and needs of the poor, and whether these staff deal with the poor as responsible adults rightfully in command of their own lives or as basically ignorant and irresponsible (Korten and Uphoff, 1981: 3).

For example, nearly all extension services are government-run and function according to a standard set of procedures, rules, and precedents which engender both inflexibility and slow response to field needs. Both prospects and incentives, particularly for those working in the field, are typically unpromising. Often it becomes more important to please immediate superiors than to do good work in the field, pandering to the bureaucratic emphasis on meeting targets rather than concentrating on the results of such activities (Jiggins, 1977: 1-3). In an environment where project staff cannot meaningfully participate, it is highly unlikely that they will encourage participation on the part of those they are supposedly trying to help.

These strictures also hold true for the international donor bureaucracies, particularly those who work with or for AID. AID personnel must meet the differing agendas of Congress, which often requires moving money in limited

time cycles while paying lip service to the rural poor and participation. "Progress" is measured in terms of expenditures; consequently, the emphasis is often on large projects where participation that is more than symbolic or manipulative becomes exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. The focus moves toward activities to the virtual neglect of results:

The rational official will rarely opt for the participatory project, which cuts into his obligation rate and may affect his future career adversely. If no credit is given for developing participatory projects, to use our initial metaphor, he must swim upstream if he designs and implements such projects (Bryant, 1980: 8).

### Constraints in the Immediate Project Environment

The project environment is the set of conditions affecting both the use of goods and services made available to a population and the capacity of that population to generate organized responses to perceived problems and opportunities. This is not to imply that these conditions are automatic determinants of participation; rather, they operate as a constraint upon the choice of intervention strategies that can be pursued, as well as upon the eventual success of any particular intervention. There is no simple or direct relationship between the environment, effective participation, and project results --a reflection of the subtlety and complexity of causal relationships in the real world. Three examples will illustrate this point.

1. In many Third World countries, ownership of land is a fairly reliable indicator of social and political power. Where land ownership is skewed in favor of a small minority, the indications are that the minority will use its power to obtain the lion's share of any scarce resources made available by the central government or by foreign donors. Similarly, this minority will tend to dominate many local organizations and manipulate them for its own ends (Uphoff and Esman, 1974: 64-67). Hence, one of the first conditions for creating effective participation appears to be the relatively equitable distribution of land. Although land reform may alleviate problems of minority control, it will not necessarily eliminate it. One unintended consequence of some land reform programs--in Pakistan, Egypt, Sri Lanka, India, and Mexico--has been the creation of new rural elites (Esman, 1978: 40-42).

2. As mentioned earlier, the ability of governments to control social and political relations at the district level and lower is frequently negligible. Even if the government did wish to bypass the rural elites--which is questionable--it would be virtually impossible. Such elite groups are going to be over represented in any process of decision making on a formal or an informal basis (Uphoff and others, 1979: 77). This does not necessarily imply, however, that they will operate only in their own interests.

First, the elite rarely fall into one homogeneous group: there may, in fact, be various elites--economic, political, religious, military, and so on (Bell, 1974: 54). Some of these may be prepared to make concessions to the poor majority out of enlightened self-interest that will yield them future payoffs. If there are conflicts among the elite, some may seek support from some or all of the local population--thus providing the population with some

leverage over policy. Some of the elite may well be where they are because of their ability, and such people are crucial for encouraging participation. In seeking support and legitimacy for their actions, they may tend to spread the benefits of projects to more rather than to fewer people (Chambers, 1974: 109-110).

In countries with a limited degree of social and economic integration, ethnic and regional bonds are likely to be strong and diversified. Consequently, elite behavior is often characterized by factionalism and patronage. Sometimes this reality can be turned to a project's advantage:

Project implementers should be attuned to conflicts of interest within the elite, and while not necessarily fomenting these, should be prepared to use such opportunities to achieve greater influence and involvement by major groups (Uphoff and others, 1979: 68).

Members of such elites will occupy important positions in local and regional networks. The importance of networks to rural development lies in their function as channels of communication and influence. Many decisions about development options are based on information passed along such channels. Key sources of information could be anyone in the network but frequently are persons having some influence, power, authority, or advantageous position in an urban setting, in a government ministry, or on the staff of a development project. Such people can forge external linkages which may be crucial to effective participation and eventual project success.

3. A third factor in the immediate environment that should be considered is local history. Implementers of development projects frequently ignore the most important historical differences among the inhabitants of rural communities--differences which may be responsible for a failure to respond to proffered goods and services or which may contribute to the breakup of participatory mechanisms. Villages may well be units of administrative convenience rather than reflections of local ethnic and historical patterns. For example, one village may contain several groups with historical ties elsewhere.

History is not only a matter of origins, but of collective experience. Local responses and initiatives--as well as capacities to organize and attempt collective innovation--are all conditioned by the course of history, especially the recent past. In many parts of the Third World, the colonial experience still exerts a strong influence. The suppression of local leadership, the imposition of forced labor, and the harmful effects of cash cropping on the relative roles of males and females are all a part of this unfortunate legacy. As a result, it is understandable that societies with a colonial history are often much more skeptical than others about development initiatives introduced by outsiders.

Many of the constraints noted here are best addressed in the policy-making or design stage of an IRD project. In contrast, the guidelines to be offered in the following section represent suggestions for coping with these constraints during project implementation. Although not necessarily attacking these constraints directly, these guidelines do suggest tactics for making marginal "end runs" around them. In fact, a case can be made that such local management

steps may create conditions that are prerequisites for dealing with broader external constraints. If designers and implementers wait for the desired structural changes, they may well wait forever - as exemplified in the following statement:

...improvement in the condition of the poor in the less developed countries will to a large extent depend on distribution of economic and consequently, political power in the developed country. Closely examined, the process of helping the poor turns out to be rather a vicious circle (Leontief, 1980: 47).

#### PARTICIPATION: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The preceding sections have laid out the broad context in which participation usually occurs and delineated the major constraints that work against creating such participation. While we do not wish to appear unduly pessimistic, we do wish to be realistic. Creating effective participation is no easy matter; there is no simple blueprint. Any intervention must be tailored to the specific environment in which it is to be implemented. However, there is a growing body of knowledge that can provide some indications of how to proceed. In what follows, we propose what we consider to be some necessary operational steps for creating effective participation.

Implementers of rural development projects should be prepared to follow a process approach.

There is a growing consensus in the development literature that creating effective participation is a gradual, evolutionary process in which both project staff and potential beneficiaries are willing to try various alternatives, discard them when they prove unworkable, and try others. In general terms, management approaches to project implementation range from what can be termed a "blueprint" style to what, at the other end of the spectrum, becomes a "process" approach.

The former is typified by certainty on the part of planners and managers that predetermined technologies and intervention techniques will work in a given local situation. It assumes that solutions to problems are known and that projects are vehicles for the application of these solutions. The process approach, by contrast, assumes considerable uncertainty and is characterized by continual openness to redesign and adaptation to changing circumstances. On-the-spot study and an interactive style of problem solving are relied on rather than remote expertise (Sweet and Weisel, 1979: 129-130).

Although there has been less documented experience with the process approach than with the blueprint, the process approach appears to have the following strengths and potentials:

- . It is rooted in dialogue with the rural population and thus is more responsive to local potential and needs than the more technically oriented blueprint;

- . It allows variation in bureaucratic structures and thus is more likely to adapt to political, social, economic, and physical changes that occur during implementation;
- . It is based on learning and capacity building and thus it is well fitted to the promotion of self-sustaining development dynamics;
- . It transfers "ownership" of the program to implementers and thus creates an environment supportive of innovative problem solving rather than routine application of predetermined solutions; and
- . It avoids negative side effects by eliminating design components that are deemed inappropriate (Honadle and others, 1980: 45).

Such an approach, of course, requires a frank admission by both designers and implementers that, given the complexity of the problems to be solved, there is still much to be learned. It implies, however, that both are prepared to try to find solutions by following a "dynamic, living theory of knowledge that requires us to set new facts into the world (Friedmann, 1978: 85). In operational terms, a process orientation includes the following:

- . A design broken into discrete phases;
- . An emphasis on action-oriented training for both project staff and beneficiaries;
- . The use of temporary task forces;
- . A reward system consistent with effectiveness in serving beneficiaries in ways that strengthen their competence to address their own needs;
- . An applied research component to contribute to learning;
- . Flexible budget processes and cycles;
- . A redesign orientation, such as periodic revisions of project organization, project objectives, and job descriptions of project personnel; and
- . Monitoring and evaluation oriented to benefits received by beneficiary groups rather than funds expended or activities completed (Honadle and others, 1980: 44-45; Korten and Uphoff, 1981: 19-22).

A project should start with small, relatively simple activities which respond to local needs and produce results quickly.

If a project is highly complex, it is less likely that donor agencies or national governments will encourage beneficiaries to become actively involved in project implementation (Cohen, 1979: 66). Furthermore, within the international donor community, "large is still seductive." Hence, the emphasis

continues to be on large, capital-intensive projects that rely heavily on imported technology and are suitable for social cost-benefit analysis (Chambers, 1978: 211). Such projects invariably follow a blueprint approach and are intrinsically antiparticipatory from the very outset:

Moving money is far easier to do in large projects, which move through the review process as quickly as small projects (sometimes more quickly). They are thus more "efficient" in terms of administrative overhead. Large projects are usually too complicated or too technical to allow for participation by intended beneficiaries (Bryant, 1980: 8).

Small farmers are more likely to participate effectively in development initiatives if by so doing they obtain tangible, relatively immediate benefits--as defined from their perspective. Small farmers usually have an excellent idea of what their immediate problems are. It is the responsibility of an IRD project to provide some possible solutions. Activities may start with such elements as small irrigation schemes, provision of focused credit, and training programs which permit meaningful local involvement.

Chambers argues that a sequential approach is best if projects are to reach the rural poor and stimulate participation. In his opinion, appropriate small projects will be administration intensive rather than capital or import intensive; difficult to monitor and inspect because of their geographical dispersion; unsuitable for complex techniques of project approval; and slow to implement, unless "they originate in popular enthusiasm," (Chambers, 1978: 210).

Potential beneficiaries should make a resource commitment to the project to be implemented.

Obtaining a resource commitment from potential beneficiaries is desirable for a number of reasons. First, governments do not have the resources to support all worthwhile development initiatives. Requiring an initial resource commitment indicates that this is not going to be another government "giveaway" program. Many activities would probably function better without the involvement of government at all. Second, the act of making a resource commitment will make the contributors more concerned for the success of the development initiative than they otherwise might be. Finally, such a commitment will provide a concrete indication of how interested the community members are in a new initiative (Gow and others, 1979: vol. 1, p. 149). Findings from an earlier study demonstrated the positive correlation between such resource commitment and overall project success (Morss and others, 1976: vol. 1, chap. 3).

Such commitments can be either in cash or in kind and can be generated in a variety of ways: from membership fees, from quotas determined by family size, or from some sort of recycling of project benefits. Chambers (1974: 110) strongly recommends that such contributions be related to economic status, the richer paying more and the poorer less, and be limited to those who are expected to benefit. Often, in fact, it may be appropriate to specifically link local farmer investment in projects to income gains derived from project benefits.

In some countries, such resource commitments may be formalized by a contract between the beneficiaries and the outside funding agency. In Nepal, participation in rural public works is generated in this manner. The contract lays out the costs, inputs, timing, and resource commitments from both the local population and the funding authority, in this case the district government. The funds are disbursed in installments; and progress reports, prepared by the district engineer, are submitted before further disbursements are made. While not infallible, such a contractual arrangement does provide both parties with leverage (Gow, 1980: 11). Whatever the specific mechanics of such a resource commitment, it is important that a commitment of some kind be made--whenever and wherever possible--to prevent accentuation of paternalism and dependency.

To the extent possible, projects should try to work with existing organizations--formal or informal.

Local organizations of farmers are commonly regarded as the most practical and effective means of achieving participation. Such organizations can play potentially positive roles in the process of rural development by acting as vehicles for:

- . Two-way flows of technical information, which reinforce individuals who try new approaches and break down barriers between groups or individuals;
- . Minimizing risk and practicing economies of scale;
- . Adapting project activities to local conditions;
- . Marshalling local resources;
- . Achieving greater political and economic clout for local people by exercising influence over local administrators and asserting claims on government;
- . Sustaining project benefits; and
- . Coordinating and spreading the benefits of outside assistance (Honadle and others, 1980: 129-139).

Divergent views are expressed in the literature concerning whether participation can be most effectively encouraged by working through existing organizations or by creating new ones. Proponents of working through existing organizations argue that:

- . It is relatively quick and easy;
- . Results are likely to "stick" inasmuch as existing organizations have a proven capacity for survival; and
- . Organizations already in place have demonstrated a capacity to "modernize" and impressive results have been achieved (Seibel and Massing, 1974).

This view also has a number of detractors who argue that:

- . Traditional organizations reflect the interests of the existing power structure and consequently will not be enthusiastic proponents of change;
- . It is extremely difficult for a traditional organization to adopt the modern practices that are essential for sustained growth; and
- . It is unlikely that the membership and structure of existing organizations will be suitable for the needs of a new development strategy (Dore, 1971).

The indications are that project implementers often do not take existing organizations seriously. If they are to be taken seriously, three factors should be borne in mind. First, existing organizations can be broadly classified according to whether they are built around the sharing or use of a particular factor of production or whether they are defined in terms of group member characteristics. These categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Second, it is important to know whether an organization is permanent or transitory, and whether it is indeed local and long established or recently imported from the outside. Finally, it is important to distinguish between associations, based on some common trait of members, and followings, based on patron-client relations. While the former may provide the base for broader participation, the latter may be more effective for fostering participation in project implementation (Uphoff and others, 1979: 38-40).

However, the most important criterion for selection of an existing organization is its amenability to change; that is, the extent to which the organization is willing to reorient its activities to tasks other than those for which it was formed. For example, in several Latin American countries, communities form civic improvement associations to plan and implement specific rural works projects. An individual community will commit some of its own resources to these projects and petition the government or other funding agencies for additional resources. Once a specific project is completed, such organizations may lie dormant until the next felt need is acted upon. But they represent a resource which can be quickly mobilized in response to future needs.

Such groupings can also form the basis for a more permanent, production-oriented organization (Gow and others, 1979: vol. 2, pp. 127-152). Tandler (1976) has argued that such temporary organizations are successful because the members perceive themselves as cooperating to achieve a specific goal rather than to create an organization. If they are successful in achieving their initial goal, then the potential exists for expanding into other activities. But this transition to a broader, more permanent status will not be automatic; it requires a patient, thorough organizational effort (Tandler, 1976: 9).

This strategy of working through existing organizations has been successfully implemented in Colombia through its IRD program, which presently functions in five regions of the country. At the local level, the most prevalent organizational form is the Community Action Board, which is dedicated exclusively to rural works projects. If a community wishes to participate in the

IRD program, its Community Action Board must be willing to broaden its activities and become more production oriented. If the board agrees, then the program works directly through it. If it does not, a parallel group is set up, often with overlapping leadership. Success to date appears to have resulted primarily from two factors: the relatively apolitical nature of the intervention at the local level and the caliber of the technicians involved (Jackson and others, 1981).

Where the environment is one of factionalism and conflict, it may be necessary to work with more than one group.

All three earlier approaches to participation emphasized the importance of consensus and equilibrium--to the virtual exclusion of conflict. In fact, however, participation implies the potential for conflict:

Organizations are sources of power and a major purpose of community organizing is often to build the power of the poor to challenge the entrenched interests. The potential for conflict is self-evident and any community organizing activity should be carried out with recognition that if the group begins to take on any political characteristics there is likely to be a backlash which may result in withdrawal of official recognition, loss of resources, or even physical coercion (F. Korten, 1981: 15).

In such a situation a certain degree of political sophistication on the part of project implementers is called for. In one form or another, the leaders of the most important factions--elites or otherwise--must be included. As mentioned earlier, some leaders will have obtained their positions as a result of their ability. Consequently, the skills and experience they can bring to development may be crucial. In addition, they may often be those best placed to take advantage of development initiatives. Some may be motivated to help their fellow villagers because of enlightened self-interest; others because they need a certain local constituency to support and implement their views. Whatever their motivation, local leaders are going to be represented--if not overrepresented--in any process of decisionmaking.

David Stanfield (n.d.) suggests a specific process strategy for a project area with little social cohesion, arguing that in such cases an intervention should be geared toward an identified social grouping at the outset. This should not be overdone to the point that it generates irrevocable opposition from other groups, but should represent a temporary concession to social realities. In time, the intervention strategy can become less exclusive, particularly by including activities which are important to more than one group but which cannot be completed by any one party working alone.

Guy Hunter, reiterating a point made by Tendler, argues for the creation of small, functionally specific groupings which will require continuous service and advice in the early stages:

It is this supportive rather than managerial or supervisory attitude which is critical at this stage. It is not a question of substituting

government for local patrons, especially in the frankly exploitative role which many local patrons adopt. It is a question of non-directive support and the gradual growth of confidence. It would be absurd to believe that the weak, in their weakness, can march ahead without such support (Hunter, 1978: 43).

In most cases, even when groups are formed specifically to serve the interests or defend the rights of the most disadvantaged, effective leadership is most likely to emerge from those individuals who are relatively more advantaged and closely allied with the local power structure.

However popular in theory, programs that attempt to simply undercut or bypass traditional leadership are not feasible. Either they fail, or outside authority in the form of project agents takes the place of the traditional local leaders.

The key is for leaders to be made accountable to a broad constituency regardless of their group of origin. Such accountability may be defined by both locally and more centrally determined norms and standards. It will be more effectively enforced if incentives and sanctions are determined and applied not only from above, but also from below. For sanctions to be enforced by constituencies of rural poor, there must be an open management style in which all members have access to community activities and records. Training may also be required to equip persons to review and understand information newly made available to them (Honadle and others, 1980: 142-143).

A two-way information flow (both formal and informal) between project implementers and potential beneficiaries should be established at the time of project start-up.

Two reasons generally given for creating an information system are:

- . To generate useful information for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating project activities; and
- . To provide a two-way information flow between project personnel and project beneficiaries.

Information thus serves not only a functional role in supporting effective management but also a process role in facilitating local involvement in project decisions and actions. Information is a necessary ingredient in building such local involvement.

Relevant, timely information is crucial for the success of any intervention strategy which embraces a process approach: flexibility is meaningless unless such information is readily available and can be acted upon. The participation of the local population in data collection, analysis, and decisionmaking is of vital importance. Not only does such involvement increase the willingness of local people to take risks, but it supplies the necessary feedback information for adapting development initiatives to local conditions.

Unfortunately, the design of information systems frequently parallels that of development projects: complex is beautiful. When a consultant is brought in to design an information system, he or she usually has no involvement in or responsibility for its implementation. This often results in a design which emphasizes quantity and complexity over quality and simplicity. The designer's wish to justify his contribution as "important" and at the same time conceptually innovative often results in designs which are very complex, formalized, and impossible to implement because of their costs and skilled manpower demands (Mickelwait and others, 1978: vol 1; pp. 64-66).

Once again, simple is optimal. Prior to implementation of an information system, project staff should know what formal and informal data are already available and the extent to which they are used in decisionmaking. The impression is sometimes given that little ever happened in a specific area until the advent of a development project. Such is rarely the case. Results of development projects, such as wells, potable water systems, health posts, foot bridges, and primary schools, usually can be found. Such activities did not just "happen." Invariably, each local area has a "system" for information use in decisionmaking, though it may be relatively informal and unstructured, and its outward manifestations difficult to discern. Despite its lack of rigor and sophistication, a system of this kind can often be incorporated into a project and used to provide implementers with a basis for sensible decisions<sup>3/</sup>.

Not only should an information system make information available to the local population on what the project has to offer, it should determine what the information needs of the local population are. For example, individual households will want some basis for evaluating the recommended development initiatives so that they can decide for themselves if these initiatives are worth the risk involved. An additional way to encourage participation is to regularly solicit beneficiary perceptions of how the project is progressing. One way this involvement can be encouraged is to organize what may politely be termed "gripe sessions"--during which the local people have an opportunity to express their opinions on both the project and its staff.

The availability of such information is one operational facet of effective participation in the decisionmaking process. Assuming that project management is willing to take this information seriously, the issue then becomes the extent to which management has the power to act on it. If simple information systems channel data directly from a problem source to a decision-maker with the power to affect that problem, then they will be more used and more influential. Systems that filter data through various organizational layers to actors with little direct interest in the problem will be less effective (Honadle and others, 1980: 72).

Various specific methods for eliciting this type of information have been suggested over and above those mentioned earlier. These include:

- . Consultation of written records;
- . Group interviews;
- . Confidential interviews with key informants;

- . Special community meetings;
- . Direct observation of behavior; and
- . Informal conversations.<sup>4/</sup>

If a two-way information flow is to be successfully implemented, two factors should be borne in mind. First, it is important to move beyond the prevailing perception of an information system as fulfilling primarily a "reporting and control" function. Second, the primary objective of an information system should be to improve project performance. Implementers and beneficiaries should jointly develop and agree to criteria for performance.

Emphasis should be placed on building organizational capacity.

In many project areas there may be a lack of organizational skills--particularly those required for organizing meetings, reaching consensus, choosing capable leaders, keeping records, or handling organizational funds (F. Korten, 1981: 11). One response to this problem is to emphasize capacity building in order to improve the ability of local people to deal with their own problems.

In general terms, capacity itself is the ability to:

- . Anticipate and influence change;
- . Make informed decisions;
- . Attract and absorb resources; and
- . Manage resources to achieve objectives (B. Honadle, 1980).

To utilize these capabilities, people often form organizations. These groups allow capabilities to continue independently of the individuals who are members at any one period. Requirements for a capable organization include, but are not limited to, the following:

- . Organizational skills, such as the ability to forge effective links with other organizations and to make it possible for local residents to participate in decisionmaking;
- . Information for decisionmaking and the ability to utilize this information;
- . Staff or a stable membership; and
- . Processes for solving problems and implementing decisions (Honadle and others, 1980: 189).

When the capacity of an organization to undertake particular tasks is observed or assessed, two dimensions should be examined. The first is organizational stock. That is, what resources does the organization control? For example, agricultural extension units with well-trained staff, vehicles,

communication equipment and other facilities are more likely to perform well than units without these assets.

The second dimension to be considered is organizational behavior. That is, what are people actually doing? This is important because high levels of stock do not automatically lead to high levels of performance. Many factors may deter capable people with superior facilities from acting in ways which support a particular project. Thus, effective capacity-building efforts must look beyond inventories of organizational stock to actual human behavior.

The link between stock and behavior is represented by organizational incentives. For example, innovation and experimentation may be stifled by donor payment procedures that provide reimbursement only for subproject activities which reach production targets, and not for those which build capacity or try new approaches. By contrast, compensation and promotion systems for local project staff that reward efforts to work with local organizations and strengthen their capacity to address community needs will help generate that kind of behavior.

In general terms, capacity-building efforts must begin by instilling in project staff a conscious awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of stock, incentives and behavior in project organizations. This awareness, in contrast to the usual narrow focus on organizational resources alone, is an essential precondition for the development of effective programs to upgrade organizational capacity (see Honadle, 1981).

The requirements for capacity building and stimulating quick-impact, production-oriented project activities are not always complementary, although the two objectives are frequently linked of late in development project planning.<sup>5/</sup> The result is often a certain inconsistency between targeted organizational behavior and the incentives to support that behavior. Thus while considerable commitment to capacity building may be evident in the rhetoric of higher level project leaders, staff in the field may be responding to project success criteria of a more traditional nature. A key task is therefore to establish a consistent set of incentives to support targeted behavior at all levels of the project management structure. These incentives must then be communicated to appropriate persons at all levels of the organization.

The concern for capacity building in development circles parallels to a great degree the move toward greater local participation. This is not surprising. Decentralized administrative arrangements may overwhelm existing organizational capabilities in two ways. First, requirements for coordination are greatly increased. Local self-help groups may find themselves competing with one another for scarce resources. Communications demands are multiplied in order to serve joint planning among local residents, project staff, and government personnel. Second, a broader role in decisionmaking draws persons into the process who possess limited formal managerial skills. In addition to all the normal management demands of development projects, participatory arrangements add such elements as ambiguity about the respective roles of staff and local leaders, lack of clarity about specific responsibilities, and the tendency of local elites to "hijack" project benefits (Bryant and White, 1980: 34-39). Addressing these and other problems in a real project setting

calls for dynamic and flexible approaches to the process of building capacity throughout the project system.

Decentralization: local control is the "operational guts" of any strategy designed to encourage participation.

Decentralization is at the heart of any attempt to stimulate effective local participation. Decentralization refers to more than the transfer to local authorities of certain powers and functions such as control over policy, resources, and people. Meaningful decentralization also requires what Korten and Uphoff (1981) call "bureaucratic reorientation" to improve the fit between the structures and modes of operation of development agencies and the requirements of authentic self-reliant development. Such reorientation requires in-depth changes in the values, structures, and operating systems of development bureaucracies, and affects both project staff and project beneficiaries. When the former feel that they have some control, rather than feeling forced to sheepishly follow the dictates of some central authority, then it is more likely they will be willing and able to encourage beneficiary participation.

The crux of the problem lies in the extent to which the central government is willing to devolve authority to lower levels. Unless there is the political will at the national level, there is little chance that decentralization will actually occur. Even when the will exists, effective implementation may be extremely difficult if the government has to deal with powerful line ministries or if it exercises only nominal control in rural areas.

In such cases there are two possible solutions. One is for foreign donors to work through private voluntary organizations, which often espouse a participatory approach. However, performance of these organizations to date is rather mixed--as is the case with most rural development projects. Limited in funding and geographical range, they often create small islands of development with little opportunity for replication on a larger scale.<sup>6/</sup> The other solution is to create an autonomous project management unit. While effective in the short run, its effectiveness in the long run is highly questionable since it is exceedingly difficult to institutionalize (Honadle and others, 1980: 37-38; 48-50).

The issue of bureaucratic change is complex. Blair, while admitting that the political and economic problems of rural development may be solvable, confesses that the issue of decentralization may be ultimately insoluble:

In rural development, the contemporary version of the center-periphery conflict lies in the area of supervision. There must be control from the top, yet there must also be flexibility at the bottom, and the two needs are fundamentally contradictory. If there is too much autonomy from control, rural development goes astray, with the benefits going to the rich. And if there is too much emphasis on supervision from above in administering government programmes, rural development also goes astray, with the benefits again going to the rich. Finding the right mix of supervision and autonomy is probably the most difficult bureaucratic problem there is in the whole field of rural development (Blair, 1978: 72).

This view is unduly bleak and is not fully substantiated by recent development work in countries where decentralization is being pursued. What is typical, however, is the ever-present pressure from central government line ministries to promote their own development ideas, since this is essential for their continued power and control (Morss, 1980: 16-17).

It is important to examine just how much control those most likely to benefit from a strategy of decentralization are likely to want, specifically in the area of decision making. Most people find it satisfying to take part in decisions within the narrow sphere of activity in which they have experience or feel competent. Outside these realms, responsibility is often transferred--willingly or otherwise--to officials further up the hierarchy. Generally speaking, people are more interested in specific services to alleviate basic problems than in action on long-range solutions to problems of development policy; that is, they are not likely to think beyond what can be done within existing policy and environmental constraints. As small, functionally specific groups improve their capability to deliver desired services, management functions become more important and the criteria of success, efficiency, and good service to all members begin to outweigh the need--or the desire for--representation (Hunter, 1978: 44; Bennett, 1978: 52-53).

What this implies is that even if the local population were offered complete control--a somewhat unrealistic possibility--they would neither want it nor know how to use it effectively. In operational terms, this suggests an appropriate degree of local influence over the three principal development inputs: policy, resources, and personnel.

In the area of policy, decisions are made at various levels. A process approach incorporates the views and opinions expressed at all levels, particularly by those who will be most actively involved--the local population and local-level government staff. If their views are taken seriously and incorporated into policy decisions concerning development priorities and allocation of resources, there will be a greater likelihood of creating effective participation and, thereby, improving project performance. The arena within which particular decisions are made depends on the issue at hand, since many local concerns have broader implications. Policies developed to address such concerns need to be responsive to the full range of interest groups which are attached by the issue and the proposed policy. This sort of flexibility is not easily achieved and may require a process of hard negotiations.

In the area of resources, it is important to distinguish between resource commitment and income-generating activities. Resource commitment is usually some sort of contribution--either in cash or in kind--made at the time of project start-up. Income-generating activities produce income on a regular basis to cover operating costs of ongoing activities and to finance new ones. Such income-generating activities can cover a wide spectrum, from charging a fee for services provided (as happens in many indigenous water-users' associations and cooperatives) to establishing some enterprise specifically devoted to raising funds for the local organization and its activities (such as, a store, a communal plot, money-lending, hiring out labor, and the like). Such activities should evolve hand in hand with organizational capacity.

What is important is that the local population, through their local organization, control how these locally generated resources are allocated and utilized. In addition, the local government should be prepared to demonstrate what Hunter terms a "prudent courage": to make resources available to the local organizations for their own development initiatives. Where this has been done for small rural works projects in Egypt, Nepal, and Indonesia, for example, the reported misuse of funds has remained within tolerable limits and the benefits have been significant.

Such resources can be made available in several ways, such as revenue-sharing or block grants. In the former, a percentage of the local taxes are returned to the local government to be used for development activities. In the latter, the central government makes a grant directly to the local authorities for financing such activities. Chambers argues persuasively that the only way to help project staff realize their potential--and this applies equally to project beneficiaries--is by giving them adequate autonomy and resources, particularly in the form of a block grant system to be used at their discretion on projects which fall within jointly negotiated boundaries. In this way local officials will have an opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities (Chambers, 1978: 215).

In the area of personnel, the potential beneficiaries should have some control over hiring and firing. Accountability of both organizational leaders and project staff to the rank-and-file membership is one way in which this can be operationalized. Accountability of project staff usually works up, not down--with the result that beneficiaries often have little control over either the quality or the quantity of the services offered. In such situations, their most effective tactic may be nonparticipation. If accountability to beneficiaries is to materialize, it must be built into the project design and reflect a willingness of both planners and implementers to accept some responsibility for their actions.

In the best of all possible worlds, beneficiaries would pay project staff for the services provided. However, this is often impractical in the early stages of a project. Project staff have to be persuaded that accountability to beneficiaries will improve the chances of project success and be motivated to act accordingly.

Various approaches to increasing this accountability have been tried. One is the use of local paraprofessionals. A recent study has demonstrated the potential of such an approach (Taylor and Moore, 1980: 1-6). First, paraprofessionals can provide services that would otherwise be unavailable at a relatively low cost; second, they are able to stimulate broad community involvement. However, paraprofessional programs also suffer from poor management practices and inadequate support--reflected in the fact that few villages were found which initiated action against an incompetent paraprofessional or sought ways to modify unsatisfactory services. The indications are that such action will only be initiated when beneficiaries also have some control over policy and resources.

Another way to encourage accountability is to provide incentives to persuade staff to be held accountable. For example, the introduction of

periodic evaluations of extension agent performance in an IRD project in the Philippines was made easier by the award of "incentive allowances" to those staff who agreed to be evaluated by beneficiaries. The evaluation procedure was facilitated by the fact that pay was not tied to evaluation results and that farmers' evaluation represented only one-third of extension agent performance review (Honadle, 1979a: 12-13).

One common fear expressed about decentralization is that both government employees and local leaders will get more than their fair share of scarce development resources--that conditions will be ripe for corruption. Throughout the course of this paper, various ways have been suggested to prevent this, from working with small, functionally specific groups to exercising a degree of political sophistication when choosing the elites through which to work. There is no evidence that decentralized administration and decision making result in more corruption than do centralized approaches (Uphoff and others, 1978: 73-74). Indeed, if decentralization is accompanied by greater openness in local budgetary and other transactions, opportunities for corruption may be reduced. The Save the Children Federation Community Based Integrated Rural Development Project in Indonesia used a strategy of combining open records with rudimentary training for local organization members in bookkeeping and management. The result was the exposure and removal of a corrupt local official, triggered by local participants themselves (VanSant and Weisel, 1979: 18-19).

Finally, the indications are that a participatory management style is the key intervening variable linking decentralization and effective local participation. As mentioned earlier, an identifying characteristic of such a participatory style is the degree to which project staff has some control over policy, resources, and personnel. This has been the case with the IRD program in Colombia, where the regional project staffs have been encouraged to use their own initiatives in generating project proposals. Funds have been made available to implement the more viable ones.

Another characteristic of a participatory style is its "open" rather than "secretive" nature. Such openness lessens the feelings of conspiracy or manipulation that often accompany a top-down process of decisionmaking. Adam Herbert suggests the following set of managerial skills essential for effective administration of a decentralized project that seeks to stimulate effective participation:

- . Ability to operate effectively in a conflict situation;
- . Ability to work in a setting which may require accountability to several, possibly conflicting, groups;
- . Ability to function in a highly uncertain work situation;
- . Ability to communicate effectively up and down through bureaucratic channels;
- . Ability to shed the aloof and elitist image that local people often hold of professional administrators; and

- . Ability to understand the feelings, demands, frustrations, and hopes of those with whom one works (Herbert, 1972: 631-632).

There is a slight tinge of the "Lawrence of Arabia" syndrome here, since such skills are uncommon in any setting and may, in some cases, violate traditional bureaucratic norms. But greater attention to these factors rather than to pure technical competence in selecting and training project staff is a needed step in forging the link between bureaucratic performance and participation.

#### MAKING IT WORK: TWO EXAMPLES

What does effective participation look like in practice? While the preceding section has laid out some specific guidelines for achieving participation, it does not demonstrate the benefits of such participation in the messy, somewhat unpredictable world of project implementation. Fortunately, there is a growing body of literature that provides impressive examples of what effective participation looks like "on the ground" and what conditions facilitate its achievement.<sup>7/</sup> Rather than a paraphrase of what others have written, two encouraging examples are provided here of attempts to achieve effective, albeit imperfect, local participation. These projects are known personally to the authors: the first is a small-scale private voluntary organization effort in eastern Guatemala, and the second is a large-scale government project in Indonesia.

##### The Guatemalan Rural Reconstruction Movement (GRRM).

The basic philosophy of the GRRM is based on ideas developed in the Philippines by Jimmy Yen, the founder of the International Rural Reconstruction Movement. According to the GRRM, rural areas already contain the potential for improving the quality of rural life. To achieve this, knowledge must be offered to small farmers in such a way that it can be easily understood, serve their needs, and increase their capability to identify and solve their own problems.

Although sounding much like traditional CD, this strategy places heavy reliance upon close contact between GRRM personnel and the local population, on training local people to become their own extension agents, and on forcing local groups to conduct their own negotiations with outside institutions once the movement has provided the initial contacts. The current strategy attempts to include all factions in local organizations: representatives of the local power structure and the more progressive farmers in the community, as well as the rural poor. The creation of a local organization is followed by the introduction of technology that is tested, adapted, and finally accepted by members. The GRRM does not fund projects directly, but does help local organizations find funding elsewhere. The governing board in Guatemala City, composed of prominent civic leaders and businessmen, provides an excellent network of contacts for local organizations to draw upon.

At present, the GRRM works with 33 local groups representing about 1,300 farmers. The agricultural committee of Laguneta is typical of these groups.

In 1971, crops failed and villagers were keen to obtain some type of technical assistance. The GRRM was prepared to provide help if the community would agree to form a local organization. An attempt to include all segments of the local population was only partially successful. Just one-third of households became members, although membership includes the more dynamic elements in the community. Since the local organization has been active in projects that have benefitted the whole community and not just the organizational membership, broad social cohesion has been served.

Members did not directly commit any financial resources to their local organization. Instead, their principal resource commitment has been labor. In addition, they have paid the committee a small fee for marketing their products, principally coffee and peaches. A board of directors consisting of nine members is elected by the general membership for a period of two years. This board is ultimately responsible for running the local organization, but it works closely with the GRRM promoter who lives in the village. Tentative plans for the coming year's activities are first drawn up by the board and the promoter and then presented to the general membership for discussion and approval. The organization holds regular meetings every two weeks, and all members are expected to attend.

Laguneta has been involved in both income-generating and infrastructure projects. During the first few years, obtaining credit, procuring agricultural inputs, and marketing took precedence. But once these activities were established, the committee--in conjunction with the community as a whole--was active in the construction of the road, the school, and the health clinic.

Over the years, the agricultural committee has offered the following services:

- . Provision of credit;
- . Provision of agricultural inputs;
- . Marketing of coffee and peaches;
- . . Distribution of coffee plants from its nursery; and
- . . Provision of technical assistance.

Although not a profit-generating enterprise, the Laguneta organization charges a small fee to members for its services and by 1978 had approximately \$1,000 in funds, which it intended to use as a basis for a revolving credit fund.

As a result of these services, yields and prices have increased for member's products. By the mid-1970s net household income had increased 81 percent over a five-year period. Seasonal migration had decreased by an estimated 50 percent. Members feel they have gained both general and practical knowledge, and the esprit de corps within the local organization was instrumental in involving the community in building the road, the school, and the health clinic.

GRRM personnel are likewise proud of their work; several have been with the project for over 10 years. There is a noticeable spirit of cooperation, shown in the way team members respect each other and their work. This positive attitude is also reflected in their dealings toward the small farmers in the area, reinforced by the attitude of the board of directors, which has left much of the initiative for project activities to the field personnel (see Gow and others, 1979: vol 2, pp. 171-185).

### The Indonesia Provincial Development Program (PDP)

The intent of the Provincial Development Program is (1) to design and implement small-scale local projects which improve the well-being of low-income rural households, and (2) to enhance the capacity of the Government of Indonesia at various administrative levels to effectively plan and implement these projects. It is increasingly recognized that achievement of both of these objectives depends, in part, on effective local participation. PDP experience to date in eight provinces mirrors for better or worse the importance of each of the operational guidelines presented earlier in this paper, particularly decentralization and capacity building.

While provincial governments provide overall administrative and budgetary support to PDP subprojects, actual day-to-day project implementation and the information systems to support that implementation increasingly involve sub-provincial levels of government. Capacity at these lower administrative levels is understood as essential if beneficiaries are to take advantage of project services, develop their own capacity to identify problems and solutions, and work cooperatively to implement the solutions generated.

In the long run, a key measure of PDP success will be the degree to which government officials and PDP staff at all levels work in a manner that invites and promotes authentic local participation in project planning and management. Several encouraging observations can be made about the process so far.

- . There is evident commitment at all levels to a more decentralized project management style which incorporates bottom-up planning. This commitment is clearly linked to PDP.
- . The idea of the district planning board is beginning to take shape in some provinces and a significant devolution of basic operational responsibility to this level is evident. This process is a direct result of PDP.
- . Various attempts are being made to ascertain local needs and aspirations and to incorporate this information into the planning process.

These are significant developments and represent necessary first steps toward the ultimate goal of genuine bottom-up planning. It is important, however, that further attention be given to institutional arrangements that support greater operational roles at subdistrict levels as well. This could begin with joint-planning exercises in which village and subdistrict officials work with district planners in preparing subproject documents. PDP in Bengkulu Province is moving toward such an arrangement by giving subdistrict leaders a

major role in the early stages of project planning. Another approach, used with success in Central Java, is the joint development of worksheets to be used by local officials as an input to higher level planning. The objective is for higher levels to provide support to the lowest operational level possible. Such support now includes training, joint development of guidelines, and technical/managerial assistance. The capability to provide this support is itself an element of organizational capacity at the central, provincial, and district levels.

At the present time, certain factors constrain progress toward further devolution of responsibility in PDP. These factors, manifested to varying degrees in PDP provinces, include:

- . The USAID/Jakarta focus on capacity-building objectives at higher levels;
- . A general emphasis on successful subproject implementation which results in a reluctance to involve lower level officials and organizations with capabilities perceived as limited; and
- . Considerable uncertainty as to how to implement decentralized activities, including planning, especially within existing structures.

The degree to which these constraints are overcome in the future will be an important measure of continuing achievement of PDP capacity-building objectives. Developments so far represent a necessary and promising start.

A major concern for a pilot initiative such as PDP is the sustainability of the institutional and subproject benefits stimulated by PDP after external funding is terminated. PDP's capacity-building focus is a direct attempt to develop an institutional base which, taken as a whole, will be self-sustaining. This does not necessarily mean that every PDP-related organization will or should be able to stand alone. The goal is to generate a network of organizations which are linked in such a way that resource and information flows sustain the total system in support of development objectives, including local participation.

An emphasis on the sequential roles that different organizational forms can play reaffirms the need to build complementary performance capabilities either in permanent agencies or in beneficiary organizations that will inherit project functions. IRD field experience suggests that the following conditions favor the creation of self-sustaining benefits.

- . Government must be committed to project activities;
- . Projects should be small scale and focus on critical constraints;
- . Potential beneficiaries should make a resource commitment during project implementation;
- . Organizational capability should gradually be built into participating agencies and other organizations so that project activities can be effectively institutionalized.

Clearly, these factors are related. Without the commitment of government, public sector support will not continue, whether or not the activities are locally institutionalized. On the other hand, if no institutionalization occurs, continued government support will be less likely. In the absence of local capacity, government support will fail to sustain for long even critically focused projects.

If the above four conditions are used as a set of criteria for PDP success, then the outlook is favorable in terms of the first two indicators, which deal with government commitment and the nature of subprojects. The situation is less promising in terms of the remaining conditions, which deal with institutionalization and local resource commitment.

The problem of institutionalization manifests itself primarily at subdistrict levels where understanding of and commitment to PDP capacity-building objectives weakens while, at the same time, dependence on higher level or special PDP-supported personnel increases. Below the district level, few institution-building efforts such as, for example, training, joint planning, or beneficiary participation in project information systems are yet evident. Without some reorientation to support such efforts as these, it is doubtful that local institutions will be significantly more prepared at the end of PDP than they are now to assume and sustain activities presently supported at higher levels by PDP resources.

Local resource generation is another key element of project sustainability that is not very evident in PDP provinces. Such resources indicate the extent to which local residents have become committed to both project activities and to the changes necessary to sustain those activities. These resources may also be a primary input needed for continuation.

For example, one feature of PDP in the Province of N.T.T. is the construction of food storage buildings, each intended to serve several surrounding villages. Currently, farmers are forced by market conditions to sell their produce at depressed harvest-time prices and later repurchase at dry-season prices, which may be double or triple what they received earlier. The PDP warehouses, by contrast, buy production at a fair price and resell with a modest mark-up to cover costs of the warehouse staff and routine maintenance. Thus the farmer incurs a reasonable cost for the service of storage.

In reality, however, this storage cost is subsidized by PDP, since the mark-up does not include any allowance for amortizing the cost of constructing the warehouse. Such a subsidy may help insure that the warehouses give a better deal than outside traders, but it does not help develop a sustainable system. If, by contrast, capital costs were amortized over a reasonable period and included in the mark-up, then a sustainable system could be created to which farmers were contributing and the merits of which compared to other investments they could judge for themselves. Of course, if the mark-ups resulted in a system that was noncompetitive with traders, then the whole warehouse concept would best be abandoned. Few things work more against sustainable participation than hidden subsidies.

It is not surprising to observe problems such as these at this point of PDP implementation. Indeed, many are by-products of effective innovation, reflections of the fact that the solution to a problem often begets new challenges. Thus, for example, decentralized planning as an element in PDP design creates unprecedented demands for coordination, information flow, and skill development at many administrative levels. The key is for learning to take place as these demands are faced, even when temporarily faced unsuccessfully. There is ample evidence of such a learning process in PDP. This is reflected in the variety of organizational arrangements which have evolved in different PDP provinces.

Above all, PDP has demonstrated that planning from below is both bureaucratically possible and functionally effective in Indonesia. It also shows that pilot projects can be tested and resultant learning brought to the attention of national level decisionmakers for use on a broader basis. Moreover it confirms that there is a dynamism created by capturing the knowledge, organizational capability and ideas of local government and local people in the development process. Success is a powerful incentive. There is an increasing, vocal, and bottom-up call for extending the PDP way of doing things to traditional top-down sectoral development programs in Indonesia (see VanSant and others, 1981b).

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The first section of this paper traced the history of the three dominant paradigms for effecting participatory rural development--cooperatives, community development, and animation rurale--and suggested why they left much to be desired. The second section dealt with current constraints to participation, specifically national policies, administrative bureaucracies, and the immediate project environment. Finally, the third section drew on these experiences and recent literature on the topic to suggest a set of operational guidelines for creating effective local participation, and the fourth section provided two case studies of what effective participation can look like in practice.

These four sections have depicted the process of creating effective participation as a highly complex, perhaps Herculean task. Participation certainly needs a healthy dose of realism, but too much can kill the concept and relegate it to the library shelves. Such has not been our intention--we have aimed for quite the opposite, in fact: to lay out what is known about participation and the extent to which this knowledge can provide guidelines to development practitioners--be they policy makers, project designers, or project implementers.

As the writings on participation proliferate, two of the operational guidelines discussed earlier stand out as paramount: organizational capacity building and decentralization. In most developing countries, the government is seen as the provider of development resources. Given this, there is no point in villagers developing project ideas until local government officials are prepared to work with them to procure the necessary development commitment and resources from the government. By the same token, there is no point in pushing decentralization at the expense of building local organizational

capacity for, in this case, lower level bureaucrats will end up designing and implementing all the projects (Morss and Gow, 1981: 1). In the final essence, as we hope this paper has clearly demonstrated, effective beneficiary participation implies both a genuine redistribution of power and a significant broadening of local competencies.

## NOTES

1. This section draws heavily on the following: Gow (1980: vol 1, pp. 125-138), Korten (1980), Uphoff and others (1979: 13-31).
2. The framework on which this section is based draws on the following: Honadle and others (1980: chap. 4) and F. Korten (1981).
3. For a concrete example of how this can be done in the context of IRD in Nepal, see Gow (1980).
4. For more information see Honadle (1979b) and VanSant (1980).
5. For example, the Indonesia Provincial Development Program. See VanSant and others (1981b).
6. There are some notable exceptions to these broad generalizations--for example, Oxfam and the Save the Children Federation (SCF). On Oxfam see Barclay and others (1979), Gow and others (1979: vol 2, pp. 27-38; 153-170; 235-247). On SCF, see VanSant and Weisel (1979).
7. For example, see Korten (1980), Hadden (1980), Lassen (1980), Morss and others (1976), Sussman (1980, and VanSant and Weisel (1979).

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