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Readers interested in the subject of community participation in USAID will find relevance in these excerpts on participation from three other bilateral aid agencies, OECD's DAC Committee and the World Bank.

Swedish International Development Authority

SIDA'S EXPERIENCE WITH POPULAR PARTICIPATION

(Excerpts from a paper prepared for World Bank Workshop on Participatory Development, February 27-27, 1992, and written by Anders Rudqvist, Development Studies Unit, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University.)

Main Objectives of Swedish Development Cooperation

The five objectives for Swedish development cooperation are:

- resource growth
- economic and social equalization
- economic and political independence
- democratic development of society
- sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment

SIDA's "changing roles policy" formulated at the beginning of the 1990s, said the agency would concentrate on analysis, direction of effort, follow-up, and evaluation as well as on analysis and feed-back of experience. The shift was intended to encourage recipient countries to take over responsibility for implementation.

The goals for Swedish development cooperation imply that much effort should be devoted to certain areas which may not be top priorities of governments in the recipient countries. Examples of such areas are environmental concerns, gender issues, human rights, and popular participation. Since SIDA is no longer present to the same degree during programme implementation, the changing roles policy may imply certain risks, that these goals and aspects will achieve less attention than before. It will therefore be essential to develop efficient procedures for 'direction of effort, follow-up, and evaluation' of SIDA-supported development projects in the future.

In SIDA's Strategy for Rural Development, developed in the late 1970s, the democracy goal is interpreted rather narrowly as popular participation in the development process. This implies mobilization and participation of the broadly defined target groups in the planning and implementation of development projects and programmes.

In Swedish development assistance, popular participation can be viewed, with reference to the democracy and equity goals, as an objective in itself, i.e., as a basic democratic right that should be taken into consideration and promoted in all development projects. In this sense, it constitutes part of an overall process where democratic development means not just changes at the macro level...For political conditions to change in a more fundamental way, a great many social, cultural, and even personal relationships must become transformed in a democratic direction also at the micro, grassroots level.

One of the main problems in the implementation of SIDA's Strategy for Rural Development was that it provided no directives or methods for the operationalization of popular participation in planned or ongoing development projects. Therefore, the Agriculture Division in 1986 commissioned Stockholm University to carry out a research and development programme on popular participation in rural development. (Popular Participation Programme, "Guidelines for Consultations and Popular Participation in Development Processes and Projects," and Rudqvist, A., "Fieldwork Methods for Consultations and Popular Participation," Development Studies Unit, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University, 1991.)

Priority Questions on Popular Participation

To cover the World Bank priority questions on popular participation, interviews were conducted with key SIDA staff with experience from various participatory SIDA projects.

Question 1

Do some of the projects selected suggest ways to provide flexibility to allow for popular participation without changing SIDA's normal project cycle?

The general opinion among the interviewed SIDA officials is that SIDA's normal project cycle constitutes no great obstacle to the flexibility required for a participatory approach. The existence of clearly formulated policies, strategies, and guidelines for project planning which explicitly refer to popular participation is also considered an important factor, not only for SIDA officials, but also for authorities and counterparts in recipient countries.

It was stressed that one of the most important advantages of country programming is that it implies a long-term cooperation and a continuous dialogue between SIDA and the recipient country. This is particularly essential with regard to the promotion of popular participation. In several cases it has been necessary to motivate initially reluctant recipient government authorities to accept a participatory approach and, through the long-term dialogue, attempt to modify negative attitudes.

Presently, SIDA officials at headquarters and in Development Cooperation Offices exert considerable influence through their continuous presence and participation in programme implementation. If this presence is reduced, participation may be less forcefully encouraged.

Question 2

Is more-than-average elapsed time typically required for preparation and supervision of SIDA-supported participatory operations?

It is generally agreed that participatory projects require more-than-average elapsed time, particularly for planning and preparation. The SIDA officials interviewed are also unanimously of the opinion that initial time and resources dedicated to participation tend to pay off later on

in the form of improved project impact as well as project sustainability. Involvement of the project beneficiaries at the stage of needs/problems identification enhances the possibilities of selecting relevant project components and activities, and developing effective problem solutions. Beneficiary participation and influence during project planning and participation create commitment and facilitate the final take-over of the project by the beneficiaries and their organizations, and hence long-term project sustainability.

Question 3

What does it cost SIDA to support popular participation in SIDA-supported operations?

No specific assessments of the costs for strengthening popular participation in SIDA projects have been made and it thus impossible to give any reliable estimations of the special costs associated with participatory approaches. One of the reasons for this lack is probably that such costs are not readily visible in project budgets. A systematic effort to estimate the costs and benefits of participatory approaches would be very useful.

In relative terms it is considered that participatory projects require more time (staff and consultancy resources) on the part of SIDA, particularly for planning and preparation. In the field setting participatory projects require more resources for local level consultations, organization, mobilization, and training.

Question 4

What skill mix is required of SIDA staff to appraise and supervise SIDA-supported participatory projects?

It is unanimously considered that practical (field) experience, both with regard to local social structures and conditions, and knowledge of Swedish development policy and administration are fundamental requirements. Personal commitment to participatory approaches is also essential, as well as an ability to facilitate multidisciplinary and cross-sectional collaboration. Additional personal characteristics required for work with participatory projects are patience (it takes time to achieve tangible results) and respect for different cultures and traditions.

Question 5

Is SIDA field presence important for participatory projects?

SIDA presence is generally considered necessary. One reason is that participation is a long-term process that requires presence, continuity, and dialogue. Vital inputs for the planning, design, and implementation of participatory projects can only be obtained through direct contacts with the field. Long-term presence of SIDA officials or consultants facilitates establishment of relations of mutual trust and understanding that are necessary for participatory projects.

Question 6

Do participatory projects require longer-than-average staff continuity?

There is total agreement about the importance of staff continuity for the planning and implementation of participatory projects. As noted above, participatory projects are generally long-term efforts where staff presence and continuity are essential. Staff continuity is required both on the part of the donor and the recipient country in order to establish trustful personal relations between the agency staff and project personnel involved in a given project.

Question 7

Do participatory SIDA-financed projects typically build upon small-scale efforts, perhaps initiated by other institutions?

Participatory SIDA projects do not typically build upon small-scale efforts initiated by other institutions.

Question 8

How do SIDA policies regarding procurement, disbursement, auditing, and local-cost financing affect popular participation in SIDA-supported operations?

SIDA officials interviewed maintain that SIDA's rules are flexible and do not constitute any obstacle to popular participation. The unanimous opinion among the SIDA officials interviewed is that the weak link in this respect is not the donor agency or its implementing consultants but the governmental agencies of the recipient country and occasionally NGOs at local organizations that are cooperating in project implementation. These are frequently characterized by low flexibility and low efficiency.

Question 9

Have other agencies helped by pressing SIDA for a more participatory approach?

At the international level SIDA itself has generally played the most active role in the promotion of popular participation both in relation to multilateral agencies and in the bilateral cooperation between recipient country governments and agencies.

Among bilateral donors, SIDA has received most support in the encouragement of participation from other Scandinavian agencies. Cooperation with agencies such as FAO, UNICEF, UNDP, and WHO has inspired SIDA's work with participation and provided new ideas in particular sectors such as water, health, education, and forestry.

Question 10

Has pressure from the people themselves contributed to the development of SIDA-supported operations which allow them to participate in decisions?

The poor generally lack both "voice" and decision-making power. SIDA's experience, therefore, is that pressure from people themselves for participation in decision-making is the exception rather than the rule.

Question 11

Have attitudes of recipient governments inhibited and/or enhanced what SIDA does to support popular participation?

The situation is very complex with regard to recipient governments' attitudes toward popular participation in SIDA projects. There are examples of governments who have positively promoted popular participation, but several governments have worked against it. In certain cases, attitudes and policies of recipient governments have undergone changes as a consequence of shifts in regimes in political and economic conjunctures. SIDA officials contend that SIDA has been the driving force, attempting to influence recipient governments in a participatory direction. This has required a continuous long-term dialogue and presence.

The recent trend in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America towards democratization and decentralization may, to a certain extent, positively affect recipient governments' attitudes toward participation. SIDA officials, however, warn of exaggerated optimism, and point out that reforms or changes in political regime at the national level do not invariably result in changes at the grassroots level. For genuine popular participation to be realized, quality changes in social, cultural and personal relations or attitudes are required at the local level.

Deutsche Geselschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)

A letter from GTZ says participation is "right at the core" of a unit created in March, 1992 on "Poverty Alleviation, Socio-Cultural Issues and Women in Development." The letter (to William J. Nagle and dated May 20) is signed by Dr. Hyfa, the head of the new unit and by I.A. Forster. It constitutes an excellent summary of GTZ's stance on the subject:

> Before coming to the integration of participation in GTZ's policy and practice which has been an on-going process sincethe early eighties, permit us to briefly point out the task of our unit and the state of our discussion concerning the subject.
>
> The main objective of the unit is to improve GTZ's competence related to alleviation of poverty, the integration of women in development, and the taking into account of the socio-cultural dimension of development. There is a consensus on the central importance of participation related to this task. we see it as crucial that the perspective of the intended beneficiaries should be the starting point of any poverty-related development activity. The process of planning and implementation of support measures has to shift significantly towards dialogue and mutual learning. Participation, in this emancipatory sense, implies a substantial handing over of decision-making power and steering capacity to the beneficiaries and should lead to the empowerment of the underprivileged.
>
> Although in our daily work as an institution for technical cooperation we are mostly dealing with participation at the project level, we do not neglect the importance of participation on the political or wider societal level. The involvement of legitimate non-governmental partner institutions seems to us the most promising way to "bridge the gap" between state-run support services (where the bulk of the donor assistance enters) and the initiative and self help efforts of the local population. Their growing and acting as intermediary organizations certainly is an important dimension for the democratization of society in developing countries.
>
> We hope these very brief remarks underline the high priority we attach to the subject of participation...The following deliberations reflect the state of discourse in our unit about the emerging and institutionalization in GTZ's policy and practice.
>
> The need for participation occurs in the development policy of the German Government since the late seventies (at that time in connection with the basic human needs debate). From the beginning of the eighties on, the topic gained increasing recognition in the overall policy of GTZ. This coincided with a

change in the basic concepts and understanding of technical cooperation (stronger partner orientation, target group approach, socio-cultural dimension of development, sequential vs. blueprint planning). Participation's prominent role is reflected in the sectoral guidelines for Regional Rural Development and Irrigation Projects, and in the guideline for the "Management of On-Site Project Implementation." Also at that time a new planning method based on the logical framework approach (ZOPP) was developed and introduced which should allow for greater participation of all concerned groups.

However, although participation was incorporated in the policy concepts and strategies of GTZ quite early, a number of structural restrictions has limited participation to entail its full emancipatory power when it comes to practice. On the one hand there were political restrictions in many developing countries (highly centralized one-party states or dictatorships; reluctant, inefficient and overloaded state agencies, etc). In this context we also have to name the under-estimation of the societal vacuum (especially in Africa) and of the lengthy and tedious process to overcome it when government agencies tried to cooperate with and organize the population at grass-roots level. On the other hand we have to admit restrictions for substantial participation resulting as well from our own administrative and organizational setup (e.g government bias in project proposals; a planning process where the important decisions were taken before the beneficiaries could effectively join in).

Since the end of the eighties there have been increasing efforts to overcome these restrictions. This concerns in particular the initial planning of projects, where a much greater flexibility and openness can be ensured by making use of "open orientation phases" which allow for the participatory planning of projects together with the beneficiaries. Another aspect is the role of legitimate non-governmental organizations whose important contribution towards development is much better understood and appreciated. Particularly in countries where serious democratization take place and where the state gives room for private or corporate initiatives, they have the chance to broaden their activities and even address political issues. In the context of GTZ's work, their cooperation in the implementation of projects is increasingly elicited to take over specific functions in an institutional network comprising government services and grass-roots initiatives. In addition first attempts are planned to systematically consult them in the process of project identification and in negotiations with the government.

All this does not mean that participation is completely institutionalized in all GTZ-supported projects. Rather it sketches the ongoing effort since the early eighties to incorporate participation as a major element in the work of GTZ.

Three of GTZ's publications written or translated into English reflect GTZ's concern and commitment to participation. GTZ's *Regional Rural Development: Guiding Principles*, published in 1984, includes a section on participation. The principle of

local participation, it says, is aimed in two directions:

(1) On the one hand, local participation calls for the inclusion of the interests, initiatives and self-help of local target groups and their institutions. This also means that the traditional community leaders and the local authorities must be included in all phases of program execution (identification, planning, implementation and supervision).

(2) On the other hand, local participation demands consideration for higher level targets and requires that their impact be incorporated in the definition of local action programmes.

A 1989 GTZ publication, *Managing On-site Project Implementation: A Guideline*, ends with a section titled "Aspects of Cooperation with Target Groups." It cites "three essential conditions for participative planning and implementation:"

- decentralized decision-making at regional and local levels concerning issues directly affecting the community or social groups;

- the existence of functioning organizations at target group level that are suitable for cooperating with government institutions and will give target groups the opportunity to integrate their ideas into the planning and decision-making process;

- social and political framework conditions and an attitude by state institutions towards the population that will allow less-privileged groups to voice their interests and goals to government authorities and will not try to deter or systematically demotivate such attempts.

In 1991, GTZ published *Where There Is No Participation... Insights, Strategies, Case Studies, "Do's and Don'ts in Regional Rural Development, Asia."* The foreword to the book includes the following:

> Only people who are or will participate can or will be partners in a development process. Participation is the key to success. It has not become one of the basic principles of programmes for urban and rural regions just by chance. Participation means becoming part of and taking part in the decision-making process, planning, implementation, the provision of resources, the evaluation of joint work, and in the sharing of the success. But participation also implicates ceding power. All concerned must, therefore, view and practice participation as a permanent process in the course of a project. A new way of thinking and behaving is demanded of those who are to be catalysts and promoters of development projects. Perhaps this is the more profound reason behind the considerable difficulties which have to be overcome, particularly when implementing development projects.

CIDA

The Canadian International Development Agency regards participatory development as inextricably linked with human rights and democratic development. This is evident in every paragraph of CIDA's November, 1991, response to the Development Assistance Council's survey of its members on policies and practices in participatory development. What follows are excerpts from the CIDA response:

The mission statement for CIDA was refined in 1991 to indicate that support of Sustainable Development in developing countries would be the focus of the aid program in the 1990s...Some of the key characteristics of the concept are that sustainable development takes a long term perspective, respects diversity/pluralism, uses an integrated approach, requires equity and justice and relies on participatory approaches...

Political sustainability (as one of the elements in the concept of sustainable development) requires an evolution of political systems toward more participatory, open, transparent, accountable and efficient decision-making processes...

Social sustainability is defined as improving income distribution, striving for gender equity, investing in basic health and education, and emphasizing participation of beneficiaries.

Canada's definition of democratic development is drawn from Article 21 of the universal Declaration of Human Rights. Democratic development is the process which encourages and supports full and equitable public participation in the entire range of social, political, and economic activities of the state...Canada assists in the creation and development of indigenous governmental institutions as opposed to political organizations, while trying to remain sensitive to the cultures of recipient countries. Democratic development is seen as the establishment of a system of government and as the participatory expansion of human capabilities.

As part of the expansion on the sustainable development framework, policy papers are being prepared on three specific aspects of participatory development: human rights, good governance, and democratization. A set of operational guidelines, for CIDA staff, will be an important section of the policy papers.

Excerpts on Participatory Development from 1991 Report of
OECD Development Assistance Committee

Participatory development was the principal subject of discussion at the 1990 High-Level Meeting which concluded:

> DAC Members reaffirm their conviction that there is a vital connection between open, democratic and accountable political systems, individual rights and the effective and equitable operation of economic systems with substantial reductions in poverty. Participatory development requires strategies and approaches which combine effective economic policies, equitable access to basic social and economic services and broader popular participation in decision-making on the orientation of government policies and programmes. DAC Members are encouraged to note that there is a large consensus on these values and orientations as is evidenced *inter alia* by the recent United Nations Conference on the Least-Developed Countries.

DAC members will work with their developing-country partners to achieve more participatory development, in particular in the following areas:

- priority for programmes providing affordable, effective and sustainable services, such as for education, training and health, for the masses of the people, including the poor, and broad participation in selection, administration and financing of these services;
- promoting conditions for a dynamic private sector, strengthening the role of individual and community-based initiatives, private enterprise and the market system, and facilitating broad access to productive assets;
- establishing an enabling policy environment and the necessary support for the micro-enterprise and informal sectors;
- establishing appropriate boundaries for the role of central government and a greater role for local organizations and NGOs;
- associating users through appropriate organizations with the design and implementation of aid-finance projects;
- enabling active participation of women in the processes of development as decisionmakers, producers and providers of basic care;
- assisting development countries in strengthening institutions, policies and practices leading to good government at central and local level;
- respect of human rights, including effective and accessible legal systems;
- strengthening the fight against corruption.

The DAC discussion also showed Members' conviction that participatory development cannot be achieved without the development of good government. The definition of good government is a complex issue, but competence and honesty, public accountability, broader participation in discussion and decision-making on central issues and generally the encouragement of individual and community-based initiatives are clearly integral features. This in turn implies the strengthening of extra-government institutions and organizations to assist in the development of good government and improved management capabilities at all levels.

B

The notion of participatory development

Considering that popular participation defies a precise and all-embracing definition, most writers on the subject aim at offering working definitions. Of the latter, an important one is "empowerment," defined by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development as "the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control." The notion of participation extends beyond technical/economic considerations into the political realm. Demanded or actual changes in power relations are often resented as a threat by those who already hold power and control resources.

Is participation an end, a means or both? When it is directed from above, it becomes mobilization, a means of getting things done. When it arises from below, it is a way for people to obtain a larger share of the benefits of development. Participation can assume different degrees and forms. It may be passive, such as using a service or attending a meeting and accepting decisions made by others. It may entail more active stances such as involvement in the delivery of a service or, as UNICEF defines it, "in real decision-making at every stage -- identification of problems, the study of feasibility, planning, implementation, and evaluation." Through participation in a fuller way at the local level, people gain knowledge and awareness of their own social, economic and political conditions and learn to address them. Thus, participation in grassroots organizations can give people experience in democracy and empowerment which, in turn, could be a foundation for democratic life in their society as a whole.

The notion of participatory development has important implications for donor-recipient relations. A key issue for donors is to find new approaches to ensure that aid-financed projects and programmes contribute more decisively to the three key requirements: effective economic policies, equitable access to services and resources and broader popular participation in decision-making.

BROADER POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

The report of the South Commission notes that over time a number of development countries moved away from popular participation. "Linked to the failure to make people central, as both the instruments and the purpose of development efforts, was the tendency to move away from democratic government towards various types of autocracy or dictatorships, military or civilian."

In the words of Mr. Adebay Adedeji, UN Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, the political crisis of the African region is at least as important as the economic crisis. Poor governance, lack of accountability and of popular participation, and an increasingly narrow basis of decision-making have led to a crisis of confidence between the governed and their government. As the crisis deepened, the pervasive lack of democracy led to the marginalization of the people in the development process.

Increased popular participation is now behind advocated on a broad front. The South Commission views a democrative environment guaranteeing fundamental human rights as a essential goal of development centered on the people as well as a crucial means of accelerating development. In addition to strengthening governmental public democratic institutions, governments should encourage non-governmental and grassroots organizations to assume responsibility for economic and social advances. By mobilizing local human and financial resources, such organizations help to meet the felt needs of their members and are important parts of the democratic system.

Donor agency have reconsidered their previous development approaches and have formulated WID strategies, along the lines of the *DAC Guiding Principles on Women in Development,* which are essentially built on the premises of participatory development.

Participatory methodologies of project design and implementation are proving to be an effective strategy for expanding opportunities for women because they feel more committed and their needs, abilities and concerns are addressed from the outset. Gender analysis and participatory methodologies are indeed increasingly used by donors to ensure women's full participation in their community and national development.

EXTENDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LESS BUREAUCRATIC ACTORS

Development Co-operation in the 1990s points out that new emphasis on participatory development does not imply by-passing governments. Indeed, effective development requires competent and efficient governments and public services. At the same time, a more careful nurturing of local initiatives and private sector promotion will require greater use of "less governmentalized" channels of aid even as part of government-to-government cooperation. Aid agencies are themselves bureaucracies that specialize in the transfer of financial resources and work primarily with developing-country bureaucracies. Bureaucracies are not always well suited to promote participation and a serious commitment will therefor be needed on the part of aid agencies to overcome their own inherent limitations.

The difficulty bureaucracies have in participatory approaches derives in part from the very nature of the latter. While not necessarily absorbing large amounts of foreign exchange, participative approaches are highly time-consuming and require continuity and familiarity with local contexts - even when the intention is to entrust a local partner with implementation. The management, procedures and career systems of agencies are not presently geared to such activities. Indeed, the skills needed for encouraging participatory processes may be quite different from those of articulate doers and achievers. But it is unlikely that aid agencies themselves would recruit great numbers of people with the required skills to directly fine-tune and control a myriad of participatory activities. Indeed, participation implies the creation of situations in which local people are able to take decisions on their own. The answers lie in part with changes in the aid agencies such as experimenting with new ways of structuring and managing aid that allow for the patience, flexibility and responsiveness needed.

The nature of participatory development suggests the need for the devolution of more responsibilities to decentralized levels, closer to the people concerned.

Much of the experience in participatory development so far has been acquired by NGOs. In the wide array of NGOs, some of those from donor countries have specialized in supporting local initiatives at the grassroots level and their networks and federative associations within and across developing countries. In the developing countries, as a result of this work and of the vision of countless local innovators at various levels in their societies, "the most exciting phenomenon in the NGO sector over the last two decades has been the birth, growth, and maturing of grassroots organizations," to use the words of John Clark in his recent book *Democratising Development - The Role of Voluntary Organizations* (Earthscan, 1991). In joining a grassroots movement, the poor acquire collectively an ability to take action that radially alters their situations, even where the starting point may be modest - a savings club, a literacy or credit program, or a farmers' or women's group set up for raising income.

The World Bank

An appendix to the paper, "Policy and Practice of Community Participation in the U.S. Agency for International Development, contains the documents that started a learning process at the Bank on participation. This later document serves as an interim report on the progress of that learning process. It is an introduction to a paper titled "Participatory Development and the World Bank: Potential Directions for Change." (The full paper, Discussion paper # 183, is available free of charge from the Bank.)

Introduction

Bhuvan Bratnager and Aubrey C. Williams

In December 1990 two senior vice presidents of the World Bank[1] agreed to explore opportunities to strengthen the Bank's support for "popular participation" in ways that would further the Bank's development objectives. Under the joint responsibility of the Bank's Central Operations Department and External Affairs Department, a Bank-wide internal learning process on popular participation was initiated. The Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) is supporting this three-year learning process through trust fund appropriations totaling $1.3 million. The first year culminated in an international workshop on popular participation held in Washington, D.C. in February 1992, which drew on experiences from inside and outside the Bank.

This volume serves as a summary record of that important workshop. It reprints each of the background papers prepared for the workshop and is meant to stimulate further discussion and comment on them. It also describes how the learning process is progressing, highlights preliminary findings, and invites Bank staff to join in the learning process.

The introductory chapter draws heavily on an interim report of the learning process submitted to Sven Sandstrom, Managing Director of the World Bank, in August 1992. That report, which aimed at keeping senior Bank management informed about progress in the learning process, incorporated comments from the Bank's Regional Management. The same interim report will be disseminated and discussed further with other operational staff in the coming months. Thus, this volume is also helping to contribute to the wide-ranging dialogue on popular participation that is going on at all levels inside the Bank.

The first section of this chapter briefly explains the approach and activities undertaken in the initial 18 months of the learning process. The second section offers an overview of preliminary findings or hypotheses that warrant further consideration. The third section presents highlights of the workshop, including a brief overview of the papers presented and issues emerging from the workshop. The final section sketches out several tracks that could be explored by the Bank as it attempts to "mainstream" the learning process based on its experience with participation and the findings of the international workshop.

Activities of the Learning Group

A group of 15 Bank staff (the core team) oversees the learning process. The group was given a mandate to assist in developing and documenting 20 Bank-supported operations that could be considered participatory, accelerate Bank learning from different initiatives taking place inside and outside the Bank, and investigate any modifications the Bank may need to make in its operational practices in order to encourage popular participation where appropriate.

Since February 1991 the learning group has comprised, apart from the 15 members of the core

team, a network of task managers responsible for operations that appear to be participatory. In addition, a small group of Bank advisers assists the task managers and advises the core team on specific operations. (The composition of the learning group is presented in annex 1.)

Because participatory development means different things to different people, the core team first prepared a concept paper containing its own provisional definitions and approaches (annex 2). The core team defines participation as a process by which people—especially disadvantaged people—can excercise influence over policy formulation, design alternatives, investment choices, management, and monitoring of development interventions in their communities.

While participation should involve all stakeholders, including official borrower representatives from central ministries, mid-level managers, line agency staff, interest groups such as nongovernmental organization (NGOs), local government representatives, and concerned people acting individually or collectively, special attention needs to be paid to women, indigenous people, and the very poor. A distinction is made between direct participation by affected people and indirect participation by other stakeholders. Area-specific communal irrigation projects, for example, often involve micro-planning and self-help that can benefit from direct expressions of participation. By contrast, participation in macro-policy decisions or formulation of national environmental action plans may have to be based on consultative and information-sharing processes that seek out the informed views of public and private stakeholders as well as those of the disadvantaged.

The learning group next identified and sought to promote specific learning initiatives. These initiatives have the potential to become case studies of how participatory processes have been introduced in large-scale Bank-supported operations. More than 80 projects and sector or policy studies were nominated as participatory by the Bank's regional vice presidents. The learning group selected 20 of these for special study and development in a participatory mode. (The 20 projects are listed in annex 3.) To date, proposals from seven of these projects have been approved for support from the SIDA trust fund to develop and document participatory approaches. Proposals from another seven are in the final stages of preparation.

To guide its investigation, the learning group agreed on a set of 21 priority questions on popular participation (listed in annex 4). To the extent possible, each specific learning initiative addresses one or more of these questions. Questions 1-11 deal with the Bank's capacity to support participation in activities which it finances, and questions 12-21 deal with general issues relating to participation in borrowing countries

The learning group is drawing on experience within and outside the Bank. The personal commitment of individual task managers has often resulted in exceptionally strong participatory aspects of Bank-financed operations, although much of this rich experience remains undocumented. The Bank's Africa and Asia Regional Offices have organized subgroups and workshops on participation. Regional environment divisions have used SIDA funds to assist task managers in strengthening the participatory dimension of their work. The Environment Division, Asia Technical Department, for example, has recruited an experienced consultant to assist country departments in complying with the participatory requirements of Operational Directive 4.01 on Environmental Assessment. Sector and Operations Policy Departments are paying increasing attention to participatory concerns through their poverty work (including the *Poverty Reduction Handbook*), operational directives, and environment policy work. (Operational directives that require or recommend participatory approaches are listed in annex 5.)

The Bank is also learning about participation from its borrowers, from academics, and from other development agencies. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), SIDA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been major proponents of participation. Since 1980, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has promoted its People's Participation Program. In 1991, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) devoted a major share of its efforts to reviewing participatory approaches to development. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has drawn up its own "Guidelines for Social Analysis of Development Projects." The 1993 UNDP Human Development Report will focus on participatory development. The Bank and the Society for International Development (SID)–Washington Chapter are cosponsoring seminars on participation in which speakers are asked to address the 21 questions of the learning process.

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To bring together these and other experiences with participation inside and outside the Bank, an international workshop on participatory development was held in Washington, D.C. on February 26 and 27, 1992. About 80 people attended, half drawn from inside the Bank and half from outside. Non-Bank participants included southern and northern NGO representatives, academics, donor agency staff, and a few government officials (annex 6).

The workshop, moderated by Sven Sandstrom, considered the range of the Bank's work, including policy dialogue, research, analytical work, policy-based lending, and investment projects. On the first day, small working groups grappled with various general aspects of participatory development (capacity building, consultation, institutional processes, monitoring and evaluation, and funding instruments). On the second day, the groups focused on the impact that participatory approaches to development would have on the Bank's budget, staffing, work with others, disclosure of information policy, and the project cycle. On February 28, a half-day seminar briefed more than 300 staff and outsiders about the workshop.

Emerging Lessons

Halfway into the learning process, it is premature to draw conclusive lessons. But several preliminary findings and hypotheses are emerging from discussions within the core team, interviews with task managers and a review of project documents for the 20 selected projects, task managers' written responses to the core team's 21 questions, information provided by academics and development professionals, and a literature review of Bank and non-Bank documents, including background papers prepared for the February workshop. These provisional lessons are discussed below under two headings: (1) benefits and risks of participatory development in borrowing countries and (2) opportunities and constraints affecting the Bank's capacity and support for participatory development.

Benefits and Risks

Benefits. Rigorous empirical evidence is scant but nevertheless positive about the benefits of participation to development effectiveness. A 1976 report by Development Associates, Inc., on its experience with small farmer projects provided quantitative data based on rural development experience in 10 African and Latin American countries. According to the report, key factors in the success of development projects are "small farmers' involvement in project decision-making and the willingness of small farmers to make a resource commitment to the project" (Morss and others 1976).

A 1985 report from the Bank's Operations Evaluation Department, which analyzed completed projects (mostly in agriculture and rural development), documented the link between grass-roots participation and project sustainability (OED 1985). The report, based on impact evaluations of 25 projects conducted 5 to 10 years after completion, found that 12 of the 25 projects had achieved long-term sustainability, while 13 had not. One set of underlying factors credited with having a significant bearing on project sustainability was participation by grass-roots institutions and beneficiaries. The department's separate review of 42 Bank-financed irrigation projects in 1987 concluded that economic returns were consistently higher for projects that involved farmers in planning and management of the irrigation system.

A 1990 study of 52 projects in various sectors by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) showed a positive correlation between participation and project success. The correlation between participation and success was almost as strong as between the availability of finance and success.

The strongest documented evidence of the link between participation and development effectiveness is in the water sector, which includes irrigation. In Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, an information campaign, decentralization of the water utility, and the launching of a community development program reduced maintenance costs of the National Rural Water-Supply Program by 50 percent. As one of the 20 selected projects for the learning process (see annex 3), the UNDP-World Bank Water and Sanitation Program is undertaking a study, based on evaluation reports from different agencies, of 110 completed rural water-supply projects. Preliminary results, based on a correlation analysis of 52 projects, support strong associations between overall project effectiveness, sustainability, and participation-related variables. While scores on participation correlate highly with improved quality of project design and project implementation, the association is even stronger for women's involvement. Final results will be available by the end of 1992.

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Evidence is also growing that in certain areas (particularly those requiring changes in community behavior, such as water and sanitation, primary health, forestry and natural resource management, land reform and rural development, education, and small-scale enterprise) participation tends to build commitment, which in turn tends to lead to greater sustainability. In areas requiring changes in individual and household behavior—like family planning, savings and credit, income generation, and the adoption of new farm practices—information, feedback, consultation, and the active promotion of solidarity or support groups tend to lead to increased demand, greater adoption of new practices, and better utilization of services.

There are a number of reasons why governments may find that participatory approaches produce net benefits, despite some economic and political costs. Participatory approaches allow governments to:

- Collect more accurate and representative information about the needs, priorities, and capabilities of local people, and the impact of government initiatives and programs
- Adapt programs to meet local conditions so that scarce resources can be employed more effectively
- Deliver better quality and demand-responsive services
- Mobilize local resources to augment or even substitute for scarce governmental resources
- Improve utilization and maintenance of governmental facilities and services
- Increase public recognition of governmental achievements and legitimacy.

Risks. The main risks of participation include:

- Incurring initially high transaction costs to generate and sustain participatory approaches
- Raising expectations prematurely
- Substituting, not complementing, technical knowledge with local information
- Capturing of development resources by local elites.

Costs of participation to local communities are often large, relative to their resources. Costs to clients in borrowing countries include actual costs in time expended in consultation and the cost of extension services—particularly the recurrent cost of fielding community promoters or change agents.

The dangers of prematurely raising expectations are readily apparent. But the Bank may have erred too much on the side of caution. For example, the Bank's early lending for family planning was constrained in part because of concern that popular demand for contraception might outstrip supply if information and participatory mechanisms were put in place too early. That concern has proven to be unfounded.

While listening to the people is essential, technical expertise can help the disadvantaged choose a course of action best suited for their needs and aspirations. Technical expertise is also necessary to interpret and translate these needs into appropriate forms.

Sometimes resources for development can be captured by local elites and used primarily for their own benefit rather than the intended beneficiaries. This happens because local elites usually have advantageous ties to national elites, because they have access to and information about resource allocation procedures, and because they can use threats and force against the disadvantaged.

Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities. The 20 projects selected for the Bank's learning process (annex 3) represent 13 different subsectors and present an opportunity to study "how to" mechanisms supporting participatory efforts across a range of Bank-supported operations. Different types of Bank-financed operations require different intensities of participation. Some operations require information sharing or intermittent consultation with affected people. In other operations, local people must play a decision-making role and take initiative in planning and implementing actions.

Despite a growing inventory, it is still too early to tell whether these 20 operations are indeed participatory or whether they merely reflect good intentions. The Bank's regional offices need to begin documenting their experiences in promoting participatory approaches and contributing to the preparation and dissemination of case studies of successful and failed approaches to promoting participation. The Africa Region of the Bank has begun to assess borrower experience in promoting participation in the preparation of environmental assessments. The Latin America and Caribbean Region is conducting a study of cross-regional experience to document best practices in popular participation. The Second Annual Implementation

Review of the Bank's Operational Directive on Environmental Assessment will focus on issues of participation in the environmental assessment process. The Environment Department will look at the best practices in this area and incorporate the findings into a sectoral training program. Together with selected sector operations divisions, the Water and Sanitation Division of the Infrastructure and Urban Development Department is assisting in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of four rural water-supply projects for the poor.

Since formulating and influencing development policy is an area of comparative advantage for the Bank, efforts at promoting participation conceivably should extend beyond the project framework. Nonlending activities of the Bank have contributed to opening up wider opportunities for participation. The emergence of participatory approaches in the Côte d'Ivoire National Rural Water Supply Program described above, as well as in the Mexico Decentralization and Regional Development Project (one of the 20 projects included in the learning process), can be traced back to participatory policy studies.

Other examples of sector work and policy studies undertaken in a participatory way include the India Family Planning Sector report, the Côte d'Ivoire Post-Primary Skills Development study, the Zaire Environment and Forestry study, the Africa Long-Term Perspective study, African National Environmental Action Plans, Guinea and Benin health beneficiary assessments, the Zimbabwe Water Sector Policy Review, and studies on education and women in development in Burkina Faso. Within the Economic Development Institute, the women in development and NGO training activities are being conceived and implemented in participatory ways.

Governments' predisposition, policies, and practices in affording citizens opportunities for participation are key. Without government commitment, there is little external agencies can do to broaden and sustain participation. This does not imply that external agencies must remain passive. It does mean, however, that the Bank's strength lies in its ability to engage in dialogue with governments about appropriate policies and methods to promote people's involvement in the development process and to influence borrowers to successfully implement all aspects of Bank-financed operations, including participation-related aspects. The Latin America and Caribbean Region has made explicit the link between strengthening popular participation early in the design of operations (during the Initiating Executive Project Summary) and building borrower commitment to improving the quality, impact, and sustainability of the Bank's lending portfolio in the region. The Africa Region has emphasized that participatory approaches are key to developing borrower-client ownership in the regional guidelines for project preparation issued in November 1991.

The opportunities for the Bank to stimulate broader participation have been strengthened by its increased ability to engage in dialogue on a wide range of critical development issues. This strength, however, has on the whole been concentrated on the Bank's interactions with central governments and, in some countries, with state and provincial governments. The dialogue at the local level has generally been very limited and, when it has taken place, has been in the context of specific, mainly urban, projects. Greater attention will be needed in the Bank's work to address the role of local governments in involving people in decision making on locally provided services, including their financing.

Constraints. As acknowledged earlier, there are possible incremental costs in promoting participation to borrowing governments and local communities. Many Bank task managers argue that there are extra costs to the Bank of ensuring participatory approaches. One can hypothesize that (1) there are frequently added costs incurred by both borrowers and the Bank in designing and starting up participatory operations and that (2) Bank staff are sometimes successful in reducing costs to the Bank by relying on the borrower and grant-making agencies. For example, in the Mexico Decentralization and Regional Development Project all the expenses for seminars and other participatory approaches to project preparation were borne by state governments and federal agencies.

Research should also be undertaken to try to determine the net benefits from participatory practices. This research should include a test of the negative hypothesis that low borrower commitment and low levels of popular participation often lead to high costs later because of low impact or project failure. Such costs include the lack or misuse of facilities, poor maintenance, deterioration of infrastructure, and program decline. While the Kampung Improvement Program in Indonesia, supported by several Bank-financed projects, was successful in building physical infrastructure, some

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facilities were not used and others broke down because of poor maintenance and minimal participation by client communities. These costs can be attributed, in part, to lack of upstream investments in processes that enable people to influence decisions that affect them.

A closely related constraint has to do with the availability of and access to relevant information about development interventions. Some political cultures foster openness and debate; others are controlling and closed. Participation is a function of information through which people can come to share a development vision, make choices, and manage activities. A range of consultative techniques has emerged for eliciting information in participatory ways, including geographic information systems, participatory rural appraisals, and beneficiary assessments. But these methods can be undertaken credibly only if people see that information also flows from governments and external supporters in ways that genuinely seek people's informed participation.

Other important constraints are scale and methodology. To go beyond successful small-scale efforts may require taking steps to persuade and assist public agencies to adopt a participatory ethos. Institutions may have to be set up or strengthened to pursue action-research methods of planning and sequencing interventions in consultation with local communities, as was done successfully by the Philippines National Irrigation Administration. New skills will therefore be needed, both in borrowing countries and in the Bank. Within the Bank, some steps are being taken to prepare case study materials and guidelines.[2] But much more is needed.

February Workshop on Participatory Development

The opportunities and constraints discussed above were brought out fully in the February 1992 Bank-sponsored workshop on participatory development. The purpose of the two-day workshop was to stimulate discussion about important aspects of participation and development and to help the learning group focus on issues relevant to strengthening Bank support for participatory approaches.

The workshop and this volume were organized around the 21 priority questions of the learning group (listed in annex 4). A matrix explaining the organization of the workshop is presented in annex 7. Workshop papers and discussion summaries focusing on questions 1-11 are included in parts I and II of this volume. Parts III and IV contain workshop papers and discussion summaries dealing with questions 12-21.

For the first day, workshop participants were divided into small groups, organized around four distinct but interrelated topics concerning participation-in-development activities in borrowing countries: capacity building and consultation, institutional processes, funding instruments, and monitoring and evaluation of participation. The topics were selected with a mind to priority questions 12 through 21 of the Bank-wide learning group (annex 4). A background paper had been prepared to stimulate discussion of relevant issues in each small group. For the most part, the background papers directly addressed the priority questions associated with a particular small group. These papers are included in part III of this volume.

Thomas Dichter's paper deals with the crisis in professional confidence about working in the "swampy lowlands" of messy, confusing problems of the greatest human concern. Development practitioners today have to chose whether to work on the high ground of safe, precise measurement or to descend into the swamp of nonrigorous inquiry. While workshop participants liked Dichter's imagery, some preferred to picture uplands of trees and woods (representing great diversity) that looked down on agricultural flatlands of straight-lined furrows. It was agreed that these uplands, the true high grounds, with their concern for people, poverty, environment, and now participation, require a different sort of rigor and approach.

The remaining papers attempt to develop and document this rigor and approach. Michael Cernea's paper crafts out a six-step "social methodology" to organize participation. Thomas Carroll focuses on the relationships between local development groups and national intermediary support organizations in building "group capacity." Alexandre Marc discusses the experience of the World Bank in designing and settingup "funding instruments" conducive to participation. Norman Uphoff details participatory approaches for "monitoring and evaluation" of participation.

On the second day, workshop participants were again divided into four small groups. These groups were organized according to four factors influencing the Bank's capacity to promote participatory development: budgetary requirements, staffing policies, ability to work with others, and receptivity to outside pressures. These topics were selected

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with a mind to the first set of priority questions (1 through 11) of the Bank-wide learning group (annex 4). The second-day discussions functioned a bit differently from the first-day sessions because each of the five background papers for the second day addressed all priority questions 1 through 11 from the perspective of a different development agency. Agencies that documented their experience were the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), IFAD, SIDA, UNICEF, and the World Bank. These papers are included as part I of this volume.

The questions and related papers for both days were intended to stimulate discussion about important aspects of participation and development. These aspects inevitably interlocked or overlapped. Small groups were expected to begin their discussions with an assessment of the relevance of the questions and the degree to which the background papers shed light on the key questions. By the end of each session, however, groups were expected to have moved beyond specific questions and background papers. Groups were requested to pull together priority concerns and recommendations for consideration in the plenary session at the end of each day. Some participants found this "task orientation" of the workshop to be restrictive, despite the participatory processes and techniques built into the workshop design (annex 8).

Discussions were guided by a trained facilitator placed in each small group. Although the facilitators were not subject-matter specialists, they were committed to making the small group discussions participatory. The authors of the workshop papers, though present, were not meant to lead discussions but were expected to provide expert insights as needed. A recorder was placed in each small group to provide a written summary of the discussions. These summaries were circulated to the participants for comments, and revised versions have been included in parts II and IV of this volume.

One of the key issues emerging from the workshop's first day concerned the definition of participation—specifically, whether participation is an end or a means. Some participants suggested that the Bank should uphold participation as a business philosophy and asserted that the Bank is unnecessarily coy about participation while being decisive about structural adjustment. Others, concerned about the risk of antagonism and political resistance, cautioned against promoting participation as an end in itself. They argued that participation is best justified as a means of making development more effective.

Some participants pointed out that the Bank is attempting to depoliticize participation to make it fit into the Bank's mandate. The aim of participation, they argued, is to ensure effective, equitable, and appropriate allocation of resources. Resource allocation is a political issue and must be recognized by the Bank as such.

Although not unanimous in their views, workshop participants shared a clear set of concerns. Participants felt that the Bank has a responsibility to support a participatory culture by including in its policy dialogue the importance of information and democratic openness, the rule of law, and appropriate legal structures supporting the private and nongovernmental sectors and local government bodies. In particular, as the role of the state is being redefined and rolled back in many countries, it has become more important for residual state functions to become more efficient through the discipline of greater public accountability and for civil society (including the private sector, NGOs, and local government) to assume certain functions for which the state was previously responsible.

Participants also cautioned that there is no blueprint for promoting participation. It was suggested that the Bank should conduct an institutional analysis in borrowing countries to learn who is doing what and to build on ongoing processes and capabilities. The Bank, it was felt, should support more pilot activities to demonstrate what can be done and give organizations opportunities to learn. Participation should be promoted as early as possible, during preproject conceptualization and identification.

In support of such efforts, participants (particularly NGO representatives) felt that the Bank needs to be more proactive in encouraging borrowing governments to share information and to debate development issues and options. The Bank was seen as setting an example by its willingness to make more information available in freestanding Global Environmental Facility projects. The possibility of conducting economic and sector work with heavy involvement of nationals in borrowing countries was discussed. Some participants advocated opening up the Bank policy-making process in ways that invite the involvement of knowledgeable persons through consultations and sharing draft policy documents with such people.

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The small discussion groups also addressed the need to simplify funding instruments if governments and the Bank intend to support participatory approaches. In channeling funds to local government, communities, NGOs, and the informal sector, it was recommended that the Bank identify appropriate mechanisms to facilitate timely disbursements. Monitoring and evaluation of Bank-assisted projects should be done in a participatory manner.

While some donor representatives expressed eagerness to support participatory approaches through trust funds, they also felt that some of the Bank's overarching priorities (poverty and environment, with emphasis on participation) lacks credibility because they appear to depend disproportionately on trust fund support.

Against this background, workshop participants sought to identify obstacles to participation within the Bank. Some pointed out that organizations tend to replicate externally the styles of operations that prevail internally. If the Bank is serious about supporting participation in development activities in borrowing countries, they argued, then it must pay attention to how its own internal operational procedures may need to be modified in order to support this participation.

While not questioning the project approach, participants raised many concerns about the Bank's project procedures. The Bank was seen as preferring easily quantifiable, supply-driven projects over those that are demand-driven and hard to appraise in advance. Appraisal and Board presentation command a disproportionate amount of attention and effort. Some Bank participants felt that career advancement and salary review depend on bringing in projects to the Bank's Board. Only the exceptional staff member risks slowing down or experimenting and deviating from traditional project designs.

Bank task managers sometimes face pressure to "move money," not always sufficiently balanced by pressures and incentives for quality impact. Some workshop participants suggested that democratic counter-pressure just might prove strong enough to get the Bank to make needed adjustments in its administrative budget (more human attention per million dollars of lending) and timetables.

Addressing Bank culture further, some workshop participants noted a tendency to regard only economists as "professionals." The Bank was urged to reexamine its staff skill mix in terms of selection criteria, professional diversity, personality, and value orientation. Finally, there was an appeal to review the prevailing incentive structure that affects how the Bank is perceived, whom it recruits, and what kinds of risks are rewarded. More people with "participation" skills are needed in the Bank. Several workshop participants felt that "skills" refers partly to academic discipline, but much more to attitude, commitment, field experience, negotiating skills, and other personal traits. For people already in the Bank and for key people in borrowing countries, training, with an emphasis on listening skills and on catalyzing participatory processes, is also essential.

Mainstreaming the Learning Process

World Bank President Lewis T. Preston recently stated in Rio de Janeiro that "consultation with the local people affected by development projects is a priority." A key message of *World Development Report 1992* is that local participation in setting and implementing environmental policies and investments will yield high returns. The Operations Evaluations Department has documented project failures caused by lack of borrower commitment, lack of consultation with local people, centralized management that interferes with people's management, and weak institutional capacity at the lower levels of bureaucracy in many developing countries. The economic, social, and cultural benefits provide compelling reasons to encourage greater attention to participation and to mainstreaming the learning process.

Mainstreaming refers to integrating participatory approaches into the Bank's work by inviting the Bank as a whole to join in the learning process. Learning should not be restricted to 20 priority projects nor to a few task managers and core team members who have so far been the primary audience or beneficiaries of the learning process. The entire Bank should become the learning group. In closing the workshop, Managing Director Sven Sandstrom stressed that "the Bank tends to compartmentalize too much; feedback and linkages are not given adequate attention. We need to look at participation with all other elements of the Bank's work in each country. If we can get participation into this broader framework, we can mainstream participation throughout the Bank."

To begin to mainstream participatory approaches in the context of the Bank's work, the core team has identified three priority "tracks" or "themes" that might fruitfully be pursued in the near future:

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- Providing operational support
- Setting up participation-related training
- Sharing information beyond the learning group.

These three priorities have been selected from a wider menu of options because the core team considers them key for providing the regions with instruments for acting on what we already know about participatory development. The core team recognizes that limited staff and consultant budgets available for the Bank-wide learning process would make follow-up action across a wider range of activities far too ambitious and unrealistic.

Operational Mainstreaming

Operational mainstreaming of participation should be promoted as a priority through economic and sector work, policy dialogue, and lending operations. Among the specific approaches advocated:

- Borrowers can be encouraged to make greater use of funding from the Bank's Project Preparation Facility to defray costs of participation to local communities and themselves.
- Some of the 84 planned poverty assessments to be conducted by the Bank can be done in a participatory way that strengthens the voice of the poor to see if they validate the situation assessment (conducted by traditional methods) and affirm the efficacy of proposed strategies.
- The Bank's Technical Departments can sensitize Project Advisers, Senior Operations Advisers, and Chief Economists to ask questions on participation while reviewing Initiating Executive Project Summaries, Final Executive Project Summaries, and Initiating Memoranda.
- Regional Vice Presidents and Directors of Country Departments can identify staff with participation-related skills and make them available across departments to advise regional staff. If needed, new staff can be recruited to disseminate participatory skills across departments.
- Current operational directives with language on participation (annex 5) and those under preparation (like the proposed directives for Sociological Appraisals and Environmental Action Plans) can be reviewed by the core team with an eye toward strengthening their participatory content. The Central Operations Department can ascertain the extent to which existing operational guidelines with language on participation are being applied.
- The Bank's External Affairs Department can assist Directors of Country Departments in identifying NGO representatives to serve as participation advisers during the identification and preparation of Bank-assisted lending operations. NGO members of the NGO-World Bank Committee have proposed that three operations be selected Bank-wide for this purpose.
- While remaining mindful of its independence, the Operations Evaluation Department could nonetheless consider expanding its use of participatory data collection in its evaluations and seek to document linkages between participatory approaches and effectiveness of development investments.
- Key ongoing task forces in the Bank on supervision, skill mix, and information disclosure can integrate participatory issues into their analysis.

Training and Field Experience

Supporting participatory development in the work of the regions is a complex and difficult process. The core team recommends that the Training Division of the Bank's Personnel Management Department organize training activities for Bank staff in order to develop personal skills (such as the ability to listen) and professional skills (for example, familiarity with participatory appraisals and beneficiary assessments) needed to deal with the practicalities of promoting participation in large-scale development programs. More specifically, the core team advises the following:

- The Personnel Management Department should examine the entire training curriculum for Bank staff to ensure that participatory issues are explored across the board in training.
- The Personnel Management Department should further emphasize the development of listening skills in training for mission leaders. The department might also set up training programs for task managers interested in learning about the practicalities of promoting participation.
- To this end, the Central Operations Department should take the lead in coordinating preparation of case studies and other materials necessary for training or for the dissemination of technical information on participatory approaches. The Sector and Operations Policy Departments could then prepare guidelines on the "how to's" of participation in select sectors—or, where appropriate, across sectors—in which the Bank is actively involved and compile a best-practices handbook.

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• Because traditional classroom-type training is not sufficient, avenues for experiential training of Bank staff could be explored. External development assignments with indigenous NGOs in developing countries is one option. The NGO-World Bank Committee can assist in outlining an experiential training program and in suggesting NGO placements.

Information Sharing

The workshop concluded that there is a pressing need to share information about participation within the Bank. Information should focus on what is being done, what more could be done, and the results of ongoing research and evaluation work. Bank staff should be encouraged to share information about their work. Information should be readily accessible and user-friendly. Specific recommendations in this area call for:

• Using the *Bank's World* and other Bank publications to feature stories about participatory approaches that have been tried. The primary objective would be informational; a secondary objective would be to give more visibility and encouragement to staff who are doing participatory work. *Finance and Development* and *World Bank Research Observer* could be used to disseminate the ongoing results of research and the learning process.

• Requesting the Bank's Regional Vice Presidents to encourage select learning group members to meet with regional management teams, in particular Senior Operations Advisers and Directors of Technical Departments. Such meetings could aim to interest Country Departments and Sector Operation Divisions in forming learning networks of their own around a few operations nominated as potentially participatory by the regional offices.

• Assisting the Central Operations Department to organize periodic seminars featuring task managers of participatory projects returning from mission who can be invited to discuss their field-level experience.

The core team will assist the regions in pursuing these three priority tracks—operational mainstreaming, training, and information sharing—in order to further the mainstreaming of participation in the coming months. In addition, the core team has a work program of its own. While the core team will continue to monitor and support the development and documentation of the 20 selected participatory operations and to disseminate findings, its members and associates will be responsible for these specific activities:

- Documenting the linkages between governance and participation
- Analyzing the economic costs and benefits of participation
- Studying the Bank's experience in applying its procurement procedures to participatory projects
- Analyzing the Bank's experience with funding mechanisms for small-scale investments in borrowing countries
- Researching legal impediments to popular participation in Bank-financed projects
- Conducting a study of the role of collective action in the delivery of sustainable rural water supply services
- Providing support to the 1993 World Development Report team in preparing a chapter on participation in the health sector
- Preparing the final report on the participation learning process by June 1994 (possibly combined with a workshop and publication of papers).

Notes

1. Senior Vice President for Operations Moeen Qureshi and Senior Vice President for Policy, Research and External Affairs Wilfried Thalwitz.

2. Refer to, for example, Michael Cernea, "The Building Blocks of Participation: Testing A Social Methodology"; Lawrence Salmen, "Beneficiary Assessment—An Approach Described"; Richard Heaver, "Participative Rural Appraisals: Potential Applications to Family Planning, Health, and Nutrition Programs"; Deepa Narayan-Parker, "Participatory Evaluation: Tools for Managing Change in Water and Sanitation"; the *Poverty Reduction Handbook*; and *Environmental Assessment Source Book*, volume 1, chapter 7.

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UNDP: Human Development Report 1993

People's participation is a special focus of UNDP's Human Development Report for 1993. Two chapters of that report are included here: Chapter 2 People's Participation and Chapter 5 People in Community Organizations.

CHAPTER 2

People's participation

Participation means that people are closely involved in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives (box 2.1). People may, in some cases, have complete and direct control over these processes—in other cases, the control may be partial or indirect. The important thing is that people have constant access to decision-making and power. Participation in this sense is an essential element of human development.

Participation, certainly not a new term, has been a part of the development vocabulary since the 1960s, or even before. But it has generally referred only to people's involvement in particular projects or programmes. In this Report, the critical difference is that participation is an overall development strategy—focusing on the central role that people should play in all spheres of life. Human development involves widening their choices, and greater participation enables people to gain for themselves access to a much broader range of opportunities.

People can participate as individuals or as groups. As individuals in a democracy, they may participate as voters or political activists—or in the market as entrepreneurs or workers. Often, however, they participate more effectively through group action—as members of a community organization, perhaps, or a trade union or a political party.

People everywhere are certainly demanding much greater access to political, economic and social opportunities. They might not expect "full participation"—but they do want a steady advance towards it. Participation is, after all, a process, not an event.

Since participation requires increased influence and control, it also demands increased empowerment—in economic, social and political terms. In economic terms, this means being able to engage freely in any economic activity. In social terms, it means being able to join fully in all forms of community life, without regard to religion, colour, sex or race. And in political terms, it means the freedom to choose and change governance at every level, from the presidential palace to the village council.

All these forms of participation are intimately linked. Without one, the others will be incomplete and less effective.

Any proposal to increase people's participation must therefore pass the empowerment test—does it increase or decrease people's power to control their lives? This test applies to all institutions that organize or affect human lives—whether markets, governments or community organizations. Each must advance the cause of people.

Participation, from the human development perspective, is both a means and an end. Human development stresses the need to invest in human capabilities and then ensure that those capabilities are used for the benefit of all. Greater participation has an important part to play here: it helps maximize the use of human capabilities and

BOX 2.1

A checklist of effective participation

Do people have:
- Equitable access to health and other aspects of physical well-being?
- Equitable access to knowledge, skills, technology and information?
- Equal human rights?

If there are obstacles, do they lie in:
- The legal system?
- Administrative rules and procedures?
- Social norms and values?
- The distribution of income and assets?

What should be the priority concern for a strategy to promote people's participation?
- Increasing public expenditure on human development priorities?
- Dismantling market barriers?
- Improving democratic governance?
- Strengthening the elements of a civil society, such as people's organizations, NGOs and a free press?

is thus a *means* of increasing levels of social and economic development. But human development is also concerned with personal fulfilment. So, active participation, which allows people to realize their full potential and make their best contribution to society, is also an *end* in itself.

Forms of participation

Participation in economic life affords people a basis for self-respect and social dignity

Since participation can take place in the economic, social and political arenas, each person necessarily participates in many ways, at many levels. In economic life as a producer or a consumer, an entrepreneur or an employee. In social life as a member of a family, or of a community organization or ethnic group. And in political life as a voter, or as a member of a political party or perhaps a pressure group. All these roles overlap and interact, forming patterns of participation that interconnect with—and often reinforce—each other.

• *Household participation*—It is almost always women who rear the children and provide food and water, as well as ensure adequate health care for the family. And to fulfil such responsibilities, they also work outside the home, often in the informal sector.

This contribution of women to society remains unrecognized in economic statistics, and it does not give women even an equal say in decisions in the household. A survey in Uganda found that the management of household income was a joint responsibility for only a small minority. In most cases, the husband handed over only a small proportion of "housekeeping money" to the wife.

Where women do have control over household funds, they generally make much better use of them. In Malaysia, a case study of rubber tappers found that almost all income earned by women was directed to meeting household needs—while men tended to devote sums equivalent to 40% of household incomes to their personal requirements, such as tobacco. Most societies are still a long way from looking at household tasks as a shared responsibility of men and women.

The starkest example of gender discrimination in the household is revealed through child survival rates. In Bangladesh, nearly 15% more girls than boys die in the first few years of life. And under the age of five, the mortality rate for girls in many countries is higher than that of boys—5% higher in Nepal, 4% in Pakistan and India, and 2% in Bhutan—whereas, biologically, more girls should survive than boys.

• *Economic participation*—Most people spend a large part of their lives in economic activity. It is in the economic arena that people have a unique opportunity to use their capabilities and to gain a remunerative income, which in turn enables them, through increased purchasing power, to increase their range of choices. Participation in economic life also affords people a basis for self-respect and social dignity, attributes that are integral to participating in all dimensions of life.

The nature of economic participation can vary widely, from forms of drudgery to creative, productive and independent economic activity. Societies also vary greatly in the value they place on forms of work, ranging from the association of manual work with servitude to a respect for manual labour in more egalitarian societies. And closely related to this range of social attitudes is the nature of the work environment itself, which can be more or less participatory. But it is only in a democratic environment that people can derive full satisfaction from work and from the perception that they are making a valuable contribution to development.

• *Social and cultural participation*—All people, and all communities, have a right to create their culture in whatever way they wish—whether through language, through ritual, art, music and dance or through literature or storytelling—in any of the myriad forms of culture through which human beings the world over express themselves.

But globally there has been a tendency towards homogenization. The world today has around 4,000 languages, but thousands of languages have been lost over the past couple of centuries. In the 19th century, there were 1,000 Indian languages in South

America. Now there are fewer than 200. And dress has similarly become more uniform, with most traditional costumes being steadily replaced by a much smaller number of international styles.

Even the very form of expression can come under threat. Oral cultures are particularly at risk since the current trend is towards less emphasis on memory and more on literacy and mechanical reproduction—substituting books for the spoken word. This means, for example, that much traditional wisdom in health and medicine, not written down, has been lost.

Similarly, many communities have communicated from one generation to the next through such intricate skills as weaving and carving—skills constantly being eroded by mass industrial production.

Such changes are usually accepted, often welcomed, as "progress". Only now—with the threat that some languages and skills might disappear altogether—is the world becoming more concerned about the wealth of valuable human information that might be lost.

Cultures need to be respected and constantly asserted or they die. Hence the determination of many groups, particularly indigenous peoples, to participate actively to preserve and reassert their identity. This is a form of cultural participation to which they have a right—and from which the whole world gains.

But if these valuable elements of the human experience are to survive, all parts of society have to contribute—including people's organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments. Cultural riches must be available to all at reasonable prices, not limited to the wealthy or to tourists. UNESCO studies show how critical the decentralization of cultural institutions is for ensuring that they are readily accessible at the local level. And while new technologies can often diminish local cultures, used creatively they can also make them available to much wider audiences.

- *Political participation*—In recent years people have been struggling, individually and collectively, to have a much greater say in national life. In many cases, opposing autocratic regimes has demanded great courage—as with those who opposed the regimes in Argentina, the Philippines and South Africa, as well as in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In other cases, as in Zambia, the rulers have themselves recognized that, in the long term, stifling people's power and initiative would be counter-productive. And international pressures have also reinforced national forces for political change as ideas about human rights and democracy have spread around the globe.

Achieving meaningful and durable democracy is far from simple. It may include several aspects: guarantees of human rights, including freedom of speech and association; rule of law; free, fair and fully contested elections at periodic intervals; a multiparty system; orderly transition of government and elected representatives fully accountable to voters.

Democracy demands an effective and open political system, not just within governments but within political parties so that people have a real choice when nominating candidates for election. And if governments are to be kept free from undue influence from vested interests, democracy also demands strong institutions of civil society (such as a free press) and a diversity of non-governmental organizations (such as the environmental groups that have had such an impact in many countries in recent years).

Democracy cannot be achieved overnight. Just as economic growth means little unless it is translated into improvements in human lives, so democracy can be merely an empty ritual of periodic elections unless people participate, aware and empowered, in all the institutions of civil society. Elections are a necessary, but certainly not a sufficient, condition for democracy. Political participation is not just a casting of votes. It is a way of life.

Political participation is not just a casting of votes. It is a way of life

New openings

Despite a number of violent conflicts, the world seems to be going through a period of positive change: participation of all kinds

seems to be on the upswing—particularly in the formerly socialist countries and in the developing world.

• *Democracy*—has been extended to many parts of the world in the past decade. Close to two-thirds of humankind now live in countries that are moving towards, or are already enjoying, democratic forms of government.

• *The transition to market economies*—is also gathering pace all over the world as governments dismantle state controls and open new doors for participation and entrepreneurial activity. Most formerly socialist countries have by now committed themselves to more market-based strategies. And many developing countries are liberalizing their economies—removing restrictive regulations, establishing much greater transparency in business affairs and offering entrepreneurs greater opportunities for participation in economic activity.

• *Privatization*—is creating new avenues for participation in the economies of many countries. Since 1980, around 7,000 state-owned enterprises have been privatized, about 1,400 of them in developing countries.

Markets exclude those whose poverty renders them uncreditworthy

• *The information revolution*—is bringing reports of global events to everyone's home. Now, through radio and TV, people have a much greater sense of participation in international events—as they happen. And people now have many different ways of communicating within their own countries, not just through broadcast media, but also through newer media, from fax machines to videocassettes, that are much less vulnerable to censorship—making it much harder for governments to monopolize the flow of information.

• *Non-governmental organizations*—have increased substantially in recent years. In 1990, there were an estimated 50,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in developing countries working in many different fields, from health care to informal education. And they have taken on an important advocacy role on such issues as gender discrimination, human rights and environmental concerns.

These changes, rapid and complex, have taken different directions in different countries. In some, the impetus has come from the government in power. In others, it has been the outcome of popular rebellion. And the results have been as diverse as the events. Some countries have succeeded in strengthening democratic institutions and enjoyed steady increases in efficiency. Others have suffered economic crisis, social chaos, ethnic disruptions and even civil war.

BOX 2.2

Children of the streets

Millions of children live in the slums or on the streets of Third World cities, and their numbers grow daily as poverty in the rural areas drives people to the cities in the hope of a better life. Thirty years ago, the population of Brazil was 55% rural—now it is 75% urban. Around three-quarters of street children in Brazil are thought to be migrants.

Many street children do have homes and parents, but they may visit them only rarely, forced to earn their livelihood on the streets and driven from the squalor of one or two crowded rooms in the shantytowns. In Manila in the Philippines, three million people live in slums, about half of them children. Fewer than a quarter of families have piped water, and two-thirds have no sanitary facilities. Manila has about 75,000 street children.

India probably has the greatest number of street children. New Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta have around 100,000 street children each, and Bangalore about 45,000. There, as elsewhere, they must work to survive—collecting rags, shining shoes, selling newspapers, scavenging on rubbish dumps. Many also turn to crime. India's juvenile crime rate is 3.1 per 1,000 people.

Street children are also a growing problem in Africa. There, too, migration from the countryside is swelling the urban slums. Mathare Valley in Nairobi is the largest slum community in Kenya, with around 200,000 people. The majority are migrants and a high proportion are children. Four years ago, Nairobi had about 16,000 street children, today there are thought to be 25,000.

Street children are one of the most obvious signs of urban deprivation. Hungry, sick and often homeless children with little chance of a basic education are a sharp reminder of the human potential the world is wasting.

The groups excluded

Despite the accumulating forces for greater participation, large numbers of people continue to be excluded from the benefits of development: the poorest segments of society, people in rural areas, many religious and ethnic minorities—and, in almost every country, women. Also excluded are those millions, particularly children, whose preventable and premature deaths cut short their lives.

Many of these groups necessarily overlap but it is useful to identify some of them individually.

• *The poorest people*—find that their very poverty is a formidable barrier to entering many aspects of social, economic and polit-

ical life. In many developing countries, income disparities are very wide. In Indonesia, the poorest 20% of the people receive only 8.8% of national income, in Sri Lanka 4.8%. And in many cases, the gaps between the poor and the rich are widening. In Chile between 1970 and 1988, the real income of the poorest 20% fell by 3%, while that of the richest 20% increased by 10%. Markets, in theory open to everyone, in practice exclude those whose poverty renders them uncreditworthy. In Bangladesh, the landless make up around half the rural households but receive only 17% of institutional credit.

Poverty has its greatest impact on children and is a denial to future generations. Infant mortality rates in the least developed countries are still 114 per 1,000 live births, and nearly 13 million children die each year before their fifth birthday. The HIV/AIDS pandemic will increase not only the number of child deaths but also the problem of orphans and hence child poverty.

And even children who do survive are deprived of the opportunity to participate fully in their countries' development. Some 200 million of today's children are having their potential for growth stunted by malnutrition. And well over 300 million children who should be in primary or secondary schools are missing their education, either because of the need to work or because schools are unavailable or too expensive. Many of these children spend their days at work in the fields or in the streets (box 2.2).

Poverty can also be harsh for the elderly. In the formerly socialist countries, the pensioners are among those who suffer most from the current reform process.

For millions of people all over the world, the daily struggle for survival absorbs so much of their time and energy that, even if they live in democratic countries, genuine political participation is, for all practical purposes, a luxury.

- *Women*—are the world's largest excluded group (box 2.3). Even though they make up half the adult population, and often contribute much more than their share to society, inside and outside the home, they are frequently excluded from positions of power. They make up just over 10% of the world's parliamentary representatives, and consistently less than 4% of cabinet ministers or other positions of executive authority.

In many industrial countries, the female human development index is only around 80% that of males. Women participate inadequately in employment, and in some industrial countries, women's earnings are less than half those of men (box 2.4).

Many developing countries exclude women from both political participation and productive work—whether by tradition, discriminatory laws or withheld edu-

BOX 2.3

Women—the non-participating majority

Women, a majority of the world's population, receive only a small share of developmental opportunities. They are often excluded from education or from the better jobs, from political systems or from adequate health care.

- *Literacy*—Women are much less likely than men to be literate. In South Asia, female literacy rates are only around 50% those of males. And in many countries the situation is even worse: in Nepal 35%, Sierra Leone 37%, Sudan 27% and Afghanistan 32%. Women make up two-thirds of the world's illiterates.
- *Higher education*—Women in developing countries lag far behind men. In Sub-Saharan Africa, their enrolment rates for tertiary education are only a third of those of men. Even in industrial countries, women are very poorly represented in scientific and technical study: in Spain, the ratio of female to male third-level students in these fields is 28%, in Austria 25% and in Canada 29%.
- *Employment*—In developing countries women have many fewer job opportunities: the employment participation rates of women are on average only 50% those of men (in South Asia 29%, and in the Arab States only 16%). Even when they do find work, they tend to get paid much less: in the Republic of Korea, women's wages are only 47% those of men. Wage discrimination is also a feature of industrial countries: in Japan, women receive only 51% of male wages.

Women who are not in paid employment are, of course, far from idle. Indeed, they tend to work much longer hours than men. The problem is that the work they do, in domestic chores and caring for children and the elderly, does not get the recognition it deserves in national income accounts.

- *Self-employment*—Women's opportunities for self-employment can be restricted in a number of ways. In some countries they are still not allowed to own property, or to offer collateral for bank loans or even to drive.
- *Politics*—In some countries, women are still not allowed to vote. And women almost everywhere are underrepresented in government: in 1980, they made up just over 10% of the world's parliamentarians and less than 4% of national cabinets. In 1993, only six countries had women as heads of government.
- *Health*—Women tend on average to live longer than men. But in some Asian and North African countries, the discrimination against women—through neglect of their health or nutrition—is such that they have a shorter life expectancy. Indeed, comparing the populations who should be alive, based on the global mortality patterns, it seems that 100 million Asian women are "missing".

One of the greatest health risks for women in poor countries is childbirth. Maternal mortality rates in the developing world are more than 15 times higher than in the industrial countries.

- *National statistics*—Women are often invisible in statistics. If women's unpaid housework were counted as productive output in national income accounts, global output would increase by 20–30%.

BOX 2.4

Women in Japan

Japan, despite some of the world's highest levels of human development, still has marked inequalities in achievement between men and women. The 1993 human development index puts Japan first. But when the HDI is adjusted for gender disparity, Japan slips to number 17. Here's why:

In education, the tertiary enrolment ratio for females is only two-thirds that of males.

Similarly in employment, women are considerably worse off. Women's average earnings are only 51% those of men, and women are largely excluded from decision-making positions: they hold only 7% of administrative and managerial jobs.

Their representation is even lower in the political sphere. Women obtained the right to vote, and to be elected to parliament, only after the Second World War. Yet today, only 2% of parliamentary seats are held by women, and at the ministerial level there are no women at all (compared with the 9% average for industrial countries and 13% for the other countries of Asia). Nevertheless, one or two women have achieved important political positions, and a number of women were among the founders of the Social Democratic Party.

In legal rights in general, Japan's patrilineal society is only gradually changing to offer women greater recognition and independence. Only in 1980 were the inheritance rights of Japanese women raised from one-third to one-half of their late husbands' property (the rest goes to the children). And in other aspects the law is still not gender-neutral. Thus, the legal age of marriage is 18 for men, but 16 for women. And after divorce, a man can remarry immediately, but a woman has to wait six months.

Japan now has political and non-governmental organizations pressing for change. The League of Women Voters, for instance, is lobbying for a correction in the disparity of seat distribution in parliament, and for a greater participation of women in policy-making.

BOX 2.5

One country, two nations

Almost every country has one or more ethnic groups whose level of human development falls far below the national average. One of the clearest, and best documented, cases is that of blacks in the United States.

Their disadvantage starts at birth. The infant mortality rate for whites is 8 per 1,000 live births, but for blacks it is 19. And black children are much more likely than white children to grow up in single-parent homes—in 1990, 19% of white children were growing up in single-parent households, compared with 54% of black children.

Children in black families are also more likely to grow up in poverty. The real GDP per capita for whites in 1990 was around $22,000, but for blacks it was around $17,000.

As Andrew Hacker, the author of *Two Nations* (1992), graphically records:

The statistics are dismaying. Nearly two-thirds of black babies are now born out of wedlock, and over half of black families are headed by women. The majority of black youngsters live only with their mother; and in over half of these households, she has never been married. At the last count, over half of all single black women have already had children, and among women in their mid to late thirties, less than half have intact marriages. These figures are from three to five times greater than for white households, and markedly higher than those recorded for black Americans a generation ago.... Black Americans are Americans yet they subsist as aliens in the only land they know. Other groups may remain outside the mainstream—some religious sects, for example—but they do so voluntarily. In contrast, blacks must endure a segregation that is far from freely chosen. So America may be seen as two separate nations.

Indeed, if the United States were divided into two "countries", the one with the white population would rank number one in the world, according to the human development index, while that with the black population would be only number 31.

cation. In the countries for which relevant data are available, the female human development index is only 60% that of males. Indeed, for decades, life has changed very little for 500 million rural women in the developing world.

- *Minorities and indigenous peoples*—often find it difficult to participate fully in societies that consistently operate in favour of the dominant groups. Sometimes this discrimination is embedded in the legal framework—denying minority groups equal access to education, to employment opportunities or to political representation. But exclusion is generally less a matter of official policy than everyday practice. In the United States, where everyone is "created free and equal", there is a marked difference between the white and black populations. As chapter 1 showed, if the US were divided into two "countries", the one with only the white population would be in first place in the human development index, while the one with the blacks would be number 31 (box 2.5). In Guatemala, the Indian population has an infant mortality rate 20% higher than the rest of the population. And in South Africa, the blacks are a marginalized majority (box 2.6).

An extreme form of discrimination and exclusion is through violence. Since the Second World War, 40 ethnic groups around the world have been persecuted or massacred, suffering millions of deaths.

- *People in rural areas*—have very restricted participation in economic and social life in the developing world. The rural per capita income in many countries is around half that in towns and cities. And rural people have much less access to government services. Despite making up around two-thirds of the population, they receive on average less than a quarter of the education, health, water and sanitation services. In Ethiopia, 87% of the people live in rural areas but only 11% of them have access to safe drinking water, compared with 70% of the urban population. In Bangladesh, 84% of the population is rural but only 4% of them have access to sanitation facilities, compared with 40% of the urban population. And in India, school attendance for children aged 5–14 is much lower in rural areas: 55% for boys and

35% for girls (compared with 74% and 52% in urban areas).

Urban biases are a predominant feature almost everywhere. But even when the parliaments of some developing countries are dominated by rural elites, this does not mean that they act on behalf of rural people. Most are composed of city-based absentee landlords with little personal interest in public services in rural areas. They often ensure their own access to electricity or water through private generators or tubewells, and send their children abroad for education. Meanwhile, rural people in developing countries remain a deprived and marginalized majority.

- *The disabled*—make up at least 10% of the world's population. They include all those who have experienced injury, trauma or disease that results in long-term physical or mental changes.

Disability is common to both industrial and developing countries, but the sources tend to be different: in the industrial countries, the principal causes are degenerative diseases associated with ageing, while in the developing world the causes are more likely to be disease, malnutrition and war. Of Cambodia's 8.5 million people, 150,000 have been disabled by mines.

Disability, even in industrial countries, is closely linked with poverty. In the United States, blacks and native Americans are twice as likely to be disabled as whites. And children in poor families are 13% more likely to be mentally retarded than those in middle- and upper-income families.

In developing countries, disability is more common in rural than in urban areas, and among the poor. In Bangladesh, those most likely to be disabled are the landless labourers.

TABLE 2.1
Share of poorest 20% of world population in global opportunities
(percentage of global economic activity)

	1960–70	1990
Global GNP	2.3	1.3
Global trade	1.3	0.9
Global domestic investment	3.5	1.1
Global domestic savings	3.5	0.9
Global commercial credit	0.3	0.2

The disabled face many barriers to participation. They tend, for example, to have less access to education: in Hong Kong in 1981, more than a quarter of the disabled population between 15 and 24 had received no schooling. And they are also more likely to be unemployed: in Japan in 1980, when 62% of the total population was employed, only 32% of the disabled were employed.

Some countries have taken measures to give the disabled greater opportunities. Germany has a quota for employment of the disabled of 6% in both government and private business. And the United States has far-reaching legislation: the 1992 Americans with Disabilities Act sets a large number of standards to be achieved in working life.

The disabled in the developing world have much more basic problems. In Zimbabwe in 1982, when 10% of the population was estimated to be disabled, only 2% had access to any kind of rehabilitation services. For most of the world's disabled, full participation is still a long way off.

- *Poor nations*—cannot participate on an equal footing in international markets or extend market opportunities to their own people. Poverty is a formidable barrier to participation, whether within or between nations. The very poverty of poor nations denies them international credit, and barriers on the movement of both goods and people cut their potential earnings. The 1992 *Human Development Report* estimated that poor nations are being denied $500 billion of market opportunities annually—

BOX 2.6

Blacks in South Africa—still a people apart

South Africa has officially abolished apartheid. Yet the country's black people continue to live in a world apart.

- *Assets*—The richest 5% of the population, mostly white, owns 88% of all private property.
- *Poverty*—Half the population, mostly black, lives below the poverty line.
- *Children*—Many poor black children are being stunted by malnutrition: 40% of rural children and 15% of urban children.
- *Literacy*—One-third of the black population over 15 (some three million people) is illiterate.
- *Education*—Three-quarters of black teachers are either unqualified, or underqualified, for their job. The education system thus perpetuates a vicious circle of deprivation and discrimination.

For South African blacks, the achievement of full political rights would be a vital step towards greater participation. But unravelling apartheid completely will be a complex and difficult task in the years ahead.

about ten times the annual flow of foreign assistance they receive. The poorest 20% of the world's population now receives only 0.2% of global commercial credit, 0.9% of global trade and only 1.3% of global income (table 2.1).

It would be short-sighted to assume that the growing demands for increased participation will stop at national frontiers. Millions of workers from developing countries have already voted with their feet and migrated, legally and illegally, to industrial countries or to neighbouring developing countries. And the process has only just started. Unless more people can begin to participate in global economic opportunities, the 21st century may witness an unprecedented migration across national borders.

Participation is a plant that does not grow easily in the human environment

Increased participation at a global level will require a radical readjustment of the international order—in particular a dismantling of international trade restrictions and a much more democratic system of global governance.

Taking these and other excluded groups together, it seems likely that fewer than 10% of the world's people participate fully in political, economic, social and cultural life. For the vast majority, real participation will require a long and persistent struggle.

Obstacles

Participation is a plant that does not grow easily in the human environment. Powerful vested interests, driven by personal greed, erect numerous obstacles to block off the routes to people's political and economic power. These obstacles include:

- *Legal systems*—Laws are often arbitrary and capricious and favour those with political influence or economic clout. In too many countries, legislation fails to measure up to ideals of transparency, accountability, fairness—and equality before the law. Some countries' laws exclude the participation of women, for example, or of religious or ethnic minorities, or deny certain rights to workers.
- *Bureaucratic constraints*—Many developing countries have shackled their people with innumerable regulations and controls, demanding all sorts of permits and permissions for even the most modest business initiative. Fortunately, many governments have started to dismantle the most stifling of these controls and are opening new avenues for entrepreneurial activity.
- *Social norms*—Even when laws change, many old values and prejudices persist, whether against women or different tribes, castes or religious groups—and are often deeply embedded in everyday language and behaviour. Laws may promote equality, but it is usually left to the discriminated group to struggle against prejudice. Thus, working women, for example, even when they prove themselves better, are not given equal treatment.
- *Maldistribution of assets*—In developing countries, one of the most significant assets is land. A high proportion of the people struggle to make a living in agriculture, but their efforts are often thwarted by the dominance of feudal elites who exert an overwhelming control over land. In most Latin American countries, the land tenure systems are notoriously skewed in favour of the rich (table 2.2). Inequality is conventionally expressed by the "Gini coefficient", which varies from zero (equal assets for everybody) to 1 (one person owns everything). In most Latin American countries, the Gini coefficient for land distribution is around 0.8—in Panama 0.84, in Brazil 0.86 and in Paraguay 0.94.

Maldistribution of land is by no means confined to Latin America. In Egypt, the richest 20% of landowners still control 70% of the agricultural land. And in Bangladesh, small farmers (with less than 2.5 acres) account for 70% of farms but have only 29% of the land area.

In these countries, there can never be true participation in the rural areas without far-reaching land reforms—as well as the extension services, training and credit for smaller farmers that can help them become productive and self-reliant.

Whether in urban or rural areas, vested interests that currently enjoy economic, financial, political or social power are usually determined to defend their position—

either individually or through close-knit associations, well-financed lobbies and even violence.

Changing the power equation requires the organization of a countervailing force, or even a revolution. People's organizations—be they farmers' cooperatives, residents' associations or consumer groups—offer some of the most important sources of countervailing power. And they often exercise it most effectively through the sharing of information and ideas—it is ideas, not vested interests, that rule the world for good or evil.

TABLE 2.2
Inequality in the distribution of landholdings in selected countries

Country	Year	Gini coefficient
Very high inequality (Gini above 0.75)		
Paraguay	1981	0.94
Brazil	1980	0.86
Panama	1981	0.84
Uruguay	1980	0.84
Saudi Arabia	1983	0.83
Madagascar	1984	0.80
Kenya	1981	0.77
High inequality (0.51 to 0.75)		
Colombia	1984	0.70
Dominican Rep.	1981	0.70
Ecuador	1987	0.69
Grenada	1981	0.69
Chile	1987	0.64
Honduras	1981	0.64
Yemen	1982	0.64
Sri Lanka	1982	0.62
Peru	1984	0.61
Nepal	1982	0.60
Uganda	1984	0.59
Turkey	1980	0.58
Jordan	1983	0.57
Pakistan	1980	0.54
Philippines	1981	0.53
Medium inequality (0.40 to 0.50)		
Bahrain	1980	0.50
Bangladesh	1980	0.50
Morocco	1982	0.47
Togo	1983	0.45
Ghana	1984	0.44
Low inequality (below 0.40)		
Malawi	1981	0.36
Mauritania	1981	0.36
Egypt	1984	0.35
Niger	1981	0.32
Korea, Rep. of	1980	0.30

The Gini coefficient is a measure of inequality in distribution. It ranges from zero to 1: the closer the value to 1, the greater the inequality.

Structure of the Report

Participation is an important element in these and many other aspects of human life. This Report concentrates on participation in development—through markets, government and community organizations.

Chapter 3 focuses on free and open markets as a dynamic form of participation for both producers and consumers, assessing the extent to which markets are accessible to wide popular participation—that is, whether they are "people-friendly". It also analyses the participation of people through work, especially their participation in labour markets. It shows how current strategies result in output growth without employment and argues for a fundamental change in development thinking. This chapter also reviews the experiences to date in liberating private enterprise and explores how participatory human development requires a new balance between the private and the public sectors.

Changing the power equation requires the organization of a countervailing force

Chapter 4 is devoted to people's participation in governance. It looks at political participation and at how governments reach out to people, particularly through decentralization as a technique for opening governance up to greater popular participation—examining the conditions for successful participation as well as highlighting the potential pitfalls, including the risk of creating even firmer power bases for entrenched local elites.

Chapter 5 examines people's participation in civil society, particularly the role of non-governmental organizations. Considering them from both a national and an international perspective, it shows how these organizations can oppose existing power structures and engineer practical changes—and through their advocacy bring millions of the world's marginalized people into the mainstream of social and economic life.

CHAPTER 5

People in community organizations

People are more likely to be excluded than included in civil and political life

People's understanding of the world is formed and nurtured in face-to-face interactions in small social groups—first in the family, then the street, perhaps, or the neighbourhood or village. Such groups also serve a political purpose, for people generally gain greater benefits in groups than as individuals.

As people move outside such groups, however, they find the wider world organized on very different principles, and they are more likely to receive decisions handed down from on high. Whether in social services, in markets or in civil and political life, they are more likely to be excluded than included.

The problem is partly practical. Many facets of modern life cannot be confined to the home, village or street. The complexity and the sheer numbers of people involved reduce the possibilities for face-to-face interaction. The intrusion of market values also plays a part, with many more goods and services now obtained with hard cash than through mutual exchange within the community.

In time, countries develop the institutions of civil society—a fair judiciary, a responsive executive, a free press and traditions of transparency, accountability and fair play. Group action is often necessary for the evolution of such institutions and for ensuring that they continue to respond to people's aspirations for genuine participation.

But governments in developing countries often discourage such participation. Starting from a "top-down" development philosophy, they have generally concentrated on providing food, services or assets—rather than enabling people to do more for themselves. Governments have seen development as something to be done for, rather than by, people—stifling many grass-roots initiatives, holding them in check, rather than nurturing and extending them.

Things are changing. Many community groups now command the attention and respect of governments in many developing countries. The energy of the people who form them, and the creative solutions they demonstrate, have helped persuade governments of the value of involving participatory community groups. Donors, too—disillusioned with the performance of much official aid—are passing more of their money through non-governmental channels. As a result, there has been an explosion of participatory movements in most developing countries.

The community organizations driving those movements are by their nature difficult to classify and analyse. This Report refers to two broad types: people's organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

People's organizations can be defined as democratic organizations that represent the interests of their members and are accountable to them. They are formed by people who know each other, or who share a common experience, and their continued existence does not depend upon outside initiative or funding. In developing countries, many of them are small, locally based and loosely established. But they need not be confined to the grass roots—they can spread upwards and outwards from the local to the regional and national level, representing networks of community groups, or professional groups or trade unions.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can be defined as voluntary organizations that work with and very often on behalf of

others. Their work and their activities are focused on issues and people beyond their own staff and membership. NGOs often have close links with people's organizations, channelling technical advice or financial support as intermediate service organizations. But organizationally NGOs can be quite different from people's organizations, often having bureaucratic hierarchies without the democratic characteristics or accountability of most people's groups.

The distinction between the two is not rigid—many groups could reasonably fall into either category.

People's organizations in developing countries

The idea to form a people's organization can come from the people themselves—as with those traditional self-help groups in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa in which people come together to pool their labour, to obtain credit, to buy goods in bulk or to promote and develop more sustainable forms of agriculture (boxes 5.1 and 5.2). Or the impetus can come from outside the group, perhaps from a dynamic individual who recognizes a community's needs and suggests ways they could meet them (box 5.3).

Sometimes, the groups are formed in response to a failure by government to provide infrastructure or services. The Cairo Public Housing Project was set up in the late 1970s as a result of prolonged government neglect of poor neighbourhoods. The aim was not just to provide some of their own housing, water and sewerage but also to induce the government to provide such services (box 5.4).

In other cases, it is what the government does that prompts groups to form. Police brutality, political oppression or the infringement of civil liberties has shown the need in most countries for groups that protect human rights, as with *Action Sociale et d'Organisation Paysanne* in Zaire.

People's organizations can also arise because the market fails to offer them the goods or services they need. The Self-Employed Women's Association in India is a striking example of how poor and disadvantaged people can enhance their bargaining strength through cooperation (box 5.5).

How many people's organizations are there? It is impossible even to come up with a reliable estimate, for a phenomenon so flexible and dynamic can never be captured in statistics. But here are some illustrative figures:

- *Kenya* has 23,000 women's groups alone.
- *Tamil Nadu* state in India has 25,000 registered grass-roots organizations.
- *Bangladesh* has at least 12,000 local groups that receive local and central government financial support (and many more that do not).

BOX 5.1

Self-help farming groups

Farmers all over the world have traditionally come together in self-help groups, particularly to share their labour. Neighbours might, for example, arrive on an appointed day to help work one farmer's land. Not paid, but fed, any of them can ask for similar help from the others.

In a more formal arrangement, farmers might, on a rotating basis, help each other prepare land for the cultivation of various crops. Widespread in Africa, this form of cooperation goes under the names *nhimbe* and *jangano* in Zimbabwe, *owe* and *are* in western Nigeria and *nnoboa* in south-eastern Ghana.

Self-help groups have also been formed to provide credit, normally among people with similar incomes, though individuals might join several groups if they meet the requirements. These groups also have a variety of names: *esusu* among the Yoruba people of western Nigeria, *susu* in Ghana, *ibimina* in the Kivuye commune in northern Rwanda, *tontines* or *njangis* in Cameroon, *cheetu* in Sri Lanka and *samabaya* in Bangladesh.

BOX 5.2

Mexico—Union de Ejidos Julio Sabines

In the 1970s, poor rural farmers migrated to the rainforest region of Marques de Comillas, near Mexico's border with Guatemala. Their shifting cultivation practices, combined with cattle ranching by more powerful groups, deforested some 40% of the area. In 1988, the Mexican government responded with a ban on the cutting of trees.

The ban drew a strong reaction from the farmers represented by the *Union de Ejidos Julio Sabines*. They held meetings with government agencies—discussing soil erosion, river flooding and changes in rainfall as a result of deforestation. They also discussed global warming—with some farmers pointing out that the international community should, if it wanted them to stop cutting trees, offer some compensation.

The majority, however, agreed to work with government agencies to develop sustainable forms of agriculture and look for alternative sources of income.

For the past four years, they have successfully developed farming techniques for both food and commercial crops, using natural fertilizers without using more land. They are also cultivating forest products for sale, as well as breeding some of the forest animals.

The government has provided medical and educational services and support for Indian communities—and created a special task force for community development.

As a result, the rainforest is being used and preserved—and the local community is flourishing.

- *The Philippines* has 18,000 registered NGOs, of which at least two-thirds might be considered people's organizations, such as community associations or cooperatives.
- The OECD suggests that there were up to 20,000 NGOs in developing countries in the 1980s, a considerable underestimate—the number is probably closer to 50,000 and could well be higher.
- The OECD's Directory of NGOs had information on more than 2,500 NGOs in the 25 OECD countries in 1990, up from 1,600 in 1980.

Among the largest people's organizations in both industrial and developing countries are the trade unions, which have offered the most significant form of group participation in the workplace. There might have been little that individual workers could do to influence the employer, but when individuals cooperated with the rest of the workforce—and with the ultimate threat of a mass strike—employers had no option but to listen and reach a compromise.

The wave of democratization of the 1980s received much of its impetus from trade unions. In Latin America, the unions in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and Uruguay—and most recently in Chile—were often the major source of opposition to dictatorships. In Asia, the unions have also been instrumental in democratization: in the Republic of Korea, it was a wave of strikes in 1986–87 that led to many democratic reforms.

In Africa, too, the trade union movement, though small in numbers, played a disproportionately large role in the moves towards multiparty democracy. In Mali, the National Union of Malian Workers organized nationwide strikes to bring down the government in 1981, and its secretary-general became vice-president of the transitional government that helped bring in a civilian administration in 1992. In Zambia, the Congress of Trade Unions was in the forefront of the opposition to the previous one-party state, and in the subsequent multiparty elections its leader was voted in as the new president.

In Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the new workers' organizations—Solidarity in Poland, Podkrepa in Bulgaria, Fratia in Romania, the miners' strike committees in the Soviet Union—propelled the moves towards democracy.

BOX 5.3

Pakistan—the Orangi Pilot Project

Orangi, a suburb of Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, has grown rapidly and now has more than 700,000 people crowded into it.

Akhtar Hameed Khan came to Orangi in 1980, a charismatic leader with considerable experience in organizing community self-help from his previous work in the Comilla project in Bangladesh. He found that housing was poor, sanitation and drainage facilities inadequate, health problems on the increase and epidemics frequent.

Khan was convinced that the best way to deal with Orangi's problems was to shun outside help and strengthen the capacity of local people to help themselves. The Orangi Pilot Project concentrated on five areas:

- Low-cost sanitation
- Low-cost housing
- Women's work centres
- Women's welfare programmes
- School education.

The results have been spectacular. The sanitation programme involves 28,000 families that have constructed some 430,000 feet of underground sewerage and built more than 28,000 latrines. They financed this with 30 million rupees ($1.2 million) of their own savings, at a cost of $66 per house—about one-quarter of what it would have cost local government.

BOX 5.4

Egypt—Cairo public housing project

Khalafawy, like many Cairo neighbourhoods, deteriorated greatly in the 1960s as a result of prolonged neglect by the government. Blocked sewage systems and piles of garbage in open areas were contaminating the drinking water and producing other serious health threats.

Disgusted by the deteriorating conditions, the Khalafawy neighbourhood started a self-help project in 1978 to improve its environment. Using their own money and volunteer labour, the people in the neighbourhood replaced broken water pipes, unblocked the sewage systems, cleared the garbage and organized regular collections. They also created a children's garden.

Three years later, these self-help efforts found a strong ally in Wafaa Ahmed Abdalla, a senior expert with the Institute for National Planning in Cairo. She developed a more scientific approach for community improvement and started training programmes for local people. As a result, five more self-help projects emerged in public housing neighbourhoods, enabling 5,000 residents to improve their environment.

Non-governmental organizations in developing countries

NGOs cover a very wide spectrum, from small loose-knit local organizations to nationwide federations and international networks. And the issues they tackle might be anything from the human rights of one ethnic group to the entire mosaic of development concerns.

NGOs sometimes grow out of one people's organization, extending its principles

and ideas to other places. Or they can be an amalgam of people's organizations coming together.

Or they can be offshoots of larger organizations, often churches that set up NGOs or task forces to tackle particular problems. In Chile, the Catholic Church established the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* to expose atrocities and provide support to victims during the Pinochet regime. The Justice and Peace Commission in Rhodesia played a similar role under the Smith regime.

On other occasions, a group of like-minded people might set up a new NGO in response to a national problem. They might focus attention on women's issues, as in the Dominican Republic, where the *Centro de Investigación para la Acción Feminina* is committed to changing the status of women in the country (box 5.6). And in recent years, many new groups have been established around environmental concerns—as in the Philippines, where the Green Forum aims to raise the consciousness of local communities and the government on environmental protection.

Many NGOs have placed much of their emphasis on empowerment. The formal purpose of a programme might be improvements in health or literacy or agriculture, but NGOs have also been concerned with how much each project enhances people's power. And they have been particularly determined to empower the poor and marginalized—many say that their prime constituency is the "poorest of the poor".

Most NGOs work with, and through, people's organizations, offering financial and other support. The links can be established in different ways. In much of Africa, NGOs usually provide assistance to existing people's organizations. In Bangladesh and India, the NGOs often take the initiative to form new people's organizations. In Latin America, both approaches are common.

Other NGOs confine themselves to advocacy—mobilizing the public to put pressure on the government to act on a particular issue. Human rights is a common focus, as with the *Foro Nacional por Colombia* and the Shuar Federation in Ecuador.

Many others take on both roles—material help and advocacy—and their links with people's organizations give them unique sources of information and authority. The *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* in Brazil offers support to landless groups and argues for their rights at both national and international levels.

At a final level of cooperation, NGOs also link up with other NGOs in networks to enable them to present a common front to regional or national governments and to international agencies like the UN. In India, individual states have networks of NGOs—such as the Federation of Voluntary Organizations for Rural Development in Karnataka, and the Association of Volun-

BOX 5.5

India—Self-Employed Women's Association

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a trade union of poor women in Ahmedabad, India (in Hindi, *sewa* means service).

SEWA draws its membership from three types of workers: petty vendors and hawkers, home-based producers and those who provide casual labour and other services. Although it started in response to the needs of urban women, SEWA now also covers rural women in agriculture and other sectors.

SEWA's aim is to enhance women's income-earning opportunities as well as their working environment. It does this in several ways:

- Savings and credit cooperatives provide working capital to hawkers, vendors and home-based workers.
- Producer cooperatives help women get better prices for their goods.
- Training courses impart such skills as bamboo work, block printing, plumbing, carpentry, radio repair and accounting and management.
- Legal services enable women to obtain the benefits of national labour legislation. Until SEWA was formed in 1972, the women in the informal sector were not recognized as workers, either in law or by society.

SEWA has also developed a welfare component. It now gives assistance to its members through a maternal protection scheme, widows' benefits, child care and the training of midwives.

BOX 5.6

Dominican Republic—Centro de Investigación para la Acción Feminina

The *Centro de Investigación para la Acción Feminina* (CIPAF), a women's NGO in the Dominican Republic, is promoting lasting social change in the status of women. It tries to engineer basic changes in attitude through programmes of research, education, training and public information. By mobilizing the energies of middle-class women, it has organized over 200 workshops, trained thousands of workers and issued 31 publications.

One of CIPAF's major studies has been *Mujeres Rurales*—a report on the condition of peasant women. It followed this up with a nationwide information campaign to highlight the findings of the report and seek concrete changes in government policy. It is now completing a sequel on the problems of urban women.

CIPAF publishes a monthly newsletter that is reproduced in a nationwide daily newspaper, and it has conducted graduate seminars in the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Panama.

tary Agencies in Tamil Nadu. And at the national level, NGOs come together in the Voluntary Action Network India.

Some NGOs are not as non-governmental as they seem. Although formally independent, they might have links to government. In Zimbabwe, three NGOs are intimately linked with the ruling party: the President's Fund, Child Survival (under the patronage of the president's late wife) and the Zimbabwe Development Trust (under the tutelage of one of the country's vice-presidents). The Philippines similarly has government-inspired NGOs, known as GRINGOs, some of which were set up to further the aims of national and local politicians, and others to serve as recipients for foreign donors that required that a certain portion of their aid be channelled through NGOs. And while the vast majority of NGOs have a voluntary non-profit ethos, some are really commercial companies in disguise. For example, several NGOs in India have set themselves up as consultancies working (for a fee) with the voluntary sector.

In some cases, the most effective way for NGOs to operate is at the international level—as the remarkable success of Amnesty International and Greenpeace has demonstrated (box 5.7).

BOX 5.7

International advocacy by NGOs

Many of the issues that concern NGOs are truly global—and can often be best addressed by truly international NGOs. One of the best-known and respected of these is Amnesty International. By tirelessly recording and publicizing human rights violations, it has amply demonstrated the power of information to protect the rights of individuals and groups.

Amnesty has more than 6,000 groups of volunteers in more than 70 countries. Through their reports and letter-writing campaigns in 1990, these groups publicized the cases of 4,500 prisoners and contributed to the release of 1,296 of them.

A new organization—Transparency International—also plans to operate through international investigation and publicity by identifying and exposing corruption in international business transactions and documenting its political, social and economic effects. The globalization of world trade increases the potential for large-scale corruption—as the Bofors arms sales scandal has shown only too vividly. Transparency International is unlikely to be short of work.

Another new international advocacy agency—in this case on environmental issues—is the Earth Council. It draws the lesson from the Rio environmental summit that people's continuing international participation is vital to the solution of environmental problems. It will provide a continuing global non-governmental forum for debate and action on sustainable development.

Northern NGOs in the South

All the industrial countries have a wide range of NGOs working on development issues, and their numbers are growing. These northern NGOs send large sums to developing countries. As with the various national Save the Children organizations, they do this in addition to helping in their home countries. Or as with the Oxfams, they spend their funds almost exclusively in developing countries.

On average, two-thirds of the funds northern NGOs raise for spending in the South come from private contributions. The highest per capita private contributions to NGOs were in Sweden, followed by Switzerland, Norway and Germany (above $13 per capita in all cases). Between 1970 and 1990, grants by northern NGOs to projects and programmes in developing countries increased from just over $1 billion to $5 billion. The country raising the most, however, is the United States—$2.7 billion, almost half the total in 1991.

Northern NGOs also serve as channels for government funds. On average, a third of their funds comes from governments, though the proportions vary widely—from 10% in Austria, Ireland and the United Kingdom to more than 80% in Belgium and Italy. Between 1970 and 1990, such funds increased from less than $200 million to $2.2 billion (table 5.1).

Taking private and government contributions together, the total transferred by and through northern NGOs increased from $1.0 billion in 1970 to $7.2 billion in 1990—in real terms twice the rate of increase for international development assistance. Indeed, government funding of northern NGOs has grown faster over the past ten years than support from the general public.

Many northern NGOs still execute their own programmes in the South—as with CARE, Plan International and World Vision in the United States, and ActionAid, Save the Children and Oxfam in the United Kingdom. But the trend is away from hands-on involvement and towards working in partnership with NGOs and people's organizations in developing countries. In

the United Kingdom, this is common for some of the largest NGOs, like Christian Aid and CAFOD—similarly with NOVIB in the Netherlands, and the church agencies in Germany and Scandinavia.

Most large NGOs in the South depend heavily on those in the North for finance. The northern NGOs typically refer to this as "partnership". But seen from the South, this relationship is often far removed from the equality the term implies.

The partnership clearly works best if donor and recipient agencies share a common perspective on development. And relations are smoother if the northern agencies provide a steady flow of funds and the southern agencies are willing and able to meet the reporting, management and accounting standards that the northern donors require.

In practice, these conditions do not always obtain. A central question that often remains unanswered is who defines the development agenda at the grass roots. The northern agencies can rarely guarantee long-term funding—and those in the South often resent the administrative demands on them. Agencies that receive money from child sponsorship organizations, for example, have to spend much of their time collecting copious quantities of personal information about the sponsored children—and employ large teams of "social workers" for this.

The donor agencies are thus in a position to set the conditions of the relationship. These may or may not be onerous, but they do restrict the freedom of the agencies they are placed on.

An additional complication in recent years has been that northern governments have been channelling aid through northern NGOs to NGOs in the South. While governments may find this attractive, they often ignore some fundamental incompatibilities. First, on the type of project: governments prefer programmes that produce tangible results, so they place a major emphasis on economic projects. NGOs, by contrast, prefer projects with stronger social or political elements that empower the poor.

Second are conflicts in time. Governments like their funds disbursed quickly, so they are not too keen on long preproject assessments. NGOs, however, know only too well that participatory projects can be implemented only gradually—and after painstaking assessment and consultation with the people concerned.

The effect: northern NGOs have to persuade those in the South to generate economic projects with quick results—adding to the tensions between donor and recipient agencies. In response, there has been, as in the Philippines and Thailand with Canadian NGOs, the emergence of a collective dialogue between groups of NGOs, and the creation of consortia, as with the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee.

TABLE 5.1
ODA flows through NGOs, 1983–86
(% of total)

Switzerland	19.4
USA	11.1
Canada	10.8
Netherlands	7.0
Belgium	6.6
West Germany	6.5
Sweden	4.6
Italy	1.9
Japan	1.6
United Kingdom	1.3
France	0.3

NGOs and people

Participation is a central tenet for almost all NGOs. Do they promote participation in practice? Mostly, it seems they do. Many studies have shown participation to be a dominant feature of their operations. And governments of developing countries, as well as donor agencies, concur that participation is the feature that distinguishes NGOs most sharply from the "top-down" approach of many official programmes.

NGOs' support for people's organizations, where face-to-face contact is the normal style of working, opens an ongoing debate on the form that interventions should take—sometimes with disconcerting results. In Bangladesh in the 1970s, Save the Children Fund (SCF) began working with the poorest women and children in the city slums. SCF wanted to concentrate on immunization and family planning, but the Slum Committees rejected this approach, insisting that the most urgent need was for curative health programmes. So that was the project's initial emphasis, and it was two years before SCF's preventive aspects were introduced.

But it should not be assumed that NGO contacts with people's organizations necessarily enhance participation. Sometimes, external assistance can discourage participation—or even repress it. This can happen when the NGOs feel under pressure to demonstrate concrete achievements quickly—to spend money fast. In the Philippines,

the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau, a quasi-autonomous agency, is working with local people's organizations to help improve livestock production in upland areas. Where people's organizations do not exist, the agency encourages people to form them, merely to take delivery of predetermined technologies.

Indeed, potential recipients might be tempted to form temporary or superficial groups if they sense that this is an easy way to obtain more goods or services. They tell the NGO "what it wants to hear" to gain access to the inputs they require. There is also the danger that people's organizations, after successfully attracting funds, are taken over by local elites who want to steer the inputs their way.

Efforts to promote participation and empowerment cannot be divorced from concrete economic achievements

How far NGOs really enhance participation is impossible to say. But one recent Dutch study—with evidence from Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, India, Indonesia and Zimbabwe—concluded that NGOs had broadly increased empowerment, even if it could not offer quantitative evidence. It reported that people in the target groups now "... act more often as partners in discussions with organizations outside the village, have the courage to lodge complaints with civil servants of the local government, move freer and travel more. These are seemingly small changes but of essential importance for the people themselves."

A lesson many NGOs have learned is that efforts to promote participation and empowerment cannot be divorced from concrete economic achievements. If they are not simultaneously offering such improvements, efforts to promote empowerment come under strain.

An example: The Development Education and Leadership Training programme, initiated in Kenya in the early 1970s, has been adapted in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The approach is to encourage communities to reflect on their place in society and their power to bring about change. But unless this awareness raising is matched by efforts to meet the immediate tangible needs of the groups involved, the result can be frustration and the group's disintegration.

The need for tangible outcomes is also an issue in Latin America now. For many years, NGO support of popular movements offered an outlet for people's democratic aspirations. Now that these have in many cases been fulfilled, people are focusing more on other matters. The poor and marginalized in people's organizations are demanding that empowerment efforts be complemented by activities that also address their pressing social and economic needs.

NGOs, like people's organizations, tend to be "value-driven" rather than profit-oriented or bureaucratically propelled. But this does not necessarily mean that they themselves work in a participatory fashion. While certainly open to a broad range of internal debate and discussion, many large organizations develop conventional bureaucratic characteristics.

Who exactly should be allowed to participate in the running of NGOs? Their trustees, their staff, their donors or the people they help? The order of priority today is probably staff, trustees, donors and, finally, beneficiaries. Many organizations refer not to "beneficiaries" but to "partners", though the equality of this partnership is sometimes open to doubt.

With such concerns so widespread, a statement at the end of a colloquy between NGOs and people's organizations in Sri Lanka in 1992 concluded that "NGOs must, as an objective, strive to increase the capability of people's organizations to articulate their concerns directly at the highest levels."

NGOs and government

NGOs have complex relations with governments, sometimes cooperating, sometimes in conflict—and often both simultaneously over different issues.

The NGOs' ability to promote participatory development is strongly influenced by the nature of the government. Where governments have been strong and authoritarian, one of the major contributions of NGOs has been to keep participatory democracy alive. In many countries in Latin America, and in the Philippines under

Marcos, NGOs nurtured and supported a range of popular movements to oppose the excesses of national security states and to address poverty issues at the local level.

Where governments are hostile but weaker, there are many opportunities for NGOs to promote participatory development through social and economic projects. If the central government does not exert strong control, regional and district governments might be more able and willing to work with NGOs, especially where their interventions are successful and have the support of the people. Zaire in recent years falls into this category.

Strong governments that welcome NGOs may sound ideal, but not necessarily. Strong governments have strong views on what NGOs should be doing, and they commonly see NGOs as "gap-fillers" for inadequate social services rather than as champions of a different kind of development. But NGOs that have demonstrated successes with people's organizations may still be able to influence government approaches to development—as in Thailand and Zambia.

In recent years, the question of how NGOs and governments should work together has been sharpened by the widespread adoption of structural adjustment programmes. NGOs around the globe have been called upon to help mitigate the worst effects of these programmes, as well as take over some of the social services that governments can no longer finance. In most cases—such as the Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala and Uganda—NGOs have agreed to cooperate, often because this qualified them for government and external funds. In others—Bolivia is a striking example—NGOs have responded with greater reluctance. But in both cases, NGOs have been forced to reflect on how their approach meshes, or conflicts, with national policy. And governments for their part are realizing that NGOs and the participatory methods they promote have a role in national development.

The key issue now is how best to promote the strengths and interests of both governments and NGOs. Governments, seeing NGOs as widening their activities, will want to monitor, or probably control, them more closely. But they will have to find ways of doing this without nullifying the benefits they bring—introducing cumbersome procedures, for example, which inhibit NGOs or delay the speedy implementation of their programmes. And NGOs increasingly recognize that if they are not to be marginalized in national debates on the participatory approach to development, they have to engage more constructively with governments.

Governments and NGOs have to interact at three levels: line ministries, local government and national forums.

- *Central line ministries*—Government ministries need to know what NGOs are doing and devise mechanisms for using the insights that emerge from NGO interventions, and, where appropriate, include the activities of NGOs in future planning. They also need to encourage greater NGO involvement where the government is not involved.

The NGOs, for their part, need to carry out more rigorous assessment of their projects, cooperate and coordinate more closely among themselves and provide governments with more information on their activities and provide critiques and proposals on policy and legislation.

In many instances, it will be useful to have some form of government-NGO liaison body. These already exist in some countries, such as in the Philippines for agricultural research, and in Tanzania for health issues.

- *Local government*—NGO activities often challenge the local power structure. Indeed, that is often the intention. If the local power structure is elitist and oppresses the poor, this is something that NGOs will seek to change. But this attitude can spill over into arrogance and antagonism towards local politicians and administrators. NGOs need to be more sympathetic to the real problems facing local politicians and administrators.

And local governments for their part need to look beyond merely eliminating or controlling NGOs—to see them more as an opportunity for local gain than as a threat to local alliances. It ought to be possible in

The key issue is how best to promote the strengths and interests of both governments and NGOs

each district to establish a forum that provides for some interchange of ideas between the administration and NGOs, covering local development problems and the best ways of tackling them.

• *National forums*—In the past, NGOs have often had only a minimal impact on national debates about the form and content of development strategies. This is partly because most NGOs have concentrated on grass-roots activities and pursued only informal contacts with government officials. And in part it is also because governments have chosen not to discuss overall policy issues with NGOs. A major exception has been Latin America, where both NGOs and people's organizations have had a major role in the democratic movement, and in the Philippines, where NGOs constitute one-third of the membership of the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development, established in September 1992 to guide national followup to the Earth Summit.

The indirect impact of NGOs is often much wider than their direct contribution

But NGOs now recognize more the limits on what can be achieved at the grass-roots level and aim at having greater influence on national debates. This will require them to present a more united front and to devote more resources to having a much greater voice at the national level. If NGOs achieve that, the contribution they already make to participatory development at the grass-roots level could well be seen as only a relatively small part of their larger struggle to widen the opportunities for participatory development at the national level. In other words, the indirect impact of NGOs is often much wider than their direct contribution. Some specific country experiences are discussed below.

• *Bangladesh*—has one of the largest and most diversified NGO sectors in the world. No one knows the precise number, but at the start of the 1990s at least 12,000 groups were receiving financial and technical support. More than 550 local NGOs were registered with the Association for Development Agencies, and more than 300 national and foreign NGOs were getting funds from abroad. Around $100 million is channelled to NGOs from external sources (about 5% of total aid flows). Most are local and small, but some employ thousands of people.

Thought to reach 10–20% of the poor, NGOs in Bangladesh generally focus on the rural poor through a wide range of activities, which include both emergency assistance and long-term development. Credit has been one of their most important activities, and they have also been concentrating on income generation.

Most NGOs aim at empowering the poor, and particularly women, and they have had significant success. In some cases, however, groups have fallen apart, and there have been violent clashes when NGO programmes have encouraged people to confront local power blocs.

NGO relations with the government are complex and contradictory. On the one hand, they are welcomed to "supplement and complement government's development programmes". But the government has also at times seen them as a threat, undermining its legitimacy, and as a growing competitor for development finance, and has responded by placing obstacles in their way, including a restrictive process of registration and approval.

NGOs in Bangladesh do have an influence on government development policy, and the government has given some leading NGO figures important advisory positions. This could be seen as an endorsement of the value of NGOs—or as a way of co-opting potential opposition.

• *Chile*—showed a more rapid proliferation of NGOs in the 1970s than any other country in Latin America, a direct response to repression by the military regime. Large numbers of middle- and senior-level personnel were forced to leave government. Some were killed, and some fled abroad. But a high proportion moved to the voluntary sector, joining or creating NGOs sustained both by the church and by a massive injection of funds from overseas, governmental and non-governmental supporters.

The NGO movement worked in two ways. It was the focus of political opposition to the government, giving rise to an array of popular movements. But it was also working to mitigate the worst effects of pover-

ty—though here, too, popular education was always an important part of the process. NGOs were thus able to keep democratic ideals alive.

When a democratic government was elected in 1990, the participatory approach that NGOs had fostered became an important aspect of government policy—indeed, many people who spent time in NGOs now hold key government positions. In addition, the government has accepted that NGOs have an important role.

But this leaves the NGOs in something of a dilemma. Previously, their role was clear: they were united in opposition to General Pinochet. Now they have to develop a new role, which could take one of roughly three forms. Some groups are likely to draw back from popular education and participatory development to focus more on the delivery of services. Others, less certain of the durability of democracy, will maintain their distance from government. And a third group will probably combine its promotion of grass-roots participation with attempts to work with, and influence, the government.

Chile in the years ahead should be an interesting demonstration of participatory development being promoted simultaneously by the government from the top down, and by the NGOs from the bottom up.

- *Uganda*—is one of the poorest countries in Africa, and for most of its post-colonial history has been ravaged by war and civil unrest. Since 1986, the government has been attempting to create working state institutions. And alongside them are at least 250 local NGOs and 24 foreign-based ones with an emphasis thus far on emergency assistance and health programmes. More than $25 million in foreign funds went to local NGOs in 1990.

The government has been broadly supportive of NGOs, and the controls it applies to them are usually only administrative. This gives NGOs considerable freedom, but it has also meant that their services often run in parallel with those of the government and sometimes overlap. It means too that, with the possible exception of health care, NGOs have had little impact on public policy.

One significant area of NGO overlap with the government is in personnel. Since government salaries are inadequate, some NGOs, particularly the foreign ones, have been poaching government staff. Others have been "supplementing" the salaries of government workers and thus drawing them away from government projects and programmes. Either way, the effect has been to substitute NGO programmes for government ones.

Most Ugandan NGOs espouse participation, but this is not always evident in practice. Perhaps understandably, there is very little participation in emergency relief programmes. But even in long-term development programmes, the beneficiaries may have little involvement in planning. And when it comes to evaluation, the NGOs (like official aid organizations and developing country governments) often consider themselves more accountable to their donors than to the beneficiaries.

NGO activities today touch the lives of about 250 million people in developing countries

Effectiveness of NGOs

NGOs have certainly increased their outreach in recent years. Both the funds they spend and the numbers of people they deal with have been rising dramatically. In the early 1980s, one rough estimate suggested that NGO activity "touched" 100 million people in developing countries—60 million in Asia, 25 million in Latin America and some 12 million in Africa. Today, the total is probably nearer 250 million—and will rise considerably in the years ahead.

But NGO activity needs to be placed in perspective. The flows from northern NGOs and northern governments to NGOs in the South have been increasing. But the $7.2 billion in 1990 was still a small proportion of overall flows from North to South, equivalent to 13% of net disbursements of official aid, and only 2.5% of total resource flows to developing countries. Even if NGOs were to treble their spending by the year 2000, they would still account for less than 20% of official aid flows. But if ODA flows stagnate or shrink in real terms, the percentage will be higher.

It is difficult to judge how effective NGOs have been, whether in increasing ef-

ficiency, relieving poverty or promoting participation. There has been very little systematic analysis by the NGOs themselves or by independent organizations. Any general assessment of the impact of NGOs can thus be based only on partial evidence. This chapter considers:

1. Tackling poverty
2. Providing credit to the poor
3. Reaching the poorest
4. Empowering marginal groups
5. Challenging gender discrimination
6. Delivering emergency relief.

TABLE 5.2
Shares of NGO credit in total credit advanced
(percent)

Country	Year	NGO credit share
Kenya	1990	1.6
Bangladesh	1990	0.6
Costa Rica	1992	0.2
Philippines	1990	0.1

Tackling poverty

Many people judge NGOs primarily by their success in improving the living standards of the poor, and there are plenty of individual success stories. The landless have obtained land. Farmers are growing more food. Wells and boreholes have been sunk. Children have been inoculated against killer diseases. In these and countless other ways, NGOs have transformed the lives of millions of people all over the world.

The results have often been outstanding. In Zimbabwe, the agricultural groups supported by Silveira House increased crop yields sevenfold to tenfold, enabling farmers to break out of subsistence agriculture and move into the cash economy. In Burkina Faso, the *Groupements Naam* are helping 160,000 people to improve their communities and protect the environment (box 5.8). In south India, the Kanyakumari District Fisherman Sangam have significantly improved the lives of fishing communities by increasing the fish catches and by cutting out the merchants, giving the communities a fairer reward for their efforts.

But there have also been failures. An evaluation of income-generating activities supported by the Ford Foundation in Africa in the late 1980s concluded that there were "very few successes to talk about, especially in terms of post-intervention sustainability". Likewise, a mid-1980s study of projects supported by the European Community found that even projects selected for analysis because they had been "successful" failed to satisfy the evaluation criteria in a surprisingly large number of cases. Of the seven microprojects visited, six had quite serious problems.

More successes than failures? Nobody really knows.

What seems clear is that even people helped by successful projects still remain poor. NGO interventions do not generally help people escape from structural poverty, but they do reduce some of the worst forms of poverty. This might seem a modest achievement, but for the people helped, it can be very significant. If they are less preoccupied with the daily drudgery of making ends meet, or have a little cash to spend on items other than the barest necessities, they are in a much better position to focus on the next stage of the struggle to improve their lives.

Any assessment of NGOs' results should also take into account their operating circumstances. Compared with official aid donors (whose success rate is also unknown), NGOs take on much tougher tasks in very inhospitable environments. In Africa, where per capita incomes are falling almost everywhere, if NGOs can help people hold their incomes steady, this is a considerable accomplishment. And NGOs do this with very little money—less than 60 cents per person assisted, according to one Dutch study.

In addition, the benefits of NGO activity can often be indirect. Successful NGO interventions can induce other agencies to follow suit and replicate their experience elsewhere. In Zimbabwe, the experience of

BOX 5.8

Burkina Faso—Groupements Naam

The *Naam* groups started in 1967, in the Yatenga province of Burkina Faso, as a revival of traditional work groups. The basic idea is for the community to accumulate a production surplus and invest it in community development.

During the rainy season, group activities include cultivating market-garden plots and planting millet, cotton, sesame and groundnuts in communal fields. In the dry season, the focus shifts to soap making, textile production, animal husbandry and building fuel-efficient ovens. After provision is made for depreciation and the capital needed for new investments, the proceeds are shared among group members.

The *Naam* groups also undertake various community works, digging ditches, building rainwater storage tanks and small dams and tending community forests. The groups also promote sports and cultural activities and run literacy programmes.

In 1989, there were some 2,800 groups with more than 160,000 members. Their motto is "development without damage".

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the Silveira House groups has been used by the government as the model for a major rural development initiative across the country. NGO successes can also induce other groups to form—and produce a ripple effect across communities or beyond, as has happened in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (box 5.9).

Providing credit to the poor

One of the most important ways NGOs have made up for failures of the market is by providing credit. Poor people are often regarded as bad credit risks, and banks seldom are prepared to deal in the small sums that the poor need.

Many NGO credit schemes have taken over and adapted traditional self-help initiatives—known as *susu* in Ghana and *cheetu* in Sri Lanka. In Bangladesh, the traditional *samabaya* scheme was upgraded to the Swanirvar Movement. One of the best-known larger credit initiatives is also in Bangladesh—the Grameen Bank—which has an international reputation as an efficient rural credit scheme (box 5.10).

These schemes have often been highly successful—reaching the poorest people and giving them small amounts of low-cost credit. They have also had very high repayment rates—frequently in excess of 90%. They have shown that the poor are bankable—that their problem is lack of access to credit.

In some cases, however, administrative costs have been high, so that what had been intended as "revolving funds" have remained dependent on top-ups from donors. And on occasion, too many loans have been granted for consumption rather than investment.

A major concern for NGOs must be that their schemes—though generally useful, efficient and effective—are unlikely ever to be a major source of funds for poor people. In Costa Rica, where the *Fundación Costarricense de Desarrollo* is a significant source of credit for the poor, the NGOs provide only 0.2% of total credit. And in Bangladesh, even the impressive activities of the Grameen Bank account for only 0.1% of national credit. And all the NGOs in Bangladesh combined provide only 0.6% of total credit (table 5.2).

This is not a criticism of the performance of NGOs, but a candid commentary on the situation. NGOs are in no position

BOX 5.9

Sri Lanka—Sarvodaya Sharamadana Movement

The Sarvodaya Sharamadana Movement (SSM) was founded in the late 1950s under the charismatic leadership of A. T. Ariyaratne to integrate low-caste families into the mainstream of national life. Now, it has more than 7,700 staff and covers 8,000 villages (more than a third of the total in Sri Lanka) in both Singhalese and Tamil parts of the country.

SSM takes its inspiration from Buddhist and Gandhian sources. It aims to help people mobilize their own resources, especially their labour, through forms of participation and self-sufficiency in tune with the country's cultural traditions.

It runs a variety of income-generating programmes, including batik and sewing shops, workshops for mechanical repairs and carpentry, printing presses and activities for farmers. On the welfare side, it has programmes for the deaf and disabled, relief and rehabilitation programmes (particularly for the victims of ethnic conflict), and nutrition programmes aimed especially at preschool children.

A recent survey of SSM and non-SSM villages in the same region found that people in SSM villages were much more likely to have overcome apathy and mutual suspicion. SSM's participatory approach has encouraged a new leadership, enabling people to bypass the inegalitarian structures associated with the temples, mutual aid committees and political parties.

SSM has also begun to work at the national level. Through seminars and discussion groups with lawyers, the police, the judiciary and various action groups, it is challenging the idea of development as a purely economic issue—and arguing that it should give greater priority to human concerns.

BOX 5.10

Bangladesh—the Grameen Bank

The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh is one of the most successful experiments in extending credit to the landless poor.

It started in 1976 in the village of Jobra. Professor Muhammad Yunus saw that it was impossible for landless people to get loans from commercial banks since they could offer no collateral. He decided personally to guarantee bank loans to the poor. This proved very successful: repayment rates were above 99%. The poor were bankable.

In 1983, the project became a full-fledged bank. The Bangladesh government contributed 60% of the initial paid-up capital, and the rest came from the savings of the borrowers themselves. International support has been considerable, but dependence on foreign funding has declined from 83% to 60%.

The bank's most significant innovation is to organize people into groups of five, and ask each person to guarantee the repayment of a loan to any of the other four members. The chair of each group has a weekly review meeting with a staff member of the bank. This combination of collective collateral, close supervision and peer group pressure has resulted in very high repayment rates (currently around 95%).

By 1991, the bank had extended its services to more than 23,000 villages through its nearly 900 branches. Around one million households have received credit. The average loan is $60, and the interest rate (16%) contains no subsidy. Primarily for working capital, the loans have generated a great deal of employment, especially for rural women.

Borrowers are also required to add one taka per week to their savings account. By 1991 this compulsory savings fund had accumulated Tk. 962 million—62% of outstanding loans.

to replace governments or commercial markets in the provision of credit. So, one of the most important roles of NGOs in this area must be to put pressure on governments to change their policies and priorities.

Reaching the poorest

NGOs often manage to reach groups that governments find most difficult to help, tending to work with people in rural areas, where government services are usually weak or non-existent. But many are now also focusing on urban areas, as in Bangladesh, Chile, South Africa and Zambia.

Until the early 1980s, most NGO interventions were gender-blind

Whether they reach the *very* poorest, however, is another matter. If government and official aid programmes usually fail to reach the poorest 20% of income groups, most NGO interventions probably miss the poorest 5–10%. This would include, for example, the sick and the elderly as well as those with few assets and little or no education—as well as the high proportion of households headed by women. Such people are often dispersed and difficult to form into groups. And because they often live in remote and inaccessible regions, reaching them can be very expensive. On the whole, it is easier for NGOs to reach the not-so-poor than the very poorest.

When helping in rural areas, it is usually easier to assist those who have some productive land. In the Gambia, NGOs participating in the Farmer Innovation and Technology Testing Programme focus on the middle-income farmers. And in Kenya, a local NGO has an Agroforestry Plots for Rural Kenya Project, funded by the Ford Foundation, which has rarely contained representatives from the poorest households.

Many interventions do, however, reach such people. NGOs in Latin America and South Asia in particular have often worked with landless labourers. One way even the poorest can be reached is to have the activity embrace everybody in a given area, as with the various Campfire projects run by the Zimbabwe Trust and the Worldwide Fund for Nature in the Zambezi Valley—projects that generate income through the hunting and care of wildlife.

Empowering marginal groups

In most developing countries, poverty is often caused less by an absolute shortage of resources than by their skewed distribution. The NGOs' emphasis on empowerment is partly a reflection of this, and their interventions do indeed occasionally enable poor people to resist local elites and claim their rights. In such cases, they are likely to come up against official opposition—as well as opposition from powerful local interests.

Some of the sharpest conflicts have been over land rights. In many countries, especially in Asia and Latin America, NGOs have been defending the land rights of minorities, pressuring governments to provide land for the landless and to embark on agrarian reform. In Ecuador, Indian federations have been formed to help the indigenous people gain secure title to their land. This has not only helped them materially, it has also strengthened their communities and helped challenge myths about Indian social and intellectual inferiority.

In several countries, NGOs have helped empower people in rural areas by organizing them into groups. For instance, in Zimbabwe, networking among groups has increased their effectiveness (box 5.11).

Challenging gender discrimination

Until the early 1980s, most NGO interventions were gender-blind, like those of other development agencies. Although there was always a small number of projects and programmes assisting grass-roots women's groups, the specific needs of women in general antipoverty programmes were often ignored. Today, NGOs are much more sensitive to such issues and often attempt to include gender- and women-focused elements in many of their initiatives. In part, this has been in response to pressures from the growing women's movement in many developing countries. And some NGOs have been established specifically to enhance the power of women in the family and in society.

In Cameroon, the Women's Networking Association brings together 50 women's

groups. It carries out literacy campaigns and gives women other practical help—such as establishing a cooperative to purchase the produce that village women bring to market but are unable to sell at the end of the day. The association also organizes seminars and conferences to raise women's concerns at the national level.

In Kenya, the Green Belt Movement, tackling the intertwined problems of environmental degradation and poverty, is encouraging women to use soil rehabilitation measures and natural fertilizers. With the involvement of 50,000 women, it has planted ten million trees in Kenya. Also responsive to the needs of the women in the poorest families, the movement has established training centres to increase women's employment opportunities.

NGOs in many countries concentrate on advocacy on behalf of women. The Alliance of Costa Rican Women provides legal and health services to more than 4,000 low-income women. But it also campaigns to improve the status of poor women and publishes information on legal and heath issues, and on violence against women.

Even so, too many NGO projects still fail to challenge prevailing patterns of gender discrimination. Too often, the attempts to incorporate gender issues into projects have been only superficial, resulting in little empowerment of women. In other cases, project successes have been eclipsed by the more powerful forces in society.

Delivering emergency relief

One great strength of NGOs is their ability to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies. Indeed, a high proportion of NGOs were founded in response to emergencies from famines, wars or earthquakes—and only later did they extend their activities to long-term development. NGOs can bring five main strengths to emergency and relief work:

1. *Warning of disaster*—With an extended network of contacts on the ground, NGOs are in a good position to draw the attention of the international community to existing or impending emergencies, particularly vital when the government chooses to downplay the emergency or exclude bilateral or multilateral agencies. NGOs often make powerful use of the news media for this purpose—as with the Bangladesh cyclone in 1970, the Maharashtra drought in 1974 in India, the Ethiopian famine in the early 1970s and the Sub-Saharan crisis of 1984–85. Their dramatic efforts can also attract international attention—as Oxfam did in 1979, when it chartered a boat, filled it with food and medical supplies and sailed it from Hong Kong to Kompon Som in Cambodia.

2. *Advocacy for international action*—Following their warnings, the NGOs can lobby governments and international organizations to increase their resources for emergencies, sometimes through international consortia. Agencies in the European Community, for example, lobbied the EC to raise food aid to Africa from 1.5 million tons in 1990 to 2.1 million tons in 1991.

3. *Speedy response*—Untrammelled by bureaucratic and political constraints, NGOs can usually act much faster than official agencies. And since they are less susceptible to political pressures, they sometimes work where governments forbid interventions from government or multilateral agencies—as in Cambodia in the late 1970s and in Eritrea and Tigray in the early 1980s. In Somalia in the most recent

Attempts to incorporate gender issues into projects have too often been superficial

BOX 5.11

Zimbabwe—Organization of Rural Associations for Progress

The Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP), an indigenous NGO in Zimbabwe, acts as an umbrella organization for local groups, each with five to 30 rural families. These are often traditional work groups that managed to survive the paternalist and racist practices of the colonial period. ORAP provides funds and technical assistance, but the groups and their regional associations make the key decisions.

Most group members are farmers, so ORAP focused initially on generating income in agriculture. Lately, it has also been engaged in education, sanitation and extension services—and in food security and drought relief. Current projects include grinding mills, gardens, irrigation schemes, sewing and savings clubs, animal husbandry and horticulture.

Now operating in three provinces, ORAP employed 60 people directly in 1990, had an annual budget of around $1 million and covered more than 1,000 groups (80,000 families), which were also organized into 16 higher associations.

Also operating in the same areas as ORAP, the government is essentially delivering services, while ORAP puts the emphasis on participation and social mobilization. ORAP's approach is being studied by other groups in Zimbabwe, since it seems successfully to have blended an efficient service organization with a popular grass-roots movement.

Advocacy clearly is the NGOs' greatest strength

emergency, such organizations as the Red Cross, Save the Children, CARE, Concern and *Médecins Sans Frontières* stayed on after the international agencies had left, even during periods of intense fighting. Today, they are responsible for much of the food distribution and, along with the International Committee of the Red Cross, are bringing in nearly 20,000 tons of food a month and running 800 kitchens for more than a million people.

4. *Cooperation with indigenous organizations*—Emergency aid is generally better administered by local organizations more sensitive to local needs. NGOs have been able to use their existing contacts to good effect and to help boost the capacity of local groups where needed. In the Sudan recently, the only NGO permitted by the government to visit the urban slums around Khartoum has been the Sudan Council of Churches, through which northern NGOs have been able to channel funds.

5. *Disaster preparedness*—Most disasters hit the poor hardest, the people living on marginal land liable to flooding or in mud houses that collapse in earthquakes. Local NGOs can try to ensure that the poor are better able to anticipate problems. In Bangladesh, the Ganges-Kobadak cooperatives monitor embankment breaches to warn of danger. And the NGO emphasis on participation and empowerment puts local communities in a stronger position to pick themselves up again more quickly after a disaster strikes.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that NGO responses to disaster are always beneficial. They can also create problems by poorly coordinating many agencies and by bringing in inexperienced workers—as with the Karamoja drought in Uganda in the late 1970s. And there have also been occasions when foreign NGOs have moved in and undermined local agencies and government efforts—as in Mozambique in the late 1980s.

Another common NGO failing in emergencies is that there is little evaluation of their work, so that mistakes are repeated in one emergency after another.

The future of NGOs

Many northern NGOs, but increasingly also southern NGOs, have joined in debates of such issues as the debt crisis, international trade, structural adjustment, the environment, women in development and peace. They now often employ or commission economists and other specialists to monitor such matters and produce detailed reports as well as campaigning materials.

NGOs have become accepted by people, governments and business as a legitimate voice, lobbying not just their own governments or enterprises, but also many international gatherings. And it seems clear that the voices of NGOs have prompted many actors to reassess their policies, as with the impact of structural adjustment on the poor. They have also enforced changes in the behaviour of multinational corporations, as in the marketing of infant formula and the use of fertilizers and pharmaceutical drugs in developing countries. And at the time of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, NGOs kept up constant pressure on their governments for real changes in policy. Advocacy clearly is—and probably will continue to be—the NGOs' greatest strength.

NGOs affect relatively small (but growing) numbers of people: 250 million is less than 20% of the 1.3 billion people living in absolute poverty in developing countries. And by the end of the 1990s, optimistic assumptions suggest that they will reach nearly 30%.

In eradicating poverty and providing social services, NGOs are unlikely ever to play more than a complementary role. Much more significant is their ability to demonstrate participatory models that governments might follow—and to keep pressure on governments, in both the North and the South, encouraging them to focus more on the human development of the world's poorest people. Again, their importance lies more in making the point that poverty can be tackled rather than tackling it to any large extent. This, too, will continue to be a critical role for NGOs.

Encouraging participation means responding sensitively to the felt needs of people and communities—and responding in ways that meet those needs without "taking over". There is always the risk of placing too much emphasis on effective delivery and too little on nurturing and strengthening participation. This tendency is likely to be heightened as NGOs open themselves up as channels for government funds. Government aid departments are used to demanding regular quantitative results and reports, and many have yet to accept fully that NGO projects need to be treated (somewhat) differently.

There is also the possibility that NGOs could "crowd out" governments. In some cases, they can offer local people better salaries and draw experienced people out of government service. Already happening in Mozambique and Uganda, this is likely to increase.

None of these concerns is new to the NGO community. Their "growing pains", evident for some years now, have been the subject of considerable internal debate. As their responsibilities and activities increase further, they will no doubt respond to this new challenge with their usual energy, creativity and commitment.

The increasing numbers of people's organizations and NGOs is a clear demonstration of how people all over the world are demanding greater participation in civil society.

These demands are likely to gather strength in the years ahead. Once set in motion, democratic movements are difficult to stop—they develop a rhythm and momentum of their own. People who know more, earn more and can do more will be raising their voices ever more loudly for greater participation in every process that affects their lives. And they will be requiring that governments, markets and all the institutions of a civil society respond to their real needs.

Authoritarian regimes might still stifle and repress. And new forms of intolerance, such as fundamentalism, might suddenly capture attention and power. But history is not on their side. The steady trend towards the dispersal of power, information and ideas cannot be reversed.

If states are to survive, they will have to establish new relationships with their people. Governments that have been able to respond sensitively and flexibly have so far been able to keep their countries intact. Others have not, and their states have come under increasing pressure.

Greater people's participation is no longer a vague ideology based on the wishful thinking of a few idealists. It has become an imperative—a condition of survival.

Greater people's participation has become an imperative—a condition of survival

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