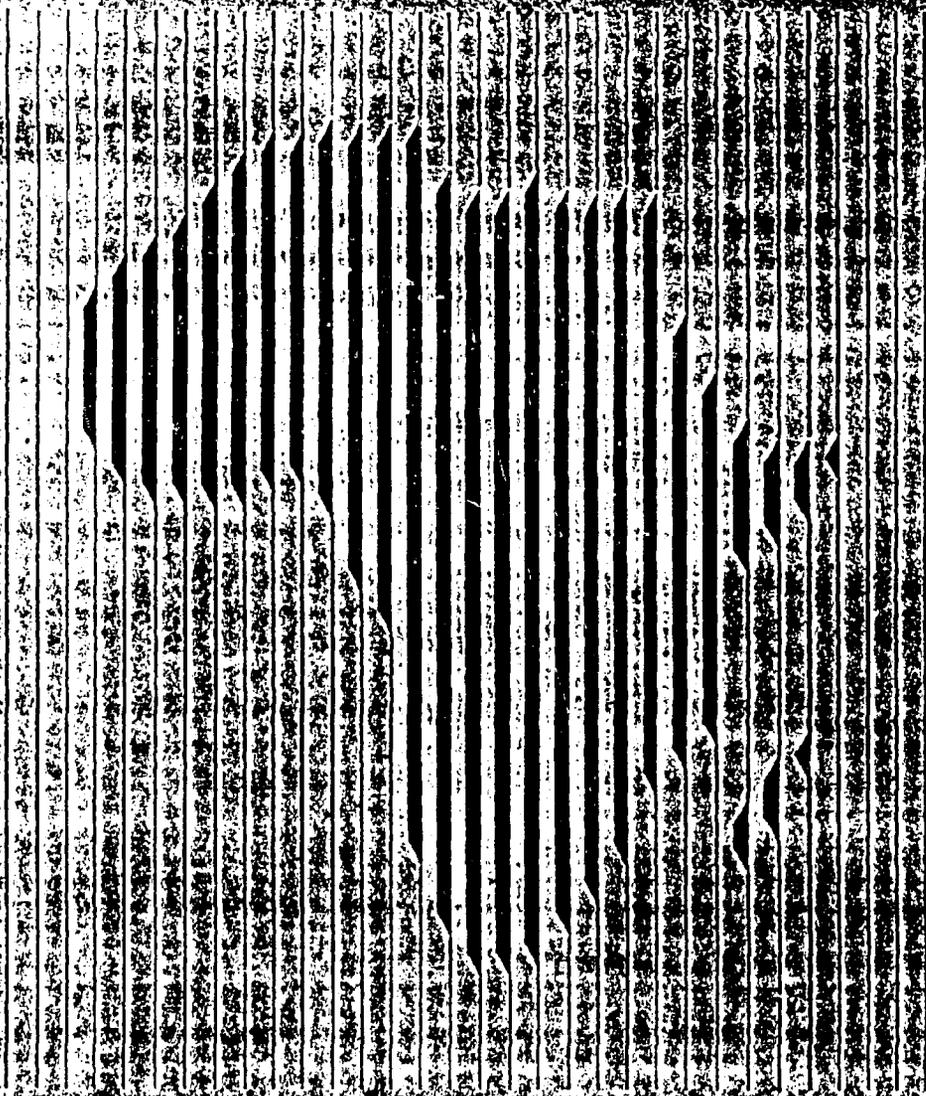


Development Fund for Africa

ACHIEVING PARTICIPATION

A Collection of the Africa Bureau's 'Best Practices'



Agency for International Development
Bureau for Africa
Washington, D.C. 20523

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Country Strategy Formulation	3
Project Design	6
Non-Project Assistance Program Design	9
Project and Program Implementation	10
Monitoring and Evaluation	12
Constraints to Increased Participation	13
Table	
Participatory Practices Reported by Africa Bureau Missions	2
Annex	
List of USAID Field Missions Responding to State 075156	15

For additional copies of this report please contact: AFR/DP, Room 2495 NS

ACHIEVING PARTICIPATION:

A Collection of the Africa Bureau's "Best Practices"

A synthesis of USAID Mission responses to a cabled questionnaire on local participation and PVO/NGO¹ collaborations under the Development Fund for Africa (State 075156) identified the following "Best Practices." As promised in that cable, these practices are being shared among Missions to expand repertoires and increase efforts to broaden participation in USAID activities. Missions are encouraged to contact named posts or USAID/Washington, Africa Bureau backstop personnel directly if they wish further information on the practices cited.

For ease of presentation and utility, the practices have been artificially structured around the USAID country program cycle. It should be noted, however, that many of the practices cited are not limited to a particular program stage. Many of the selected examples can be used at multiple points in the cycle and for a variety of purposes. The matrix presented on the following page illustrates how the different practices cross-cut the program cycle.

The examples presented have been selected from those provided by the 28 USAID Mission responses to State 075156 (see the Annex for a list of responding Missions). Many duplicative and/or somewhat similar examples are not listed. Missions also may be engaged in a variety of participatory practices that were not reported. Additional examples of successful practices are welcomed, particularly those that have been used to address the various "Challenges Remaining" noted in the text. These issues have been highlighted partly because they reflect criticisms frequently heard from outside USAID and partly because few Missions took the opportunity provided by the survey to suggest practices in these areas.

¹ In this report, U.S. PVOs (or just PVOs) refer to Private and Voluntary Organizations who have headquarters outside of Africa and who are registered with A.I.D./Washington. African NGOs (or just NGOs) refer to Non-Governmental Organizations whose operations are limited to Africa. This distinction is not always accurate -- some African NGOs are registered as PVOs and some U.S. or international organizations may be incorporated in African countries and may not be registered. Specific explanations are provided when greater clarity is needed. PVO/NGO refers to the universe of U.S. PVOs and African NGOs.

Participatory Practices Reported by Africa Bureau Missions

Practice	CPSP Formulation	Project Design	NPA Program Design	Project/Program Implementation	Monitoring & Evaluation
Structured Consultations	X	X	X	X	X
Conferences/ Workshops	X		X	X	
Studies/ Surveys/ Gender Disaggregation	X	X	X		X
Document Dissemination	X	X			
Field Trips/ Social Gatherings	X	X		X	
Work with NGO Consortia	X	X	X		
Direct Beneficiary Participation	X	X	X	X	X
Create Long-Term Programs	X	X		X	
Create Oversight Committees				X	

This table does not adequately describe the many Mission-specific ways in which the practices were implemented. Interested parties should contact the field posts listed in the report if they require more information on a particular practice or approach. For more information on the Small Country Program (SCP) and those Missions scheduled for close-out, contact the USAID/W backstop officer.

I. Country Strategy Formulation

Practice: Structured consultations with a broad range of host country representatives.

- USAID/South Africa encouraged participation in the preparation of the Strategy Concept Paper by arranging a series of formal "roundtables" with key South Africans in various locations around the country.
- USAID/Chad embarked on a series of retreats to arrive at a new Mission strategy. Over the course of a year, four retreats were held with PVOs, consultants, USDH and FSN staff, and USAID/Washington personnel to help formulate what could and should be done. This process helped broaden knowledge considerably, and because a variety of people helped decide what was to be done, they had a personal stake in seeing the strategy carried out. The Mission found the personal interest in and commitment to the program were well worth the extra time it took to involve the larger group.
- USAID/Burundi directly consulted PVOs and NGOs with expertise in relevant sectors. Generally, the Mission found that consultations are easier and more effective with local groups that have demonstrated capability and experience in sectors that coincide with USAID's areas of strategic interest.
- USAID/Uganda employed three different types of consultations to make the CPSP conceptualization and formulation as participatory as possible. First, using a contracted facilitator, the entire Mission started the CPSP process with a three-day retreat. Second, persons charged with writing CPSP sections made several presentations of the work in progress to the Mission as a whole. Finally, the Mission engaged in a three-step process that involved focus group meetings with a broad variety of Ugandans in different geographic locations around the country. The focus group process involved a successive narrowing of the issues for Mission strategic objectives. This process was responsible, for example, for the decision that brought USAID into the primary education sector. Following the finalization of the CPSP, Mission staff returned to the focus group locations to report back to the participants on the strategic plan.

Practice: In-country conferences, seminars, and workshops.

- USAID/Cape Verde cited a three-and-a-half day long private sector forum that publicly debated private sector needs and aspirations. The forum, half-funded by

the Mission, was attended by private sector representatives and some members of government, including key government officials who deal with private sector issues.

- USAID/Togo staff actively participated in the *Etats Generaux*, or sector reform assemblies, that took place after the National Conference. The meetings went on for days, and a broad spectrum of participants, ranging from farmers, street vendors, and students to university professors, doctors, and senior government officials, established policy guidelines and objectives for the different sectors.

Practice: Targeted studies and background surveys.

- USAID/Togo carried out a series of background studies that included local surveys, field visits, and interviews with rural and urban poor (including a high percentage of women), business men and women, local organizations, and host country agencies.
- USAID/Chad staff developed an analytical agenda to obtain as much information about Chad as possible and then contracted for four studies on various subjects to fill the gaps in their knowledge.
- USAID/Senegal conducted a series of field studies while developing a new strategy. Though the outline of the strategy was widely discussed with GOS representatives and donor agencies, consultations with local populations during the numerous studies provided the foundation on which the strategy was based.

Practice: Widespread dissemination of draft country strategy documents for review and comment.

- USAID/South Africa sent drafts of its Strategy Concept Paper for comment to 24 South African NGO and business leaders. Subsequently, Mission personnel met personally with 16 of the reviewers.
- USAID/Chad disseminated throughout the country draft reports from four targeted studies commissioned to provide information needed for a new country strategy.

Challenges Remaining:

One observation based on Mission responses is that local participation in program strategy development seems to take place after key decisions about sectors of intervention have already been made. While 30 percent of the responding

Missions mentioned local participation as part of the CPSP process, only USAID/Uganda provided a link between local consultations and Mission decisions to focus efforts on specific development sectors. This is a complaint frequently heard among groups outside of USAID. Part of the problem seems to be confusion about the process rather than intentional lack of transparency. USAID Missions should not assume that the logic behind strategic decisions is understood by all the various development partners. There will always be programmatic winners and losers given the constraints of limited financial resources, but if the decision-making process is understood by and visible to all concerned, complaints are more likely to revolve around substantive issues than rhetorical ones.

II. Project Design

Every responding Mission affirmed that a variety of efforts are taken to solicit a broad range of views when designing projects. The practices presented here represent only a small percentage selected to illustrate the broad scope of possibilities. They range from actions taken pre-PID, often overlapping with country program strategy formulation, to operations following PP approvals. It was clear from the responses that Missions are most familiar with the possibilities for local participation at this stage of the program cycle.

Practice: Structured consultations with international and local organizations.

- USAID/Burundi held discussions with CLUSA on Mission strategy for the private agricultural sector. These brought to light the spontaneous increase in farmer cooperatives as a result of the improved policy environment for such groups. The Mission has since approved a proposal from CLUSA for an 18-month pilot program to set up cooperatives and other associations in rural Burundi.
- USAID/Swaziland consulted with members of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) during the design of the Education Policy Management and Training project. SNAT's input was crucial to the design, which includes special teacher training in community outreach, and the project was structured so that SNAT was represented on the project steering committee.

Practice: Information gathered and shared during informal meetings, field trips, and social gatherings.

- The Small Countries Program, which does not have a USAID field presence, uses any TDY from USAID/Washington (and likewise visits from PVO field staff to Washington) to share information on current activities and plan for future operations with PVO/NGO partners in the five countries.
- USAID/Togo reports that there are many social occasions in which USAID and PVO representatives meet informally, ranging from the weekly Hash to the annual Fourth of July reception.

Practice: Working through national NGO membership organizations or NGO consortia that facilitate and host meetings among donors, NGOs, and African government representatives to discuss and plan new projects.

- USAID/Niger has found that in addition to overall coordination of PVOs and NGOs in Niger, GAP [*Groupe ment des Aides Privées*] serves as a lobbying group that pushes hard for PVO and NGO participation in GON projects, conferences, and planning and analytical documents.
- USAID/South Africa notes that a series of regional and national development forums involving government, business, unions, and leading NGOs have emerged in a number of key areas, including housing, electricity, and economic policy.

Practice: Commissioned surveys and targeted studies.

- USAID/Tanzania has undertaken six baseline surveys and studies in the past three years. The purpose of these studies is to understand the living conditions, needs, priorities, knowledge, attitudes, and practices of people living in the area, especially those affected by the project. The objective is to tune the project toward relevant priority needs with strong emphasis on sustainability.
- USAID/Niger's Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation (DPM) project design team conducted a number of interviews with victims of previous disasters to better understand how they cope in such situations. This "perception study" of disasters was the first of its kind to be conducted in Niger. The results of the study were incorporated into the design of the DPM and presented last year at the annual African Studies Association meeting in Seattle.

Practice: New participatory project design methodologies, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), are increasingly becoming standard components of USAID's project design repertoire.

- USAID/Senegal engaged a variety of local and international organizations to assist with the design of its new Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) project. A critical element of the design was a Resource Management and Planning Study (REMAPS) that used PRA research methodologies. The preliminary results of the study were discussed during a conference involving academics, government officials, development planners, other donors, and representatives of PVOs and NGOs.
- USAID/The Gambia's work with Save the Children/USA over the past four years has involved Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to understand the felt needs of the rural poor in a particular village or community before starting an activity.

Challenges Remaining:

One issue that has not been sufficiently addressed is how USAID personnel determine when adequate participation has been achieved in project design. Recognizing that it is impossible to query each and every intended or potential beneficiary, what are the best methods to ensure that project design decisions reflect majority views and will be broadly supported? How does one assess the "representativeness" of a particular organization or association? These and other similar questions are important in the present context. There are concerns that donor agency efforts to increase local participation are the driving force behind the proliferation of African non-governmental organizations. The relationship between these organizations and the breadth and variety of local concerns and aspirations has not been adequately examined.

III. Non-Project Assistance Program Design

Practice: Consultation with beneficiaries.

- USAID/Malawi's Girl's Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) NPA program benefited from wide-ranging and numerous consultations during the design stages. The PAIP team visited schools to discuss concerns and obtain advice from principals, teachers, and pupils. A videotape was made of these conversations and subsequently shown at the PAIP review meeting in Washington.
- USAID/Togo Mission personnel made extensive visits to the field to interview the intended beneficiaries and field personnel of the agencies implementing the Health and Population Sector Support (HPSS) NPA program.

Practice: Consultations with sectoral experts to determine policy conditionality.

- USAID/Madagascar has used the groundbreaking work done by COMODE, a consortia of NGOs, in developing a new code governing NGOs in Madagascar as one of the conditions precedent of the KEPEN environmental NPA program.
- USAID/Rwanda consulted representatives of the private sector on a regular basis during the development of the policy conditionalities for the Production and Marketing Policy Reforms (PMPR) NPA program.

Challenges Remaining:

The examples above were the only responses received to a question that sought instances of participation in the design of non-project assistance programs and determination of policy conditionality. Several Missions did point out the need to limit the extent of participation in NPA design. USAID/Senegal, for instance, finds strategy and policy negotiations with the government of Senegal on ESF-VII, AEPRP-II, and PL-480 programs to be a politically sensitive process. Widespread discussion of these issues with organizations in a position to lobby the government for possible gain can jeopardize the bilateral negotiations.

Similar to the challenge discussed in the country strategy formulation section, criticism from outside USAID is frequently focused on the seeming lack of local participation in the design of sectoral reform programs. Despite the validity of the sensitivity issue raised by USAID/Senegal, there are too few examples to ensure that USAID is meeting its DFA mandate to take into account the views of the rural and urban poor in NPA design.

IV. Project and Program Implementation

USAID-supported projects that are implemented by U.S. and international PVOs and national NGOs were by far the most frequently identified as examples of local participation in project/program implementation. Missions indicated that the success of PVOs and NGOs in ensuring participation is primarily because their sectors of activity, types of beneficiaries, and regions of operation are representative of local interests, particularly those of the poor. In most cases, local participation in project implementation has been achieved through PVO/NGO efforts to organize community involvement in the development activity. Many Mission-provided examples of PVO/NGO actions are not included among the practices and supporting examples discussed below. The intent here is to emphasize replicable mechanisms rather than simply list projects known to be successful in involving local people.

Practice: Create and support long-term programs.

- USAID/Mali has found that views from the grassroots will be heard and heeded if projects and programs are considered and implemented as long-term commitments. The Haute Valley project, for instance, has been established for 14 years and has become recognized as the most successful rural development program in Mali. The project has remained long enough for village associations to develop their voice and their managerial capacity and for rural bankers, non-governmental organizations, local commercial interests, and others to make their influence felt on the program.

Practice: Make programming decisions based on local input.

- USAID/South Africa's program is primarily driven by unsolicited proposals, making virtually every project funded responsive to local interests. Implementation of the nearly 375 grants to local NGOs also necessitates that USAID staff work closely with local groups.

Practice: Establish project implementation organizations and project review boards that represent different interests and views.

- USAID/Swaziland assisted in the creation of two NGO implementing organizations to work with small and medium-sized businesses in a program to strengthen the private sector. Both of the organizations are managed by boards of directors made up of people from relevant local businesses and NGOs.

- USAID/Tanzania holds occasional meetings with two informal groups known as the Health Sector Committee (HSC) and the Private Sector Committee (PSC). Members of the HSC and PSC include private medical practitioners, consultants, university staff, entrepreneurs, donor representatives, senior Tanzanian government officials, and the media. These meetings have become forums for advocating and soliciting new ideas on program implementation.
- USAID/Botswana notes that projects are always designed and carried out under the guidance of a reference group composed of national and local government officials, NGO representatives, and other interested parties.

Practice: Encourage USAID staff to spend as much time as possible conducting site visits in the field.

- USAID/South Africa began its program with an emphasis on spending long hours in the field to understand the needs of the majority community and to gain credibility for the program. The need for such outreach is no less true today.

Practice: Convene regular meetings with project beneficiaries to discuss project implementation.

- USAID/Madagascar's SAVEM project holds regular meetings with representatives of the local communities to ensure their participation in the decision-making process.

Challenges remaining:

The issue of who is actually participating in USAID-supported projects and programs is not always as carefully researched and analyzed as it could be. In Africa, rural communities in particular are frequently thought to be homogeneous and uniformly poor when, in fact, there is a great deal of differentiation and inequality. Participation in development projects frequently requires a certain investment of labor or capital, items that are not usually available to the poorest members of many communities. Mission responses to the cabled questionnaire tended to praise projects simply because of the sector or region of involvement. None of the examples specifically discussed mechanisms that can be used to make a critical assessment of differential involvement in project implementation and, perhaps more importantly, how to get those who have been excluded more involved.

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluations by definition require some sort of input from beneficiaries to determine the results of the intervention. This means that a certain amount of contact between evaluator and local beneficiary is required and, in fact, when participation in the context of monitoring and evaluation was discussed by the Missions, they tended to emphasize the quantity of interviewing that occurred. Mid-term and final evaluations that involve interviews with intended beneficiaries are valid instances of local participation, but the examples below have been selected because they discuss additional practices that some Missions may not be aware of.

Practice: Institute a project monitoring process that involves regular contact with the local population.

- USAID/Chad has installed an iterative monitoring process that involves field trips and the preparation of progress reports that assess how the project is going, whether the assumptions are still correct, and what actions should be taken in the future. The Mission still conducts mid-term and final evaluations, but the progress report process allows more regular contact with the local population. This facilitates the identification of issues and recommendations for solutions before problems become too big to handle.

Practice: Disaggregate indicators by gender for better comprehension of impacts on women.

- USAID/Togo initiated a process to disaggregate by gender the indicators used in the Assessment of Program Impact to determine whether the Mission's country strategy has differential impact based upon gender.

Practice: Involve NGO project implementors directly in the evaluation process.

- USAID/Mali engaged 12 of the local NGOs that had been involved in the Urban Revitalization Project to participate in the project's final evaluation. Each of the NGOs conducted extensive interviews with residents in areas where that particular NGO had not been active, followed by several days of group meetings to synthesize the results into a list of project strengths and weaknesses.

VI. Constraints to Increased Participation

Despite relatively good progress in ensuring consultation and participation and the recognition of the need for a more concentrated effort in certain areas, there exist a number of real constraints. The most common examples coming out of the survey included the following:

- **Shortage of staff time.** Encouraging local participation and consultation is very time-consuming. USAID Missions are frequently thinly staffed (something that is likely to get worse rather than better), and there are many competing demands on the staff.
- **Procedural rigidities.** USAID's processes and requirements often limit the flexibility to work directly with various individuals and groups, particularly with local NGOs that have not established the institutional capabilities required by U.S. government procedures.
- **Perceptions of donors by NGOs and perceptions of NGOs by donors.** Donors often think of PVO/NGOs in terms of their project implementation capabilities rather than as true development partners, and PVO/NGOs often conceive of donors as monolithic entities only concerned with macroeconomic issues, capital infrastructure, and/or unwilling to work with anyone other than governments. These conceptualizations must be broken down before a real dialogue can begin.
- **Lack of representative organizations.** In many African countries there are simply not many PVO/NGOs operating, and/or the low level of institutional capacity among the PVOs or NGOs reduces the effectiveness of collaboration.
- **Host government interference.** Bureaucratic centralism and long-held views about the role of government in African nations continue to cause some repressive actions against non-governmental organizations. Authentic pluralism and political liberalization do not appear overnight.
- **Distance, infrastructure, and language.** Physical and social obstacles can very easily constrain attempts to broaden local participation and conduct consultations. The extraordinary difficulties involved in simply getting to many parts of African countries are legendary. Social and linguistic barriers might be less obvious, but they are equally difficult to overcome. As USAID/Guinea-Bissau

notes, "Less than 15 percent of the population speaks Portuguese, the official language, and no USDH has had training in either Creolo or ethnic-specific languages." USAID/Rwanda points out that consultation is made more difficult by "the relative isolation of individuals within the rural population. Families live on their land in separate units. There are no villages or village chiefs to bring people together. If the process is accomplished by government officials, people are not as open or free to say what they really think about a concept or proposal in the presence of the officials."

USAID continues to work at overcoming those constraints that are amenable to external intervention. Several from the above list, host government interference and the shortage of representative organizations, for instance, are addressed as part of the investment in democratic governance. There is also a USAID-wide commitment to reviewing and eliminating, to the greatest extent possible, the internal bureaucratic requirements that limit USAID's interaction with PVOs and NGOs. In the medium term, however, the constraints posed by conflicting demands on staff time, distance, and physical infrastructure will remain.

Annex

List of USAID Field Missions Responding to State 075156

**Botswana
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Chad
Cote d'Ivoire
Ethiopia
The Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Kenya
Lesotho
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Namibia
Niger
Rwanda
Senegal
South Africa
Swaziland
Tanzania
Togo
Zambia
Zimbabwe**

Responses were also obtained from the Washington-based manager of the Small Country Program covering the Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe, and Sierra Leone.