

PN-ACF-110

101577

**Coalition Assessment**  
*USAID Civil Society Program*  
**Executive Summary**

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Metro Manila, Philippines  
April 1998

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# Coalition Assessment USAID Civil Society Program

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This report was completed through the assistance of the U S Agency for International Development (AID) under the terms of Contract No 492-0395-C-00-5072-00 The views, expressions, and opinions contained in this report are the authors' and are not intended as statements of policy of either AID or the authors' parent institution

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## GLOSSARY

BSK	Balikatan sa Kaunlaran
BUCO	Building Unity for Continuing Coconut Industry Reform
DSMP	Developing Standards for Micro Finance Program
EPIC	Enhancing Peoples' Initiatives and Capabilities for Housing and Urban Development
FASAR	Fisherfolk Advocacy for Sustainable Aquatic Reform (FASAR)
NACFAR	Nationwide Coalition of Fisherfolk for Aquatic Reform
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PKSMMN	Pambansang Samahan ng Magsasaka at Manggagawa sa Niyugan
PO	People's Organization
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
SPEED-Mindanao	Strategic Program for Enhancing Education and Development in Mindanao
TUCP	Trade Union Congress of the Philippines
UNAC	Upland NGO Assistance Committee
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ULRTF	Urban Land Reform Task Force

# USAID Civil Society Program Coalition Assessment Executive Summary

This summary is based on a synthesis report of a more detailed study of seven coalition initiatives supported by USAID/Philippines under its Civil Society Program. The study looked into the themes and lessons drawn from seven coalition initiatives. Through such a study, USAID hoped that stakeholders could gain a better understanding of the processes involved in strengthening policy reform through coalition building for policy advocacy. The study was conducted between September 1997 to February 1998 and was based on primary and secondary data that were gathered about each coalition experience<sup>1</sup>

Since 1980, USAID Philippines has been assisting non-government collaborative development activities that are co-financed and executed by private voluntary organizations (PVOs). USAID's democracy strategy is to broaden citizen participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies in selected areas. In specifying the thrust of this objective, USAID/Philippines formulated the Civil Society Program to open new arenas for the active and effective participation of disadvantaged and under-represented groups.

## *I The Coalition Initiatives and their Key Stakeholders*

At the start of the Civil Society Program, USAID/Philippines anticipated funding nine coalition-building initiatives within a five-year period. In 1995 three coalitions gained the support of USAID while four other coalition building programs received grants in 1996<sup>2</sup>. These seven coalition initiatives were:

1. Fisherfolk Advocacy for Sustainable Aquatic Reform (FASAR). This initiative assisted the Nationwide Coalition of Fisherfolk for Aquatic Reform (NACFAR), a coalition of organized groups of artisan fisherfolk. The program aimed to help the coalition effectively represent the rights and protect the welfare of artisan fisherfolk at the national, regional, and local policy levels.
2. Enhancing Peoples' Initiatives and Capabilities for Housing and Urban Development (EPIC). This initiative supported the consolidation of the Urban Land Reform-Task Force (ULRTF), a coalition of urban poor people's organizations and NGOs. It also aimed to consolidate the urban poor organizations to effectively participate in policy making and access land, housing and basic social services.

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<sup>1</sup> The authors of the study do not lay any claim to having completed a comprehensive evaluation of coalition building and policy advocacy or of the coalition groups. Not all nuances, dynamics and particular conditions and factors affecting coalition activities were captured in the study. At best, sequential snapshots of experiences were gathered, different perceptions elaborated and attendant conditions and emerging patterns described. Lessons were conceptualized for the purpose of stimulating a learning process and reflection among the lead stakeholders.

<sup>2</sup> During the writing of this report (January 1998) three other coalition projects were approved.

- 3 Advancing Participation of Upland Indigenous Peoples in Philippine Democratic Processes This initiative supported the Upland NGO Assistance Committee (UNAC), a network of NGOs and institutions working in the uplands, to strengthen existing and/or develop alternative structures and systems for IP organizations' participation in policy-making
- 4 Empowering Women and Children in the Informal Sector This initiative built on the alliance between the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) and Balikatan sa Kaunlaran (BSK) in advocating the implementation of existing laws on Child Protection and the Women in the Informal Sector This program aimed to help the coalition influence policy reform by advocating the implementation of promulgated laws for homebased women and child workers
- 5 Building Unity for Continuing Coconut Industry Reform (BUCO) This initiative supported two coalitions addressing the situation of coconut farmers – the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahan ng Magsasaka at Manggagawa sa Niyugan (PKSMMN) and Coconut Industry Reform (COIR) This program sought to broaden the influence and meaningful participation of small coconut farmers and farm-workers including their organizations and support institutions to influence policy-making
- 6 Developing Standards for Microfinance (DSMP) This initiative supported the formation of a tactical coalition of NGOs engaged in microfinance programs The program aimed to help these NGOs develop a set of standards for the sustained and effective operations of NGO microfinance practitioners in the country The standards focus on the issues of institutional viability and broad outreach to achieve long-term impact in poverty alleviation through micro lending
- 7 Strategic Program for Enhancing Education and Development in Mindanao (SPEED) This initiative supported the formation of an alliance of four NGOs addressing the development needs of Central and Western Mindanao The program aimed to organize a strong multi-level and multi-sectoral group that would advocate needed reforms in the educational system in the sub-region

## ***II Results and Impact of Coalition Initiatives***

The following section discusses the results of the coalition initiatives in the area of policy advocacy and coalition building The assessment was guided by a set of indicators established by USAID and partners The discussion starts with a description of the state of coalition building for policy advocacy before USAID's Civil Society Program supported coalition groups This is followed by a presentation of the policy advocacy gains of USAID partners during the implementation of the USAID-supported coalition programs

## *Pre-USAID Coalition Building and Policy Advocacy Work of NGOs/POs*

Coalition building and policy advocacy were important elements in the empowerment programs of development NGOs and POs following the February 1986 People Power Revolution. In the late 1970 and early 1980, politically partisan groups tried to use coalition formation to harness the critical mass necessary for advancing a common social issue or agenda. Coalitions became a collective expression of tactical collaboration among a range of organized groups representing various interests but bound by common objectives. These coalitions were often tactical and issue-specific.

The second phase of coalition formation was marked by NGOs and POs putting more of their time and effort to coalition building activities as they formed task forces and ad hoc to address policy advocacy needs of their partners. Unfortunately, there was no solid funding for coalition building. At best, linkage and networking were funded through budget items of other development projects funded by donor agencies.

The "resist and desist" and "expose and oppose" mentality of some NGOs and POs in advocacy and mobilization campaigns was tempered by the "critical collaboration" approach in policy advocacy. Although coalition building and policy advocacy drew increased interest and attention from donor agencies, government and policy makers, pro-poor social reform bills and sectoral issues of the marginalized were given lip service or else easily opposed in the political bureaucracy.

Coalition building, though desirable, was just one of the many tasks and responsibilities of POs and NGOs. NGOs and POs were often pulled toward different directions as they continued to face many other priorities besides coalition building and policy advocacy needs at the national, regional and provincial levels. Thus, problems of priority setting and focusing prevented NGOs and POs from fully and effectively addressing the needs of coalition building and policy advocacy work.

### *Gains in Coalition Building for Policy Advocacy*

This section presents the achievements of the USAID coalition programs in the area of policy advocacy and coalition building of NGOs and POs.

***A commonly shared and articulated policy agenda based on research and analytical input from coalition groups*** The partners in the coalitions came together to collaborate in articulating a policy agenda that will advocate laws, provisions, and positions that will advance the interest of their constituent groups. The seven coalition groups mapped out their activities based on an agenda for advocating policy reform. The drafting of the agenda often required the coalitions to study various unfamiliar legislative documents and processes. They labored to comprehend, debate, argue and iron out differences in perspectives and beliefs in order to arrive at a set of common policy issues to advocate.

***Participatory approaches and organized and timely deliberations*** The coalition groups were able to convene and sponsor various consultations among PO members and other constituent groups. The coalitions operated based on a participatory approach. National, regional and area level consultations were cross cutting activities among the seven coalition projects, where often constituent groups like the small coconut farmer, the women, fisherfolk, would bring their concerns and learn about policy issues. The coalitions identified an agenda based on consensus among the primary stakeholders and members of the coalitions. Strategic planning sessions and planning activities helped build the agenda of the coalitions.

***Information dissemination and a deeper knowledge about issues of constituent and other groups in society*** The consultations allowed the coalitions to disseminate information about their policy issues. The deliberations facilitated a process where the marginalized members of the coalitions gave voice to their thoughts and positions about the policies that directly affected them. It was also during these meetings that the coalitions would get feedback from the constituents, conduct popular education and information dissemination activities. Information gathered here would then be integrated into the project plans and activities.

***Public awareness of coalitions and appreciation of their policy advocacy*** As coalition groups conducted advocacy campaigns, media projection, and mobilization, public awareness of coalitions increased and other sectors like the government, business, academe and other professional groups started to view the coalitions as the voice and representatives of the marginalized sectors. Coalition activities linked them not only to policy advocacy but also to popular education, information dissemination, resource mobilization as well as counterparts of policy makers for social reform.

***Increase in the number of allies and supporters from the ranks of policy makers and other sector*** The coalitions' advocacy and other activities broadened the network and linkages with individuals, groups and organizations from other sectors. Coalitions were clarifying lines of opposition and support to their policy agenda. The coalitions gained allies from policy makers, government officials and managers, religious, business, professional and other sectors of Philippine society.

In the process of increasing the presence of coalition representatives in public fora, legislative consultations, and other advocacy campaigns, the coalitions helped train and mobilize PO and NGO leaders and members at all levels of the coalition.

***Coalition groups as watchdogs and pressure groups*** In their role as watchdogs and pressure groups, coalitions gave a voice to the needs of the marginalized and the under-represented. They exerted pressure on policy makers to be more accountable and as watchdogs oversaw the policy-making process and the performance of policymakers.

In turn, those who participated in these coalitions, especially the base groups, slowly learned to identify with the coalitions and "own" the advocacy issues of the coalition groups. Eventually, the coalitions in turn became more conscious of their constituencies and worked to become responsive representatives of the marginalized groups.

***Improved repertoire of strategies including ways of exacting accountability of policymakers*** USAID-supported coalition initiatives gave its partners the necessary resources to develop and use a wide range of strategies to more effectively undertake coalition building and policy advocacy. Some of these strategies included intensive advocacy campaigns such as mass mobilizations, writing position papers and materials for information dissemination, media coverage, meeting with high government officials, sending representatives to government and other consultative bodies, and sponsoring nation wide as well as sectoral consultations.

Coalition groups used pressure and persuasion to prod policy-makers to be accountable to groups who were directly affected by the policies they legislated. While criticizing those opposing and obstructing the reforms they were advocating, coalition groups also acknowledged contributions of supportive legislators and government leaders. They updated these supporters with information from their end.

**Improved program management** At the same time the coalition program supported by USAID provided the framework and conditions to improve the organizational and programmatic management of coalition initiatives. The coalitions set up structures, mechanisms, procedures and activities while planning, implementing and monitoring their work. They deliberated in an organized and timely fashion. Organization and timeliness was indicated in the way that management structures were set up, functions of units defined, roles and responsibilities assigned, and regular meetings scheduled. Policies and procedures for operations were put in place.

Generally, it appears that the coalition projects made solid efforts to achieve the goal of strengthening coalition building for policy advocacy of marginalized groups. This was especially true in terms of providing the coalition groups the opportunity to systematize its activities and consolidate its operations.

This internal strengthening of coalition processes and advocacy strategies and broadened access to policy-making resources in Philippine society operationally translate the contribution of the USAID program into what may be termed as the formation of *social capital* or the web of organizations and norms that help people cooperate and coordinate with one another for the common good, which, according to social scientist Robert Putnam, is instrumental in the development of sound government, economic prosperity and healthy society.

### **III Impact**

Following are the three questions that were formulated to gauge the effects of the coalition projects based on the parameters of USAID and its coalition partners:

- a) In what ways did the coalition initiatives help empower the under represented and marginalized groups in Philippine society?

The collaboration of a plurality of groups is one important element in coalition building that makes coalition groups significant agents in strengthening democratic processes in society. This plurality of groups allows society, especially those in power, to recognize the legitimacy of multiple actors and interest in collaborative work. The USAID supported coalition initiatives showed that government representatives learned to work with multisectoral groups in policy-making of these coalitions.

The support of USAID reinforced a broad based and autonomous coalition building of different sectors of the marginalized and underrepresented. It also helped marginalized sectors and the policy-makers appreciate the heterogeneity of the marginalized as sub-sectors gained their own identity. This was clearly seen in the emergence of the fisherfolk, informal and microfinance standards coalitions as legitimate subgroups within the sectors of peasant, urban and economic enterprise sectors of the NGO and PO communities. The broad representation of marginalized and under represented groups encouraged policymakers and other sectors to appreciate the diversity of citizen groups in Philippine society.

Coalition experiences showed that active involvement of civil society groups in policy advocacy contributed towards the decentralization of policy-making power. Active advocacy work eventually created space for groups to participate as they pressured, cajoled and argued with policy makers. Ultimately, policy makers learned to accept and expect these coalitions and ascribed a role to them in policy formulation.

Other factors combined to help coalition groups especially the marginalized, better appreciate the necessity of broad-based power as an aspect of empowerment. One indicator, a strong bias of USAID support for coalitions directly supportive of issues of base sector organizations, greatly contributed to allowing the POs take more responsibility and assume final decision making power vis-a-vis the NGOs. Another factor was a non-exclusive regard towards primary coalition partners from various groups who identified themselves as members of the base sector. This facilitated a non-proprietary view towards constituting coalitions.

Also, coalition building drew organic leaders from the local to the national level, strongly encouraging the PO leaders to delegate their other responsibilities and in so doing provide for the emergence of new or secondary leaders. And the other factor was the increased number of coalition groups that built their capability to closely collaborate with more experienced and professional policy analysts.

b) In what ways did the coalition initiatives contribute toward professionalizing processes dedicated to the furtherance of democracy?

The seven coalition initiatives contributed to the shift from informal unstructured, often voluntary ad hoc collaborative work to more formal, structured, systematized, skilled and documented coalition operations. The USAID Civil Society Program introduced formal documentation of agreement among coalition members, and between main grantees and implementing partners. Meanwhile, the Civil Society Program brought changes to partner relations. By allocating major funding for coalition projects it effectively introduced a program development and management framework into coalition relations and resources. Partnership relations of loosely coalesced groups bound by goodwill and voluntary participation moved up to a level of more formal transaction, subtly changing expectations about roles and responsibilities of partners. It also formalized accountability of partners for the successful completion of projects.

The coalition initiatives strengthened the role of PO leaders as formal decision-makers while the NGOs complemented the POS. In USAID projects, NGO members ensured efficiency in coalition activities in their role as technical and support staff. Also, the coalition initiatives brought elements of organizational development and program management tools and approaches. Structures that clarified communication lines and accountability helped organize the processes. Decision-making approaches was formalized and less attributed to interpersonal ties and personal biases.

Finally, information and data became important elements in professionalizing coalition building, a step that gave coalitions a stronger organizational resource base for policy advocacy. They were able to generate informed decisions and options with a more structured approach. At the same time, advocacy work shifted away from what used to focus on government inadequacies to more constructive collaboration with other groups in the society.

c) In what ways did the coalitions enhance gains of civil society institutions to more creatively and productively relate with government?

The enhancement of creative and productive relations with government was evident in the area of policy making where non-traditional coalitions of NGOs and POs served as counterparts of policy makers. They offered alternative policy agenda or provisions that

better responded to the needs of marginalized and underrepresented groups. Policy makers eventually turned to coalition groups to gauge public sentiment on certain issues. Coalitions had become mechanisms to validate and test public response to government policies.

#### ***IV Areas of Learning***

Each of the seven coalition initiatives supported by USAID under its Civil Society Program is unique although all the projects shared the goal of broadening citizen participation of marginalized groups. Drawing lessons that cut across the seven projects will be useful in deepening the appreciation and understanding of coalition building experience. In this light, the following lessons were abstracted from the seven coalition projects. The order of presentation of the area of learning does not necessarily indicate order of importance.

***On Coalitions and Coalition Building*** The term coalition was given a broad loose definition by the coalition partners. They regarded coalitions as the coming together of different groups for a common objective or issue. Like-mindedness became an important consideration in forging the coalition links during the formulation of the coalition programs. Coalition building is the collective expression of organized groups undertaking participatory action, a citizen group's response to important issues in society.

The experiences of the seven coalition groups showed that coalition building is the process of strengthening the capacity of and space for groups, especially the under represented and marginalized sectors, to gain the position and voice to participate in societal processes, particularly policy reform/advocacy. Thus, the marginalized groups are able to participate in societal processes.

Coalitions that are time bound and activity bound tend to gain more focus in their tasks and are thus better able to complete them. The policies and societal issues addressed by coalitions are strategic to their sector but often the day-to-day operations of the coalition are tactical or short-term.

The intersecting bonds and links that constitute diverse civil society groups like the coalition supported by USAID are palpable only at different points in time. The actions are not manifested in a continuing process. Coalition building experiences and the lessons they provide civil society groups are drawn at appropriate times to expand and consolidate the participation of organized groups. Social issues call for the direct presence of such groups.

More than these, coalitions require the active involvement of organic leaders who are able to provide the passion, leadership, and support from technically skilled and committed staff members. It is after all in supplementing and complementing each partner that coalitions become more effective.

***On Policy Advocacy*** Framing the issue in the form of policy proposals must have both specific and comprehensive objectives to serve as progress indicators to sustain the long-term goal or vision. Also, a relevant and responsive policy agenda incorporates a balanced top-down and bottom-up approach that address the urgent and felt needs of base groups as well as the more macro analyses of political and socio-economic trends in Philippine society.

Success in policy advocacy is greatly influenced by the proper timing of strategies and actions of coalition groups. Well timed and opportune launching of strategic actions based on an astute reading of the confluence of factors and events characterize right timing. Some factors to consider are policy environment, formation of allies and support groups, degree or intensity of opposition, availability of critical information, political relevance and trends and flavor of popular political relations among power holders. Pressure politics involves the participation of the coalitions' constituency base that legitimizes different forms of protest/critique and is therefore a crucial component in policy advocacy work.

Coalition partners are better able to assess and plan for policy advocacy when a set of basic policy advocacy indicators is available. These indicators help the partners gauge their achievements during and after program implementation. The indicators must be simple yet appropriate for all coalition partners to use as a starting point towards developing more specific and sophisticated measures of goal achievement.

***On Leadership*** The strong and consistent presence of the coalition leader in the processes and activities of the coalition increases the capacity of the leader to effectively intervene. Leaders are more effective if they have good communication and interpersonal skills. Additionally, leaders with the capability to listen and provide feedback are effective mediators and therefore contribute to stronger partnership relations with their coalition.

Organic leaders (PO) of the marginalized and underrepresented groups and NGO leaders who are actively immersed in the issues of constituent groups become more effective spokespersons for policy advocacy. Leaders are perceived to be stronger and are more effective if they are well informed about policy positions of their coalitions, committed, persevering, confident, sociable, level-headed and yet not self righteous.

***On Partnership and Participation*** Open and formal articulation of the bases of unity and collaboration helps clarify the level of expectations among partners. The more partner groups share common objectives, principles, values and practices, the more they are open to coalesce. Generally face-to-face interaction strengthens a sense of partnership.

Free and voluntary decisions to form partnership relations in a coalition is fundamental in starting coalition relations. Awareness and recognition of the valuable role and contribution of partner groups facilitate group bonding and smoother interpersonal relations.

***On Conflict Resolution*** Tensions are constant in coalition building and need only to be treated with level headed humor and patience. Severe strain on a significant relationship in the coalition should find immediate intervention. Intermittent discussions on the sources and effects of tension could help sensitize the persons involved about the coalitions' situation.

Basic sectors will often turn to USAID as the "last resort" in conflict between main grantee and implementing partner, thus USAID representatives must be ready to listen and assist in clarifying the issues and the parameters of USAID's role in conflict resolution.

## ***V Future Directions***

The coalition building projects supported by USAID can only find its immediate relevance and usefulness the coalition groups build on or sustain the gains made. There are several tracks and options for the coalition partners to choose from for future involvement. The role

and course of action each coalition takes will depend on large part on the particular objectives and thrust of their organizations as well as the resources available to them

- 1 Coalitions could pursue national coalition building to advance gains for the marginalized sector. Much needs to be done to expand the allies of the marginalized and win concrete provisions to protect their interests and improve their conditions. The Social Reform Council (SRC) working on the Social Reform Agenda needs the support of autonomous coalitions.
- 2 Coalition groups could also take a serious look at policy advocacy addressing the implementation of existing laws that benefit the marginalized.
- 3 Coalition partners need to sharpen their strategies, particularly in the area of exacting accountability from policy-makers and sustain the dialogue with them in order to continue the education of both parties on effective policy reform. The marginalized need to increase their capacity and develop confidence to enter into such dialogue.
- 4 Coalition partners as well as other groups in society must have a continuing system to draw from the wellspring of experiences and learning. A policy advocacy and coalition building resource program focused on providing both technical as well as strategic repository of past and on going experiences of coalitions or policy advocacy initiatives will help sustain civil society groups in their efforts at democratizing policy reform in the country.

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## GLOSSARY

ACDI	Agricultural Cooperative Development, Inc
AAFLI	Asian-American Free Labor Institute
ADMP	Ancestral Domain Management Plan
BCPC	Barangay Council for the Protection of Children
BSK	Balikatan sa Kaunlaran
BUCO	Building Unity for Continuing Coconut Industry Reform
CLOA	Certificate of Land Ownership and Acquisition
CODE-NGO	Caucus of Development NGOs
COIR	Coconut Industry Reform Movement, Inc
CPAR	Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform
EPIC	Enhancing Peoples' Initiatives and Capabilities for Housing and Urban Development
DAO	DENR Administrative Order
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
FDC	Freedom from Debt Coalition
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
GO	Government Organization
GOLD	Governance in Local Development
IECDF	International Economic Cooperative Development Fund
IS	Informal Sector
IP	Indigenous People
IPO	Indigenous Peoples' Organization
IPRA	Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act
IR	Intermediate Results
IRR	Implementing Rules and Regulations
LGU	Local Government Unit
LOPIP	Life of Project Implementation Plan
LPVO	Local Private Volunteer Organizations
MFI	Mondragon Foundation, Inc
MOA/MOU	Memorandum of Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding
MDFI	Maguindanaoan Development Foundation Inc
NACFAR	Nationwide Coalition of Fisherfolk for Aquatic Reform

NCL	National Council of Leaders
NDFCAI	Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities, Inc
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OGP	Office of Governance and Participation
PAG	Project Advisory Group
PAFID	Philippine Association for Intercultural Development
PBSP	Philippine Business for Social Progress
PCJC-PCHRD	Philippines-Canada Joint Committee-Philippine Canadian Human Resource Development
PD	Presidential Decree
PKSMMN	Pambansang Samahan ng Magsasaka at Manggagawa sa Niyugan
PIME	Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation
PCC	Policy Coordinating Committee
PHIC	Philippine Health Insurance Corporation
PO	People's Organization
PMO	Program Management Office
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
RA	Republic Act
RP	Results Package
SPEED-Mindanao	Strategic Program for Enhancing Education and Development in Mindanao
SO	Strategic Objective
SRA	Social Reform Agenda
SRC	Social Reform Council
SSS	Social Security System
TSPI	Tulay sa Pag-unlad, Inc
TUCP	Trade Union Congress of the Philippines
UDHA	Urban Development and Housing Act
UNAC	Upland NGO Assistance Committee
UPO	Urban Poor Organizations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VOCA	Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
UDP	Upland Development Program
UICI	Urban Integrated Consultants, Inc
ULRTF	Urban Land Reform Task Force

## FOREWORD

This study provides the Philippine development community the depth and breadth of experiences across seven NGO and PO coalition initiatives supported by USAID under its Civil Society Program. The convergence of visions, goals, interests and needs of the key stakeholders – the grantees, coalition groups, USAID, and other support groups – allowed the coalitions to work as a collective force and help strengthen civil society through coalition building for policy advocacy.

Much has been accomplished. Yet much remains to be done. The coalitions have created a wellspring of experiences and learning – victories and challenges. All these strengthen the resolve of development workers to work more creatively and productively for the reconstruction of democracy-led development in Philippine society.

It was a privilege to have been afforded the chance to look closer into the experiences of the seven coalitions. I would like to acknowledge the valuable support of

- the leaders and staff of the coalition programs - FASAR, EPIC, Indigenous Peoples, BUCO, Informal Sector, Microfinance, and SPEED-Mindanao
- the research team members – the two project specialists Ana Maria O Clamor, Sixdon C Macasaet and the two researchers - Ann Maria Leal and Ma Romina Santos,
- USAID PVO team - John Grayzel, Michael Calavan, Lisa Magno, Boy Dulce and Gerry Porta,
- UICI staff - Mar Tenorio, Maan Mananzan, Tony Mendoza, and Mabel Pamiloza, and
- Editor - Lulu Brillantes

I would like to thank everyone who in one way or another provided information, shared their thoughts and reflections, and encouraged this study.

Angelita Gregorio-Medel, Ph D  
Team Leader  
Civil Society Program Assessment

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<sup>2</sup> During the writing of this report (January 1998) three other coalition projects were approved.

- 3 Advancing Participation of Upland Indigenous Peoples in Philippine Democratic Processes This initiative supported the Upland NGO Assistance Committee (UNAC), a network of NGOs and institutions working in the uplands, to strengthen existing and/or develop alternative structures and systems for IP organizations' participation in policy-making
- 4 Empowering Women and Children in the Informal Sector This initiative built on the alliance between the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) and Balikatan sa Kaunlaran (BSK) in advocating the implementation of existing laws on Child Protection and the Women in the Informal Sector This program aimed to help the coalition influence policy reform by advocating the implementation of promulgated laws for homebased women and child workers
- 5 Building Unity for Continuing Coconut Industry Reform (BUCO) This initiative supported two coalitions addressing the situation of coconut farmers – the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahan ng Magsasaka at Manggagawa sa Niyugan (PKSMMN) and Coconut Industry Reform (COIR) This program sought to broaden the influence and meaningful participation of small coconut farmers and farm-workers including their organizations and support institutions to influence policy-making
- 6 Developing Standards for Microfinance (DSMP) This initiative supported the formation of a tactical coalition of NGOs engaged in microfinance programs The program aimed to help these NGOs develop a set of standards for the sustained and effective operations of NGO microfinance practitioners in the country The standards focus on the issues of institutional viability and broad outreach to achieve long-term impact in poverty alleviation through micro lending
- 7 Strategic Program for Enhancing Education and Development in Mindanao (SPEED) This initiative supported the formation of an alliance of four NGOs addressing the development needs of Central and Western Mindanao The program aimed to organize a strong multi-level and multi-sectoral group that would advocate needed reforms in the educational system in the sub-region

## ***II Results and Impact of Coalition Initiatives***

The following section discusses the results of the coalition initiatives in the area of policy advocacy and coalition building The assessment was guided by a set of indicators established by USAID and partners The discussion starts with a description of the state of coalition building for policy advocacy before USAID's Civil Society Program supported coalition groups This is followed by a presentation of the policy advocacy gains of USAID partners during the implementation of the USAID-supported coalition programs

## *Pre-USAID Coalition Building and Policy Advocacy Work of NGOs/POs*

Coalition building and policy advocacy were important elements in the empowerment programs of development NGOs and POs following the February 1986 People Power Revolution. In the late 1970 and early 1980, politically partisan groups tried to use coalition formation to harness the critical mass necessary for advancing a common social issue or agenda. Coalitions became a collective expression of tactical collaboration among a range of organized groups representing various interests but bound by common objectives. These coalitions were often tactical and issue-specific.

The second phase of coalition formation was marked by NGOs and POs putting more of their time and effort to coalition building activities as they formed task forces and ad hoc to address policy advocacy needs of their partners. Unfortunately, there was no solid funding for coalition building. At best, linkage and networking were funded through budget items of other development projects funded by donor agencies.

The "resist and desist" and "expose and oppose" mentality of some NGOs and POs in advocacy and mobilization campaigns was tempered by the "critical collaboration" approach in policy advocacy. Although coalition building and policy advocacy drew increased interest and attention from donor agencies, government and policy makers, pro-poor social reform bills and sectoral issues of the marginalized were given lip service or else easily opposed in the political bureaucracy.

Coalition building, though desirable, was just one of the many tasks and responsibilities of POs and NGOs. NGOs and POs were often pulled toward different directions as they continued to face many other priorities besides coalition building and policy advocacy needs at the national, regional and provincial levels. Thus, problems of priority setting and focusing prevented NGOs and POs from fully and effectively addressing the needs of coalition building and policy advocacy work.

### *Gains in Coalition Building for Policy Advocacy*

This section presents the achievements of the USAID coalition programs in the area of policy advocacy and coalition building of NGOs and POs.

***A commonly shared and articulated policy agenda based on research and analytical input from coalition groups*** The partners in the coalitions came together to collaborate in articulating a policy agenda that will advocate laws, provisions, and positions that will advance the interest of their constituent groups. The seven coalition groups mapped out their activities based on an agenda for advocating policy reform. The drafting of the agenda often required the coalitions to study various unfamiliar legislative documents and processes. They labored to comprehend, debate, argue and iron out differences in perspectives and beliefs in order to arrive at a set of common policy issues to advocate.

***Participatory approaches and organized and timely deliberations*** The coalition groups were able to convene and sponsor various consultations among PO members and other constituent groups. The coalitions operated based on a participatory approach. National, regional and area level consultations were cross cutting activities among the seven coalition projects, where often constituent groups like the small coconut farmer, the women, fisherfolk, would bring their concerns and learn about policy issues. The coalitions identified an agenda based on consensus among the primary stakeholders and members of the coalitions. Strategic planning sessions and planning activities helped build the agenda of the coalitions.

***Information dissemination and a deeper knowledge about issues of constituent and other groups in society*** The consultations allowed the coalitions to disseminate information about their policy issues. The deliberations facilitated a process where the marginalized members of the coalitions gave voice to their thoughts and positions about the policies that directly affected them. It was also during these meetings that the coalitions would get feedback from the constituents, conduct popular education and information dissemination activities. Information gathered here would then be integrated into the project plans and activities.

***Public awareness of coalitions and appreciation of their policy advocacy*** As coalition groups conducted advocacy campaigns, media projection, and mobilization, public awareness of coalitions increased and other sectors like the government, business, academe and other professional groups started to view the coalitions as the voice and representatives of the marginalized sectors. Coalition activities linked them not only to policy advocacy but also to popular education, information dissemination, resource mobilization as well as counterparts of policy makers for social reform.

***Increase in the number of allies and supporters from the ranks of policy makers and other sector*** The coalitions' advocacy and other activities broadened the network and linkages with individuals, groups and organizations from other sectors. Coalitions were clarifying lines of opposition and support to their policy agenda. The coalitions gained allies from policy makers, government officials and managers, religious, business, professional and other sectors of Philippine society.

In the process of increasing the presence of coalition representatives in public fora, legislative consultations, and other advocacy campaigns, the coalitions helped train and mobilize PO and NGO leaders and members at all levels of the coalition.

***Coalition groups as watchdogs and pressure groups*** In their role as watchdogs and pressure groups, coalitions gave a voice to the needs of the marginalized and the under-represented. They exerted pressure on policy makers to be more accountable and as watchdogs oversaw the policy-making process and the performance of policymakers.

In turn, those who participated in these coalitions, especially the base groups, slowly learned to identify with the coalitions and "own" the advocacy issues of the coalition groups. Eventually, the coalitions in turn became more conscious of their constituencies and worked to become responsive representatives of the marginalized groups.

***Improved repertoire of strategies including ways of exacting accountability of policymakers*** USAID-supported coalition initiatives gave its partners the necessary resources to develop and use a wide range of strategies to more effectively undertake coalition building and policy advocacy. Some of these strategies included intensive advocacy campaigns such as mass mobilizations, writing position papers and materials for information dissemination, media coverage, meeting with high government officials, sending representatives to government and other consultative bodies, and sponsoring nation wide as well as sectoral consultations.

Coalition groups used pressure and persuasion to prod policy-makers to be accountable to groups who were directly affected by the policies they legislated. While criticizing those opposing and obstructing the reforms they were advocating, coalition groups also acknowledged contributions of supportive legislators and government leaders. They updated these supporters with information from their end.

**Improved program management** At the same time the coalition program supported by USAID provided the framework and conditions to improve the organizational and programmatic management of coalition initiatives. The coalitions set up structures, mechanisms, procedures and activities while planning, implementing and monitoring their work. They deliberated in an organized and timely fashion. Organization and timeliness was indicated in the way that management structures were set up, functions of units defined, roles and responsibilities assigned, and regular meetings scheduled. Policies and procedures for operations were put in place.

Generally, it appears that the coalition projects made solid efforts to achieve the goal of strengthening coalition building for policy advocacy of marginalized groups. This was especially true in terms of providing the coalition groups the opportunity to systematize its activities and consolidate its operations.

This internal strengthening of coalition processes and advocacy strategies and broadened access to policy-making resources in Philippine society operationally translate the contribution of the USAID program into what may be termed as the formation of *social capital* or the web of organizations and norms that help people cooperate and coordinate with one another for the common good which, according to social scientist Robert Putnam, is instrumental in the development of sound government, economic prosperity and healthy society.

### **III Impact**

Following are the three questions that were formulated to gauge the effects of the coalition projects based on the parameters of USAID and its coalition partners:

- a) In what ways did the coalition initiatives help empower the under represented and marginalized groups in Philippine society?

The collaboration of a plurality of groups is one important element in coalition building that makes coalition groups significant agents in strengthening democratic processes in society. This plurality of groups allows society, especially those in power, to recognize the legitimacy of multiple actors and interest in collaborative work. The USAID supported coalition initiatives showed that government representatives learned to work with multisectoral groups in policy-making of these coalitions.

The support of USAID reinforced a broad based and autonomous coalition building of different sectors of the marginalized and underrepresented. It also helped marginalized sectors and the policy-makers appreciate the heterogeneity of the marginalized as sub-sectors gained their own identity. This was clearly seen in the emergence of the fisherfolk, informal and microfinance standards coalitions as legitimate subgroups within the sectors of peasant, urban and economic enterprise sectors of the NGO and PO communities. The broad representation of marginalized and under represented groups encouraged policymakers and other sectors to appreciate the diversity of citizen groups in Philippine society.

Coalition experiences showed that active involvement of civil society groups in policy advocacy contributed towards the decentralization of policy-making power. Active advocacy work eventually created space for groups to participate as they pressured, cajoled and argued with policy makers. Ultimately, policy makers learned to accept and expect these coalitions and ascribed a role to them in policy formulation.

Other factors combined to help coalition groups especially the marginalized, better appreciate the necessity of broad-based power as an aspect of empowerment. One indicator, a strong bias of USAID support for coalitions directly supportive of issues of base sector organizations, greatly contributed to allowing the POs take more responsibility and assume final decision making power vis-a-vis the NGOs. Another factor was a non-exclusive regard towards primary coalition partners from various groups who identified themselves as members of the base sector. This facilitated a non-proprietary view towards constituting coalitions.

Also, coalition building drew organic leaders from the local to the national level, strongly encouraging the PO leaders to delegate their other responsibilities and in so doing provide for the emergence of new or secondary leaders. And the other factor was the increased number of coalition groups that built their capability to closely collaborate with more experienced and professional policy analysts.

b) In what ways did the coalition initiatives contribute toward professionalizing processes dedicated to the furtherance of democracy?

The seven coalition initiatives contributed to the shift from informal unstructured, often voluntary ad hoc collaborative work to more formal, structured, systematized, skilled and documented coalition operations. The USAID Civil Society Program introduced formal documentation of agreement among coalition members, and between main grantees and implementing partners. Meanwhile, the Civil Society Program brought changes to partner relations. By allocating major funding for coalition projects it effectively introduced a program development and management framework into coalition relations and resources. Partnership relations of loosely coalesced groups bound by goodwill and voluntary participation moved up to a level of more formal transaction, subtly changing expectations about roles and responsibilities of partners. It also formalized accountability of partners for the successful completion of projects.

The coalition initiatives strengthened the role of PO leaders as formal decision-makers while the NGOs complemented the POS. In USAID projects, NGO members ensured efficiency in coalition activities in their role as technical and support staff. Also, the coalition initiatives brought elements of organizational development and program management tools and approaches. Structures that clarified communication lines and accountability helped organize the processes. Decision-making approaches was formalized and less attributed to interpersonal ties and personal biases.

Finally, information and data became important elements in professionalizing coalition building, a step that gave coalitions a stronger organizational resource base for policy advocacy. They were able to generate informed decisions and options with a more structured approach. At the same time, advocacy work shifted away from what used to focus on government inadequacies to more constructive collaboration with other groups in the society.

c) In what ways did the coalitions enhance gains of civil society institutions to more creatively and productively relate with government?

The enhancement of creative and productive relations with government was evident in the area of policy making where non-traditional coalitions of NGOs and POs served as counterparts of policy makers. They offered alternative policy agenda or provisions that

better responded to the needs of marginalized and underrepresented groups. Policy makers eventually turned to coalition groups to gauge public sentiment on certain issues. Coalitions had become mechanisms to validate and test public response to government policies.

#### ***IV Areas of Learning***

Each of the seven coalition initiatives supported by USAID under its Civil Society Program is unique although all the projects shared the goal of broadening citizen participation of marginalized groups. Drawing lessons that cut across the seven projects will be useful in deepening the appreciation and understanding of coalition building experience. In this light, the following lessons were abstracted from the seven coalition projects. The order of presentation of the area of learning does not necessarily indicate order of importance.

***On Coalitions and Coalition Building*** The term coalition was given a broad loose definition by the coalition partners. They regarded coalitions as the coming together of different groups for a common objective or issue. Like-mindedness became an important consideration in forging the coalition links during the formulation of the coalition programs. Coalition building is the collective expression of organized groups undertaking participatory action, a citizen group's response to important issues in society.

The experiences of the seven coalition groups showed that coalition building is the process of strengthening the capacity of and space for groups, especially the under represented and marginalized sectors, to gain the position and voice to participate in societal processes, particularly policy reform/advocacy. Thus, the marginalized groups are able to participate in societal processes.

Coalitions that are time bound and activity bound tend to gain more focus in their tasks and are thus better able to complete them. The policies and societal issues addressed by coalitions are strategic to their sector but often the day-to-day operations of the coalition are tactical or short-term.

The intersecting bonds and links that constitute diverse civil society groups like the coalition supported by USAID are palpable only at different points in time. The actions are not manifested in a continuing process. Coalition building experiences and the lessons they provide civil society groups are drawn at appropriate times to expand and consolidate the participation of organized groups. Social issues call for the direct presence of such groups.

More than these, coalitions require the active involvement of organic leaders who are able to provide the passion, leadership, and support from technically skilled and committed staff members. It is after all in supplementing and complementing each partner that coalitions become more effective.

***On Policy Advocacy*** Framing the issue in the form of policy proposals must have both specific and comprehensive objectives to serve as progress indicators to sustain the long-term goal or vision. Also, a relevant and responsive policy agenda incorporates a balanced top-down and bottom-up approach that address the urgent and felt needs of base groups as well as the more macro analyses of political and socio-economic trends in Philippine society.

Success in policy advocacy is greatly influenced by the proper timing of strategies and actions of coalition groups. Well timed and opportune launching of strategic actions based on an astute reading of the confluence of factors and events characterize right timing. Some factors to consider are policy environment, formation of allies and support groups, degree or intensity of opposition, availability of critical information, political relevance and trends and flavor of popular political relations among power holders. Pressure politics involves the participation of the coalitions' constituency base that legitimizes different forms of protest/critique and is therefore a crucial component in policy advocacy work.

Coalition partners are better able to assess and plan for policy advocacy when a set of basic policy advocacy indicators is available. These indicators help the partners gauge their achievements during and after program implementation. The indicators must be simple yet appropriate for all coalition partners to use as a starting point towards developing more specific and sophisticated measures of goal achievement.

**On Leadership** The strong and consistent presence of the coalition leader in the processes and activities of the coalition increases the capacity of the leader to effectively intervene. Leaders are more effective if they have good communication and interpersonal skills. Additionally, leaders with the capability to listen and provide feedback are effective mediators and therefore contribute to stronger partnership relations with their coalition.

Organic leaders (PO) of the marginalized and underrepresented groups and NGO leaders who are actively immersed in the issues of constituent groups become more effective spokespersons for policy advocacy. Leaders are perceived to be stronger and are more effective if they are well informed about policy positions of their coalitions, committed, persevering, confident, sociable, level-headed and yet not self-righteous.

**On Partnership and Participation** Open and formal articulation of the bases of unity and collaboration helps clarify the level of expectations among partners. The more partner groups share common objectives, principles, values and practices, the more they are open to coalesce. Generally face-to-face interaction strengthens a sense of partnership.

Free and voluntary decisions to form partnership relations in a coalition is fundamental in starting coalition relations. Awareness and recognition of the valuable role and contribution of partner groups facilitate group bonding and smoother interpersonal relations.

**On Conflict Resolution** Tensions are constant in coalition building and need only to be treated with level-headed humor and patience. Severe strain on a significant relationship in the coalition should find immediate intervention. Intermittent discussions on the sources and effects of tension could help sensitize the persons involved about the coalitions' situation.

Basic sectors will often turn to USAID as the "last resort" in conflict between main grantee and implementing partner, thus USAID representatives must be ready to listen and assist in clarifying the issues and the parameters of USAID's role in conflict resolution.

## **V Future Directions**

The coalition building projects supported by USAID can only find its immediate relevance and usefulness the coalition groups build on or sustain the gains made. There are several tracks and options for the coalition partners to choose from for future involvement. The role

and course of action each coalition takes will depend on large part on the particular objectives and thrust of their organizations as well as the resources available to them

- 1 Coalitions could pursue national coalition building to advance gains for the marginalized sector. Much needs to be done to expand the allies of the marginalized and win concrete provisions to protect their interests and improve their conditions. The Social Reform Council (SRC) working on the Social Reform Agenda needs the support of autonomous coalitions.
- 2 Coalition groups could also take a serious look at policy advocacy addressing the implementation of existing laws that benefit the marginalized.
- 3 Coalition partners need to sharpen their strategies, particularly in the area of exacting accountability from policy-makers and sustain the dialogue with them in order to continue the education of both parties on effective policy reform. The marginalized need to increase their capacity and develop confidence to enter into such dialogue.
- 4 Coalition partners as well as other groups in society must have a continuing system to draw from the wellspring of experiences and learning. A policy advocacy and coalition building resource program focused on providing both technical as well as strategic repository of past and on going experiences of coalitions or policy advocacy initiatives will help sustain civil society groups in their efforts at democratizing policy reform in the country.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Rationale and Background

The mission/goal of USAID is to establish a U S -Philippine partnership for democracy and development Under this goal are six strategic objectives (1) accelerate the economic transformation of Mindanao, (2) improve national systems for trade and investment, (3) reduce family rate and improve family maternal and child health, (4) enhance management of renewable natural resources, (5) reduce emissions of greenhouse gas, and (6) broaden citizen participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies in selected areas

In line with the last strategic objective, the Office of Governance and Participation of USAID/Philippines was given the task to implement several programs for this purpose One of these was the Civil Society Program

The Civil Society Program, USAID/Philippines was established in 1995 Founded in recognition of the importance of citizen empowerment in the country's democratization process, the program was designed to support efforts to strengthen democratically-led development in line with the Local Government Code and the Social Reform Agenda

The Civil Society Program was envisioned to open new arenas for the effective participation of disadvantaged and under-represented groups This would be accomplished by providing eligible grantees with financial assistance to undertake activities that support the formation of coalitions of the disadvantaged and under-represented groups The basic thrust of the Civil Society Program was towards

*supporting the formulation or application of coalitions, federations, or alliances of under-represented or marginalized groups harness the power of a unitary position rather than individual or highly localized efforts The grants will be implemented by self-governing organizations of groups of individuals who are similarly disadvantaged so that they could achieve representation in the governmental or other processes of public decision-making USAID/Philippines underlined that it was not interested in simply strengthening existing networks of like-minded organizations but rather in assisting viable coalitions or NGOs who intend to forge active coalitions or alliances of disadvantaged and less represented groups, able to advocate their interests and mobilize resources<sup>1</sup>*

In 1995 three coalitions were granted support from USAID and in 1996, four other coalitions received grants These included

- Fisherfolk Advocacy for Sustainable Aquatic Reform (FASAR)
- Enhancing People's Initiatives and Capabilities for Housing and Urban Development (EPIC)

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<sup>1</sup> 1995 1996 1997 USAID/Philippines Guidelines for Grant Application

- Advancing Participation of Upland Indigenous Peoples in Philippine Democratic Processes (IP)
- Empowering Women and Children in the Informal Sector (ISP)
- Building Unity for Continuing Coconut Industry Reform (BUCO)
- Developing Standards for Microfinance (DSMP)
- Strategic Program for Enhancing Education and Development in Mindanao (SPEED)

USAID/Philippines expected the groups provided with financial assistance to be united into member-controlled coalitions or alliances that would promote their under-represented interests. It was also expected that these coalition groups would eventually be linked to power centers that would facilitate their participation in public policy arenas.

## **1.2 Purpose and Objectives**

Purpose This study was contracted for the purpose of harnessing learning from the seven coalition building projects. By looking into their recent experiences, USAID/Philippines hoped to better appreciate the on-going processes and at the same time understand the complexities of strengthening policy reform or advocacy of disadvantaged groups through coalition building.

Objectives By studying substantive and process related aspects in coalition building, the major stakeholders of the Civil Society Program should gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for coalition building towards policy reform and advocacy.

Expected Output This study is expected to produce a report that will include (a) a description and analysis of the coalitions, (b) a discussion of the themes and lessons observed across the selected projects, and (c) an assessment of the program's performance.

## **1.3 Methodology**

A guide for data gathering was completed in the form of a matrix, using questions on three main areas of inquiry: (a) the external environment that shaped the emergence of the coalition, (b) the coalition profile and (c) the project supported by USAID.

Primary Data Gathering Ninety-nine respondents were individually interviewed, some more than once. Thirteen focused group discussions involving 61 participants were also conducted.

Secondary Data Gathering Project concept papers, proposals, Memorandums of Agreement or Understanding, progress reports, correspondence publications, and other documents were obtained from USAID and other stakeholders.

## **1 4 Limitations of the Study**

Primary data gathering was conducted between October 1997 and January 1998 and the entire study concentrated on the period between March 1996 to December 1997. The 1995 coalition building projects on the fisherfolk, urban poor, and indigenous peoples composed the first batch of projects. These projects had more to share than the 1996 batch, which included the projects on coconut workers, Microfinance Standard programs, the informal sector and SPEED, since the 1995 batch had been established before the 1996 batch. A lack of an efficient filing and documentation system for several coalition groups made data retrieval difficult at times as certain information could not be validated. Finally, the study does not lay any claim to being a comprehensive evaluation of coalition building. At best, sequential snapshots of experiences have been gathered, perceptions from different stakeholders elaborated on, and attendant conditions identified.

## **2 THE COALITION BUILDING PROGRAM**

### **2 1 Major Stakeholders**

There were three major stakeholders in the coalition initiatives – the main grantee, the implementing partners and USAID. The main grantee was the legal signatory to the grant of USAID. It assumed program implementation and financial accountability. The implementing partners included the coalition groups, their member organizations, and other stakeholders or allied groups that supported their coalition activities. For the purpose of this study, data were gathered from the primary partners directly engaged in coalition program. These primary partners represented the base groups who were supported and assisted by the grant. The USAID provided financial assistance and program development support.

The following presents each coalition program supported by USAID and presents the statement of purpose of each. It also includes a more detailed description of the stakeholders.

<b>Coalition Program</b>	<b>Statement of Purpose</b>	<b>Main Grantee</b>	<b>Implementing Coalition Partners</b>
Fisherfolk Advocacy for Sustainable Aquatic Reform (FASAR)	To assist the Nation wide Coalition of Fisherfolk for Aquatic Reform (NACFAR) and coalition partners more effectively represent the legitimate rights and interests of its fisherfolk constituents in advocating sustainable aquatic reforms at the national, regional and local policy levels.	Agricultural Cooperative Development Inc (ACDI)	Nationwide Coalition of Fisherfolk for Aquatic Reform (NACFAR)
Enhancing People's Initiative and Capabilities for Housing and Urban	To consolidate and empower urban poor organizations (UPOs) for the effective participation in the formulation	Mondragon Foundation Inc (MFI)	Urban Land Reform Task Force (ULRTF)

Development (EPIC)	and implementation of public policies that would improve access to land housing and basic services		
Advancing Participation of Upland Indigenous Peoples in Philippine Democratic Processes (IP)	To strengthen existing and/or develop alternative structures and systems for the Indigenous Peoples (IP s) participation in program formulation policy and decision-making processes to extend the necessary skills needed to shape national and local policies decisions and programs for the upland	Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP)	Upland NGO Assistance Committee (UNAC)
Empowering Women and Children in the Informal Sector	To advocate the implementation of existing laws protecting child workers and home-based women to build coalitions among other informal sector groups	Asian American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI)	Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP)  <i>Balikatan sa Kaunlaran (BSK)</i>
Building Unity for Continuing Coconut Industry Reform (BUCO)	To increase the influence and meaningful participation of small coconut farmers and farm workers in public policy processes at the national regional and local levels	Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (VOCA)	<i>Pambansang Samahan ng Magsasaka at Manggagawa sa Niyugan (PKSMMN)</i>  Coconut Industry Reform (COIR)
Developing Standards for Microfinance (DSMP)	To develop and promote standards for microfinance operations that seek to provide the poor with greater access to financial services on a viable and sustainable basis	<i>Tulay sa Pag-unlad Inc (TSPI)</i>	The Microfinance coalition group was formed precisely through the USAID supported program
Strategic Program for Enhancing Education and Development in Mindanao (SPEED)	To catalyze developmental reforms in policies systems and programs in the education and training sector in Central and Western Mindanao	Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities (NDFCAI)	The SPEED-Mindanao coalition group was formed precisely through the USAID supported program

## 2.2 Fund Allocation

The seven coalition programs had a total cost of \$7,865,863 and the average cost per program was \$964,805 with a two to three year implementation period. USAID provided a total of \$5,401,412 for the seven programs and the balance was the cost shared by grantees.

## 2.3 Geographical Base and Focus of Coalition Groups

The coalition programs were spread out in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao and therefore the spread of their advocacy work was national. However, most of the management groups or secretariats of the coalitions were based in Metro Manila.

## **2 4 Coalition and Program Structure**

Most of the coalition initiatives were set up in such a way that a national council or coordinating/executive group took charge of setting the direction, planning and implementation of the initiatives. Key leaders of the coalition groups and the management team composed this decision-making body that also operated as a clearing house and communication center. Two of the initiatives, BUCO and Microfinance, had similar coordinating bodies, which functioned as advisory bodies.

Staff/Secretariat All the coalition initiatives had a mix of full time and/or part-time staff to attend to the day-to-day work of administering the coalition activities. Generally, three practices were observed in the hiring of coalition staff:

- a Coalition member groups endorsed their candidates who were accommodated so long as qualification requirements were met. In FASAR, there was an attempt to ensure balanced "representation" of the coalitions in the secretariat.
- b Only independent "non-aligned or non-partisan" qualified professionals from outside the coalition formations were recruited to ensure autonomy of secretariat and staff.
- c Leaders of people's organizations (POs) were contracted as staff and effectively assumed double roles.

## **2 5 Decision-making**

Decision-making across the coalition initiatives was conducted in one of four ways:

- a Coalition partners were consulted but decisions were centralized with the grantee, as in the case of BUCO.
- b Decisions were lodged in coalition leaders and executive staff, as in FASAR and EPIC before ULRTF's withdrawal.
- c Decision-making was equally shared by the main grantee and coalition partner, as in Indigenous Peoples, Informal Sector, and SPEED-Mindanao.
- d Decision-making was clearly delineated between the main grantee who handled financial matters and the advisory group, which handled program matters, as in Microfinance.

## **2 6 Communication and Interpersonal Relations**

Closely related to the decision-making set up was the communication system and the flow that essentially defined the quality of collaboration and participation of program partners.

Direct and face-to-face communication The coalition processes were facilitated largely through this type of communication. Meetings and consultations were regular and often activities. The committees held regular sessions for planning, decision-making, training or assessing and met socially or informally as well.

Written Communication Documentation and dissemination of written materials, including notes or minutes of meetings were uneven across coalitions One group (Microfinance) was provided quarterly updates about program developments through letters and newsletters Other programs documented some meetings However retrieval of some of these documents proved problematic in most coalition programs

## ***2.7 Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation (PIME) Mechanisms and Systems***

USAID's criteria for institutional capability included personnel, financial, evaluation and planning and other basic components of effective program management USAID set a six-month time frame for the coalition program teams to complete the indicators setting, baseline and life of project implementation plan (LOPIP) Although planning and assessment management activities were conducted in all the coalition programs, the coalitions found this period of time insufficient

FASAR (fisherfolk) conducted its strategic planning and assessment plus an external assessment However, conducted during the last semester of the program, it was greatly weakened by the disengagement of half of the coalition members Implementation workplan was delayed in three programs - EPIC (urban poor), IP (Indigenous peoples) and BUCO (coconut workers and laborers) - the last due to conflicts over activities and finances The Informal Sector coalition conducted orientation and planning sessions and completed its work plan Microfinance Standard's focus on producing a set of standards helped the program team better handle the formulation of a plan of activities, although it too was affected by internal problems and consequently had its LOPIP approved only seven months after the program startup SPEED- Mindanao (education) was assisted by a consultant to formulate the program proposal and convened a strategizing session

## ***2.8 Centrality of USAID Support in Coalition Building***

USAID was the only source of funds for most of the coalition groups involved Through USAID support, three new coalition building initiatives were formalized For the Microfinance, SPEED-Mindanao and Informal Sector coalitions, the USAID program was the central initiative around which their internal coalition building processes unfolded Five older programs, including NACFAR (fisherfolk), UNAC (indigenous peoples), ULRTF (urban poor), COIR and PKSMMN (small coconut farmers), having been established prior to their participation in the USAID programs, depended in different degrees on USAID for building and maintaining their coalition processes

# **3 RESULTS AND IMPACT**

This chapter will discuss the extent by which the coalition initiatives have advanced towards achieving its goals and accomplishing its plans As background information a general picture of coalition building and policy advocacy activities of NGOs and POs before the start of the USAID Civil Society Program is first presented This is followed by a listing of measures or indicators used to assess the progress made by the coalition groups and the grantees towards goal achievement The last section describes and analyzes the general results of the coalition initiatives and the effects of these accomplishments

### **3.1 Pre-USAID Coalition Building and Policy Advocacy Work of NGOs/POs**

Coalition building and policy advocacy were important elements in the empowerment strategy and programs of development Non-government Organizations (NGOs) and People's Organizations (POs) shortly after the February 1986 People Power Revolution. The return to a more democratic government was accompanied by a redefinition of the concept and practice of governance. Thus, the idea of strengthening civil society – citizens' participation and people's empowerment – gained more attention and support especially from NGOs and POs.

Policy reform as an arena of struggle. Policy reform through increased participation and advocacy of NGOs or POs representing the interests of marginalized groups emerged as an arena for struggle and change. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, coalition formation was initially tried out by politically/ideologically partisan groups to harness the critical mass necessary for advancing a common issue or agenda. Coalitions were the collective expression of collaboration among a range of organized groups representing various interests but bound by a common objective. These coalitions were often tactical, that is, short term and issue-specific. A classic example of coalition work was observed during the series of concerted actions launched to topple Marcos and install Aquino as the president of the Philippines in 1986.

Coalition building and policy advocacy for and with marginalized sectors. The second phase of coalition formation was marked by the coming together of different organized groups addressing a common social issue as well as the needs and development problems of a marginalized sector<sup>2</sup>. Inspired by the experience of the peasant groups in the Congress for People's Reform (CPAR), other sector-focused coalitions began to emerge in the early 1990s.

Limited resources for coalition building and policy advocacy. As NGOs and POs started to put in more of their time and effort to coalition building activities, they formed task forces and ad hoc working groups to address policy advocacy needs of the PO partners. However, there was no solid funding for coalition building. At best, linkage and networking were provided budget items in the projects or programs funded by donor agencies. Often, coalition-building was only a sub-component of projects with very limited resources. Costs incurred were covered by small one-time donations or drawn from other budget lines of existing projects.

Growing Recognition and Coalition Counterparts of Policy Makers. On the positive side, coalition groups of POs, NGOs and other allied organizations started gaining the recognition of some government leaders, politicians, policy makers and those in the centers of decision making. Business, religious and other professional groups started to voice out their support for the causes and issues raised by the coalitions of marginalized and under-represented groups. The success of the Urban Land Reform Task Force, a coalition of urban poor people's organizations (ULRTF) in lobbying for the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) is a good example of this. Over time, several PO and NGO leaders established their personal credibility as spokespersons or representatives of advocacy groups. A number of policy makers called on some of these spokespersons for consultation.

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<sup>2</sup> Some examples of these coalitions were the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC), PCJC-PCHRD/CODE-NGO coalition and the Congress for Peoples Agrarian Reform (CPAR) and Total Log Ban Coalition.

Wide range of coalition building and policy advocacy strategies As more NGO/PO activities were launched in pursuit of coalition building towards policy reform, the coalition builders and policy advocates tested a repertoire of approaches, strategies, tactics and tools for policy advocacy. Coalition workers and leaders began to discover the best ways to gain allies among power brokers and policy makers. The “resist and desist” and “expose and oppose” mentality of some NGOs and POs in advocacy and mobilization campaigns were tempered by the “critical collaboration” approach in policy advocacy.

Coalition groups especially made their mark with small victories resulting from mobilizations and mass based actions. They creatively engaged those who opposed them and collaborated with supportive individuals within the government bureaucracy. Coalition strategies also started to include a more sophisticated agenda that factored in incremental gains in policy making and encompassed comprehensive, as well as specific, objectives in policy reform.

Low impact of social reform and pro-poor legislative bills Although coalition building and policy advocacy drew increased interest and attention from donor agencies, government and policy makers, pro poor social reform bills and sectoral issues of the marginalized were ignored or easily opposed in the political bureaucracy. This was especially true when champions of the bills or provisions that favored the needs and issues of the marginalized were either obstructed or themselves marginalized in the policy making process.

Policy makers reacted in different ways to the advocacy efforts of the coalitions and the marginalized groups. Some policy makers tended to be cautious or grudgingly compromising, even patronizing of the issues of marginalized groups if lobbying pressure was exerted by informed representatives of these same marginalized groups.

Likewise, submission of well researched propositions or analytical policy studies made it easier for policy makers to support the issues advocated by the marginalized.

Inadequate technical support for policy advocacy work Coalition groups and policy reform advocates remained hampered by the lack of resources in the area of policy studies, policy formulation and research. Although coalition groups had tapped other agencies or organizations to provide technical support for their coalition building and policy advocacy program, much of the needed support remained unavailable.

Coalition building, though desirable, was just one of the many tasks and responsibilities of POs and NGOs NGOs and POs undertook coalition building and policy advocacy as a means to make their impact felt on the macro level. Unfortunately, coalition building and policy advocacy were just among the many other priorities of these groups. NGOs and POs continued to be torn between attending to base group building and organizing federation and network consolidation of base groups. At the same time, they had to respond to the coalition building and policy advocacy needs at the national, regional and provincial level. Problems of priority setting and focusing thus prevented NGOs and POs from fully and effectively addressing the needs for coalition building and policy advocacy work.

### **3 2 Accomplishments of the Seven Coalition Programs**

The following section describes the accomplishments of each coalition group in terms of reaching out to marginalized communities and base groups, improvement in orientation, awareness and skills of leaders and members of the coalitions, increase in number of allies, improvement of advocacy strategies and over advancement in the capability of marginalized groups to engage in policy advocacy through coalition building USAID's main indicator based on its strategic objective was the narrative of the advocacy issues addressed by the coalition groups The following section presents a detailed narrative of gains of each of the seven coalition initiatives for policy advocacy

- ***Indigenous Peoples' (IP) Coalition Program***

UNAC, through the Indigenous peoples' (IP) coalition, has been successful in facilitating the position of IP organizations and NGOs regarding various policy documents of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) These include the implementing rules and regulations of the Mining Act [DENR Administrative Order or DAO No 40], the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claims and Ancestral Domain Management Plans (DAO 2 and 34 respectively), and the Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) [DAO 29] The Mining Act, enacted into law in 1995, seeks to revitalize the mining industry but at the same time poses many dangers for the IPs and their ancestral domains DAO 2 and 34 provide for the administrative procedures for the official recognition of the IP's ancestral domain and the IP community's plans for the area UNAC had been particularly successful in influencing the DENR in its Administrative Order on the Ancestral Domain Development and Management Program (ADMP) that integrated many of UNAC's proposals

The IP program also facilitated the formulation of the position of local IP coalitions and of KASAPI, the recently formed coalition of POs vis-a-vis the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) It actively participated, at a later stage, in IPRA broader advocacy when KASAPI, the IP coalition of base groups, was better organized In particular, UNAC formally submitted its comments and suggestions on the IPRA bill to the NGO Technical Working Group and met with them during the first quarter of 1996 UNAC mobilized IP leaders for the sponsorship of the IPRA bill last October 1996 It also participated in or spearheaded various local consultations on the proposed IPRA in 1996 and 1997

The IP program has planted the seeds for two national coalitions involving the IPs KASAPI and Bantay-Mina (Minewatch-Philippines) In terms of the local coalitions, the project has clearly strengthened the alliance of a tribal group called Tagbanuas in Northern Palawan (SARAGPUNTA) The program's contribution to the status of the other local coalitions (ACDA, MTCC, KATAPU, and PANAGTAGBO) is in the area of ancestral domain delineation and advocacy The USAID support helped IP leaders to use tools like Geographical Position System (GPS) and thereby appreciate the use of data and facts to strengthen their claims and advocacy

The program also provided technical assistance for the formation and planning of the IP Action Committee of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP)

- ***Microfinance Standards (MF) Coalition Program***

The Microfinance Standards (MF) coalition, after its challenging first two quarters, proceeded as planned and attained its objectives as set in March-April 1997. As planned, the advocacy component of the program has so far been limited. The advocacy work for the promotion and adoption of the MF Standards through advocacy workshops and conferences is scheduled for the last four (4) months of the program (April to July 1998).

Still, the program has already been able to greatly help popularize need for microfinance standards through activities such as the International Microfinance Conference entitled "Breaking Barriers in Microfinance" that was held in cooperation with the Asian and Pacific Development Centre (APDC) last June 20-21, 1987 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC). This was attended by 285 local and 20 foreign participants representing major governmental and NGO groups and institutions actively engaged in Microfinance Standard coalition. The coalition also participated in several other conferences sponsored by various organizations.

One significant accomplishment of the MF Standards Coalition was the meeting with the captains of the finance industry where the need for microfinance standards was supported by no less than government's Secretary of Finance.

The coalition initiative facilitated the formation of the Microfinance Coalition and in one year has grown from a membership of four organizations to 61.

- ***Informal Sector (IS) Coalition Program***

The IS program has been very successful in terms of meeting its empowerment objectives. For example, it targeted the organization and strengthening of 20 women/child workers' organizations by the end of 1997. However, as early as July 31, 1997, the IS program had already organized 20 new women organizations and had involved 47 existing organizations in the five local informal sector coalitions. The IS coalition has directly contributed to the formation of five local ISP coalitions and the coming together of TUCP, BSK, KDF and other groups at the national level for IS concerns.

Significant progress has been made by the IS program towards establishing Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children (BCPCs) in three of the five ISP pilot areas. The BCPCs have raised awareness of officials of national government agencies (NGAs) and LGUs on laws related to child labor and women's access to resources. The IS program has also obtained commitments from the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), and the National Commission on Women (NCW) to review the status of the implementation of Republic Act (RA) 7192 and RA 7882.

RA 7882 grants women engaged in cottage enterprises access to credit, markets, technology and training. RA 7192, on the other hand, provides 10 to 30 percent of LGU funds for women. It also ensures access of these women to non-collateral Land Bank of the Philippines or Development Bank of the Philippines credit as well as to a \$10M International Economic Cooperative Development Funds. The IS coalition forged links with the IS Labor Program of the Bishop-Businessmen's Conference (BBC) to support advocating the ratification of the Homeworkers' Convention.

- ***Building Unity for Continuing Coconut Industry Reform (BUCO)***

By September 1997, the BUCO initiative made a number of gains in policy advocacy. It had identified key issues affecting the coconut industry. This included the coconut levy recovery, agrarian reform in coconut lands, land conversion, coconut tree cutting, women's participation and representation, and bias against women. More specific issues were later identified through regional consultations, including agrarian reform cases in the province, pushing the local coconut development council (LCDC) in every barangay, municipality and province, participation of women in PO activities and lobbying and advocacy.

Regional consultations in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao were conducted by PKSMMN, enabling coconut farmer leaders to participate actively and be aware of major coconut issues. Meanwhile, participation in congressional hearings on agrarian reform bills, land conversions and other issues affecting the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) implementation encouraged some legislators to willingly meet with affected farmers for open dialogue and negotiation. The coalition was able to help block the attempt of several groups in congress to exempt coconut land from being covered by CARP.

The 1996 & 1997 coconut week celebration, 1996 & 1997 audience with President Ramos, the 1997 State of the Nation and regional and national summits produced summit declarations and resolutions which were presented to President Ramos and concerned government agencies. The immediate results of these activities were (a) action from the President through a directive to concerned government agencies to study and undertake appropriate actions on coconut farmers summit resolutions and recommendations, which drew a response from Cabinet Cluster A, in the form of draft Executive Orders and Memoranda for presidential action, and (b) the grant of life insurance to 137,000 coconut farmers from the Coconut Levy Fund.

BUCO continued to establish expanding ties in the pursuit of its objectives, networking with NGOs and POs with urban poor programs and with media and pro-urban poor legislators. It also worked with media personalities, columnists, writers and distributed 45,000 primers in three dialects discussing the coconut levy to farmers, other sectors and the general public to raise general awareness and support.

Other activities included the conduct of PO Baseline Research which provided data on POs and some gender-disaggregated data to determine the situation of women members, the conduct of training seminars to transfer skills and knowledge on research techniques (Jan and Feb 97), indicators setting (Jan 97), lobbying, advocacy and coalition building (Feb 97), financial management and project reporting (May 97) and group dynamics (Sept 97). BUCO also established the Policy Coordinating Committee to provide overall coordination of policies and activities and the BUCO Resource Center through a pooling of experts and materials on various fields.

- ***Enhancing People's Initiatives and Capabilities for Housing and Urban Development (EPIC)***

The major accomplishment of the EPIC initiative was an on-the-job-training for PO leaders on project management and implementation as staff. Problems and concerns were discussed in regular weekly meetings for MANCOM, Program Staff (PMO & PO), Program Teams and Sub-teams, and monthly PMO Staff meetings. Occasional individual meetings occurred as needs arose and important meetings and decisions were documented. A participatory and consensual mode of decision-making was generally observed.

As a recognized representative and advocate of the urban poor, the Urban Land Reform Task Force (ULRTF) was invited and participated in symposia and congressional hearings on issues affecting the urban poor Anti-Poverty Summit, National Shelter Conference, congressional public hearings on poverty alleviation, CISFA & UDHA implementation & Magna Carta ULRTF also co-sponsored a symposium on medium-rise housing During the Anti-Poverty Summit, they were able to get the commitment of Pres Ramos to work for the repeal of the anti-squatting law (PD 772) which criminalizes squatters

The ULRTF joined mobilization and negotiations with the Department of Agrarian Reform during the rice crisis (late 95), rally in Mendiola for the Urban Development Housing Act (UDHA) anniversary (Mar 96), State of the Nation Address (Jul 96), launched the One-Million-Signature campaign (Jul 96), vigil rally at Senate to oppose APEC-related demolition (Nov 96) These activities enabled ULRTF to project issues of the urban poor such as housing and demolition

EPIC also formed the Anti-Demolition Working Group (ADWG) to deal with APEC-related demolitions Additionally, it intervened for several villages including Welfareville, Barangay Bagbag & Sauyo, Novaliches (C-5 National Road) and Barangay Culiati (AWSOP Area) on specific issues affecting these urban poor communities

EPIC continued to establish partnerships with the National Housing Agency on setting up Tri-sectoral Consultative Council on Housing, and recruited new members and base expansion beyond Metro Manila and Luzon through the organization of city/municipal caucuses/councils in the provinces and identification of NGO secretariats to help in accomplishing objectives of the EPIC initiative Exploratory talks were held on possible partnerships/members with urban poor organizations and NGOs in Baguio, Angeles, Bacolod, Iloilo, Davao, General Santos City and Cotabato, and dialogued and networked with well known and respected media leaders, correspondents of major newspapers to enhance the image the urban poor and raise public awareness of the sector's problems and concerns

In research, the initiative conducted a baseline survey (April-July 96) and made area visits to ascertain the local situation and organizational status of members PO leaders who were trained on research conducted this survey themselves A handbook on baseline survey was also developed

Two General Assemblies (DEC 95 & 96) were held to consolidate the ranks of ULRTF It has started the process of formulating Constitution and By-laws to be ratified during planned National Congress on Sept 97 Also, a series of training to develop needed skills, knowledge and attitudes to PO leaders was conducted

- ***Fisherfolk Advocacy for Sustainable Aquatic Reform (FASAR)***

FASAR increased networking relationships with government agencies & other NGOs (tie up with NGO TWG) in lobbying at the House & Senate and increased representation/attendance of fisherfolk leaders in public caucuses and local public hearings As a result, ordinances and resolutions were passed by local legislative bodies in support of the implementation of selected provisions of the Unity Bill (RMC, 15 Km municipal waters, and no entry of 50 gross tons fishing vessel in municipal waters) They also influenced some legislators, and local government officials who expressed support for a more democratic Fish Code In addition, task forces composed NGOs-LGUs-POs were created in selected provinces to address local fisherfolk concerns

The initiative conducted issue discussions and training with women leaders and two regional women's fisheries consultation (Visayas & Mindanao) It also held conferences and meetings including the Campaign & Advocacy Coordinating Body Meeting (Jul '96), the National Council & Expanded Campaign Committee Meeting (Jul '96), the Luzon, Visayas, & Mindanao All Leaders Conference (Jul '96), the National Unification Conference held at St. Rafaela Seminar House (Aug '96) These meetings enabled the national leadership to touch base with their constituents and consolidated and strengthened the ranks of NACFAR

Dialogues on specific issues were held with church people, with Manila Bay & Cebu officials, Davao officials, and Quezon Province re Commercial Fishing Operations in Lamon Bay

FASAR also established TAG (Technical Assistance Group) – composed of NGO people with expertise in research who advised NACFAR's research team A concept Paper for Research Program was drafted and local interviewers were trained between September and November 1996) Research was conducted on the Asian Development Bank Funded Fisheries Sector Program This resulted in a congressional inquiry and ADB invited FASAR to sit in the deliberations for FSP2 Data gathering was completed for eighty percent of other research projects conducted during the FASAR program

FASAR raised public awareness of issues of the fisherfolk sector through media It made 101 print media releases, 31 radio appearances and 18 TV appearances In addition, a video tape documentation of local fishery issues was developed It conducted 1 national, 29 local, 13 sub-regional, and three regional consultations These resulted in an increased awareness and clear understanding of national and local fisherfolk issues of fisherfolk organizations and the public

### ***3.3 Gains in Coalition Building for Policy Advocacy***

Additional indicators to assess the coalition building gains were culled from the experiences of the coalition groups as they implemented the program All these indicators helped USAID and its partners gain a practical sense of the advancement in accomplishing targeted results and achieving the goals of the programs These indicators were

- 1) Organized and timely deliberations,
- 2) Commonly shared policy issues,
- 3) Identification of an agenda based on consensus within a coalition,
- 4) Empirically based research and issue analysis,
- 5) Participatory, grassroots up, gender sensitive approach in program implementation,
- 6) Improved repertoire of advocacy strategies,
- 7) Public awareness of coalitions and appreciation of their policy advocacy activities,
- 8) Legitimation of the role of coalitions as watchdogs and pressure groups,
- 9) Allies and supporters from the ranks of policy makers and other sectors,
- 10) Use of strategies to make policy makers more accountable,
- 11) Training and mobilization of leaders and members at all levels of the coalition, and
- 12) Formation and strengthening of coalition groups

Organized and timely deliberations Organized and timely deliberations were conducted by the coalitions in several ways. Management structures were set up and functions of the units defined to clarify the division, distribution and flow of the work activities in project implementation. Regular meetings and discussions among sub-units or committees as well as across units were set as policies and procedures for operations. Weekly staff meetings, monthly executive meetings and quarterly meetings or consultations with advisory or policy making bodies were reported in all coalitions.

The creation and hiring of full time secretariat provided the necessary human and administrative/management resources to ensure that time and funds were available to systematize an orderly, organized and timely deliberation (monitoring and assessment) of the work done under the coalition programs.

Commonly shared policy issues Once the communication systems was organized and in place, coalition groups were able draft commonly shared and articulated policy issues. These issues and agenda were prioritized and crafted according to information and data that coalition groups identified, used and consolidated as part of the coalitions' policy advocacy thrust. Issues were discussed and analyzed, positions on issues were studied and alternate policies formulated, disseminated and projected as part of the coalition's policy advocacy thrusts.

Identification of an agenda based on consensus within a coalition<sup>3</sup> Shared policy issues discussed in regular and strategic planning sessions helped build the agenda of the coalitions. Implementation plans facilitated deliberations and decision-making on issues concerning the agenda. Consultations also facilitated the emergence of common concerns that led to a ratified agenda.

Coalitions used varying decision-making approaches when deciding upon an agenda. The Microfinance group had a formally documented decision-making policy. Other coalition groups practiced decision-making approaches of either consensus or modified consensus (FASAR and EPIC).

Data shows that the common practice in all the coalition projects was to facilitate decision making through intensive group or one-on-one consultations. These consultations aimed to facilitate an atmosphere of consensus making. Equal access to and control of data or information were critical factors for effective consensus decision-making.

Empirically based research and issue analysis. PO members and constituent groups who participated in the various consultations initiated under coalition programs deepened their knowledge about the policy issues that directly affect their lives. They learned about the existence of laws, administrative orders, implementing guidelines or rules and other instruments of law making. The more developed their awareness, the more the base groups learned to own the advocacy issues. In turn, the more the base groups owned or identified with the policy agenda of the coalitions, the more the coalitions became relevant and responsive representatives who lent a voice to the marginalized and under-represented groups.

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<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this study "agenda" is defined as the strategic plan that will direct the implementation of the project and determine the thrust of project activities as well allocation of resources given the time frame and expected output stipulated in the USAID grant.

USAID strongly encouraged the grantees to complete baseline studies to better ground project implementation and strategies. The coalition groups generated baseline and profiles of their areas of operation and groups, contracting professionals and experts (BUCO, FASAR, Informal Sector, and EPIC) or in some cases having their members undergo specific training to complete the work (Microfinance and SPEED). Based on the analysis, critique and review done by staff secretariat and the coalition leaders on selected policy issues, position papers were drafted and disseminated by coalition groups.

Participatory, grassroots up, gender sensitive approach in program implementation The participatory and grassroots up dimensions were made operational by the grantees as the extent of involvement of the different stakeholders in the program. National, regional and area level consultations, which included member organizations of the coalitions were cross cutting activities among the seven coalition projects. These consultations and summits were often the venue where constituent groups like small coconut farmers, women's associations in the informal sector, fisherfolk, and microfinance NGOs brought their concerns and learned about policy issues. The consultations and summits became the fora to present issues of coalitions, get feedback from constituent groups, conduct popular education and information dissemination activities, validate programs of the coalition, and create a sense of sectoral belonging among individuals and groups involved in coalition work.

Baseline surveys and profiles were the main mechanisms used to assess the situation on the community level and pulse the needs or issues of the sector directly from the grassroots. Information gathered from these field activities were then brought to the level of the coalition for incorporation and integration into the project plans and activities. Mobilization activities on the local and national level became the venues for the coalition members to take part and participate in concerted and collective action of constituent groups of the coalitions.

An area for improvement in the coalition initiatives was the gender dimension in the work of coalition building and policy advocacy. Thirty-six percent of the secretariat and 39 percent of the executive bodies were composed of women. The best effort exerted to implement a gender-sensitive approach was observed in FASAR, BUCO and Microfinance programs.

Improved repertoire of advocacy strategies As coalition groups became more knowledgeable about issues, grantees accumulated various experiences, sharpened their skills and deepened their knowledge about effective strategies in coalition building for policy advocacy. The coalition programs supported by USAID allowed the grantees to have the necessary resources to focus on coalition building and policy advocacy.

The technology of political mapping and stakeholders analysis was improved, adapted and used in policy advocacy planning and agenda formulation. Advocates balanced the application of pressure tactics that included protest actions and public recognition of the pro-people actions of policy makers. Also a mix of legal, policy research, media campaigns and organizing was used and integrated to persuade policy makers to take up the cause of the issues and policy proposals of the coalitions.

Public awareness of coalitions and appreciation of their policy advocacy The various campaigns, media projection, mobilization and other activities supported by the coalition groups helped legitimize coalition groups as the voice of selected marginalized sectors. EPIC and FASAR started links with media groups by holding press conferences, dialogues and updating them about the developments in their policy advocacy. Microfinance created its own website to attract new partners and participated in various conferences and consultations on microfinance.

The lobbying work that moved the coalition groups to seek out allies from other sectors of society like the religious or church sector, the professionals, and academicians increased the awareness of these groups about the plight and cause of the under represented and marginalized. Such awareness often paved the way for establishing links or even undertaking collaborative work with other POs, NGOs, coalition groups and support institutions.

Individuals and groups in congress, the executive agencies, research institutions, development service agencies, media, and others referred to these coalitions as pressure groups of the marginalized, as social activists, and as representatives of under-represented sectors. The coalition groups' policy advocacy activities did not only include linking with policy makers. There were also other related activities such as popular education, information dissemination, and solicitation of support from new contacts and potential allies outside their immediate constituencies.

Legitimation of the role of coalition groups as watchdogs and pressure groups. Coalitions saw themselves as watchdogs and pressure groups that gave voice to the needs of under-represented sectors and the marginalized. They exerted pressure on policy makers to attend to policies that benefit the powerless groups and protect their interests as the marginalized majority in Philippine society. As watchdogs, the coalitions monitored and oversaw the policy making process and the performance of policy makers. In the process, they exacted accountability from civil servants and elected officials.

Allies and supporters from the ranks of policy makers and other sectors. NGOs and POs actively worked for or supported either the entry of colleagues, allies and supporters into the government bureaucracy. Some won seats in the senate, congress or local government bodies while others became civil servants or appointed officials in the executive branch. In certain instances, the coalition groups also lobbied for seats in different policy making bodies at both the national and local levels. NGO friends and supporters in the DENR facilitated the work of policy reform for the ancestral and indigenous peoples' agenda. The support harnessed from religious, professional and even business groups greatly boosted advocacy work aimed at repealing PD 772.

Strategies for exacting accountability from policy makers. In the process of being watchdogs and pressure groups, coalitions exacted accountability from civil servants and policy makers. Since accountability mechanisms remained informal and unstructured, coalition groups requested one-on-one meetings with legislators to win support for their issues. They also engaged in mass actions as pressure tactics.

The coalition groups monitored legislators' policy-making performance and outputs. Legislators were sometimes rebuked, exposed or criticized in public when their policy output or legislative performance adversely affected the constituents and base communities of the coalitions. At the same time, the coalition groups acknowledged the contributions of legislators who supported their issues and proposed bills.

Training and mobilization of leaders and members at all levels of the coalition. The training component of the coalition groups had substantive support from USAID. Almost half of the coalitions conducted a training needs analysis and formulated a training program. The EPIC and the FASAR projects had full time training coordinators who were members of the project management or secretariat staff.

There was significant training conducted by the coalition groups as a whole. Training was frequently conducted on data gathering for local researchers or coalition staff members (EPIC, BUCO, Microfinance and SPEED). The Urban Integrated Consultants, Inc (UICI) provided training on financial management, project reporting and monitoring according to USAID rules and requirements.

FASAR had the most output in terms of training sessions. Coalition leaders, members, and staff members were provided training on coalition building and team building, advocacy, propaganda and mass campaigns, advocacy communications and management, and in propaganda work. Issue discussions and training sessions for women leaders were conducted in this project.

Formation and strengthening of coalition groups As gleaned from the program outputs measured by the coalition indicators, most of the projects strengthened the coalitions. Considerable progress had been made by most of the coalition groups in strengthening coalition-building processes. Of the seven projects, three facilitated the formation of three coalitions among USAID project grantees (Microfinance, SPEED and Informal Sector). New area-based coalitions of informal sector groups were formed under the Informal Sector Project.

A new coalition of indigenous peoples' organizations (IPOs) emerged during the IP program implementation. While these IPOs were emerging, UNAC assisted in facilitating the coalition-building processes. Through the IP project, area coalitions of IPs several of their ancestral land issues and activities. Existing national level coalitions who were sub-grantees were strengthened under the FASAR, BUCO, and EPIC project.

The USAID projects gave the different formations, factions and subgroups in the coalitions ample opportunity to collaborate, coordinate, debate and occasionally fight with each other. Amid all these difficulties, the seven projects formed a deep well of coalition experiences where learning can be drawn in guiding future endeavors to make the voice of the marginalized heard in the centers of power and decision-making.

### **3.4 Impact of the Coalition Initiatives<sup>4</sup>**

Parameters of the Civil Society Program and coalition groups This section discusses the impact or effects of the coalition building and policy advocacy initiatives as a package of interventions. A sensible assessment of the impact of the USAID civil society program requires that the same parameters used in designing and conceptualizing the program be used. However, because USAID is just but one of the primary stakeholders in the coalition projects, the parameters that guided the grantees in undertaking the coalition projects needed to be integrated. These two sets of parameters were fused into one set of questions to guide discussions of the palpable effects of the coalition initiatives. The following section presents the parameters.

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<sup>4</sup> An "effect or impact" is differentiated from output in the sense that an output will be the measurable and directly observable result of the projects (no of participants training programs studies etc). Meanwhile the outcome of having produced the impact or effect of these outputs will be the less palpable changes in social relations, consciousness and practices of the participants and target groups.

For the purpose of this assessment the three general areas of intervention were used to gauge the effects of the coalition programs on the two key result areas of the coalition activities – coalition building and policy advocacy program. USAID then crafted a package of interventions that addressed three critical areas in democratizing development processes in the country. These areas are 1) empowerment of the marginalized and under represented groups, 2) evolving more professional coalition building and policy advocacy processes, and 3) creative and productive relations of civil society groups with government.

Thus, three questions are raised to gauge the effects of the coalition projects based on the two sets of parameters of USAID and grantees:

- In what ways did the coalition initiatives help empower under represented and marginalized groups in Philippine society?
- In what ways did the coalition initiatives contribute towards evolving more professional processes dedicated to the furtherance of democracy?
- In what ways did the coalition initiatives enhance gains of civil society institutions to more creatively and productively relate with government?

### **3.4.1 Empowerment**

The term empowerment attempts to capture the twin objectives of self-determined and participatory action of the marginalized in transforming societal structures towards more democratic development. One essential element in an empowering process is decentralization of power. This section attempts to look at how decentralization of power in terms of broadening participation of marginalized groups in societal processes occurred through coalition building and policy advocacy.

Coalition building is the formation of partnership relations among different groups that share strong and common bonds yet these groups do not collaborate with each other. There is one important element in coalitions that makes them significant agents in strengthening democratic processes in society. This element is the collaboration of a plurality of groups. Plurality of these groups includes both the multiplicity of thrusts (orientation, activities, and strategies) and the abundance in the number of groups. Coalition building harnesses civil society groups towards a focus (policy advocacy, issue mobilization, resource accessing) so that these groups learn to highlight their common bonds while recognizing their intrinsic differences.

Plurality of coalition groups. This plurality of groups in coalitions allows the society especially those holding economic and political power, to recognize the legitimacy of multiple actors and transecting interests in collaborative work. The coalition projects showed that, government (legislative and executive) learned to work with multi-sectoral and independent sectoral representatives of various groups in policy making.

The support of USAID reinforced a decentralized and autonomous coalition building of different sectors of the marginalized and the under represented. This decentralized representation of marginalized groups encouraged policy makers and other sectors of society to appreciate the heterogeneity of citizen groups across and within sectors of Philippine society.

Coalition of base organizations vis-a-vis intermediary agencies The coalition initiatives appeared to have a bias for coalitions constituted by base sector organizations representing the marginalized and under represented groups. This approach greatly contributed to the decentralization of power from the NGOs (as intermediaries and sometimes spokespersons for the POs) to the POs and organic NGO leaders of the sector.

The broader the network links and base constituents of national coalitions, the more they gained legitimacy as direct representatives of the marginalized and under represented groups. A broad base constituency strengthened coalition building and policy advocacy for the marginalized groups.

Non-exclusive constituents of coalitions Although there was a distinction made between the two types of coalition partners (primary and secondary), a select number of individuals and NGOs were regarded by the coalition groups as primary coalition partners. These individuals and organizations usually came from NGOs, the church or other professional group. They worked very closely with the POs in the coalition groups for many years and identified themselves as members of the base sector. This open and non-exclusive regard towards primary coalition partners facilitated a non-parochial and non-proprietary view towards constituting coalitions.

Complementary roles of coalition partners The differentiation of roles at two levels 1) PO vis-a-vis NGO members and 2) leader vis-a-vis staff members in coalition building processes facilitated the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among different coalition partners ensuring that no single group directed the coalition. The role of POs and organic leaders of the coalitions as spokespersons and lead partners in coalition groups complemented the role of NGOs as providers of technical support and conceptual articulators of coalitions.

Leadership Coalition building for the marginalized and under represented groups contributed directly to the devolution and decentralization of the power of leaders. Coalition building pulled organic leaders from the local to the national level. This often forced the leaders to either delegate their other responsibilities or encourage the emergence of new leaders.

Whenever leaders lessened their involvement in the coalition projects, other leaders or staff members often took up the slack. This resulted in a weakened link between the concerned leaders and their organization on one hand, and other coalition partners on the other hand. This also further eroded the influence of the leaders on the coalition and confidence in the coalition processes.

The falling out of leaders and their organizations from a coalition resulted in the break of one link in the chain of coalition relationships. Eventually, the entire coalition felt the consequences of this broken link because coalitions are only as strong as its weakest link. The break up of the NACFAR into two factions, for example, and the withdrawal of some POs in the Urban Land Reform Task Force (ULRTF) had serious effects on the ability of the coalitions to either more efficiently or more effectively proceed with the implementation of the projects.

Issue advocacy and policy reform Project experiences in policy reform and issue advocacy contributed towards the decentralization of policy-making powers. Active lobbying and advocacy work of coalitions ultimately created space for these groups to participate in policy

making Coalition groups prepared and submitted position papers critiques and proposals, pressured, cajoled, and argued with policy makers Eventually, policy makers expected coalitions to play an active role in policy formulation

The experience of the Informal Sector showed that close monitoring of policy implementation completed the cycle of advocating for policy reform It also sustained effective participation of marginalized groups in policy-making

Decentralized expertise on policy advocacy The formation of coalitions for policy advocacy contributed towards breaking the dominant role of researchers and academics in policy analysis More and more, coalition groups are building their confidence and capability to closely collaborate with professional policy analysts

The broadening of power becomes more meaningful for civil society groups if they have direct experience about the processes, approaches, mechanics and implications of devolution and decentralization The civil society program reinforced and strengthened decentralization through the empowerment of marginalized groups within their own organization This enabled the coalition groups, especially the marginalized, more deeply appreciate the necessity as well as the dynamics of decentralization of power as one aspect of empowerment

### **3 4 2 Evolving more professional coalition processes**

For the purpose of this study, evolving more professional processes dedicated to the furtherance of democracy will refer to the shift from informal, unstructured often voluntary, sometimes spontaneous or ad hoc collaborative work of coalition groups to more formal, structured, systematized, documented, verifiable, skilled, informed, and analytical operations

The coalition programs brought in a program management setting and mentality to coalition building relations Most coalitions, especially those whose existence or founding preceded USAID projects, were used to a loose and informal kind of collaboration The relationship of coalition members was bound by goodwill and voluntary participation The USAID Civil Society Program, however, allocated major funding for coalition projects and effectively introduced a project framework into coalition relations USAID regarded the grants as gifts that the grantees should be able to use with flexibility However, the award of grants was premised on the delivery of a set of outputs and adherence to a system for utilizing the resources

The coalition programs brought partnership relations of loosely coalesced groups onto level of more formal transaction It formalized the accountability of partners for the successful completion of programs Receiving funds in exchange for a promise to deliver a service or an output brought with it a sense of urgency and obligation towards partners From the more voluntary and loosely bound coalitions, there emerged among the USAID coalition partners, increased expectations for more regular, focused and effective fulfillment of roles and responsibilities from each and every group involved in the project

Most of the coalitions of POs were not used to formal systems of accounting (financial and narrative) for their work, tasks and responsibilities This was an area where NGO partners and NGO staff members in the coalition secretariat or the project management units provided valuable support

Formalizing partnership relations Partnership relations among coalition members and between main grantees and coalition partners were openly discussed and sometimes debated. Unfortunately, only a few of the coalition partners completed a formal documentation of these agreements in the form of Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding, or Terms of Engagement among coalition sub-grantees.

During conflicts, the availability of formally signed documents to regulate partnership relations helped facilitate disengagement of partners. This was true in the experience of Micro-Finance. On the other hand, the absence of such a document made conflict resolution extremely difficult in EPIC and NACFAR.

Roles of partners and their complementation Coalition programs strengthened the role of PO leaders as formal decision-makers and spokespersons for the sector. The advocacy agenda of the coalitions made it necessary for coalition groups to have direct representatives from the marginalized to speak for and in behalf of the sector. At the same time, POs and their leaders continued to provide the anchor at the community level. The articulation of felt needs and long term concerns of the POs lent pragmatic and down-to-earth relevance of the coalition agenda.

On the other hand, NGOs provided managerial systems or structures to coalition building processes. They also assisted in packaging and articulating coalition experiences. As members of the secretariat staff and the management team, NGOs complemented the POs. NGO members of the coalition were expected to ensure efficiency in the implementation of coalition activities and provided most of the technical staff for finance, research, training, and media.

Management systems and approaches The program management modality used in implementing the coalition programs brought into coalition processes fundamental elements of organizational development and project management tools and approaches. Some of these tools and approaches were financial and program planning, implementation, evaluation and monitoring. Also, the documentation of coalition decisions and activities became a standard part of normal activities of coalition groups.

Structures that clarified decision-making, communication lines and accountability helped organize the processes and flow of information in the coalition. Efficient use of resources and effective application of strategies became important indicators of performance that coalition groups openly accepted and imbibed into their work.

Decision-making Formal decision making processes within coalition groups gave primary importance to the needs and resolutions of PO leaders. This did not mean that the ideas, opinions and contributions of NGOs were given lesser attention and importance. Informal caucuses, consultations and one-on-one discussions or dialogue of small groups within the coalitions became venues for open debate and deliberations where POs and NGOs shared co-equal standing as members of the group.

Decision-making was formalized and systematized through the setting of structures and definition of tasks. Decision making approaches became more rational as interpersonal ties and personal bias of individuals or groups in the coalition lessened.

Strategic actions based on analytical and informed deliberations Coalition programs gave partners more access to information and researches as well as research services. Although still underutilized and weakly incorporated into the regular activities and approaches of coalitions, planning, strategizing and decision making have increasingly been informed by data and analytical work of coalitions and their support groups.

Policy studies and analysis Advocacy activities of NGOs and POs focusing on social and political issues exposed inadequacies and shortcomings of government and power elite. Opposition to government policies and programs was the key objective of advocacy.

As NGOs expanded their strategies, advocacy work shifted towards more constructive engagement or collaboration with other groups and sectors of Philippine society. Consequently, policy research, study and analysis became part of the tools that coalitions used to improve their capability to persuade and convince policy makers about the merits of their proposals and interventions.

Information and data as important elements of professionalization NGOs and POs learned the importance of information and data to help them develop more sophisticated analyses and strategies for policy advocacy. Grantees included data banks, data resource centers, area or organizational profiling and surveys, and policy reviews as targeted output. Consultants and other skilled professionals were contracted, bringing into the coalitions more information, knowledge and skills for improved project planning, implementation, and assessment. Thus the coalition groups developed a more structured approach to managing coalitions and coalition building.

### **3.4.3 Creative and productive relations with government**

This refers to the nature of relating with government. In the past, the common approach of NGOs and POs was to oppose and distance themselves from government. However, they explored more creative and productive ways of relating with government.

Non-traditional counterparts of policy makers The creation of successful alternatives to formal governmental processes was most concretely observed in the area of policy making where NGOs and POs were able to offer coalitions as non-traditional civil society groups acting as counterparts of policy makers.

Alternate, responsive policy agenda Government bodies and officials used to be the primary source of inputs and ideas in drafting policy agenda. Through the coalition projects, NGOs and POs were able to provide alternative policy agenda or policy provisions that better respond to the needs of marginalized and under-represented majority in Philippine society.

Coalitions as mechanisms to validate and test public response to government policies Policy makers turned to coalition groups to gauge public sentiment about possible government action or inaction on sensitive and highly political issues. Policy makers were able to gauge the extent to which controversial policy provisions could be included and not elicit strong negative reaction from the public.

## 4 LESSONS LEARNED

All the coalition programs shared the goal of broadening participation of marginalized groups in the formulation and implementation of public policies. However, each coalition supported by USAID under its Civil Society Program is unique. The processes, events, factors, dynamics, and mix of groups and individuals that shaped each program were unique to the initiatives.

Drawing lessons that cut across the seven coalition groups will be useful only in providing some common observations to deepen the appreciation and understanding of coalition building as a collective action of development and democracy oriented change agents.

It is within this context that the following lessons may be drawn from the experiences of coalition initiatives. These are in the following areas: 1) Coalitions and Coalition Building, 2) Policy Advocacy, 3) Leadership, 4) Partnership and Participation, 5) Project Development and Management, and 6) Conflict Resolution.

### 4.1 *Coalitions and Coalition Building*

Coalition building is the collective expression of organized groups undertaking participatory action. It is a citizen groups' response to important issues in society. This collective expression parallels the ebb and tide of opportunities to breakthrough some dimensions in societal transformation.

Coalition building processes create the venue for civil society groups to strengthen their capabilities in becoming effective agents of social transformation. It hones the organizing, analytical and interpersonal skills of these groups. The presence of empowered groups introduces a plurality that strengthens civil society.

Ownership and accountability are two interrelated but separate elements in coalition building processes. Ownership refers to the commitment of groups to the issues advocated by the coalition and their active investment of time and effort in participating in coalition building. Accountability connotes formal contractual agreement especially in terms of documentation, financial and reporting. The experience of the seven coalitions showed that not all coalition partners shared the same degree of responsibility for producing project outputs.

Coalitions are necessarily short term and are manifestations of collaboration of diverse civil society groups. The bonds and links that constitute these coalitions are not activated in a continuing process. Instead, the coalition building experiences contribute to a well of civil society action filled by an array of group experiences. Different interested groups form the learning and experiences at appropriate times and places. They do this to expand and consolidate their participation as organized groups as they aim for the decentralization of power and the empowerment of the marginalized and under represented groups in Philippine society.

Coalition building is the process of strengthening the capacity of and space for groups, especially the under-represented and marginalized sectors, to gain the position and voice to participate in societal processes, particularly policy reform/advocacy.

Coalitions that are time bound and activity bound tend to gain more focus in their tasks and are thus better able to complete them

The culture, framework of operations and mentality of a project modality has institutionalizing effects on coalition building processes A project modality formalizes the structure of relations and operation of coalitions. The different organizational and management tools and practices transform formerly loose, informal relations and work of coalition groups. Such transformations are not always smooth. This is especially true when the coalition partners undergoing the transformation are not aware of the process of change.

In a project modality of the USAID, the provision of funds make coalition partners more conscious about not only owning the initiative but also accounting for the use of resources.

## **4.2 Policy Advocacy**

Comprehensive and specific objectives The framing of the policy agenda and policy advocacy strategy must leave room for incremental gains. This helps the coalition partners gauge the progress in goal achievement. The specific objectives in this program served as progress indicators and the comprehensive objectives sustained the long term goal or vision. The comprehensive objectives helped rally partners and motivated them towards their desired direction and situation.

Pressure politics and affirmation Pressure politics was a critical component in policy advocacy work. On the one hand, pressure politics involved the participation of the coalitions' constituency base that legitimized different forms of protest and critique of government. However, these forms of actions and advocacy had to be intermittently balanced by affirming the contribution and support of policy makers in advancing the agenda of coalition groups. This helped strengthen ties with allies.

Right timing Success in policy advocacy was greatly influenced by the proper timing of strategies and actions of coalition groups. Right timing here refers to the timely launching of strategic actions based on an astute reading of the confluence of factors and events. The factors that affected timeliness were: 1) policy environment, 2) formation of allies and support groups, 3) degree or intensity of opposition, 4) availability of critical information, 5) political relevance and coherent articulation of positions, and 6) the trends and flavor of popular political relations among power holders (i.e., what issues are "hot" or "fashionable" at the moment).

Top-down and bottom-up approach A relevant and responsive policy agenda incorporated a balance of the urgent and felt needs of base groups and the more macro analyses of political and socio-economic trends in Philippine society. The participatory approach to agenda setting was most often done through massive grassroots consultations. The results of these consultations became the bases for drafting the policy agenda of coalitions. Meanwhile, the top-down approach helped balance the grassroots proposals with the strategic view from macro considerations.

Indicators for policy advocacy gains Coalition partners were better able to assess and plan for policy advocacy when a set of basic policy advocacy indicators were available. These indicators helped the partners better gauge the progress in achieving the objectives of policy advocacy. These indicators were basic enough for all coalition partners to use as a starting point in formulating more specific indicators suitable to the particular projects they undertook.

### **4 3 Leadership**

Strong and consistent presence of leaders The strong and consistent presence of coalition leaders in the processes and activities of the coalition increased the capacity of the leaders to effectively intervene. Through their presence, leaders gained respect and recognition across coalition groups as they gained more exposure to the stakeholders and became familiar with the activities of the various groups.

Skills in effective communication and interpersonal relations Leaders became more effective if they had effective communication and interpersonal skills. As the direct representatives and spokespersons of the marginalized and under represented groups, coalition leaders engaged in policy advocacy articulated well the causes of her/his sector and coalition. Aside from public speaking skills, coalition leaders with the capability to listen and provide feedback became more effective mediators for stronger partnership relations within their coalition.

Conversely, the skills in listening and providing feedback became the means by which many leaders established healthy interpersonal relations with other coalition representatives as well as targeted personalities or groups in the coalitions.

Legitimate organic leaders Organic leaders (PO leaders belonging to the sector of the marginalized and under represented groups and NGO leaders who are immersed in the sector or line of work) were regarded as more legitimate representatives and spokespersons for policy advocacy work of coalition groups. Policy makers and their staff gave more weight to the proposals of organic leaders when they participated and sat in policy deliberations, reviewed and other activities of the government.

Informed proposals Coalition leaders became more effective advocates when they were well informed about the substantive content of policy positions of their coalitions.

Committed leaders Leaders perceived to have strong commitment to the cause and the struggle of the marginalized and under represented groups to commanded respect from policy makers as well as other coalition partners even in times of extreme conflict in policy or coalition negotiations.

Leaders and conflict mediation Accepted and respected leaders by the most number of coalition partners were in the best position to mediate during conflict. However, these leaders personally accepted the role of mediator.

Personality of leaders Perseverance, confidence but not self-centeredness, sociable extroversion and level-headedness were personality traits that facilitated effective leadership.

### **4 4 Partnership and Participation**

Bases of unity/collaboration or terms of engagement Partner relations often started on high levels of trust. However, the open and formal articulation of the bases of unity and collaboration or terms of engagement helped level off expectations among partners.

Like-mindedness and shared objectives The more partner groups shared common objectives, principles, values and practices, the more open they were to coalesce

Positive experiences of collaboration in the past Past experiences of working together did not necessarily encourage partner groups to form or join coalitions Only positive experiences of past collaborations attracted partners to enter coalition relations

Voluntary choice of partners and positive regards for partner groups Free and voluntary decisions to form partnership relations in a coalition were fundamental in starting the coalition relations on the right foot In the absence of any past experiences of collaboration or linkage, groups were encouraged to form coalition ties with prospective partner groups when there was positive regard for the representatives and the organization of these partners Positive regard refers to the initial impression formed by groups based on some interpersonal encounters with the other partners A program manager expressed his view of this matter when he emphasized that partnership must never be imposed on each other, adding that he was more predisposed to work with coalition groups with whom he felt "comfortable"

Recognition of the partners' valuable contribution and role Awareness and open recognition of the valuable role and contribution of partner groups facilitated group bonding and smoother interpersonal relations Groups appreciated their complementarity and contribution to the whole coalition building endeavor when each partner group was able to respond to a need for information, expertise or skills within the coalition

Reciprocity between partners When partners practiced reciprocal relations, the coalition building became more collaborative and team-oriented Partners more willingly negotiated and ironed out differences

Valuable partnership mechanisms Clear decision-making approaches and articulation of the bases of unity or terms of engagement helped sustain coalition-building processes The formal documentation of these agreements came in handy during conflict resolution Institution of conflict resolution or grievance settlement mechanisms helped sustain partner relations

Regular face-to-face relations The consultations, meetings, discussions and other assemblies convened under the projects provided opportunities for partners to form personal relations A generally cordial and good-natured face-to-face relations strengthened a sense of partnership On the other hand, acrimonious or quarrelsome face-to-face encounters strained relations and filled the work atmosphere with tension even when no actual conflict existed

Confidence building activities Partnerships were strengthened by confidence building activities like group reflection and team building exercises

#### **4.5 Project Development and Management**

In-depth environmental scanning and analysis Partners, especially main grantees with no previous links and direct knowledge about coalition groups, should have conducted an in-depth environmental scanning and analysis of the past relations and activities of coalition

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groups. This scanning could have helped prepare them to design and plan the project. The scanning and analyses would have sharpened the main grantees' risk analysis in the area of internal organizational capacity of potential partner-implementors.

NGO-PO Dynamics Coalition building interventions are greatly affected by past and existing dynamics in the relationships between or among stakeholders like the NGOs and POs. The long history of NGO and PO involvement in development work has been marked by distinct patterns of relations. There are NGO-NGO, NGO-PO and PO-PO dynamics that need to be appreciated by coalition leaders and program implementing groups as they affect the success of programs. These dynamics essentially affect the quality of coalition relations and must be recognized at the start of program formulation. However, such dynamics could also emerge in the course of implementation.

Ownership and coalition project formulation The formulation of coalition projects required balanced participation of primary stakeholders. Consultations with and among the different coalition partners encouraged a more collaborative attitude among partners. The project formulation process shaped the predisposition of partners towards the project. The partners' active participation in formulating the projects helped build a sense of ownership commitment to the project.

Baseline and profiling Baseline data and research as well as profiling of coalition partners were crucial pre-requisites to strategic planning and the formulation of plans for project implementation. The design of the baseline and the data gathered through these studies were tailored to the particular goals and thrust of the project. Baseline studies in several of the coalition projects experienced delays. In most cases, the data and information generated through these studies were not consistently used in strategizing and management decision making.

Utilization and systematization of data and information Information resulting from needs analysis for training or policy formulation, policy research, and other relevant activities of the coalitions became useful only if these were systematically stored for easy retrieval.

Training and capability building Training as capability building programs were ubiquitous components in the coalition projects. Development of training framework and modules helped rationalize the conduct of training activities. A properly planned program on training and capability building had to be derived from a coherent analysis of the needs of target participants to the training. Training activities that were conducted on a developmental and progressive basis became more effective capability building interventions.

Program and performance indicators Indicators that were used regularly as tools for monitoring, assessment and planning helped rationalize and focus project development. Coalition partners who viewed the completion of indicators as a mere compliance to USAID requirements often failed to use and maximize the indicators as effective tools for program development and management.

Program strategy and implementation plan The experience of some coalition projects showed that delaying the drafting of program strategies and implementation plans did not help project implementation. The absence of such documents, no matter how tentative, caused misunderstanding and conflict among implementors.

Project management units The creation of project management units systematized implementation and operations of the coalition. These management teams were distinct and separate from policy, direction setting and decision making bodies. They had adequate representation from the executive arm of the sub grantees, the main grantees, and the secretariat.

Formal agreements between grantees Formal documents (memorandum of agreement) provided clearly defined guidelines in managing the partnership relations of project partners. In times of conflict, these documents helped establish the basis of the partnership relations in project implementation, making conflict resolution more manageable. However, these documents should be a product of substantial participation and understanding of all the parties concerned. Otherwise, they became mere documents that did not carry much weight.

Delineation between functions and tasks of staff and leaders Having a secretariat run professionally by staff helped leaders focus on their work of policy advocacy. In some of the coalition projects, however, there were PO leaders who also assumed staff functions. Assumption of dual roles tended to confuse the leaders over their primary tasks and priorities. Was it the day-to-day concerns of project management or the immediate needs of their constituencies? A PO leader who decided to be staff, have to delegate or relinquish his/her leadership functions to another person.

Organizing Coalition building was good for engaging and projecting issues at the national level (propaganda). However, it also propelled the need to strengthen the bases of the coalition partners both for support and validation of their advocacy efforts.

Participatory approach and training While participation in the different aspects of program implementation was desirable as it deepened the sense of ownership and commitment of key players and also facilitated the transfer of technology, slowed down the pace of activities. There were instances when immediate results were needed such as the baseline information to guide the planning and strategizing of activities. In some coalitions the data gathering for baseline became an occasion for training PO leaders and members in research, thus delaying the completion of the research results. In cases when immediate results were needed, broad based participation was foregone.

Training and consultation must be seen as two different aspects of the work of policy advocacy. In consultation, participation is a must. In training, participation is desirable but not necessary.

#### **4.6 Conflict Resolution**

Tension is a constant aspect in coalition building and coalition relations. Tension is a ubiquitous component in coalition processes. It becomes creative only when it is managed and balanced by getting the potentially contentious groups to focus on producing positive results and output. On the other hand tension that is not articulated, acknowledged and addressed often festers and erodes the bonds of partnership relations.

The groups were like-minded in the sense that they shared the vision of social transformation – the empowerment of the marginalized and under represented groups. They differed, however, over how they formulated and operationally defined the vision into

development goals and in the strategies or tactics to achieve these goals. These groups were very jealous of their independent identities (organizational affiliations) and autonomous operations. But they came together and undertook collaborative action because they shared some very concrete and important objectives like policy reform and access to resources.

Intensive policy advocacy campaigns required equally intense coalition building activities. The consistent and active presence of coalition leaders was most crucial during these times. The leaders provided not only the organized voice and representation of their constituents but also communicated the urgency of the issues.

At the same time, intensive policy advocacy and coalition activities required more technical work commensurate to the scope of advocacy work of coalitions. This entailed heavier workloads for staff members and other support groups. The volume and magnitude of a high profile advocacy often placed coalition partners in tension-filled but potentially enabling relations of partnership. In times of intense activities, coalition workers tended to make short cuts in the prescribed approaches to consensus decision-making.

On these occasions, the level of trust and confidence between the partners was tested. When partnership relations in the coalition had been pursued based on reciprocal and ethical principles, the terms or principle of engagement and consensus points guided the actions and decisions of coalition workers. As a result, coalition partnership was strengthened. However, when there were cracks in the collaborative relations and less trust and confidence among partners, coalition partnership eroded. Consequently, the individual organizational agenda of coalition members took precedence over the broader coalition agenda.

## **5 FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Coalition building initiatives supported by USAID can only find their immediate relevance and usefulness if coalition groups build on or sustain the gains they made through these projects. Coalition partners (USAID as donor agency, main grantees as intermediaries and support groups to marginalized sector, and the implementing partners as the agents for community and sectoral development) define their roles and interventions based on the achievements and experiences of the seven coalition projects.

On another level, the role and course of action that different coalition partners will take will be greatly influenced by the particular objectives and thrust of their organizations as well as resources available to them.

There are several tracks and options that are available to coalition partners for future involvement in coalition building and policy advocacy.

- 1 Pursue national coalition building to advance policy advocacy gains for the marginalized sector. There is clearly much work to be done to expand the allies of the marginalized and win for them concrete provisions or policies that will directly protect their interests, strengthen their rights and improve their conditions. The Social Reform Council (SRC) working on the social reform agenda needs to be supported by autonomous coalition.

groups At present, coalition groups have not addressed their intersecting or overlapping involvement in the SRC and the coalition projects Policy advocacy at the executive level could be expanded

- 2 The May 1998 elections will change a number of elected officials This change is expected to effect equivalent changes in government priorities in the area of policy making and programmatic thrust It is important for coalition groups to be vigilant about preserving their gains in the area of policy reform Coalition groups need to update their political mapping They need to analyze the reconfiguration of interest groups and identify potential allies from the new groups of policy makers and government managers
- 3 Coalition groups could be encouraged to take a more serious look at policy advocacy addressing the implementation of existing laws that benefit the marginalized The Informal Sector coalition showed that much needs to be done in this area The IP group could help strengthen its Mine Watch initiative by looking into rules and procedures in the mining act Meanwhile the BUCO coalition need to be more vigilant as new government priorities and biases could easily reverse the gains made
- 4 Coalition partners need to develop their approaches and thinking about how to best exact accountability from policy-makers The coalitions could advance their advocacy by engaging the electoral candidates to clarify their positions and proposed programs about the sectoral policies advocated by the coalitions The overlap between the local governance and civil society strengthening could be best forged if the coalitions use the elections as a venue for making the politicians more accountable
- 5 Sustained policy dialogue between coalitions and more policy-makers are needed to continue the education of both parties in the area of responsive and effective policy-making The marginalized must increase in their capacity and confidence to enter into such dialogue Media fora in the form of round table dialogue could help not only establish public accountability but also sustain the link between the coalitions and the policy makers
- 6 If coalitions are collaborative actions that have their ebb and tide, coalition partners as well as other groups in society must have a continuing mechanism to draw from the well spring of experiences and learning of these coalitions Resource centers for coalition building and policy advocacy could provide the groups with a formal repository of coalition experiences