

PARTICIPATION FORUM SUMMARIES

US Agency for International Development

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The Participation Forum was a monthly noon-hour meeting at USAID that provided presentations and frank discussion of key participation-related topics. Sessions attracted between 50 and 150 and are enhanced by e-mail contributions from overseas staff.

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The Participation Forum (No. 1)

Host Country Participation in USAID Country Strategic Development

February 17, 1994

The first monthly session of the Participation Forum featured presentations of three different experiences in which USAID country strategies had been developed with considerable host country involvement: Chad, described by Mission Director Anne Williams; Togo, described by John Grant, former Deputy Mission Director and currently Deputy Director of the Program Office in the Bureau of Humanitarian Response; and Uganda, described by Mission Director Keith Sherper. Diane La Voy, the Administrator's point person for participation in PPC, welcomed participants and introduced the speakers.

Deputy Administrator Carol Lancaster kicked off the Forum series by noting that "We have been talking about participation at USAID for twenty to twenty-five years....Obviously we are doing a good bit of it, and these forums should help us to do it more effectively...." Joan Atherton, Senior Advisor for Social Science, Office of Development Planning in the Bureau for Africa, provided some context for the three country cases. Following the three presentations, Curt Grimm, AAAS Fellow in the Africa Bureau's Office of Development Planning, discussed some results from on-going research on USAID African field mission efforts to broaden participation and foster local collaboration. A brief period of discussion concluded the session.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development.

The Context for Consultation in Africa

Joan Atherton

Since 1987 and the initial passage of the Development Fund for Africa (DFA) legislation, there has been a wave of democratization in Africa. Fifteen countries are fully fledged democracies; nineteen are in transition. This creates a favorable environment for promoting participation and makes it more possible for USAID to follow the lead of nationals in their debate over development objectives than has previously been the case in the region.

The Legislation Creating the DFA-Mandated Participation

"The Agency for International Development shall take into account the local-level perspectives of the rural and urban poor in sub-Saharan Africa, including women, during the planning process for project and program assistance; and should consult with African, United States, and other private and voluntary organizations."

The DFA legislation gives USAID flexibility in exchange for accountability for results, and should in theory permit us to develop programs based on country realities as determined by participatory processes tempered with analysis. However, the various targets (10% for population; 10% for maternal/child health; 10% for environment; 5% for AIDS) and some Agency-wide earmarks (e.g., in basic education) limit USAID's ability to respond to the needs and desires identified via enhanced participation.

Strategies are about building consensus around key choices made about the use of limited assistance resources. Having received broad guidance as to the mandate of the DFA and the parameters of programming, each mission can take its own path in the development of its Country Program Strategic Plan (CPSP), and, in terms of participation, lots of different flowers have bloomed, as today's cases from Africa will show.

Consultation in Chad

Anne Williams

The strategy-building process I will describe today was designed and implemented by Carole Sherrer-Palma, former Deputy Mission Director in Chad, who unfortunately was not able to participate in this forum today. I believe that despite the many difficulties of working in Chad--little available data, difficult transportation, hard living conditions--and the special problems during the 1990-1992 period during which the strategy was being designed -- a coup d'etat, two or three attempted coups d'etats, two evacuations, and a bad food year--USAID and Chad were able to come up with a very workable strategy.

Meetings and Retreats

The process of building USAID's country strategy in Chad began with a series of analytical studies that looked at Chad from various perspectives. These were prepared by consultants who traveled around the country observing and talking to people. When the studies were complete, USAID held a series of meetings and retreats. We kicked off our own analytical process with a two-day retreat attended by USAID and contractor staff, representatives from PVOs, the [World Bank](#), and [UNDP](#), and Chadian government officials up to the director general (i.e., permanent secretary) level to discuss the studies. In small representative working groups, participants looked at the overall goal statement and identified maternal/child health care and agricultural marketing as the main areas of concentration. In addition, food security was identified as a target of opportunity.

The parameters thus set, Management Systems International (MSI)** came out and assisted the mission and contractor staff, plus PVO representatives, to hammer out the logframe. The mission virtually closed down for a week. After people had mulled this logframe over and begun writing text to follow it, a third retreat was held solely for mission staff to re-evaluate the strategy and to orient new personnel.

Consulting with Chadian Partners

After this final retreat, mission personnel felt they had to go back and speak with our Chadian partners, particularly the government, on specific decisions within the strategy. These talks sometimes led to considerable changes in the strategy. For example, USAID had been considering a national approach to health, but, based on the government's decentralization strategy and a debate within the mission, USAID decided to look at a regional approach. This represented a change in the mission's mindset.

Proxies for Grassroots Consultation

The mission did not consult directly with the grassroots during the strategy-building process because it would have added years to an already-long process. Instead the mission used a couple of proxies for the grassroots. First, the PVOs. They had been working in Chad for a long time and were supposed to represent the voice of the people. (I am not sure this is always true; PVOs also have their own agendas.)

Also, UNDP had organized a series of regional seminars with representatives of "groupements"--local associations of peasants--that allowed the voice of the people to be heard. Time limitations prevented USAID staff from participating in this process, but the mission was able to obtain reports of the meetings.

Lessons Learned

Overall, because lots of players were brought into the strategy-building process, the credibility of that process was enhanced. Other lessons were learned:

- Government participation helped us to make key decisions and created a sense of ownership for the strategy. However, frequent changes in government mean that we have to start all over again.
- USAID does not give the missions enough time to pay adequate attention to participation. Chadians view consensus as paramount, but building consensus can be a long process.
- Participation implies partnership. USAID missions have to learn to listen--something we are bad at doing. Country strategies should be developed mutually instead of unilaterally by USAID. This can create difficulties, however, because other cultures do not use the same processes for decision-making that we do. We must be culturally sensitive to these processes in order to get the kind of consensus and participation that we want.

Consultation in Togo

John Grant

In Togo, the strategy-building process began during an exciting time. It was late 1991, and the country had just had a National Conference and had put aside its dictator of 27 years and was in a transition to democracy. USAID's budget had just been increased from \$4 to \$10 million. The new mission director and I arrived in country with a mandate to develop a strategy to build on this democratic process.

The "Etats Generaux"

The National Conference was like the second independence of Togo. Run by Togolese, the conference, attended by about 1,000 people, was televised. The country practically came to a standstill for six weeks while the entire population watched the proceedings. The conference declared that it was the sovereign body of Togo, put in motion the development of a new constitution, and decided to hold a series of Etats Generaux, or general assemblies, in each sector (health, agriculture, land reform, culture, sports, etc.) to reflect the will of the people.

USAID and other donors supported these assemblies which were not uniformly successful. For example, in the agriculture meeting, some farmers were represented among the 400 participants, but they were outvoted by the powerful parastatals and government bureaucrats. But in the health sector, more progress was made; USAID, the major donor in this area, became fully engaged in the process. Many constructive things came out-- including the need for increased private sector participation, improved cost recovery, and increased access to low cost drugs--and were embodied in the USAID strategy. Unfortunately the whole process got turned back as the old president began to muscle his way back onto the political scene, and the country was shaken by strikes and violence. Also, the government did not make the budgetary allocations required to fund the reforms recommended.

Extensive Consultation; Limited Involvement

Togo is an interesting case with respect to participation. It is a small, easy-to-get-around-in country in which USAID has a big role. There is lots of PVO participation. Some USAID technical staff and their Togolese counterparts share offices. Also, the Togolese like Americans. We have been one of the largest donors, and we don't have the colonial baggage of the French and the British in the region. Consequently, consulting with the Togolese was easy and we consulted throughout the strategy- building process. However, the turbulent political situation was a constraint; government and NGO offices were closed for long periods as a result of the strikes and

violence.

The strategy-building process began with a macroeconomic analysis and a series of field-oriented sector assessments carried out by consultants who met with government officials and also went out into the rural areas. We found the Manual for Action in the Private Sector (MAPS)^{***} to be a very effective tool in developing strategy options for work with the private sector and business development, and it involved extensive surveys and focus group interviews with entrepreneurs. Later the MSI team came out to assist with the logframe.

Development of the mission strategy was an interesting process, but it was not perfect. We consulted with local people but did not involve them as much as we might have in deciding which strategy options to adopt. Final decisions were made more or less in-house and in consultation with Washington.

Lessons Learned

There are a number of obstacles or constraints to participation:

- Some African countries are very hierarchical. It is difficult for people at the bottom to have a voice.
- Mission strategies do not begin with a tabula rasa. There are projects in the pipeline and a lack of flexibility. Getting out of some sectors and into others is like turning a big ship around.
- Participation should be built into all processes -- project planning, evaluation, and so on -- not just strategy-formulation.
- Deadlines are tight and staff time is short.
- USAID mission personnel are not as accessible as they should be; we need to make more of an effort to get out into the field and meet with local people.
- Some mission personnel have attitudinal problems with respect to NGOs whom they view as pushing their own agendas.
- Broad-based consultation raises expectations, yet we have limited funds and are able to focus on only one or two priority areas in our mission strategies.
- Last minute shifts in priorities in Washington can jeopardize a strategy built with participation.

Consultation in Uganda

Keith Sherper

Some sort of dialogue on aspirations and priorities at the community level is necessary, for if we are to measure impact, we need to know what is going on among the people we are trying to assist. We must seek a balance between USAID's strategies, host country development priorities, and the felt needs of the people. This requires an understanding of conditions on the ground.

This dialogue does not need to be comprehensive to be sufficient. We are not looking for 100% perfection. The breadth and depth of participation is a mission-level judgment.

Three Participatory Exercises

In Uganda, our approach in preparing the CPSP was to emphasize participation by actively

seeking out the views of local USAID staff, people the mission worked with, and some segments of the general population. Local USAID staff were encouraged to give their views and question us on the strategy. This process was extremely helpful in giving us a broad perspective and wide range of views.

In Uganda we carried out three participatory exercises. The first was a contractor-facilitated off-site meeting for the entire mission. Second, the people that had been assigned to write sections of the CPSP gave presentations to all mission staff for feedback. And by "all" I mean all--the drivers and warehouse workers included. Third, we used focus groups to collect information throughout the CPSP process.

Focus Groups

Three rounds of focus groups meetings were held. Groups were formed in five geographic areas of the country. (One of the groups in a remote rural area was formed by an indigenous NGO.) The first round was an open-ended discussion in which people were encouraged to state their concerns and aspirations. There seemed to be a consensus that the country was still in the peace-making process and that some economic stability had been achieved. Education, health, and democratization were the biggest concerns. The process generated a great deal of enthusiasm; many people said it was the first time they had been asked their opinions.

The second round examined and prioritized the four major areas: education (mainly primary), health (mainly AIDS), economic development, and democratization. Interestingly an ongoing strategic objective in environment/natural resources management was never raised by the Ugandians. On the other hand, in response to the high interest expressed in the focus groups in basic education, the mission proposed a strategic objective in that area, which was a new sector for USAID/Uganda. And the mission did launch a primary education program.

The third round concentrated on the top priority: education.

The groups discussed how to go about education, what it takes to be a good teacher, how education is financed, etc. This helped us as we got into designing our activity in basic education. Based partly on the views expressed in the focus groups, we decided to stress quality of education, not numbers of students.

Feedback and Follow-Up

Once the CPSP was finalized, the mission made a point of giving copies to all the focus groups that we had worked with. We also made presentations about the whole process to the three focus groups with which we had worked most closely. This move was highly appreciated. We have tried to continue our relationship with the focus groups.

Through the participatory strategy-building process we learned more about Ugandans, generated enthusiasm in drafting the strategy documents, and improved the basis for project decisions. It was not a scientific process, but we are confident that we got closer to the customer.

The Africa Bureau's Best Practices

Curt Grimm

The Africa Bureau surveyed its field missions as to the benefits of participation, the ways in which it might be improved, and the constraints to promoting participation. I will summarize some of the more generalized findings of this survey. (A report on some of the results of this survey is available from AFR/DP, Room 2495 NS: Development Fund for Africa. "Achieving Participation: A Collection of the Africa Bureau's 'Best Practices'").

Beneficial Aspects of Participation

Participation has a legitimizing effect on local institutions and organizations, which obtain information on donor agencies and their processes and which increase in stature as a result of the simple act of holding formal consultations with USAID.

On the other side of the coin, USAID gains immeasurable respect and increases its own legitimacy by reaching out to diverse elements. Suspicion about it decreases and its credibility increases. However, participation should not be a single-shot gesture; transparency should be continual to maintain credibility.

Room for Improvement

Many groups outside of USAID say that local participation in program strategy development seems to take place after key decisions about sector interventions have been made. The Uganda experience is an exception. Part of the problem is confusion about the process, not intentional lack of transparency.

Constraints:

- Shortage of staff time;
- Procedural rigidities within the Agency;
- Bad mutual perceptions between NGOs and donors;
- Lack of representative organizations and institutions in the host countries, especially in Africa. In some cases there is host government interference in USAID's attempt to foster participation;
- Distance, infrastructure, and language are barriers that are real and will continue to exist.

USAID is trying to address these constraints. By participation we can build a consensus around what USAID is doing and thus make it more effective and efficient.

Discussion Session

Cultural differences between ourselves and host country nationals as a potential impediment to participation.

Use of focus groups for assessing project performance.

Effect of DFA legislation on the Africa Bureau's interest in participation.

How USAID can encourage participation in developing-country decision-making processes.

"On the other hand, the upheavals, uncertainties, and frequent changes of government make it difficult for missions to have continuity in their consultations or confidence that they will provide a solid foundation for medium to long-term strategy development. While missions can learn from the experiences of others, each mission needs to try to find ways to take advantage of the opportunities to promote local participation that arise from their special country circumstances (as in the Etats Generaux in Togo). It is also clear that we in USAID have to recognize and to confront a series of internal constraints in order to achieve effective and broad-based local participation in our strategy development process. These range from straightforward staff and time constraints which limit our ability to seek as much outside participation as we might like, to abrupt changes in Agency priorities which may undermine or negate the consultative process."

"Promoting increased local participation in our strategy development may be challenging and time-

consuming but it is essential to ensure that the people in the countries in which we work both contribute to and benefit from our development efforts. The benefits far outweigh the costs!"

Joan Atherton: To me, several things are critical in promoting participation in strategy development:

Missions must have not only policy guidance (including an appropriate legislative framework) and commitment at senior levels of Agency management, but must have flexibility to seek an approach to participation that is compatible with local customs and behavior. Best practices are useful to exchange among missions, but supply-side efforts to provide "tools" for participation at the country strategic planning level cannot adequately respond to the variability of country settings.

Missions must also have some hope of being able to respond appropriately to the needs and desires expressed by participants, and, to the extent that programs are constrained by overlapping priorities set by Congress, the Administration, and other outside interest groups, participation can raise expectations without being able to deliver.

Wherever possible, missions should take advantage of ongoing host-country or other donor efforts at consultation. This has two benefits--a host country process of listening to its own peoples is the most desirable and sustainable form of participation; and missions would not feel that they have partially committed themselves to follow-on action by eliciting people's demands.

Increasing participation in country program strategic planning does not automatically insure greater sustainability of USAID's program, as the Togo case clearly shows.

Participatory processes are time- and staff-intensive and set up a constant tension with the Agency pressure for demonstrating results in the short term.

Due to policy and programming parameters, missions must be encouraged to analyze the findings of their participatory efforts and shape a program that meets budgetary and other exigencies, while at the same time responding to the input received via participation. More attention is needed to ensuring that the results of these deliberations are reported back to participants, so that USAID's decision-making becomes more transparent.

Keith Sherper: Local Participation in conceptualizing and preparing a USAID country strategy is a valuable aspect of the development process.... It is not a substitute for a proper economic policy environment, political stability, and an open democratic system; rather it is a vital complementary element for attainment of development.

The presentations from Chad, Togo and Uganda brought out a number of salient features for more widespread consideration.

Be flexible in the manner in which you solicit participation. We are learning and there is no standard paradigm. Variations across countries in terms of stage of development, openness of the system, culture, intracountry differences and other factors necessitate locally tailored approaches. Use what works.

Of the three methods applied in Uganda (offsite mission retreat including FSN's, entire mission involvement in review of strategy background papers, organized focus groups) the focus groups reached a poorer segment of the population. Among focus groups those managed through an indigenous NGO probably were the most representative. Scientific preciseness is not the object; a healthy cross-section of individual and community-level views is what is being sought. Make sure that focus groups truly portray a characteristic representation, or acknowledge and understand the bias. Women, youth and the more elderly may not be fairly represented unless specifically requested.

Undertake local participation early in the strategy-making agenda, even before sector interventions are decided. In our case it influenced the decision to engage in the education sector.

Strategic choices may be limited because of the inability to accommodate bureau and agency priorities or congressional earmarks. Washington tends to be part of the problem; each policy

instruction, earmark, and objective impinges if not infringes on the nature and extent of participation of those at the grassroots. Where one places the fulcrum for proper balance between top-down control and participation is of great consequence.

Do not forgo analytical studies on a variety of key topics such as health, education, the economy, etc. However, even these benefit from participatory consultation as they are being drafted....

Listen carefully to views expressed. They may not be eloquent, but they are genuine. Language might be a problem, but recognize it and put the extra effort in to communicate effectively.

Accept that popular views on a subject may not, and often will not, mirror those of the government. This will add to the challenge of creating a strategy that is suitable and consistent with national priorities while addressing community-based development needs within the confines of our comparative advantage.

Follow through with continuing communications. Local participation and input to the design, implementation, and impact measurement stages are valuable as well as serving as periodic reality checks on the strategy. In our case, we have not seen too much of the "what's in it for me" syndrome. On the other hand, there is increased confidence by participants to reveal problems and seek solutions. We used some of the same focus groups to conduct sample surveys related to the election process.

We found that the process of listening and seeking a wide range of views was appreciated.... To the extent that such exchanges take place it can only contribute to a sense of empowerment and a more open society over time.

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

**MSI is the lead entity in the PPC/CDIE PRISM contract for providing technical support to the development of strategic frameworks and measurement plans for country assistance programs.

***MAPS is an analytical approach to assessment of private sector activity and opportunities for assistance used by the Africa Bureau.

February 17, 1994

The Participation Forum (No. 2)

Building Participatory Programs on Local Culture

March 17, 1994

The second session of the monthly Participation Forum examined the use of culture as an ally in participatory development. Two main speakers, Nagat El-Sanabary and Charles David Kleymeyer, drew from cases in Asia, the Near East, and Latin America to describe two different but complementary approaches to building upon culture. El-Sanabary, currently an advisor to the Bureau for Asia and the Near East, has lectured and written extensively on women's participation in education and employment in Arab and Islamic countries. She is originally from Egypt. Kleymeyer has been a field representative for the Inter-American Foundation since 1979. He recently edited a collection of articles on culture and development: *Cultural Expression and Grassroots Development*, a book that draws insights from 215 cases in thirty countries. The scene was set for these main presentations by Richard McCall, Chief of Staff for the Administrator. The Forum ended with a lively discussion moderated by Norman Nicholson from PPC. A few attendees were inspired to comment on the Forum via e-mail. A summary of their communications are included.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participation

The Glue That Holds Societies Together

Dick McCall

Ofentimes we have a tendency to emphasize cultural differences, rather than similarities. Thinking about the 23 years I spent in Congressional oversight in the field, the similarities among the value systems of different cultures always struck me. A sense of family and a sense of community should be looked at as an asset within the context of the work we do. Let me give you an example from my heavy involvement in Somali policy.

One of the biggest mistakes the United States and UNOSOM made was approaching Somalia within the traditional Western framework. The international community believed we could go into Somalia and rebuild the national institutions that had collapsed. It was our first post-Cold War test case in nation-building. What we didn't understand was that just because national institutions had collapsed did not mean there weren't institutions that could bring the Somalis together within the traditional clan system. And, quite frankly, despite some negative aspects of the clan system -- mainly the use of violence for revenge or to get people's attention-- an intensely democratic process goes on within the clan system and between clans to achieve consensus within society at the community level. We short-circuited that process by attempting to reconstitute a transitional national government.

What happened? All of a sudden we had enemies. Mohamed Farah Aidid became an enemy, and UNOSOM became another political faction in Somalia. That is what precipitated a lot of the violence. When I was given the responsibility within USAID to come up with an alternative strategy on reconstruction, I brought in a number of Somali expatriates to get a sense of what the appropriate national institutions are for them. I also managed to get my hands on a wonderful analysis of the clan system and the personalities to help me understand all dimensions of the problem.

Sometimes we're intimidated by cultures and traditions or don't think they're important. But if we understand the traditional cultural framework within which people organize themselves to solve problems, we can help people and communities to solve their own problems. When you're given a problem to deal with, don't look at culture as an impediment, but focus on the traditions and customs that are the glue that holds societies together. Then you'll find an awful lot of similarities with the basic values we have in our own society.

Development and Cultural Schizophrenia

Nagat El-Sanabary

I will talk mostly about Islamic cultures, because I think this is where the greatest misunderstanding exists and where the impediments and constraints to development are perceived.

I will mention my thesis at the start. I argue that culture is the foundation upon which people stand and that sustainable development cannot be achieved without cultural sensitivity and the participation of indigenous people. Development assistance must build upon traditional knowledge and skills.

Culture and Development

Culture gives people a sense of identity, belonging, rootedness and direction. It can be a source of community and national cohesion, but it can also be a divisive force. I feel strongly that development assistance can build upon the positive elements in the culture to minimize the negative ones. Cultures do change, and they change over time, but change does not mean transformation. Meaningful change is accomplished mainly from within. The development community can play a role in cultural change as well, if it subscribes to basic rules.

Any attempt to attack or undermine a people's culture is like pulling the rug out from under their feet, leading them to lose their balance and their sense of identity and community. Many people in the Third World live in a state of what I call cultural schizophrenia. They are confused and frustrated because of lack of access to resources and power. Their cultural heritage is what gives meaning to their lives. Development assistance should never attempt to accentuate this schizophrenia, because, if it does, it will only increase the ranks of extremists. In my belief, there is no viable alternative to cultural sensitivity or empathy if development assistance is serious about helping people help themselves to achieve long lasting, sustainable development. Improving the quality of life in these countries cannot happen at the cost of loss of their basic cultural values. Hence strategies must, and here I quote from the Administrator's "Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," be "consistent with the priorities and values of those who will have to sustain the effort after the donor has left."

Stereotypes of the Muslim East and Judeo-Christian West

In Islamic countries, where one-fifth of the world's population lives, development work has been hampered because of the stereotypes that the Muslim East and Judeo-Christian West have about each other. Western stereotypes of the Muslims, perpetrated by Western media and movies, present Muslims as backward, fatalistic, fanatic, anti-democratic, and even terrorist.

One would hope that development specialists are free of these stereotypes and that their training and development experience have helped them develop empathy with the people with whom they work, but this is not always the case. There is a tendency among many development specialists and researchers to view Muslims as monolithic and to disregard the vast differences based on nationality, class, ethnic background, rural-urban residence, etc.

Many Muslims have a distorted view of the West, which focuses on the negative aspects, like the West focuses on the negative aspects of the Muslim. Muslims point to family disintegration, crime, sexual harassment, and what they consider to be moral laxity in the West.

The two cultures also are suspicious of one another. The Islamists -- and I'm afraid I have to say this -- feel that the West wants to destroy Islam and dismantle the Muslim family. This suspicion results from these countries' bitter experience with European colonialism. In their effort to assert their cultural identity after independence, some Muslims see themselves in a culture war with the West, a war of ideologies. Some Muslims have replaced the word "development" with terms with negative connotations for Muslims such as "modernization" and "Westernization." We can avoid the notion of "forced development" or the imposition of Western values only by respecting the culture of other groups.

Culture and Islam

In the case of Islam, we must realize that religion is very important to the lives of most Muslims. Development assistance should not be confrontational regarding sensitive religious matters such as the issues of polygamy and inheritance. Anything that is mentioned specifically in the Koran is too sensitive and should be avoided as far as external development assistance is concerned. In any case, polygamy and inheritance don't really have much to do with development. We can focus on other issues and we can accomplish a lot in other areas. These matters take care of themselves with increased levels of education and employment options for women.

It cannot be denied that there are many cultural constraints to development in Muslim countries, but we have to be careful not to blame all the ills of these countries on their cultures or religion. Other factors such as poverty, class, rural residence, and ethnic affinity, are also important. In these countries, as in other Third World countries, it is the poor who lack access to education, gainful employment, and adequate legal and political representation.

Culture and Gender

As the previous speaker said, we often view culture, especially in Islamic countries, in a negative manner. And over many years, culture and religion -- terms that have sometimes been used interchangeably -- have been used to legitimize women's subordinate position. In my view, culture has been used as an easy excuse for people who want to keep women in their place.

Let me give a few brief examples, beginning with education. For many years, the Western world has viewed the education of women as against Islam and against Arab cultural traditions. This is wrong, and we have to understand that there is nothing in Islam against the education of girls. If we understand this, we can speak confidently with governments who are saying that the people don't want to educate their daughters, because they do.

But education of girls does not necessarily mean coeducation. Over twenty years ago, the U.N. Convention Against Discrimination in Education included the statement that signatories would agree to promote "co-education." And what do you think the result was? Many Islamic countries did not ratify the convention. They wanted to eliminate discrimination against girls, but they didn't want co-education. It took the development community decades to realize that nothing is basically wrong with single-sex schools or girls' schools. A few days ago, an article in the [Washington Post](#) talked about how some schools in the United States are separating girls into their own classes in order to get them to do math and science. And I must say that I had never heard that math is not for girls, until I first came to this country.

Regarding education, let me describe a costly failure made by a donor agency in Pakistan that built a major housing project for teachers and teacher trainees. The buildings remained empty. Why? Because the donor did not realize that in most Islamic countries women simply do not live alone, women of any age. What would have been very acceptable is a dorm, a supervised facility. I asked the donor agency, "Did you talk with the people?" They said, "Yes, there were government representatives in among the design team." I said, "Well, they didn't tell you."

Another Example

Family planning programs succeed when they take people's concerns into consideration, not when programs are based on the Western model in which the individual is the decision-making unit. The Tunisian family planning program started to achieve results only after it began targeting

all family members that have a say in decisions on child bearing: the woman, her husband, the mother, the mother-in-law. Then the program took off.

It is much easier in Muslim countries, because of the traditional respect for professional women, to get women in cabinet positions and into parliament than to try to change the family.

To conclude, I would say that development assistance in Islamic countries should be based on trust and mutual respect between Muslim people and the West. This is the best way to achieve prosperity, peace, and democracy in the world.

Using Tradition to Enable Change: The Feria Educativa

Chuck Kleymeyer

My task today is to give you some case material that illustrates a methodology of culture-based participation. In fact, this method goes beyond participation. It's engagement, it's ownership of a process. The truth is, those of us dealing with this methodology rarely talk about participation. The concept of participation is almost a moot point because participation is the beginning, middle, and end of this methodology.

Technicians and planners, staff, government agencies, and private institutions in the development enterprise have long tended to overlook the positive linkage between culture and development, between tradition and change. Theorists have often blamed the lack of progress in development on "backward-looking traditional people," and this criticism is frequently internalized in the target populations. Cultural differences, as you all know, have often been thought of as obstacles to change rather than opportunities to be seized.

Harnessing "Cultural Energy"

An alternative approach grounded in traditional culture has emerged from the grassroots in developing countries. The case I'll describe today is taken from the book that I just finished,** which looks at projects in which people employ traditional cultural forms -- music, dance, theater, puppets, artisan work, poster and mural art, oral tradition, and so on -- to drive their development efforts. The approach encourages social and economic change by drawing upon and reinforcing the cultural traditions of ethnic minorities and the poor in general.

This approach has been developed and presented to us by people in the developing world. It is not something that was sketched out on flip charts in D.C. or Rosslyn. It seeks to retain people's special cultural strengths while enabling them to achieve the necessary changes in their social and economic conditions. In a nutshell, the argument is that people's own cultural heritage comprises the foundation upon which equitable and sustainable development is built. The cultural energy that is thereby tapped into and directed is what drives development.

To avoid misunderstanding, let me state from the outset that in no way does this method propose the maintenance of traditional people in some static or pristine state, were that even possible. Cultural traditions have emerged and are maintained in a dynamic process of creative invention and re-invention as well as borrowing and adaptation from other subgroups and cultures. This dynamic process readily lends itself to a strategy of using culture to effect change. The issue is not whether a cultural tradition or form should change or be utilized for new ends, but who controls that change.

The Power of Sociodrama

Let me take you to the highlands of Ecuador, to Chimborazo Province. Chimborazo is probably about the size of the greater Washington-Baltimore area. It contains one of the largest concentrations of poor Native Americans in this hemisphere: 1,000 indigenous communities and about a quarter of a million people, many of whom have just emerged from a semi-feudal hacienda system in the last ten or fifteen years. This system was so repressive that many of the adult leaders I have come to know had no access to schooling as children and were considered

part of the hacienda property. One of the major leaders I worked with told of having a thorn put through his tongue every time he spoke Quichua in school.

From about 1970 on, national and international organizations streamed into Chimborazo Province to bring about development. Normally, the technicians who arrived were from a totally different background than the local indigenous people. They quite commonly met only with the men and explained to them what the project was going to be about. The technicians used Spanish, which is a foreign language to these people. Most of the programs failed. Today you can see very little evidence of their ever having been there.

Over the last ten to fifteen years, a local indigenous program has arisen. The first point of contact that a community has with this program is a small group of young, indigenous people, men and women, musicians and dancers, called the Feria Educativa, the Educational Fair. They go into the communities, perform music, get people dancing, and then move into sociodrama. They never go into a village without an invitation. They arrive speaking Quichua, dressed as the local people are dressed because they themselves are all from surrounding villages. And many times they're literally kept hostage until one or two in the morning, usually in the local school.

Generally what happens in the sociodrama is that a particular social problem is presented. It could be what happens to an indigenous man when he temporarily migrates to a city looking for day labor. It could have to do with illiteracy, with cholera - - any broad number of problems. Sometimes there's so much audience participation that people in the crowd actually become part of the sociodrama itself.

The drama never provides an answer or solution. Usually, as soon as the problem is presented, the performers stop and open up the discussion to people in the crowd. Often someone, maybe someone way in the back, standing in the doorway, will step forward and say, "What I just saw here today happened to me" or "That happened to my uncle when he was in Quito." Such utterances reaffirm that the sociodrama is the truth. "What we've just seen is what we are living."

In a few cases, a decision is actually made to take action. At a performance about illiteracy that I attended, people from a neighboring village had gotten hold of a literacy trainer and would not let him leave until he promised to bring one of his supervisors on the next Sunday to their village to help them set up a literacy training center.

Achievements of the Feria

The Educational Fair is attached to a broad development program which offers a variety of projects ranging from artisan workshops, to reforestation, to agricultural production. As I said, the Fair is the first contact with the village. The performers talk about what the possibilities are. No promises or offers are made. The village leaders, if they ask, are told how to get in touch with various programs.

Over the past fifteen years the Educational Fair has visited over 750 of the 1,000 villages in Chimborazo. Over 1,000 literacy training centers have been set up; thirty community bakeries, forty-five artisan workshops, and 145 community centers have been built; 200,000 trees have been planted, and the Fair has helped train over 100 groups to do the same kind of thing that they're doing.

The interesting thing about these hundred groups is that over a dozen of the musical groups are made up entirely of women. Ten or fifteen years ago, you would never hear a woman speak in public, let alone play a musical instrument or sing. The development process which I've just described, has been accompanied by--and I want to underline "accompanied by"; I'm not talking about direct cause and effect -- increased participation by women in meetings, in training programs, and in the leadership of their organizations.

Open Questions

Let me leave you with a set of questions (and partial answers) that we could discuss if we had more time.

- Can culture-based participation be transferred to other areas? (It exists all throughout Ecuador at this point, not only among indigenous Indian populations, but among the blacks in Esmeralda Province. There is even a deaf group in Quito using this methodology.)
- Can a culture-based approach be misused? (From my own cultural background, I can name two dramatic cases of the misuse of symbols and culture. One is the Nazi party and the other one is the Ku Klux Klan.)
- Can a culture-based methodology distort cultural traditions? (An example is selling Pepsi-Cola with break dancers on television. How does this affect African American kids on the street corner who've seen their culture being expropriated?)
- Can this methodology be used to exacerbate or cause inter-ethnic strife? (Of course it can, but, in the 215 cases that I have looked at, I did not find a single case of reverse racism or any attempt to increase inter-ethnic tensions.)

The key is who controls the use of culture, who controls changes in culture, and to what end.

Discussion Session

Norm Nicholson: This topic is very timely. This morning I saw an article in the Washington Post about the Masai driving the Kikuyu off their lands. On the whole, today the idea of "culture" is mixed up with ideas about conflict and brutality. But we must realize that culture can be a positive force.

Perhaps, as a way to frame the discussion, we could identify key insights or approaches that we in USAID should be incorporating into our programs. [The following list records the topics discussed in the discussion period.]

USAID should continue to work with local NGOs as intermediaries between USAID and the culture. Is USAID prepared to allow more time in the design of projects for working with the culture? And can USAID adjust its procedures to accommodate such work?

Can USAID strategic planning include local traditions? Is the establishment of strategic objectives flexible enough to allow modification over time through experience?

An education project in Pakistan did a very thorough pre-analysis from a social agenda standpoint to understand what the context of the society was that they were working with. The project was very successful. If we are prepared to take the time up front to do the social and gender analysis that is required, projects will be more culturally sensitive.

The goals of nations and communities are sometimes in conflict, and USAID has to deal on both levels. USAID must understand how the two interact and may be mediated.

Development workers should not rely on information from elites alone.

It is a pitfall for USAID to ask what we would maintain or change in a culture. Instead we should enable processes through which groups decide on their own what they think should change.

A good question for USAID to ask is whether local culture is being revitalized or diminished through a project.

USAID should explore the possibility of using attitudinal indicators of progress as well as behavioral, socio-economic, and statistical indicators.

USAID often does not pay enough attention to the voice of social scientists. They are sometimes sidelined and little attention is paid to social analysis.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

The Mooers Uncertainty Principle

Donald Mooers: "Implementing and evaluating participatory development programs is the most difficult part of participatory development. This is especially true when one factors in what I call the "Mooers Uncertainty Principle," which goes something like this: Anything we do that affects either directly or indirectly another community, culture or society will achieve results, both positive and negative, which we cannot wholly predict beforehand.

"For participatory development to be successful, it has to be responsive to a society or culture's needs not only at the design phase but throughout its life. Ideas and plans, while applicable at the beginning of a project, may be completely worthless within a short time. In fact, this will probably happen more often when a program has been a success than when it has been a failure.... Success by change agents creates change. Development projects, in order to be successful on a sustainable basis, must keep up with this change.

"I am not sure that this idea is compatible with the discussion that followed the presentations. Some people seemed to be saying that if social scientists completed more reports, that this somehow would result in a more culturally sensitive development approach. It seems to me that we do not need more reports, but rather we need people who are more aware of how the changes they are introducing affect the groups they are working with. We also need to have a USAID which rewards implementers and contractors for making the adjustments necessary to 'keep up with change,' and not be locked into fulfilling a multi-year project paper which at best reflects the reality of when it was written."

Attitudinal Surveys and Two-Way Participation.

John Eriksson: "During the discussion I mentioned 'attitudinal' measures of performance. What I meant was surveys that seek to elicit the attitudes or opinions of beneficiary-participants as to what they think about their conditions of living, the control they have over their lives, sense of empowerment, etc.; how they see those as having changes over the course of USAID support; and to what extent they would attribute those changes to USAID involvement.

"Reliably eliciting such information requires care and skill, but it can be done by providing questionnaires that are constructed by people who are skilled and experienced in doing this, and administered by trained interviewers.

"A significant point that came up in the presentations is that the participatory approach that builds on indigenous cultures is more successful when it is a TWO-WAY process, when it is evident that the 'donor'/partner can learn something from the 'recipient'/partner as well as vice-versa."

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

The Participation Forum (No. 3)

Participation in Policy Reform

April 21, 1994

Policy reform is an area of USAID work that used to be viewed as beyond the reach of participation. Speakers at the third session of the Participation Forum made a strong case that participation can and should be brought into the policy design and implementation process, even in undemocratic settings. Carol Peasley, Deputy Assistant Administrator in the Bureau for Africa, described and reflected upon the agricultural sector reform process in Malawi where she was, until recently, Mission Director. Roberta Mahoney, who served in Malawi as Program Officer and is now Senior Agricultural Policy Advisor in PPC, drew additional lessons from the Malawi case. Larry Cooley, President of Management Systems International and Director of the Implementing Policy Change project, set the Malawi experience in a broader framework. The session was introduced by USAID Administrator J. Brian Atwood, and I moderated the discussion. This session generated a large volume of e-mail, a sampling of which is included at the end of this summary.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participation

Participation: An Iterative Process

Brian Atwood

The topic of policy reform is not new to USAID. Agency staff are constantly engaged in diplomatic discussions with representatives of other governments. Those discussions are at least as delicate, if not more so, than the discussions of our State Department colleagues on matters of national interest, because we are trying to encourage a government to take steps to improve itself or to develop its own economy or political system. This is indeed delicate. When outsiders, even outsiders with money to offer, get into policy discussions, they are often viewed with skepticism as claiming to know better than the people of the country.

In fact, it is impossible to be absolutely certain of the right course even in our own country. The United States is in the midst of a tremendous debate over health care, and many political leaders think they have all the right answers. But as the debate evolves, their views change as they hear from the people. In the same manner, we here at USAID may have some ideas with respect to policy reform, but we have to make sure that we help a government to communicate with and listen to its own people in the policy-making process.

USAID's work in policy reform should be an iterative process with the country concerned. After initial discussions with host country officials and political leaders, we ought to go back to the drawing board and see what impact those discussions have on our thinking. Then we should encourage officials and political leaders to talk to the people who will be affected by the particular policy reform. These talks will reveal whether or not the policy proposal needs to be revised. Indigenous NGOs should be engaged in these talks as well.

Last fall, I put out a statement of principles on participation. It is obviously easier to put out a statement of principles than it is to make these principles work. We think we should practice what we preach in terms of participation, and as we proceed here at USAID in our own iterative process of developing ideas about how to make participation work, let me say that I really think this is the right approach. We're getting there; I'm confident that it can be done.

Participation in Malawi's Ag Policy Program

Carol Peasley

Policy reform is a process that includes analysis, design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and redesign. It is not simply the preparation of USAID documents. Nor is implementation of policy reform limited to the period after the obligation of funds. Implementation begins during the design and negotiation of the program.

How the Policy Agenda Was Originally Defined

Malawi was known through most of the 1980s as a good economic performer. The [World Bank](#) referred to it as a "star performer," as President Dr. Hastings Kumuzu Banda frequently reminded listeners. President Banda traveled throughout the country telling his people that he and his government had brought them three necessities: food, clothing, and roofs that didn't leak. He also created a relatively repressive regime.

Perceptions of Malawi as a star performer slowly began to change in the mid-1980s, in part because of donor-funded research and analyses, some of which was done by Malawians. By late 1988, the country's poverty was beginning to be discussed more openly by donors and Malawian technocrats. Nonetheless, the president and the political establishment still crisscrossed the country talking about Malawi as a star performer. There was no consensus within the country on either development problems or strategies. And given the high degree of political repression, dialogue was seldom free and open, and opposing views were not tolerated. Few mechanisms existed for consensus building.

USAID Malawi presented its new five-year country program strategy to Washington in December of 1989. This included strategic objectives on agricultural productivity and off-farm employment. The strategy focused on Malawi's serious land constraint and proposed new programs to increase smallholder access to land and to improve the use of estate land to generate incomes and jobs. These preliminary program ideas followed closely on reform efforts initiated by the World Bank in 1989 under its Agriculture Sector Adjustment Credit (ASAC).

The initial agenda for USAID's agricultural sector reform program was defined through sector analyses and discussions with other donors and Malawian technocrats. As presented in our country strategy paper, the agenda was based heavily on the ASAC, which included several highly controversial reforms, for example, to restrict the conversion of customary (smallholder) land to the estate sector; to increase taxes on estate land; and to permit smallholders to produce burley tobacco, Malawi's highest value cash crop, by issuing production quotas to them. These Bank reforms were controversial, and there was a feeling that they had been imposed as "conditions." The Bank program was not owned by the Malawians. Because some of USAID's strategy was based on the ASAC, which had not been a participatory process, and because of our own limited dialogue with Malawians, on a participation scale of one to ten, we probably would have earned about a two at this point.

How the Program Evolved As a Result of Participation

In early 1990, USAID/Malawi began to define the technical analyses that would be needed to support the program. We received substantial early support from REDSO Nairobi, particularly from social scientist Pat Fleuret. Pat, along with his REDSO and mission colleagues, traveled widely in the country to consult with smallholder farmers. They found a large number of illegal burley tobacco growers in the smallholder sector and thus met firsthand the growing grassroots demand for this new income-earning opportunity. Smallholders wanted access to burley production quotas; they did not want the estate sector to retain its monopoly.

Realizing that no one in USAID, the government, or other donor organizations understood the estate or leasehold sector (even though the World Bank's ag sector program included some very fundamental reforms of that sector), we sponsored a detailed survey of the estate sector, to be

carried out by the University of Malawi's Bunda College of Agriculture, with support from the Institute of Development Anthropology in New York. All USAID staff working on design of the program went out with the survey teams at various times to interview farmers.

The results of the survey, which became available in September 1990, began to redefine how people viewed Malawi's ag sector. We were startled to find that the huge increase in estate land registration was in fact an increase in very small "estates." They were not large commercial estate enterprises, but graduated smallholders seeking access to burley tobacco quotas and land tenure security. The dualistic agricultural sector was obviously in the process of breaking down.

Donors, technocrats, and Malawian academicians clamored for copies of the report. Recognizing the strong interest, USAID urged the Ministry of Agriculture to host a number of meetings and debriefings by the researchers. These provoked some first-time dialogue on key ag policy issues.

The survey and consultation caused us to shift our basic policy agenda towards production and marketing reforms. These changes were reflected in the initial design document submitted to Washington in January of 1991. Again on a scale of one to ten, I would give us a four on participation in preparing this document. The Africa Bureau approved the document but urged us to look at smallholder choice in production and marketing as key elements of sectoral reform and to define with the Malawians a long-term vision for the ag sector.

By spring and summer of 1991, we had begun a series of new studies, many of them at the farm level, as well as political risk analysis. We also brought in a British consultant who had grown up in Malawi, worked in the tobacco industry, and knew just about everyone. He traveled throughout the country talking with smallholders and the largest estate owners and managers. During his first visit working on the program design and subsequent visits during program implementation, he helped us better understand the sector, and served as a bridge between the development types and industry, farmers, and government.

Opening Up the Dialogue

Throughout this period, implementation of the Bank's ASAC program became more contentious. Opposing groups began to approach the USAID mission directly, asking us to explain the newly initiated pilot smallholder burley program agreed to by the government under the Bank program. Recognizing that we should not be an intermediary, the mission tried to open up the dialogue. We encouraged the various parties to debate issues in the same room at the same time. Debriefings on the design studies and analyses created excellent opportunities for such dialogue. For the first time, representatives from government ministries, the tobacco trade association, individual estates, and donors met together and discussed issues. This group ultimately became the project implementation committee.

This type of participation, including mission staff field trips in which farmers clearly articulated their desires, continued to influence the design. By the time we went into the final negotiations with the government, our vision was a simple one--choice: that smallholders could grow any crop they wanted, buy inputs from whomever they wanted, and sell their output to whomever they wanted.

Our efforts to broaden dialogue had a major impact on the content of the program, but we were still concerned that the Malawians did not really have the capacity to develop a consensus on their own ag policy agenda. This caused three further changes in the program design.

First, we added a component to develop an agricultural policy research center at Bunda College, a center which could do research, sponsor open debate on the issues, and play a lead role in defining Malawi's agricultural policies.

Second, we shortened the program from the original five years to three years, as we thought there was enough consensus on the initial reforms that it could become more of a Malawian, as opposed to a donor-imposed, program. Third, we added a studies component, primarily through Bunda College, to allow the Malawians to take the lead in defining the policy agenda for phase two of the program.

By the time we got to the final design stage, we had reached up to five or six on the participation

scale. We had made significant changes in the content and phasing of the program to expand Malawian ownership.

Negotiating a Shared Vision

Formal negotiations took place during July-August 1991. The normal pattern in Malawi was to negotiate with the Ministry of Finance alone. Given the controversy about the Bank's project, we decided it was important to have as many actors as possible in the room at the same time for the negotiations. We therefore suggested that the government negotiating team be composed of the Secretary of the Treasury, the Principal Secretary of Agriculture, and the Principal Secretary of the Department of Economic Planning and Development, as well as their staffs.

I would like to add, because it is probably fairly unique, that on USAID's side it was an all-female negotiating team. We initiated the negotiations by seeking a consensus on a long-term vision for the ag sector, a vision of choice and freedom as a key to poverty alleviation. We tried to develop that consensus first rather than going immediately to the conditionality package, which is what the Malawi government initially wanted to discuss. More generally, we tried to avoid use of the term "conditionality" and to focus on the steps needed to achieve the shared vision.

Participation During Early Implementation

We tried to do a number of things to increase participation.

Mission staff took lots of field trips to talk to the farmers about their problems and successes. (This facilitated our dialogue with government on issues and enabled us to give them positive feedback.)

The mission supported a number of surveys to assess the impact of the program, some done by our Malawian staff, some done by Bunda College. (These surveys expanded contact with potential beneficiaries.)

A number of consultants who had been involved with the program from the outset continued to foster participation. (The British consultant I mentioned earlier was particularly effective as an intermediary and consensus-builder between different interest groups.)

The Ministry of Agriculture was heavily involved with monitoring and evaluation, especially at the regional level where some of the Ministry's strongest supporters for the program were. (This enhanced their commitment and stature and strengthened government of Malawi ownership.)

The studies component of the program was implemented by the Malawians, not USAID staff. This included writing the scopes of work for those studies. (The Malawians said, "No donor has ever asked us to do a scope of work. You guys have always done them for us." It took a little extra time, but helped to build Malawian ownership.)

During the mid-term evaluation in February of 1993, as political change was underway in Malawi, the evaluation team met with representatives from one of the major opposition parties, many of whom were burley estate owners. The idea was to explore their views on the smallholder burley program and to educate them on its poverty-alleviation potential.

Participation and Political Change

Malawi began to liberalize politically in late 1992. Today the country is dramatically different from what it was in the late 1980s, when a few brave technocrats were willing to look critically at the failures of the country's development policies. USAID's Agriculture Sector Assistance Program was designed and early implementation took place in that difficult closed political environment. Participation was consequently less than ideal. Nonetheless, it was not impossible. Even in unreceptive environments, USAID can expand participation and host-country ownership through such steps as surveys and studies, selection of consultants who can serve as bridges to the various interest groups, the phasing of programs to maximize ownership (even if it means shortening programs to cover only those areas for which there's real agreement), incorporating

studies and capacity- building during the initial phases of a program, taking advantage of studies and surveys to create fora that bring multiple interest groups together, and making field trips, listening, and being willing to change.

Participation can become much more comprehensive and effective as the political situation matures. USAID Malawi is currently doing some exciting things in designing phase two of the ag sector program. We may have achieved a six on the participation scale in 1991-1992. Because of its extraordinary efforts to increase participation, USAID Malawi will have a far more effective phase two of its ag sector program.

Improving Our Vision Through Participation

Roberta Mahoney

Malawi's policy reform appeared very simple. What could be more simple? Let farmers grow what they want, how they want, sell it wherever they want--pretty straightforward. Our initial focus on burley tobacco was even more simple and more direct: let them grow burley, let them grow it how they want, let them sell it where they want. In retrospect, it appears to have been a sort of stroke-of-the-pen reform, one that did not seem to require participation. But what appears simple in retrospect can be difficult to see at the outset. I would like to comment very briefly on five lessons that I learned in reflecting back on my experience in Malawi.

The first lesson is that participation is important at the outset so that the problem can be adequately defined. In Malawi, participation brought all actors into defining the problem and suggesting a remedy.

The second is that participation continues to be important as a program moves along the design-to-implementation continuum. In our case, participation kept us on track and prevented us from getting sidetracked with empty rule changes.

The third is that there are no real secrets to participation, just a whole lot of work. The techniques of participation can be learned. It is important to keep focused on thinking through what is best and what needs to be done, not on what is easiest. For example, we did not use Malawian academics in the first of our studies because they were cheaper or closer. We used them because they knew more about local conditions and issues and because they could speak the local languages. We supplemented their skills as necessary. Contracting with a U.S. consulting firm would have been easier, but the Malawian study team we used did a better job.

The fourth lesson concerns what about the Malawi experience in policy reform is important to its replicability in other places. It is the unflinching commitment to people and to participation that we who were involved in the design felt and that was expressed at all levels. The first level of that commitment was expressed by the U.S. Congress, USAID, and the Bureau for Africa, through the definition, articulation, and enactment of the Development Fund for Africa legislation. We were committed to participation, and our mission director gave that commitment life. Participation requires time, money, people to do the job, and an abiding respect for our host country colleagues. The mission director has to send the signals that these activities are valued and that those involved in the design have the resources necessary to do the job. The director may also have to keep USAID Washington at arm's length, while the mission is trying to get the job done.

Finally, participation facilitates the ability to measure and to report on results. In our case, the more we talked to people, the more we were able to express our objectives and to measure progress in terms of real impact on real people. In our first year, incomes among small, rural producers increased by over \$4 million. By the end of the second year, more than 20,000 farm families, over 100,000 people, who were affected by the program saw their cash incomes increase dramatically, up some six- or sevenfold, from admittedly very low levels. We know that smallholders earned more money, and we know that they spent it on school fees, on fertilizer, on seeds, on bicycles, and on food because we spoke to them and they told us.

The future looks even brighter. Each year, the number of people participating in the program has at least doubled. Momentum for the program and for agricultural and political reforms in general is

increasing. Soon, all one million farm families will be able to grow what they want, how they want, and sell it as they see fit. Participation has been critical in helping us to realize this dream.

Lessons Learned from the IPC Project

Larry Cooley

Introducing participatory approaches to policy selection and implementation needs to be seen in the context of a broader set of governance issues. If a donor is engaged in facilitating a process in which people are coming together and speaking out actively, the government will begin to receive demands from those sources. Thus, participation offers a chance to reinforce positive changes in the way decisions are made and to increase the role of various populations in decision-making.

Real commitment to participatory approaches has fundamental implications not only for what is done but how it is done. As development assistance people, we should be guided by the Hippocratic Oath: above all, do no harm. There are a million opportunities along the way in development assistance to contradict your message with your medium.

Nuts and Bolts of Participation

The following practical, hands-on experience gleaned from the experience of the Implementing Policy Change (IPC) project is presented as a checklist or a menu of ideas that have worked successfully in one or more places.

Better Political and Institutional Analysis

The IPC project has found two techniques for political and institutional analysis -- stakeholder analysis and "political mapping"-- to be particularly useful in stimulating and focusing participation in policy reform. There are, however, three levels of participation in the use of such tools. The first, and the lowest level, is for a donor agency to do this kind of analysis to inform its own decision-making -- better than nothing but less than we should aspire to. The second way is for a donor agency to conduct studies to help host government leaders make their decisions in a more informed manner. The third level, and the one to be aspired to, is helping host country people conduct these studies themselves so that they themselves reach out to their stakeholders and learn what it means to view policy change in a broader context than the one they're used to.

Collaborative Design

Like Roberta and Carol, we have observed that collaborative design not only provides a forum for fostering consensus but also almost always increases the technical quality of the design. I originally thought that we would trade technical quality for building consensus, but that has not been our observation.

It's preferable, but not always possible, for collaborative design to be used, not just to inform a donor program, but to look at a broad range of policies from the country's point of view. However, because of the institutional or the political environment, it may be much more practical to begin with a question like, "What should USAID be supporting in such and such an arena?" There's no question about the legitimacy of USAID promoting a participatory process on that issue.

Redesigning the technical content of the reforms to make participation more feasible. An example from the United States: with block grants or decentralized decision-making rather than categorical programs that are centrally administered, the chance for involving a range of people in implementation goes up by an order of magnitude. We have also observed that there are more opportunities for participation during implementation than during the design stage. So if there is initial resistance to involvement at the design stage, there's a second chance to influence outcomes.

Capacity Building

There's been a lot of emphasis within USAID on looking for the "policy champion." However, policy issues are usually so complex that no individual can pull off the remediation of those problems by him or herself. The country also needs to look, and we need to look with them, at the capacity of institutions at all levels, inside and outside government, to do the jobs related to policy reform: policy analysis, lobbying and advocacy, and sometimes basic institution building. In line with this, donors need to make more use of local monitoring and evaluation, research, and analysis.

Implementation As a Process, Not As an Event

During implementation, all kinds of learning goes on and bumps appear in the road. The notion that implementation can be mapped out with certainty in the beginning is unrealistic. Participation makes it necessary to be responsive to a range of interests that may or may not have been fully understood at the outset. As a practical matter, this suggests the desirability of phased programs, rolling designs, and flexibility.

Extensive Use of Workshops and Forums

We have found there's a particularly effective role for donor agencies in facilitating forums--opportunities for people who don't normally get together to discuss things, or for people whose positions tend to isolate them, to get input from a variety of sources.

Structural Solutions

Governments can be helped to establish formal or semi-formal mechanisms for consultation and coordination such as policy implementation units. These units are typically attached either to the state house or sometimes to the cabinet office. Their job is to work in a collaborative way across ministries to promote participation in decision-making within the government, and then to reach outside that arena to get input from other sources. To conclude, let me list a few lessons the IPC project has learned in applying the ideas discussed above. Policy change that is imposed is very unlikely to be implemented or sustained. It is striking how many ways a policy can be disrupted if people are disposed to do so. Their ability to stop changes in policy through subtle means is extraordinary.

Policy change is inherently threatening to public-sector actors, as are participatory approaches. It's hard to manage, it has uncertain outcomes, and it produces new voices. We should do what we can to reduce the threatening aspects of participation.

Meaningful participation is demand-driven from civil society as well as supply-led from government channels. Many efforts to increase participation have focused on trying to increase either the demand or the supply. What works best is to encourage both in tandem. Otherwise, what you have is either the frustration of too much demand and no plausible supply mechanism, or a government that is being asked to institute change for which there seems to be no pressure or demand from its citizens.

It is possible to promote participatory approaches even under authoritarian regimes, if you are sensitive to the implications of what you are doing. The range of options is smaller, however. Participation, handled thoughtfully, can be quietly subversive. Addressing policy implementation and technical issues in a participatory manner provides a model of a different way for decisions to be made and implemented.

Skills in planning are required to do participation right, in addition to a lot of hard work. Unfortunately, there are only a few people in developing countries who have been trained in participatory approaches and process skills.

There is simply no one-size-fits-all in the participatory approach to policy reform. It must be tailored to the circumstances.

Discussion Period

The following excerpts capture the principal themes raised during the discussion period.

Authoritarian Regimes--How Feasible is Participation?

Brian Atwood: "In the case of Malawi, am I right in saying that the intent was to provide some permanence to the informal institutions that were being created through the participatory process? In addition to the policy reform, the mission was trying to allow those new institutions to put down some roots down."

Carol Peasley: "I strongly agree. As activities to open up an economic system occur, the political system itself is affected. The networks and relationships that are created will continue over time."

Larry Cooley: "There is a big difference between the way participation is promoted in a transitional state and the way it is done in a recalcitrant one. For example, who's sponsoring a public event or forum is important. That can change as the political structures change. In one situation institutions are being reinforced; in another, new models are being implanted."

Andy Sisson: "In Malawi one of the most effective things we did in promoting more associational rights, and ultimately creating a better framework for participation, was withholding aid, particularly balance-of-payments support. That is a very powerful statement, I believe."

Larry Cooley: "USAID can go further than I thought possible with the 'insidious,' or technical approach, as long as it works in avenues least likely to be initially seen as political. The process builds a certain momentum once it gets initiated, and manages to clear a number of hurdles. Even if the issue that preoccupies a mission is the governance issue, it should not pick the most political policy area to start in. The activities of the mission are less likely to be seen as threatening if it is encouraging people to get together and express their interests about issue that is less of an immediate threat to the entrenched powers. Since there are a whole range of policy issues that one could start with, there's a lot to go on."

Frequently, by framing the issue a little bit larger and looking for agreement around basic principles there are chances to do things that you couldn't otherwise do. The fora that Carol and Roberta were talking about at Bunda College could have been seen as threatening by the government if they had been perceived in governance terms."

Carol Peasley: "There are a lot of people, even in a repressive regime, who want to begin to talk about things. USAID can play a facilitative role in giving them a chance."

Roberta Mahoney: "In Malawi, the government gave us an entree to talk about political issues by stating that, in Malawi, people had enough food to eat and roofs over their heads even though that contrasted completely with one's daily observations. So we in the donor community were able to pose the question, 'Why, if there's enough food, are people hungry?' This opened a forum for us to discuss the divergence between what we were hearing and what we were seeing."

Keeping Washington At Arm's Length

Joe Stepanek: "Sometimes Washington must be kept at arm's length, certainly in the special sense of allowing time. The two-year money, the no-year money, is an important part of this. Mission directors that are committed can also create the time. But this question of time is interesting. In my experience in Tanzania, for instance, having spent 18 months designing the family-planning program in a highly collegial manner, we found that we had in fact 18 months of implementation under our belts when we finally signed, without having spent a dime of program money."

Carol Peasley: "On the question of Washington-based constraints to participation, clearly one of them is the issue of time: you have to obligate the funds by X date. Also, Washington can be too directive in saying, 'This is what you shall negotiate.' A third thing is delegation. Ours was a \$50

million program for five years. We decided to reduce it to three years and \$30 million, but we had the authority to do it. Larry Saiers (DAA/AFR) came out to see what we were doing, concurred with it, and we authorized it in the field. But it didn't get back into a system that chewed it up and ended up being directive. (I'm embarrassed to say this because I've been part of that directive process.)"

New Cultural Norms for USAID

Joe Stepanek: "It takes a mission director's leadership to create a culture in which participation is the norm. All too often mission staff draft their papers, take them over to the Minister of Finance, and basically say, 'Sign it or lose it.' That has never worked very well. Actual participation--I think that is something new. We've done it, but it has not been the rule. It has not been a part of the culture of all our missions."

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

The following excerpts are taken from the many e-mail comments sent in reaction to the forum.

Participation and Democratization

Anicca C. Jansen: "I spent some time in Malawi last fall and had the opportunity to attend a SHARED-sponsored training of board members of newly formed NGOs. Participants seemed both overwhelmed and excited by the possibilities that lay before them. It was clear that people were disclosing experiences, including human rights abuses, that they had never discussed publicly before. It was humbling to be a witness to the bravery that must be behind those disclosures and incredibly exciting to see the way in which the economic development process, via networking and local institution building, was fostering the democratic process. Let us keep in mind how frightening democratization may be to the individuals involved. Imagine what it feels like to be a Malawian buying her/his first opposition party newspaper."

Bob Charlick: "Some issues which I wish had been explored further regarding the use of the Malawi case:

- What does participation mean in a society where meaningful autonomous civil society organization is virtually impossible, and where there are on-going serious human rights abuses targeted at perceived opponents? It is my understanding that these conditions were substantially present in Banda's Malawi in 1991-92 when this activity commenced.
- Is a 'participatory' approach in which the U.S. government promotes consultation and 'participation' through the use of its own agents because Malawian farmers have such limited freedom of association and expression, a sustainable one?
- Does it make sense to characterize the ag sector policy reform process as one that can be successful in an authoritarian society substantially because it is less political than dealing with governance issues? What can be more political in Malawi than decisions on who gets to grow and market the country's most important export crop, and whether elites controlling estates will be able to continue dominating these processes?
- If this was truly a politically sensitive issue, why did USAID and the other donors succeed in achieving the desired policy reforms? Was it substantially due to the participatory nature of the exercise, or to the threats of conditionality?

These questions seem to beg for answers before we reach the conclusion that the Malawi, or any other particular case, is a 'success story' which we should consider publicizing and perhaps modeling."

Technical Assistance to Facilitate Process

Lee Ann Ross: "In Sri Lanka in 1988 USAID provided an advisor to help the government undertake a food and nutrition strategy under a process whereby the Sri Lankans did all the work themselves. No outsiders, no expert team jetting in with a cast of 20 delivering a strategy. I wrote

an article on this experience: "Collaborative Research for More Effective Foreign Assistance," World Development, Vol. 16, No. 2: 231-236 (1988)."

"It is a good example of our technical assistance being used to facilitate process rather than provide substantive technical input. It was a lot of fun and very useful. Also very time consuming. But we built process and institutions and the strategy was owned by those who created it, not by USAID."

Staffing for Participation

Robert Young: "One possible barrier to participatory program implementation is the rapidity with which USAID staff move about. On the participatory front, I suspect that to identify and understand the best subsectors and tactics to use in promoting participatory sustainable development, it will take a year or two for the employee to understand and establish strong links and working relationships with appropriate individuals and institutions. This would be particularly so, if one is concerned about problems, people and institutions beyond the capital! Then, to capitalize on and work with those relationships and achieve significant impact, of course, will require substantially more time."

Pirie Gall: "If you were head of training, and had about \$50-100,000 per year to invest in USAID staff to make them better participatory developers, what would you do? What skills would you want people to have or strengthen? What knowledge would you want them to gain or augment? What specific tools, techniques, or materials would you want people to learn about (this is about specific content, not training techniques)? Would you focus on cross-cultural skills, facilitation skills, listening-human interaction, analysis of survey data?"

Four Kinds of Participation

Robert Mitchell: "USAID has at least three and possibly four meanings for 'participation': It is (1) a dependent variable that we are trying to produce (e.g., more participation in a cash economy or higher voter turnout); (2) an independent variable that is a technique used to create consensus or to manage the implementation of policies (such as IPC emphasizes); and (3) both an independent and dependent variable that structures patterns and rates of participation more generally (the new institutional economics) in ways supportive of USAID's strategies for sustainable development. Finally, (4) generic institutional (participatory) and organizational development, in which creating a sewing club is as important as a small factory, for it represents the creation of an independent interest group participating in a society."

Rethinking Agency Objectives

Joe Lombardo: Participation, if truly implemented, negates the blueprint approach to development programs. To the extent we posit specific sectoral outcomes, we will find ourselves manipulating participation to gain support for our program. Once the process for true participation is started, the final outcome in terms of problem definition, and proposed solutions cannot be specified in advance. The resolution of this dilemma resides in how we define our mission as an agency."

"Policy reform programs have generally been couched in terms of specific measures to be achieved. All this presupposes we have not only have the answer and it is reachable; but that achievement of the target somehow solves the problem. However, we all know that the problems never go away. Our own country is still grappling with the issues of health care, fiscal reform, private sector v. public sector issues, governance issues (like term limits, public financing for elections, etc.). The difference is that we believe (rightly or wrongly) that we have the wherewithal to deal with the problems. We believe we can, on our own, debate and define the problem, devise solutions, and implement them. I posit that we might view our mission in other countries as assisting them to develop the capability to define problems, weigh alternatives, put together viable programs to deal with manageable aspects of the issues, and to implement and evaluate these programs."

"This view of USAID's mission would then be reflected in the kinds of objectives we wish to monitor and report on for assessing the effectiveness of the Agency's program (participation, inclusiveness of the process, openness of the society, development and implementation of viable

programs that address real issues, capacity of civil society to identify and articulate problems requiring public sector assistance, etc.).

"Sectoral level achievements would still be accomplished inter alia through our financial, technical assistance and training contributions to host country programs. But we would worry less about whether we have standard indicators across all countries for measuring progress in agriculture or education; by definition, the participatory process in each country will likely produce different focuses.

"In sum, the goal of engaging in a participatory process to develop and implement assistance programs requires a rethinking of the way we conceive of development problems and issues, and the kinds of objectives we wish to focus on as an Agency."

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

April 21, 1994

The Participation Forum (No. 4)

Participation in Policy Reform, Continued

May 19, 1994

The fourth session of the Participation Forum once more addressed issues of bringing participation into USAID support for policy reforms. This session emphasized a theme that has been implicit in previous Forum sessions: the importance of learning from experience--not only from "best practices" but also from less-than-successful cases. Larry Byrne, Assistant Administrator for Management, set the stage for this with thoughts about risk-taking in a "change culture." Terry Brown, Assistant to the Administrator for [Policy and Program Coordination](#), and formerly Mission Director, USAID/Guatemala, provided a self-critical look at USAID's support for the Maya Biosphere Reserve Project in Guatemala. The audience offered ways in which this effort might have been approached more successfully. This summary includes the essence of the presentations, the lively discussion, and subsequent E-mail comments.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Accepting Risk-Taking

Larry Byrne

I would take issue with the idea that some projects "succeed" and some "fail." It depends on our perspective and approach to risk. A true "failure" occurs when we try something, it doesn't work, but we continue to try it again and again. If we at USAID take the scientific experimenter's approach, we will learn from experience. A "change culture" accepts and assumes risk-taking.

Let me give a classic example of this risk-taking approach. 3M originally created a product that almost all of you have in your office: those little yellow post-it notes. Post-it notes grew out of failed experiments 3M was conducting to develop a heavy bonding glue. But 3M took the failed bonding glue and came up with the sticky note idea. From that, the company created a whole new product line.

3M management believes that a significant segment, at least 25 percent, of their profit five years from today will be generated from still-to-be-created products. They don't know what those products will be. Their system rewards risk-taking because "success" includes either producing a new product or finding out what won't work. The people who produced the post-it product included the bright guy who thought of it and all the people who had worked on the failed bonding glue tests. They all got bonuses.

As long as we continue to learn and use what we learn, taking risks is a valuable tool. It's only if we don't use what we learn that we fail. This concept of success and failure allows people a much greater amount of flexibility to take risks, to see options, and to do things a different way.

Two Views of Participation

Terry Brown

The area known as the Pet in the north of Guatemala is one of the largest repositories of germ plasm in the world. In the last 10 years or so, there's been about a 10-fold increase in the population in that part of Guatemala, a large outmigration from the highlands. Currently some 250,000 to 300,000 people live in the Pet. The land is extremely stressed, even though much larger numbers of people lived in that region at the height of the Mayan civilization.

The Pet bio-reserve is 1.5 million hectares in size, an area about the size of El Salvador. It's mostly savannah or tropical forest. The nutrient content of the soil is very poor, better for trees than for anything else. The current rate of deforestation is such that, if it is not checked, within about 30 years, most of the natural forest will disappear. The economy is characterized by slash-and-burn agriculture, which rapidly turns into extensive cattle grazing. The traditional products of the area are chicle; xate (a fern used for floral arrangements); and allspice. There's also extensive logging, both legal and illegal, and an extensive illegal trade in archaeological artifacts. In general, the area of the Pet is Guatemala's wild west. The only real control is through the military; civilian governmental institutions are just beginning to establish themselves.

The program that USAID put forward focused on providing communities with economic alternatives more compatible with the natural forest resource base and with the biosphere reserve status. We approached the project not simply in terms of saving the trees, but in terms of striking a balance between economic activity and preservation of the natural resource.

It was a \$22 million project signed in 1990. USAID's share was \$10.5 million, the government of Guatemala about \$7.5 million, and U.S. NGOs about \$4 million. The original planning included some very important and experienced U.S. NGOs: the [Nature Conservancy](#), [Conservation International](#), and Rodale.

The project intended to work with the public sector to establish a sustainable management system for the reserve through the National Commission for Protected Areas, called CONAP. Also we would work with communities to develop alternative sources of income and we would support environmental education in the area. From the beginning, it was clear that it was a people project. If we did not change the way in which people lived and dealt with their environment, the project could not succeed.

Setting the Policy Framework

In 1989 to 1990, prior to my arrival, the mission attempted to establish a national political commitment to the program. President Marco Vinicio Cerezo, the first democratically elected president in Guatemala since the early 1950s, modeled himself as an environmental president and supported the project. Mission staff worked with the Guatemalan legislature and had three major pieces of legislation approved: the Biosphere Reserve Law, which established the Maya Biosphere Reserve; the Protected Areas Law, which created our major counterpart, CONAP, a national system that established basic authorities and rules for protected areas; and a forestry law, which attempted for the first time to put forestry management and control into the hands of a licensing authority in the Ministry of Agriculture. The mission received significant support from Guatemalan and U.S. NGOs during this period.

Thus, when the project began, mission staff felt they had established a national mandate for the program with strong political leadership behind it. The project was going to change the way things were done in the Pet, but it would not be easy.

Program Design and Development

During project paper development, USAID held extensive discussions with the people in the communities about their interests and needs. In terms of project development, it was probably one of the most extensive dialogues that I had seen. My staff traveled widely in the Pet and knew it better than almost anyone else in Guatemala, including most of the folks living there. I am sure that my project manager could easily have been elected governor of the Pet. Also, the leadership of the Guatemalan environmental and public sectors participated in project design. A number of U.S. PVOs were involved in those project design discussions, although they lacked counterparts in the Pet. Guatemalan NGOs had little or no presence there.

So we had supporters, but we also faced strong entrenched resistance. Loggers, both legal and illegal, and "informal" archaeologists, as I would call them, had no interest whatsoever in the government's establishing control in the reserve area. It was an area without any sort of authority beyond the Guatemalan military.

Initial Stages of the Project

During the implementation phase, we carried out a competitive grant process to secure the participation of U.S. NGOs. We in the mission felt that since the project was basically focused on people, it should use mechanisms that would get to people. The public sector certainly was not a way to do that, and the Guatemalan NGO community was very small.

Eventually, three major NGOs participated: [CARE](#), [Conservation International](#), and the [Nature Conservancy](#). They agreed to put up about one dollar for every two dollars of USAID funds. We required that each of them would establish a presence in the Pet, which was not easy. It's a very difficult place to live and work. CARE and Conservation International particularly were focused on community-level activities, on getting communities to buy into the process, identify problems at the community level, and work together on solutions.

NGO involvement on the ground in the Pet was one way to decentralize management of the program. The major Guatemalan counterpart, CONAP, also decentralized its management. By December of 1992 CONAP had about 150 or 200 folks working in the area, mostly Peteneros, people from that area.

We felt we had strong political support. The governor certainly supported the program, along with a number of mayors. The military, at least in a leadership sense, also was supporting the program, or at least not putting up any major resistance.

We worked a lot on balancing stakeholder interests--sawmill owners, loggers, the tourism industry, xate and chicle harvesters, and farmers and the people moving into the area-- helping them to understand that we were in favor of the reasonable, sustainable use of the forest resource and did not plan to shut them out entirely.

The program, as initially designed and implemented, had a very strong participation focus because we were most concerned about change in the way people behaved, within a policy environment which had been set before the project was established.

Taking a Second Look

As implementation progressed we found that we had not achieved what we thought we had in the area of participation. Our most important lesson was realizing that the project was not a technically focused project. It really was a political project. It was not a project about trees, but about the distribution of political and economic power.

By December of 1992, some major issues threatened the very life of the project. In three days the legislature essentially legalized illegal logging. The Forestry Service of Ministry of Agriculture was using its licensing authority not to control lumbering, but to raise revenue. There was a direct relationship between the Forestry Service presence and deforestation. CONAP representatives in the Pet had been attacked and beaten in one instance, probably with participation by the military, and a number of the CONAP employees working in the area had not been paid. Mayors were protesting their perceived loss of control. And while the project was having significant micro-successes, particularly in working with communities, it appeared to be facing a macro-disaster. In other words, the project was not affecting the deforestation of the area.

At the national level, the problem with our approach was that the support we had developed was extremely narrow and largely confined to Guatemala City. The legislature was nonrepresentative. Votes were for sale. There was a lot of balancing of interests and trading off of favors.

So we in USAID were confusing mandate with the appearance of mandate. While we had the

support of a very small number of influential people--visionaries--we had no clear national mandate. Our political support was compromised.

We had consulted extensively with the people in the Pet, but it was all USAID. As I said, my staff and a few contractors had spent a great deal of time in the Pet. What was missing was the Guatemalan side of the equation. Although we developed a program that effectively took community concerns into account, the solutions we devised were based on our interpretations of their reality.

The planning process tended to be relatively isolated and leadership focused. We were very dependent on a very small number of people on the Guatemalan side who were subject to being swayed by competing visions of the project; some saw it as an environmental protection project, others as an economic resource project.

Another factor in the planning process was USAID's strong desire to do this project. AID-Washington wanted us to do it, the U.S. PVO community wanted us to do it, and the mission wanted to do it. Given the USAID project framework, certain decisions and time frames preclude greater participation, especially for projects viewed so favorably on the USAID side.

The year between the initial signing of the project and implementation led to a certain demoralization. It was too lengthy. The competitive grant process is lengthy, frustrating for all concerned. Add to that the time it takes to mobilize resources and put them in place once the grants are awarded. There was a long delay, and USAID had no clear counterparts working in the area. That led to the perception, especially in the Pet, that nothing was happening. Unfortunately the Pet was only too familiar with a lot of planning and nothing ever happening.

Management decentralization was ineffective. CONAP leadership changed five times in the Pet and three times in Guatemala City. Decentralization of resources was also ineffective. It was difficult to force resources through the funnel from Guatemala City up into the Pet. We could never persuade Guatemalan leadership in the capital city to focus on the Pet, to get out there themselves, to be part of the project. Again, USAID staff tended to be the ones who were engaged, to bridge the gap.

In terms of balancing stakeholder interests, there was a significant mobilization of opposition forces as the project began to look like it might be successful. For example, the passage of the Logging Extraction Law I mentioned earlier totally undermined our efforts. And in the absence of a Guatemalan political arena to play out these conflicts of interests, we in USAID found ourselves trying to balance stakeholder interests.

The basic question was, whose reform project was this? Was it really ours, or was it theirs? Did we care too much? Did we push the project farther and faster than we should have? In our haste to obligate funds and to get going on a project "everyone wanted," did we fail to understand and identify the political dynamics of the situation? And were we too focused on micro successes and not focused enough on really achieving the broader elements of the program?

Discussion Session

Diane La Voy: We count on all of you to provide the rest of the program. I would like the audience to consider the question: What could USAID have done differently?

Terry Brown has laid out very interestingly a case that looked good but wasn't quite as good as it looked initially. If that sounds familiar to you, we would like to hear your suggestions.

Working for a Consensus Among Donors

Tobey Pierce: From your presentation, I conclude that the community participation part seems to have gone well, but the public sector seems to be where the problem lies. In other countries where we've had success on the ground but have been hampered by lack of public policy will,

we've worked on donor coordination. The idea is to develop a powerful consensus among government donors and NGOs. It would seem that if the [World Bank](#), the [Inter-American Development Bank](#), and the other bilaterals had all said the same thing, that approach might have had some promise.

Developing Broader-Based Constituencies

Terry Brown: Although there were not many donors actively involved in Guatemala, the concept of developing broader-based constituencies and taking experience on the ground and applying it back to the political level is extremely important. Initially the project tended to be technically focused. We needed to understand the nature of the political issues in the Pet and to deal with the issue of the military. The United States had cut off military assistance to Guatemala, so it was difficult for us to get support for the program from the military. We might have attempted to mobilize political support in Guatemala City by increasing the visibility of certain issues and concerns. The president was trying to use an environmental cover: we might have been able to use the threat of his being embarrassed by public sector failures to make key changes.

Building Guatemalan Capacity to Press for Policy Change

Jeanne North: I think that your ultimate objective in Guatemala was to promote a process in which not only the USAID people but also interested people in the country would learn about the province, a process in which the nongovernmental people would impact positively on the government and vice versa. It seems to me that looking for opportunities to start such a process would be one thing to do early on.

Pairing with Counterparts

Jim Nations: As a representative of Conservation International, one of the PVOs involved in the project, I would make three recommendations for improving the process next time. First, during the initial planning, USAID brought in a team of 17 specialists from the United States. If each of those specialists had had a Guatemalan counterpart, the planning team would have been a "duplicated" process. As it was, some Guatemalans felt as if the ultimate design was produced by USAID alone.

Seeking Consistency Among Policies

Second, the rest of U.S. policy and other institutions' policies should be brought into sync with USAID's policies. The same might be said for multilateral agencies. For example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is currently trying to relocate Guatemalan refugees from Mexico in the middle of the national parks of the Maya Biosphere Reserve. That's not in the interest of the refugees, of Guatemala, or of Central America as a whole.

Countering Special Interests Through Information Campaigns

The third point is that the local people, the rural families most directly affected by natural resource use and by the project, are the project's strongest supporters. The people who resist change are those whose livelihoods are threatened by the success of the project. That includes some in the military who are involved in illegal timber, wildlife, and archaeological trade and drug running and the loggers and large landowners, who are more interested in cattle ranching than in the conservation of tropical forests. One way to counter these special interests is to increase the spread of information among the local population. The analogy is that when the lights go on, the rats tend to scurry. In this case, information is the light that we need to spread among the rural population of the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

Involving All Concerned Sectors

Joan Gooden: From what I knew about this project, three sectors seem not actively involved: municipal governments, the military, and the church. I was just in the area and our conversations with mayors and auxiliary mayors confirmed our impression that they were not engaged.

As for the military, I realize that finding a way for them to participate is a real challenge, not just in Guatemala, but in many countries, and particularly in Latin America. When I got back from my field trip, the deputy director of the mission told me that the mission was working with the Strategic Studies Institute, where both military and civilians are taking a course that includes an environmental component. This might be a step towards helping the military figure out how to play another role in society.

The third sector is the church, and not just the Catholic Church. Clearly the evangelicals have been champion organizers in the Pet. It seems to me their involvement would be important because of the influence they have. I would be interested in your reactions to these observations.

Terry Brown: Your comments are very interesting. I guess I would say that what the project lacked from the beginning was a good stakeholder analysis. For example, one of the things that we eventually did but could have done earlier was to shift \$100,000 of the \$200,000 small grants fund for communities from the highlands to the Pet. That gave the mayors some small resources (\$5,000 to \$10,000) to deal with. That was a very low-cost way to give the municipal governments some stake in the project. The military was a key target audience, but we focused on them very late.

Lack of counterparts or an indigenous presence in that area continued to haunt the project. One of the NGOs now is trying to establish a Guatemalan counterpart organization. But it is still too much us and not enough of them, except at the community level.

Being Open to Reformulation of the Problem

Frank Method: What I found most telling about this case were your remarks about how much you and Washington and other influential people wanted this project. Two observations about this. One, the lesson that I heard in the discussion of the Malawi experience as recounted in the April Forum was that participation focused on defining the problem and led to a reformulation of the problem as originally defined by USAID.

Second, I liked what Larry Byrne said about managing with a degree of tolerance for risk and learning from the process, but the analogies that he drew with 3M and others that work with an awareness that they don't know today what products they will be producing five years from now doesn't apply to what we're doing in USAID. In this Maya Biosphere project the mission did not really have the option of following the lead if participation had led to the formulation of a different problem or to some activity in the Pet that put some other priority ahead of deforestation abatement.

Allowing Time for Democratic Processes to Take Root

Brian Housefield: I'm from the Nature Conservancy and, like Jim Nations, I have been with this project since the beginning. It is important to keep in mind that the Maya Biosphere Reserve is part of a much larger contiguous forest that spans three nations. Five years ago, when we began this process, throughout Central America and in much of Mexico, democracy was only a glimmer in some people's eyes. Today, thanks partly to USAID, the area is gradually democratizing. When Cerezo's government came in, USAID grasped an opportunity to set aside a large conservation area and perhaps moved a little bit too fast in terms of local community participation. However, with democracy just coming back in after 30 years of dictatorship, there weren't any social institutions that we could call democratic. Democracy is a learning process that has to occur at both the community level and at the highest levels in government. The Guatemalans working on this project are beginning to understand that they can actually stand up and voice an opinion at a public forum without fear.

The important lesson here for USAID is continuity of effort. Life of project and moving a lot of money fast and success in terms of dollars spent have very little to do with success on the ground.

Terry Brown: I agree that we tend to get trapped in project frameworks. One of the advantages of strategic planning is that we may be able to get longer-term commitments around broader

objectives and to shift resources as we learn from our successes and failures. The project in the Pet is not a six-year activity; it's a much longer process than that.

Assuring the Participation of Women

Jenna Luche: It's unclear to me how gender roles or responsibilities are reflected in participation at the community level.

Terry Brown: Conservation International, in its work on economic issues, has adopted a family-based approach, with the emphasis on roles within families and economic opportunities for females. Thus the project clearly addresses gender issues. From that perspective the project is one of the most effective that I've seen in Guatemala.

Working with Local Governments

Mike Gallavan: I just want to address one of the dozens of interesting issues your presentation raised: the unreliability of bureaucratic counterparts. The obvious point is that they tend to come and go quite rapidly. Given the near universality of that phenomenon and the transition to democracy, I think we in USAID need to rethink what a counterpart is. Perhaps elected officials at the local level could be considered counterparts. By its nature, a project like the Maya Biosphere Reserve goes to a certain part of the country, and we could look for the most promising elected officials or local governments there to work with. These officials are in office for a longer period than most of our central bureaucratic counterparts are, and, because they usually live in the project area, they have a commitment to it that central bureaucrats, who come from the national capitals, seldom have.

Terry Brown: As a direct result of experience in two projects--this one as well as a 10-year activity in watershed management--we in USAID Guatemala gave up on the public sector. We looked at natural resources as an objective rather than a project, for a year, trying to figure out bureaucratically how to avoid national structures and go to the community level, specifically mayors and community councils. We got ourselves so wrapped around accountability issues that, in frustration, we chose another model, which was using a U.S. PVO structure to get to the community level. I think USAID needs an instrument, or point of access, that will make it possible for us to engage fully, especially at the community level and especially through political structures.

Bringing Stakeholders Together to Resolve Issues

Ken Schofield: Were there any organizations or people in the Pet that could have the power of convocation to bring the stakeholders together to talk about some of the political issues involved?

Terry Brown: Attempts were made, but the most difficult stakeholders either did not attend or were not interested. One of the most corrupt legislators in the Guatemalan Congress was from the Pet. He was the one who proposed the law that if a tree had been cut, it could be extracted from the forest without a license. So the chain saw sales in the Pet skyrocketed. The military and the logging interests were probably the two most serious stakeholders. It was difficult to get access to them, especially for a non-Guatemalan. Furthermore, participation has up until just recently been discouraged in Guatemala. In the early 1980s, especially in rural areas, assuming a leadership role was a death sentence. That mentality of repression still continued. The situation was even worse in the Pet, because until the Cerezo government, it had been a military reserve with no civilian institutions at all.

Getting Local Talent Involved

Diana Putman: In some countries USAID has moved beyond reliance on the public sector by using local talent throughout the design, planning, and implementation process. In Tunisia, we discovered that even when the local talent didn't help very much in writing up a report or getting paper work done, getting them interested and on board meant that a much broader batch of people heard about what was going on. Also, continuing to use these consultants built up local expertise. When USAID left Tunisia, it left behind a cadre of local consultants that continued to work with other donors and to spread the philosophy of participation and working on the social

side of things. Does that kind of talent exist in Guatemala?

Terry Brown: Your point is very well taken in differentiating between local capacity to write our pieces of paper and local capacity to manage and carry out programs.

The (U.S.) NGOs have been relatively successful in identifying people in the Pet to work on the programs. But they were less successful in identifying counterparts that could bridge the resource gap between Guatemala City and the Pet.

Focusing More on the Demand Side in Natural Resources Policy

_____ : Did you consider working on the demand side rather than the supply side in addressing the question of a national forestry policy? For example, West Africa is faced with Europe's year 2000 requirement that imported products be "green." In one instance USAID approached protection of the West African tropical forest by helping an association of sawmill operators to meet the requirements of the year 2000. Guatemala is very different, but it still may be possible to look downstream at who is using the forestry projects.

Terry Brown: At least one Guatemalan furniture manufacturer was basing his business on certifying that any wood used came from a cultivated rather than a natural forest. So I think more of a demand approach might be taken. On the other hand, based on earlier policies, USAID Guatemala financed a sawmill about four years ago, the biggest sawmill in the Pet, thus creating a problem for ourselves in the Maya Biosphere Reserve project.

Strengthening Social Science Analysis

Diane La Voy: These comments and suggestions will give us all a lot to think about, but I notice that we may be coming up short when it comes to suggesting how to deal with the difficult issues of the military. We're faced with the question of how to promote policy change where the military, though not as actively repressive as they once were, are still feared.

Christina Schoux: I'm just struck by how many of the problems of the project were related to participation and stakeholder issues, and wonder if we have gotten away too far from what we used to call social soundness analysis. I worry that, as USAID looks at diminishing some of its project design requirements, we might be in danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water. As we look at projects in democracy, micro enterprise, health, environment, and so forth, sociopolitical analyses need to be rethought and brought back into greater prominence.

Terry Brown: I went back to the project paper to look at the technical and social analysis and found that there wasn't a word about these kinds of issues--not that they weren't in the heads of the people who put this together.

Guatemala wasn't a small mission, but we had only one U.S. direct hire, a PASA, and a Guatemalan professional working on the project. They were so wrapped up in doing the kind of work that contractors can't do on the process side of the program and establishing the linkage between the community and Guatemala City, that they did not have time to conduct a sociopolitical analysis. They were frustrated by not having the time to be more effective in that area. USAID missions are not staffed to look at the behavioral dimensions of what we're doing. Our two direct hires found themselves totally stressed out because of the extensive traveling in the Pet and USAID bureaucratic requirements.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

The following excerpts are taken from the many e-mail comments received. Several took their cue from Terry Brown by examining some USAID experiences and perceptions with a critical eye.

Lessons from Policy Reforms in Tunisia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Cameroon

Tim Miller: Last year we did a study through the ISPAN Project called "Contrasting Approaches for Water Policy Development in Tunisia and Sri Lanka." We wanted to find out how successful each policy effort had been and what went right and what went wrong. As it turned out the effort in Tunisia had far more immediate success than the one in Sri Lanka. Reviewers thought the effort in Sri Lanka might have a payoff in the longer term and, in this regard, we have just been informed by USAID/Colombo that some of the recommendations have found their way into recent legislation.

The objective in Tunisia was to develop and implement a national strategy (Action Plan) for forming and monitoring viable water users associations. Over the longer term, these structures would serve as institutional bases for locally initiated community-development activities. Some features of the experience were: occurred within an appropriate macroeconomic and legal framework; based on replicable field-tested models; all major parties viewed policy changes as desirable and the implementation process generated no significant group of "losers"; process directed by a core of well-trained, experienced, and motivated Government of Tunisia officials; process designed to be iterative, flexible, and consultative; other major donors actively supported the process.

Dick Brown: Policy reforms are successful if they have clients within the Government who need and can use the policy analysis -- and the recommendations serve their development objectives (and often their political needs) in a timely manner.

Failures are usually attributable to being "externally driven" policy changes (often by donor agencies), having insufficient support or will within the Government ("ownership"), lacking sufficient analysis to make the economic (and political) arguments, not being timely, or being presented inappropriately (using a two by four rather than a velvet glove).

Failures are also relative. We conducted in Sri Lanka a particularly difficult policy change relating to participatory management of irrigation systems. The exercise involved numerous studies and periodic workshops with the senior-most policy makers from the "competing" ministries. Through this gradual process we were able to successfully achieve a high degree of consensus amongst the participants. We had intended that this would lead to legislation in late 1991. The Government found it difficult to approve the "large pill" but most of the participants saw the value of the approach and without legislation began to move to implement many of the exercise's recommendations. I just received word from the Mission and the primary Government policy makers that legislation will be approved by the cabinet next week. The policy reform effort has produced a change in irrigation management as well as in promulgation of new law.

Keep up the good work. You have successfully established "participation" as an important part of the Mission (and Agency) lexicon. And while I believe we were already doing quite a good job before intuitively, we now make it an explicit part of our design and implementation process.

Frank Young: What essential lessons have we learned from doing "policy reform" in Bangladesh?

- It is a long-term process. Effective policy reform takes a decade, even longer to assure institutional commitment and sustainability. It takes this long because policy reform means building alliances with senior policy makers and bureaucrats at the operational level who share the same reform agenda. These alliances must evolve into networks which stretch outside of government into private interest groups so that policy change is transparent and accountable.
- Policy reform and change are not linear. One has to expect recidivism and even failure for a while. This is because entrenched groups don't give up easily. Donor coordination is important, but the strategy has to be how to strengthen the alliances and networks we are nurturing.
- Policy reform FAILS if it doesn't have a clear vision of who in society it is benefiting, and why. Unless the benefit stream of reform is identified and pursued, the reform program will lose power. Here risk-taking is important. Beneficiaries, however, must understand the risks they take as well.
- Effective policy dialogue must be between equals (partnership). Both donors and host country organizations (public and private) must bring legitimate interests to the table and deal from respective positions of strength. The process is, after all, negotiation.

USAID, in many cases, can play only a catalytic role. This role focuses sympathetic quarters in society and our donor colleagues on the essential issues and brings the technical expertise to bear to analyze and surface major issues and alternatives. In this sense, achievements are not ours alone, but then if building effective alliances and networks is a critical ingredient to sustainable reform, this is the way it should be.

David Eckerson: Policy change that works depends on a lot of things going right at the right time, or a lot of things going wrong at the right time. We, as outsiders, can catalyze the process, but not lead or direct it.

In Cameroon, when the GOC integrated nutrition into their five-year development plan, the most critical element was the interpersonal dynamic of committed people (who were friends) guiding a process to make life better for others in need.

Recognizing Politics in Development

Anonymous Correspondent: I had a 5-year tour in Egypt during the last years of Sadat's tenure and the first of Mubarak's. Egypt's status as an important ESF country created some unique problems. The Egyptians knew we had obligation targets and that the country was a State Department program. USAID staff members were much respected by our counterparts, but the history of the program taught the counterparts that they could largely ignore us on policy issues.

These initial conditions encouraged USAID to adopt a narrow technical perspective on its programs. USAID/Egypt was similar to other countries in which I served, in that Mission staff dealt with their counterparts primarily as technicians rather than (also) as politicians. This perspective was easier to adopt in Egypt because only two or three ministers had independent power bases; the others were technicians.

As policy issues assumed greater visibility (in large part through the World Bank and IMF), USAID discovered it lacked policy-dialogue counterparts -- that is, mainline ministries didn't have market-oriented economists. This awareness led to a Ph.D.-generating program managed by the Minister of Administrative Reform (Egypt's OPM), which seems to have been based on the questionable assumption that a reform mafia would be created within key ministries and that these technicians could, qua technicians, effect significant reforms. This apolitical perspective also seemed to assume that the (American-Ph.D.) Minister in charge of the program would adopt a narrow technical approach to the abundant resources provided him. Instead, I believe this minister used USAID's resources to build his own political base, as he had lots of favors to dispense. The Minister's goodies were primarily graduate fellowships and the larger training program included in this single project package.

I think AID would (and will) do better if we recognize that development is a political issue and that our counterparts stand in different positions on the map of political power and influence. If we are going to reward counterparts with disposable "project" resources, let's at least reward those who can make a policy difference.

Later, I served in two countries where my responsibilities led to work with counterparts in their role as politicians in ways that affected economic development. In both countries, we were able to help change the political system by building mechanisms and structures that allowed political opening, accountability and transparency. My ambassadors in both countries were supportive of this approach.

Perhaps the least we can do is to require Missions to politically map their countries, to relate projects and programs to this map, and to justify approaches to policy dialogue and reform according to the map.

Finally, it is normal for the Ambassador to restrict contacts with the PM, President, and (in some instances) the legislature to the Ambassador himself/herself. Recognizing that policy reform is a political process and issue, this division of privileges between State and AID warrants review and change. We may have created a structure that severely inhibits successful policy dialogue and reform.

The Learning Organization

Frank Method: It is true that USAID is reorganizing to manage differently, and that the management culture of USAID is becoming more open to learning from experience and more able to make mid-course corrections in the process. I do not think that we are creating either an organization structure or a management culture which is open to learning about new products or taking on new challenges.

My view reflects a particular frustration with the difficulty of getting adequate attention to issues of children and child development (which get buried and marginalized because they require non-standard and multi-sector approaches and do not yield easily to vertical reporting and management structures) and to issues of education and human capacity development (which are cross-cutting in nature with multiple external benefits and which therefore are not fully captured in any one of the new conceptual or organizational boxes of the sustainable development strategies). However, it also reflects a more general concern that the new organization is under-investing in research and analysis (not just evaluation and monitoring), is not sufficiently interactive with other organizations and agencies working on related topics, has not yet created forums in which new technical possibilities (not just management options and process changes) can be discussed seriously, and has not absorbed the lessons from the corporate community of what it means to be a learning organization engaged in continuous improvement and continuous product development.

Toni Christiansen-Wagner: A major way USAID can learn from our experiences is through the use of better communications about what has worked and what hasn't. Many times our experiences are shared within a Bureau but not within the Agency. The old bureaucratic structure made it difficult, if not impossible, to share experiences; but as in the case of demobilization and reconstruction efforts, we should do a better job of sharing information in the form of lessons learned so that we can plan programs that may have a higher success rate. We should also think of ways to exchange information with other donors on topics of interest and their experience in dealing with them.

William Miner: Until the last session of the Participation Forum, all that I had heard about Terry Brown's experience in Guatemala with promoting and leading the participatory approach to development program design and implementation had been extremely positive and laudatory. Thus, it was quite an eye-opener to hear his retrospective presentation. The shortcomings and the possible explanations thereof were not startling or unusual; in fact, they sounded rather familiar.

I applaud him and you for the presentation. The Agency finds it difficult to look at the past, even more so if there is not a success story to tell.

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

May 19, 1994

The Participation Forum (No. 5)

Breathing New Life into Old Projects

June 16, 1994

The stories told by the two presenters at the fifth session of the Participation Forum began similarly: health projects whose evaluations showed a lack of "ownership" by the host government and local communities. Barbara Sandoval, former Mission Director in Belize and future Mission Director in Ghana, spoke about Belize's successful effort to realign a community-level program that had achieved its numerical targets but had not built an institutional foundation. Stella Goings, a physician specializing in public health and infectious diseases at [Johns Hopkins University](#) who has been seconded to the USAID staff in Nigeria through the Quality Assurance Project, described how participation was used to redesign two large health projects.

Ramon Daubon, Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, kicked off the session. The presentations were followed by a lively question and answer session.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Sustainability and Participation

Ramon Daubon

What attracted me to come to USAID was the agency's emphasis on sustainable development and the notion that development cannot be sustainable unless host country citizens are committed to it and engaged and vested in it. USAID's Strategies for Sustainable Development says "Development is 'sustainable' when it permanently enhances the capacity of a society to improve its quality of life." That's what we do. We don't do projects; we make communities better able to deal with their own problems.

Building the notion of participation into projects is probably the greatest contribution USAID can make to the countries we work in. Citizens may participate directly in the design and implementation of projects. But their engagement does not end there. Even in large infrastructure projects, citizens must be engaged in fundamental decision-making and priority setting. They may not be engaged in the design and siting of a bridge, but they should be involved in decisions about whether or not it makes sense to have a bridge at all. Every project has an opportunity cost: the money, human resources, and good will could have been invested in something else.

I believe that participation is indispensable to development, but I wonder to what extent the expectation of measurable results conflicts with the leeway that is indispensable to program participation. Measurable results, by their nature, need to be consequent and orderly; whereas democracy is unpredictable and messy.

Based on the few field visits I've been able to make, I believe that USAID mission personnel appreciate the essential role of participation. They are eager to learn more about how to program participation in specific activities and they wonder if Washington will give them the room to do it.

Getting Down to Basics in Belize

Barbara Sandoval

Belize is an extremely small country with a population of only 200,000, although culturally it's very diverse. USAID started there in 1983 with some very broad-based interventions and will be closing out in September 1996. Overall we can count it as a major success for the agency.

The "Increased Productivity Through Better Health" project, or IPTBH, began in March 1985. Its original purpose was to assist in malaria and dengue control and to expand water and sanitation in rural areas. A 1989 evaluation of the project found that, while USAID and the government of Belize had achieved our numerical targets (number of latrines built, houses sprayed, health education messages delivered) the project did not appear to have built an institutional foundation, sense of ownership, or lasting impact.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Natural Resources had both done all the things they were supposed to do under the project but had not done much in terms of community development. Instead of just finishing the project and ending our work in the health sector, we decided to see what we could do in the very last year of this project to make its impact as long-lasting as possible.

Revamping the Project

We took steps to switch our approach. We contracted with the Water and Sanitation for Health (WASH) and the Vector Biology and Control (VBC) projects for assistance in planning interventions with the people who were our colleagues, our clients. The first step was for those who were responsible for the implementation of the project to define the problem. These were mid-level people: the directors of health education, primary health care, vector control, water supply and sanitation. The two-day problem definition meeting for these people was very tense. They didn't know quite what was expected of them, and we in the mission didn't know quite what was going to come out of it. In the end they defined two major problems. One was their dysfunctional bureaucratic structure. The other was poor communication--downwards, upwards, sideways. District teams did not go to the communities; the central level did not support the district teams; health education consisted merely of canned talks; and there were no linkages among the volunteers and committees working at the community level on separate issues.

After defining the problems, they went out and gathered data to clarify the problems further and to identify the next steps. They sought to understand the different sorts of communications and different values in the communities and also surveyed to find out what skill areas were missing: What did people who were working in the program need to know how to do? Through a more formalized data-gathering process for the communities, they found out what community members' behavior was in reality.

Once the data had been gathered and the communities talked to, another meeting was held for program planning. The idea was to inform the senior level people in the two ministries what it was that the mid-level people had learned and to develop some clear objectives and strategies for achieving them.

The mid-level people had gotten very energized by all of the information they had gathered and excited about what they could do at the district level in other communities. But they had a great deal of trepidation about how to explain this to their bosses, that is, the permanent secretaries and the higher-ups in their organizations. But after the program planning meeting the mid-level people were ecstatic about the results and said, "We finally have learned how to talk to our bosses." Everyone bought into the process.

New Behaviors, New Relationships

The last step in revamping the project was to do training-of-trainers to spread information and make everyone involved into an enabler rather than a provider. As you know, health workers often

see themselves as providing a service. They provide a well or primary health care. Through training we hoped to show them how to help people in the communities take charge of some of their problems themselves.

Training was short-term--nothing more than a week. The technical advisors came in and left district staff with homework assignments and then returned to give another short training course and homework assignment. Our colleagues and clients were pleased to see the same advisors come back, and it inspired them to participate more fully in the next level of training.

The behavioral analysis mentioned earlier led to the development of more effective health education messages. For example, the project had put in a lot of wells, but it turned out that many of the villagers did not care to drink the well water. They preferred rainwater, which they collected in catchment tanks. There was no problem with that except that once a year they painted the insides of these tanks with lead-based paint. These findings led to the design of interventions that no one had thought about before.

Information on the conditions and needs of the villagers was collected and expressed through the village health committees, which had formerly been inactive for the most part. Asking the residents about their needs empowered and strengthened these committees.

We also worked hard on the teamwork approach. Instead of the water people going off to community X all by themselves and doing water, they would go together with the malaria and health education people as a team. This would lead to greater efficiency and a lot less confusion among community people. The various health providers, by the simple act of travelling together, saw immediate positive results from their visits and also learned the value of each other's work.

Another effort was directed toward developing an information system. No one had been keeping track at the community level of what the health problems were and feeding that information back into decision-making.

Policymakers had to interact with the mid-level people every three months. In this way they became involved with what was going on within their own ministries as well as the communities. This cyclical process was advantageous for the communities as well. Policymakers would come by, ask them what they thought, do something, and then return and complete the process.

Institutionalizing the Approach

Eventually, the project was extended to complete the process of institutionalizing the new approach. It culminated in the development of a policy paper written by the mid-level people and presented to the chief bosses, the permanent secretaries. They all realized that they should not fall back into old patterns and canned solutions. They learned that it was possible to formulate policy by starting with the community and working through the middle level.

Because Belize is such a small country, the few people in permanent-secretary-level positions have a lot of responsibility. Getting them to put in extra time for the participatory approach was difficult. It called for USAID to be flexible, to give and take, to know when to back off or when to devote more resources on something that hadn't been in our original plan.

We also felt a need to keep Washington out. Part way through the process, some of our colleagues in Washington tried to force certain indicators on us to measure the project. These were unrelated to the capacity-building process we were going through. We said, "That's not what we're about right now. We have only five or six months left in this project, and we are not going to change course now. Goodbye. Thank you. Don't call us. We'll call you."

In the end, we had products: papers, meetings, a record of what we did. Is that a measure of sustainability? I don't know. But I do know that a year after project completion the methodology is still being used. The health teams are still working. We do know that they're involving the communities, that the interactive visits are still going on. And another donor is picking up where we left off to expand the program. (I don't know if I'd count that on the plus side or not, but it's so.)

Lessons Learned

False participation temporarily enlists input from community members but fails to build capacity or ensure sustainability. Many organizations involved in water supply, for example, go into a community and dig a well and then expect the community to "participate" later on by maintaining the well. If the community had no say about the well in the first place, it's a little hard to count on its subsequent participation.

Genuine community participation is a long-term process aimed at developing leadership, technical skills, and social cohesion as well as achieving specific project benefits. The fact that our Belizian counterparts had the experience of working differently together in their communities may lead to other initiatives or changes. Certainly, at a minimum, more participation will strengthen Belizian democracy.

Ownership of a project should ultimately be transferred to local institutions. This sounds obvious, but is not always easy to do. We have to learn to step back.

Policy development can and should be included as a component of any community participation project. Policy dialogue and reform are often viewed as high-level, while community development is field or ground level. In Belize we found that the two levels had to be married. What was developed and learned at the community level had an impact on the policy level.

The next lessons are specific to community-level health projects.

A dual approach is called for, one which not only teaches health workers the skills necessary to operate successfully at the village level but also focuses on the development of the district team itself.

Establishing village health committees is a good way to decentralize the health care system. They can certainly empower the people to take responsibility for their own health and their own behavior.

Increased attention should be focused on the quality of work at the district level, because that leads to the development of viable community institutions. In many countries, even those that talk about decentralization, the district level personnel often get short shrift.

Mid-level program managers also have a central role in assuring the quality of service provided at the community level. This project started to yield results at the community level when mid-level people became fully involved. Prior to this effort, mid-level managers saw their role as distant "gate keepers" or "policemen," but they learned through this process what kind of impact they could and should have.

I'll conclude with the most obvious, but perhaps the most significant lesson of all. Genuine community participation is not easy, fast, or inexpensive.

Securing Nigerian Ownership As a Part of the Project Paper Development Process

Stella Goings

During the last few years the USAID programs in Nigeria have been working in a challenging environment. Nigeria's economy has been in free fall for some months. There have been four ministers of health in the last two years. Political unrest is a constant factor, and our USAID programs were recently, and we hope temporarily, disrupted as a consequence of decertification for drug-trafficking. Nevertheless, we believe that we have demonstrated substantial progress in effectively engaging the broad fabric of Nigerian society in planning and implementing our programs.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and it has one of the worst health and demographic

profiles of any country in the world. The entire list of difficulties and obstacles to the delivery of health and population programs can be applied to Nigeria. Nigeria's population has grown very rapidly. The country has approximately five million births a year. Even with a substantial out-migration and high mortality rates, the population is growing by about three million persons per year.

USAID Lagos supports three core health programs: one in health with the focus on maternal and child health care and communicable disease control, another in AIDS prevention being implemented by AIDSCAP, and a third in population: the new Family Health Services Project currently under review. The three projects are designed to work together in support of an integrated program of service delivery. The redesign process that I will describe began during the developmental stage for the NCCCD project, but the real breakthrough in participation occurred later in the development of the project paper for the Family Health Services Project. This process has been evolutionary, with the mission staff responding to lessons learned and adjusting the art of collaboration as we engaged in the process.

Making Changes Based on an Honest Evaluation

USAID Lagos began by critically examining its experience with health and family planning to extract lessons learned. I was privileged to direct the sustainability assessment of the NCCCD project. The assessment team received only one operative instruction from the mission director: "Provide an honest evaluation." The team came back with 17 recommendations, some of which were critical of USAID's failure to engage the government of Nigeria in project development and implementation. Much to our amazement and delight, the USAID mission staff responded almost immediately by shifting the frame of reference and the process for proceeding with the new Family Health Services Project.

Taking It on the Chin in Town Meetings

To initiate the process, USAID convened a series of workshops, which resembled town meetings. Mission staff, consultants, and host country counterparts spent time away from Lagos in an environment conducive to an open-ended exploration of the issues. We tried to make these meetings inclusive. Government counterparts attended, along with representatives from key PVOs and NGOs and the private sector. We worked to identify constituency and interest groups, such as traditional leaders, women's groups, journalists, and others. Any group that expressed an interest in the development of these projects was given the opportunity to participate.

These meetings were nothing short of courageous. Both Nigerian and USAID attendees were encouraged to speak out openly about issues that they felt were important. A basic ground rule was that no topic was off limits, and USAID did not attempt to structure the dialogue. As a consequence, both USAID and the government of Nigeria had to be willing to listen to some very pointed complaints and concerns and to discuss issues of causation and proposed remedies. While some barbs were slung at USAID, the people who really demonstrated tremendous personal courage in participating were Nigerian government officials. The Nigerian people, and especially the private sector and NGO groups, were angry about what they saw as a lack of progress, and they did not mince words. Some government officials had to take it on the chin.

The Project Paper Development Process

Prior to the redesign process, USAID Nigeria had completed a country program strategy plan (CPSP) based on a high-level dialogue between Nigerian and U.S. officials. This provided a framework for the development of subsequent project papers. Therefore, the task at hand was to find the best way to accomplish USAID Nigeria's program objective tree and to develop projects which would support the development of those objectives.

To follow up on the planning workshops, USAID supported an on-going forum for extended dialogue and the consideration of issues and suggestions that had arisen during the original meetings. Nigerian and U.S. staff were encouraged to work together to develop program critiques and initiative papers proposing creative solutions and new approaches. USAID effectively limited its role to one of supportive participation, making sure that the mission perspectives were heard without dominating the process.

Administratively, the process was orchestrated by a team of three U.S.-based external consultants who facilitated the town meetings with about 63 participants, an 18-member technical advisory group, and a smaller subcommittee of core writers. The technical advisory group was nominated by the participants during the town meeting process. In other words, it was the Nigerians who decided among themselves who the members of the technical advisory group should be. In turn, the technical advisory group decided internally on the membership of an eight-person core writing group. With the aid of facilitators, these eight people did the majority of the work in close collaboration with the larger group. Several opportunities were planned for the core writing group to share ideas with the members of the technical advisory group.

The core writing group was extremely productive thanks in part to administrative support provided by USAID. We assigned office space and gave the core group the freedom to hire secretarial staff. We provided a dictaphone to allow people who would normally have difficulty using a word processor to dictate what they wanted to say. The result was production of a compilation of background documents authored entirely by Nigerian participants early in the project paper development process. As we like to say in Nigeria, if you want Nigerians to be with you when you get off the plane in Borno, you have to have them with you when you get on the plane in Lagos.

Long-Term Ownership

The USAID team focused on fostering dialogue and a sense of ownership in the project paper development process. It was made clear to our Nigerian colleagues that they would be expected to serve in a long-term capacity as an advisory group for the life of the project and would periodically be asked to examine and realign project activities in response to shifting political and economic realities and performance assessment. Everyone understood that the advisors and the Nigerian collaborators shared with USAID responsibility for insuring the success of the USAID project.

When the draft documents were finished, we received excellent support and assistance from REDSO, the Office of Population, and the [Global Bureau](#). Our backstop officer in Washington ran interference for us early on, defended our vision of the participatory process, and then helped us to get the best inputs from Washington. The reviews and comments that came in were shared with our Nigerian colleagues who were fully a part of the project development team.

Elements of Success

We have identified a few factors that contributed to the success of this process.

The process was inclusive. We made a concerted effort to identify those who had a need or interest and then worked to secure their involvement.

We had a flexible time line. Without that we would not have been able to develop such a good participatory process. Because our core funds come from the Development Fund for Africa, we had the latitude to negotiate several project extensions, and this was key to having sufficient time to work on the participatory aspects of project paper development. However, because we've learned so much about participation in Nigeria, we do not anticipate that future project papers would require such a flexible time line.

Our efforts were self-directed with respect to the topics considered and the approaches to project development. We were assured that, even though a project initiation document (PID) had been developed, if we thought there was a better way, we were free to suggest it and to write it into the project paper.

The three-person technical team who facilitated the Nigerian group had collectively more than 25 years of experience in Nigeria, much of it external to USAID. These advisors came to the task with well-developed, warm, and supportive relationships with people in many different sectors of society, and their presence added to the credibility of the effort early on.

The Family Health Services Project Paper that resulted is still being reviewed, but we think it's very good. The original drafts and background documents were authored by Nigerians, and they

were responsible for a substantial redirection of the project design and for proposed approaches and mechanisms of implementation that are uniquely Nigerian. However, the most important result is that we have fostered a sustainable partnership. The Nigerians who worked with us are intellectually invested in the project and see themselves as a part of a USAID team that will work to get this project approved and successfully implemented.

During the difficult weeks just past, as we contemplated the possibility that USAID Nigeria might not be able to continue and began to take stock of the sustainable activities we've carried out in Nigeria, there was agreement that this process of dialogue and participatory project development was one of the most sustainable and that its impact extends far beyond the USAID umbrella. The government of Nigeria has, as a consequence of our effort, developed the skills, the capacity, and the desire to have an ongoing dialogue with the people of Nigeria, and the people of Nigeria have, through their representatives, developed a posture of ownership of their health and population programs. If USAID disappears tomorrow, we believe that this process will see Nigeria through difficulties in months to come and will make a very positive contribution to its potential for sustainable development.

Discussion Session

Cost Effectiveness

Q: *Andy Sisson*. I was struck by Barbara's last lesson, that participation has costs, isn't easy, takes time. Could you provide some thoughts on which kinds of participation are cost effective in achieving results like sustainability or ownership?

A: *Barbara Sandoval*. The costliest part of full participation is the community level, even in a very small country like Belize. But it is too important to short change. It's worth whatever the cost is. There may be some tools to minimize the cost of participation, but we now all know for sure that it's effective.

A: *Stella Goings*. There were some substantial costs to the approach that we used in Nigeria: convening workshops, paying for people's travel, per diem. That all mounts up. But when we consider the history of project development in a country like Nigeria and compare the costs involved in assuring the never-ending flow of U.S.-based consultants to come in and write background documents and help write your project paper, we think we got a real bargain by working with our Nigerian counterparts. We don't expect this process to end with the project papers. This same group will be playing a pivotal role in implementation and evaluation. Ultimately, when we tally up the whole thing midway to two-thirds of the way through these new projects, we're going to find that we were extremely cost effective.

A New Paradigm for Host Country Participation

Q: *Andy Sisson*: It seems we're still thinking in terms of USAID projects and trying to get government or people's ownership of these projects. Is there any scope for moving to a new paradigm where the government, working with its civil society, could define much broader strategies and priorities and gain donors' support for its efforts in, say, the health sector or the water sector?

A: *Barbara Sandoval*: In Belize our goal was not to make the project sustainable but to make health provision, and interventions, and institutions, sustainable. When the technical advisors kept talking about the project, I told them, "We're not talking about the project; we're talking about the community's involvement in its own health."

A: *Stella Goings*: In Nigeria the town-meeting scenario was an open forum. Part of the purpose was to foster Nigerian leadership, to allow the Nigerians to decide among themselves and then to tell us what direction they wanted to go in their health and population program. The only constraint was to stay within the health and population sectors. The trouble is that USAID and its programs can respond to Nigerian leadership in a substantial way only during the project development process. For example, in the week before I left Nigeria, I was sitting with some government

officials in Nigeria who were talking about the need to privatize hospital services in Nigeria. This is a very important initiative, but USAID will not have a mechanism to assist them in responding to that for several years. So our problem in Nigeria is that, although we are clearly operating within the new paradigm you describe, we are worried that USAID will not have the ability to respond.

Indicators for Evaluation

Q: *Diane Russell*: During the design process, did you elicit indicators from local people? Did you find out what they saw as successful outcomes to a project? That might be one way of integrating participation and measurement of results. Washington then could be presented with the indicators that the local people see as important.

A: *Stella Goings*: In Nigeria, we had many extended debates about evaluation indicators. The Nigerian input was responsible for many changes in these. If you compare the project initiation document with the family health services project paper, you'll see that the indicators changed substantially, in part in response to Nigerian input. But we took it even further. We've also modified the indicators in our Assessment of Program Impact (API) as a consequence of Nigerian input and suggestions.

Dealing with Conflict

Q: *Robert Mitchell*: In Nigeria the focus has been on finding commonalities and concerns. That is quite different from the next step, actually developing a project, which involves bargaining. NGOs and the government all bargain for a piece of the action, and that's where participation becomes potentially full of conflict. How did you deal with known areas of potential conflict?

A: *Stella Goings*: We had a lot of arguments. Sometimes we resolved the issues and sometimes we didn't. The Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) strategy in the family health services project paper, for example, includes a completely separate strategy for the northern part of the country. We could not resolve issues having to do with the role of some of the NGOs. Areas of conflict were explored: Should this be government or NGO responsibility? What role should religious considerations play? But what we arrived at was a compromise, with the understanding that the Nigerians themselves will make adjustments if the plans do not work out. Measuring the Participatory Process

Q: *Ramon Daubon*: When beneficiaries are engaged, a project is more likely to be successful. But how can we measure the degree of engagement so that we are accountable to the U.S. taxpayer? Even a project that fails to achieve its immediate objective may still manage to generate enough participation so that the people involved can carry on and design a follow-up project on their own. If that capacity is embedded in those people, haven't we succeeded to some extent?

A: *Stella Goings*: In Nigeria we are using a number of objective indicators to measure the success of the participatory approach: The degree to which Nigerian leadership is accomplishing tasks within the project development work plans and implementation of program components without external input are two examples. These and others I could name are indicators of the degree to which the Nigerian community has invested in the project. One of the most interesting indicators is the degree to which Nigeria invests financially in the projects that we have mutually designed and developed.

Q: *Arthur Silver*: It might be of interest to mention USAID's most successful sector-wide or subsector-wide experience in participatory project design and redesign in the area of irrigation and water management. Starting in the 1970s, USAID discovered that the irrigation infrastructure it had built was not being kept up. Sociologists and agronomists and engineers were forced to sit down together and come up with new approaches for projects in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan and others. They found ways to organize water-user associations that made decisions on key questions of water-sharing. There's a body of successful experience on these user associations.

Q: *Julie Sutphen Wechsler* (Inter-American Foundation): How do we know that the American taxpayers want quantitative indicators about the results of development? We come from a fairly math-averse country. However, Americans have the personal experience of participating in local

civic activities and understand what it means. Instead of straitjacketing ourselves with quantitative indicators, perhaps we need to re-evaluate what kind of indicators of development we are going to be reporting to Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, and the taxpayers themselves.

A: *Barbara Sandoval*: Elected officials tell us that Americans want numbers. They go to the store, put their hard-earned money down, and get something -- with a 12-month warranty.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

This month's E-mail highlighted several themes emerging from the Forums. The following are excerpts from the many thoughtful communications.

Advocates for Development

Kristen Loken: "Previous forums have mentioned that USAID needs to reward the 'courage to keep Washington at bay.' It seems to me that we have to become once again ADVOCATES FOR DEVELOPMENT. We must communicate the idea that if the USG wants to have effective development programs that are valued by our counterparts and beneficiaries and that are sustainable and that ultimately benefit the U.S. as well, then the design and management of these programs must be participatory and field directed and take into account the lessons learned from the past. We need country-specific strategies developed together with local counterparts and beneficiaries. And we need to make it understood that trying to transplant American systems in other societies won't work. What will work is to address local problems and develop indigenous systems. This can't be done by a bunch of bureaucrats in Washington. We have to address this message to our colleagues in State and on the Hill."

Pre-Project Homework

Molly Davis: "I know it's not always possible to KNOW beforehand whether a project will be 'successful' or 'sustainable,' but perhaps a pre-project evaluation of potential impact and prospects for sustainability could tell us if the project meets the expected criteria. If it doesn't, then would be the time to re-design it, not half-way through, not at the end. We have Environmental Impact Assessments - why not Sustainability Impact Assessments?"

John Daly: "Why do we have to wait until an evaluation tells us that a project is failing to decide to use a participatory approach? In a recent meeting of the Agency Research Council, John Wilkinson showed that USAID usually started research in a substantive area five to ten years after starting assistance in that area. He suggested that we normally didn't start research until evaluations started showing that projects went wrong from lack of knowledge or understanding of the situations in which they are working."

"It shouldn't take a rocket scientist (a techie) to understand that knowledge and information are central to good project and program design and management. Basically we have two ways to improve knowledge and understanding -- getting people who have the knowledge and understanding to participate with us, and formal research. Don't we know enough yet to use these two approaches before we start any project or program?"

Measuring Results

Ramon Daubon: "Citizens must be engaged in whatever the selected model of development is for that model to be successful. This engaged participation almost defines development. Hence we -- USAID -- should judge our projects by the extent to which they promote this engagement. They should be deemed successful if they promote it, even if for some other reason the potatoes don't grow or the immediate goal is not achieved."

Jeanne North: "The Administrator has said 'remember that results are really up to the countries we work with. They must develop themselves. We can only assist.' With his leadership in this important concept, the re-engineering should help bring clarity to this matter. A 'results orientation'

is essential. However, I would like to propose the following typology:

- **"Sustainable Results Of Development Assistance:** Changes in the indices of development achieved by host country organizations with the use of USAID (and other) development assistance and investments. (These results--concerning population, economy, literacy, natural resources, democracy, etc --are now tracked and reported by the [World Bank's](#) Development Report and [UNDP's](#) Human Development Report, for example). Sustained achievement of these changes requires a number of complementary developments in the host country, which depend upon initiative, influence, organization and management by host country organizations. A results-oriented USAID will have to take these factors into account as it develops its programs.
- **"Outcomes:** Examples of 'outcomes' might be: a) well-trained teachers employed, b) adoption of specific new natural resource regulations, c) new political parties formed. In each of these examples, the outcome goes beyond what is in USAID's power to do. Host country leadership or at least 'ownership' is important if the 'outcome' is to affect the 'results.'
- **"Product:** Any USAID unit should be held responsible for the 'products' of the assistance it provides to support the 'outcomes.' This assistance must be of high quality and sound in respect to development strategy and appropriate in timing and kind. USAID should also be responsible for assuring that the assistance 'products' are designed and delivered in such a way as to support the capacity of host-country organizations to design, plan, and carry out the activity in question and to produce the 'outcomes' envisioned.

At first glance USAID responsibility for 'products' may seem much less demanding than a responsibility for achieving 'results.' In fact, these products will be very difficult to produce, given the lack of control USAID Missions have over all of the elements needed. However, this requirement is more within the realm of possibility for USAID than the 'airy' and remote responsibility for 'results.'

"But 'results-orientation' is the overarching guide in this chain of activities: product, outcomes, and results. It is the shared goal of USAID and the host country partner."

Participatory Communications

John Grayzel: "It would be interesting if the participation network could upgrade our basic understandings of participatory communications and responses. The matter can become quite complex because the same terms can convey different meanings if used verbally (in conjunction with body language) or in writing. Then there is the problem of different cultural settings; different disciplinary backgrounds, the experiential background of individual parties, etc. People who are going to participate together may need basic communications preparation prior to the actual participation process."

Pirie Gall: "The basic issue is whether people have the patience and the skills to listen, to explore different levels of understanding (rather than jumping to conclusions and decisions prematurely). John Grayzel from Manila got to the core question--whether people have the communications skills for participation (and whether the Agency develops and rewards them). When we identified project management competencies, communications skills were rated first among twelve, higher than the 'hard' skills that get most of the rewards in the Agency."

Teamwork and Shared Vision

John Grayzel: "Dr. Margaret Mead said that the only time people from different perspectives could work as a team is if their contributions were based on what they brought to the task individually, not on their own narrow expertise or separate functional responsibilities."

"What does this mean for USAID and participation? We have to figure out how to arrive at a common understanding of the problem both among ourselves and between us and our collaborators. Unfortunately, the functional units and job division in USAID result in our having different objectives. The emphasis on measurable results is controlled by groups that feel their objective is providing such results. They want to do what is easiest and surest to get these. Financial management is in the hands of people who sincerely believe their objective is to insure

that at least several pieces of paper cover every cost. In terms of program, the process is in control of people who believe their objective is to insure every act conforms to a Handbook. Just look at a PIO/T form, the major implementing document of the Agency. It requires every person and office to see the problem FROM A DIFFERENT perspective--not a shared perspective!!!

"One idea we are considering in our new coastal management project is to say to communities that we would like to work with a number of them on sustainable management of coastal resources but that we will choose the communities to a large extent on what they bring to the table in terms of already existing community consensus and willingness to work together. We believe before we and a community can work together we both have to get our own acts in order. At the moment our greatest concern with such an approach is not that we won't find communities that can get their acts together but that within USAID we will still be operating under the paradigm of division of perspectives and responsibilities exemplified by the PIO/T clearance sheet."

Diane La Voy: "Selecting communities according to their track record of collective action and will makes perfectly good sense if one gives real weight to participation as a likely determinant of success. Institutions that specialize in selecting and funding bottom-up development efforts (the Inter-American Foundation, where I used to work, being the USG agency that has pioneered in this field) give even more weight to the organizational and 'social energy' underpinnings of a group than to the specifics of the project, when they evaluate a proposal. The design of the project can be improved through dialogue, exchange of experience with other groups, training, and technical assistance. But the real raw material of development, without which a project will not succeed, is shared vision and solidarity."

"As John Grayzel observes, our challenge is to ensure that the way we do business at USAID does not keep us from arriving at and acting upon a common understanding of the problem."

Gerald Cashion: "I certainly agree with John Grayzel's point on working with folks who have their act together. It makes sense to work with those that know what they want to do, are already expending some effort to realize their objectives, and will be sure to do so with a boost from the exterior."

"Key problem with this philosophy: the need for pretty thorough knowledge of the culture, society, and economy so that you have a sense, for example, who are Bedane or Rimbe and who are Rimaibe or Haartane or Banya. So that you don't help the exploiters exploit the exploitees. So that you have an idea of what resources are available to the target groups. So that you have an idea of their sense of purpose. And so that you can be reasonably sure that benefits will diffuse. In most of the assistance we program today I believe this knowledge is missing. The result: we program and account for money but positive change in peoples' lives is hard to discern."

"When we work with rural or urban groups, governments, or PVOPs/NGOs, it seems to me the principle of a cash contribution should be standard. But with governments today we routinely waive the required contribution. Isn't this because we want governments to do what we want rather than what they want? If it were what they want, they would make the contribution."

"Bottom line comment: We need the knowledge that comes from participation, writ large, by USDH personnel with ministry colleagues, with local NGO officials and members, with target groups. And I do not think that second-hand knowledge from proxies -- consultants -- is sufficient for us to effectively program assistance. Participation in its various refinements is one of the methods available to us to inform our programming -- to expand our knowledge. And even those of us with no formal social science training know something about participation. The task now should be to make sure our programming is properly informed. This should be a mission responsibility kept honest by Washington oversight. I don't think this is currently working well."

Evaluations, Participation, and Sustainability

John Eriksson: "The degree of stakeholder involvement in project evaluations varies considerably. In my experience, the greater the degree of involvement of the host country implementing agency in the design and execution of a mid-project evaluation, the greater the likelihood that the project will be sustained. This is because implementing agency involvement results in a stronger 'ownership' of the evaluation's findings and recommendations."

"Intuitively, it would seem that beneficiary involvement in an evaluation would result in broader ownership of the evaluation and would further enhance the prospects for sustainability. Such involvement should include active participation in evaluation design, implementation, and interpretation, not just 'passive' participation as an interviewee. This is known as 'participatory evaluation,' or '4th generation evaluation' in the evaluation literature. I have not had direct experience with this form of evaluation, and I think USAID's experience with it is fairly limited. But it has been tried, and I suspect there are ongoing examples in the field. It would be valuable to try to capture this experience. This is one topic the proposed 'Best Participation Practices Electronic Conference' might consider."

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

June 16, 1994

The Participation Forum (No. 6)

Improving Technical Rigor Through Participation

July 21, 1994

How can participation improve the technical rigor of the work that we do as development professionals? What can the views of ordinary citizens bring to decisions and processes that require a lot of technical understanding? What happens when we ignore those views? At the sixth session of the Participation Forum, two presenters highly credentialed in the hard sciences addressed these questions. Keith Pittman, a water specialist at the [World Bank](#), discussed massive flood control efforts in Bangladesh, where he was until recently the chief of party for the USAID-funded Irrigation Support Project for Asia and the Near East (ISPAN) in Bangladesh. Gene Brantly, Technical Director for Risk Assessment for the Environmental Health Project, described how a health risk assessment in Quito, Ecuador, employed participatory methods to get a more accurate picture of reality. The Forum was introduced by John Hicks, Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Africa, and Glenn Prickett, Senior Policy Advisor on the Environment, moderated the discussion.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Participation Successes and Failures in Africa

John Hicks

The issue of participation is high on the agenda of the Africa Bureau--partly because of the head start that the Development Fund for Africa gave us. As we craft our strategies and programs, we think of the people in the governments, institutions, and organizations in Africa as partners, with whom we jointly develop programs, not as beneficiaries. We try to devise creative ways in which Africans can lead in the development, design, and implementation of programs. I'd like to cite two examples of how ordinary people can be engaged in development interventions--one from the Gambia and the other from Zimbabwe.

In Gambia, a national environmental action plan was developed through a participatory process involving representatives of all strata of Gambia's society, the government, and the donors. USAID agreed to support the program with the condition that the government sign agreements with local communities giving them the right to manage their resources if they developed plans for the sustainable use of those resources. Once these agreements are signed, the communities have the right to request technical assistance in areas such as increasing soil fertility or enhancing forest or range resources. Because the technicians work for the communities rather than vice versa, community knowledge of the resources is taken into account.

My anecdote about Zimbabwe has to do with USAID efforts in family planning. I was deputy mission director in Zimbabwe as we were trying to define our population program. When Zimbabwe emerged from independence in 1980, family planning was a sensitive issue. During the civil war, the revolutionary factions in Zimbabwe, as part of their propaganda campaign, accused the Rhodesian government of promoting family planning to commit genocide against the Zimbabwean people. At the same time the country was facing a 3.3 percent population growth rate; population obviously needed to be addressed from a developmental point of view. Without a

full understanding of the sensitivities of Zimbabweans, USAID developed a family planning program in collaboration with the National Family Planning Council, an institution that dated from the colonial period.

The program was technically but not sociologically sound. USAID did not put forth the type of effort needed to engage the local people--in this case, the women's wings of the various liberation groups and the members of the majority community in the rural areas. In fact, we had designed a project that we could not negotiate and implement with the new government of Zimbabwe. So what did we do? We backtracked. We built linkages with the new government. We built a relationship with the women's wings and then reached out to the local communities. In about a year, we redesigned the family planning program. It was a program that emerged from the Zimbabweans with our technical support, and it was implemented very successfully.

Striving for Participation in the Bangladesh Flood Action Plan

Keith Pittman

Major Problems, Major Impacts

Major water-sector investment started in East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh. About \$2 to \$4 billion has been invested to cover about 3.6 million hectares of land with flood-control and drainage projects and about 200,000 hectares with irrigation projects. Currently 1.6 million people are affected by major irrigation projects-- basically dams that divert water from rivers onto the land rather like, say, the Salt River Project. And approximately 24 million people live within the boundaries of the flood-control and drainage projects. Planned expansion between 1990 and 1995 will probably increase that to about 30 million people.

A Program Designed for Pakistan, Not Bangladesh

Up to 1991, all public-sector water projects were driven by a master plan developed in 1964. In terms of people's participation in Bangladesh, it's very important to know that all of the technical expertise that directed planning in Bangladesh came from Pakistan. This approach to development was centrally driven and planned. Also it assumed that Bangladesh was like Pakistan. In a sense, the projects were designed inappropriately for Bangladesh. All the administrators and technicians had been trained primarily in Pakistan and were not able to adjust to the reality of Bangladesh. Another problem arose from the military orientation of the Pakistani administration. Information was controlled in a military way.

For example, maps were restricted. Field engineers had to go to Dacca, make a tracing of a map, and then go back to the project. They concentrated on the site where the structures were being built because they were design engineers. They didn't worry too much about the area of the project, nor did they ask the local people what they thought about the project. They went back to Dacca, perhaps even to Karachi in the early days, redesigned the projects, and then started building them. When USAID, through the Irrigation Support Program for Asia and the Near East (ISPAN), began work in Bangladesh, we inherited a system in which there was no participation at all.

Operational Problems Caused by Lack of Participation

Lack of participation gave rise to conflicts between farmers, fisherman, and tradesmen, all of whom have different interests in the project areas. "Public cuts" are one operational problem. A project may consist of an embankment 10 to 15 feet high encompassing an area. The water on the outside rises quite quickly during the monsoon period, which is between June and October. When people perceive a local threat to the embankment and worry about its giving way, they sometimes cut it from the inside. They'd rather have the water come in in a controlled way than to

wait for it to go over the top. Also, the people on the outside of the project mistakenly think that by cutting the project boundary, they can lower the floodwater on the outside, but, of course, this is impossible with such a huge river. The public needs education about the purpose of these projects.

Operation and maintenance are also affected by lack of participation. Because there's no local ownership of the projects, they're regarded as imposed upon the landscape by the central government. People work on the projects for about six months during the time of construction, and that's all they know about them. The structures quickly dry up, wash out, or silt up because there's no local involvement in their maintenance. Thus the projects tend to run down and fail. Out of the 3.6 million hectares of land covered with flood control and drainage projects that I mentioned earlier, only about 25 percent is effective. At a cost of between \$2 and \$4 billion, it's mighty expensive in terms of cost per hectare of development. And, cost recovery is minimal. People don't see themselves as beneficiaries of these projects and consequently are unwilling to pay any service fees. The collection rate is only 2 to 5 percent.

Changing a Dismal Inherited System

The Bangladesh Flood Action Plan, which started in 1990, is a \$160 million effort, with 265 projects. Fifteen donors are involved. It consisted of a new strategy for controlling floods in Bangladesh. Many people, particularly in the government, felt that the Flood Action Plan was a new opportunity to revamp the 1964 master plan and build yet more mega public-sector projects so that the government could regain control from what they saw as the unfortunate effects of privatization of minor irrigation, which has proved to be very successful. However, the donors realized that the only way that this plan was going to make any difference to the future of Bangladesh, given the history that you just heard, was to argue for people's participation in project preparation and design. The 15 development partners voiced a long sustained argument for transparency at the macro level of planning in the central government directed at the government and the Flood-Plan Coordination Organization.

ISPAN was deeply involved in trying to get the government to account for what was going on. Projects with a potential price tag of \$5 to \$10 billion were being planned by the government, and many felt that these were being imposed upon the country by President Hussain Muhammad Ershad's regime, which fell at the end of 1990. Many regarded this as an undemocratic plan that foisted upon the people of Bangladesh a huge debt to pay off over the next 40 years.

In a slightly more rational way, others argued that the country needed some control over water so that it could maximize its development opportunities, and therefore it was necessary to work with the government. They wanted to make the plan democratic. This was the line of argument adopted by local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). As participants in this debate, they wrote several pamphlets that were circulated widely in Bangladesh and internationally. Using their incredible network, which is linked with the U.S. NGO network, they made the government listen, although the government regards them as very irritating. As a result of the debates, the plan has gradually changed from a structurally oriented plan in 1990 to a plan with more emphasis on the environment and people's participation.

In reaction to many of the criticisms, special components for people's participation were built into the Flood Action Plan. The FAB 20 Compartmentalization Pilot Project consists of 20 to 25 big structures to regulate the water through the area, taking into account the needs for fisheries, navigation, and also farming. It's the first time a multidisciplinary approach has been adopted for a project in Bangladesh. Guidelines for people's participation were produced and accepted by the government of Bangladesh.

Last week, during a consultation on the Flood Action Plan in London, ISPAN representatives asked some questions about people's participation. The government was talking about enacting a law to ensure people's participation. It was as if the government were saying, "We will set up a committee headed by so-and-so who will tell you to participate." We almost fell off our chairs when the conference secretary responded to the idea of a participation law by saying, "We've decided that if participation is going to work, it has to be voluntary. We cannot mandate participation." So they've learned something, rather wonderfully.

National Seminars

Originally Flood Action Plan projects went through a review process assisted by an international panel of experts. Once approved, the projects went back to the Bangladesh Water Development Board for implementation. Now the process is more complex but also more effective. A process of consultation with field visits produces a preliminary plan, or blue line, that is processed by the Flood-Plan Coordination Organization. The plan is collated and pushed out as a series of pamphlets and briefing notes for regional presentations. Local conferences are held in regional centers with two levels of consultation. One is with the local members of Parliament and local officials, and the second level is with local people looking at the plans on the spot. This then feeds back into the review process.

Another difference is that national seminars are held on the proposals coming out of this national planning process. In other words, the government doesn't say, "We are going to do it." It now says, "We wish to do it. What do you think about it?" These seminars are not as participative as one would like, because the government of Bangladesh is not comfortable with democratic institutions. Three national conferences have been held on the Flood Action Plan. The first, in 1990, was attended by civil servants only behind closed doors. Thirty-five people were almost locked in the room and weren't allowed to talk about what went on during the meeting. The minutes were circulated privately and were confidential.

USAID and ISPAN worked very hard to make the second conference in 1992 more transparent. We argued very strongly that if they were serious about participation, they had to open the conference up to more people. In consequence, over 600 participants turned up from all walks of life -- politicians, journalists, academics. At our urging they also published the proceedings and made them widely available. The third conference, in 1993, was organized by the government itself with USAID financing much of the participation process. The government said, "Fine. You've shown us how to do it. We'll do it ourselves." The result was a bit disappointing. For example, they wouldn't allow questions from the floor. People had to write their questions down and hand them over to the chief engineer who simply ignored the questions he couldn't understand or couldn't answer. This was symbolic participation, but at least they made an attempt. In fact this new way of doing business in the country has set a precedent, we hope, for other sectors. The way is still not easy, but attitudes are changing.

Now, the debate is much more open, partly engendered by the [World Bank's](#) recent cancellation of credits and proposed loans to Bangladesh. The [Asian Development Bank](#) is beginning to think along the same lines, indicating that it may cancel 16 projects. The donors are saying, "Look, we're not going to support you in building unsustainable projects. You've got to face up to the fact you're in the twentieth century." The donors' views have changed too. Out of 11 donors at the local consultative group meeting at the end of the third conference, public participation accountability was raised by 82 percent of them as the major problem, followed by environmental and social soundness. So, the whole of the donor agenda is focusing more on sustainable development because of the pressure exerted under the banner of the Flood Action Plan.

Refusing to Give In on Participation

The message for USAID is that it's a long and painful process to argue something consistently for five years. At times, there was a feeling in Bangladesh that USAID would give in. The ISPAN project was single-minded about arguing for transparency and openness.

In 1982 we decided that if we were arguing for transparency, we had to be transparent ourselves, if we had meetings, we would circulate minutes of those meetings, because that's what we were telling others to do. So we published a newsletter containing minutes of meetings. This got us into trouble with the USAID mission. They felt that it wasn't "quite the normal or done thing." And, of course, the mission got flak from the government of Bangladesh about sharing what they thought was confidential information publicly. The mission felt that some future projects might suffer but decided not to clamp down on us.

Fortunately for ISPAN, in the meantime, the local NGOs produced a newsletter, which meant we didn't really need to produce our newsletter anymore. Then the Flood-Plan Coordinating Organization in turn began producing a monthly newsletter describing what was happening in each of the 26 projects. Finally they gave in and became more transparent themselves.

A Gradual Dawn

Gene Brantly

When Diane first contacted me about this presentation, she said that she was thinking of calling this session "Techies See the Light." Apparently she got a storm of e-mail saying, "Don't be pejorative about scientists or techies." Actually I thought the comment fit me, so I entitled my presentation "A Gradual Dawn." This techie did begin to see the light gradually over a period of time, and I'm now working hard to build a participatory approach to conducting health-risk assessments in developing countries.

Risk Assessment as a Discipline

Risk assessment attempts to predict the future health consequences of people's exposure to harmful environmental conditions. The method was developed primarily for use in the United States to predict the impact of exposure to environmental pollutants on cancer rates. To regulate pollutants intelligently, we need a way of estimating the long-term public-health consequences of exposure to those pollutants. All pollutants cannot be totally eliminated, but we can bring them down to a level of acceptable risk. Within the last 20 years, health-risk assessment has come into its own as a discipline for environmental protection. As used in the United States, risk assessment is a data-intensive process, requiring a lot of information on ambient concentrations of pollutants, "transport-and-fate" models to predict ambient concentrations if we don't have actual measurements, "dose-response" models to predict the health effect of a particular dose, and so on. The process was developed primarily by toxicologists, but epidemiologists, ecologists, and other specialists are also in the picture.

Risk assessment is used first to decide whether or not to control a particular pollutant and second to set standards for reducing the levels of pollutants we wish to control. In "comparative" risk assessment, the attempt is to estimate and compare the risks attributable to a number of pollutants and to set priorities about which should be targets for control.

Setting the Scene

USAID's Office of Health and Nutrition wants to use risk assessment in developing countries. But to do so lots of issues have to be addressed, one of which is the lack of data. USAID, through the Water and Sanitation for Health (WASH) Project, decided to carry out a risk assessment in Quito because a fairly substantial amount of information was available and USAID's partners in Ecuador were interested in doing a study. A risk assessment team would typically consist of a toxicologist, a specialist in environmental monitoring to collect the data, and an epidemiologist.

A colleague of mine on the WASH Project, May Yacoob, a medical anthropologist experienced in community participation, kept telling me during our talks on how to structure this kind of investigation for a developing country, "You've got to put a social scientist on the team." I said, "What will a social scientist do? Just give me the environmental data, data on concentrations, and I will predict everything else. I don't need to talk to people, I just need to have the numbers." She told me that one of the things a social scientist could do would be to talk to people in the community about what they think is a risk or problem in the environment. I said, "I don't trust that information. What they think the problem is is not necessarily what it really is." I felt that getting people's impressions of their exposures and risks was not rigorous, and I did not want to be asked to estimate risks on the basis of somebody's opinion. That was professionally embarrassing to me.

May finally convinced me that the information that a social scientist could obtain might at least provide a context for the information that would be obtained using what I consider to be more rigorous methods. After thinking about that for a while, I came up with some other uses of interview information. For example, we have standard assumptions on people's dietary intake for populations in the United States, but we don't have such assumptions for other populations. Interviews could tell us what the composition of their diet is. After about six months of arguing back and forth, finally I said, "Okay, May. As a matter of faith, I will do this. I'll take the step based primarily on professional faith in our status as colleagues." So we hired Linda Whiteford, a

medical anthropologist from the University of South Florida, to participate on the risk assessment team.

How It Worked Out

Once in Ecuador, Linda collected a lot of original data, more than the rest of the team, who relied primarily on information that was already available. Linda organized a series of focus groups in the communities, she observed people's behavior and exposures directly, primarily around food and activities in the household, and she conducted a series of individual interviews. Her activities yielded qualitative information on people's exposures and health impacts. The people that she interviewed could not necessarily draw a linkage between cause and effect, but they provided information that didn't show up in the public health records: high rates of upper respiratory infections and relatively high rates of diarrheal disease. Some of the qualitative information that Linda brought back was used directly in the risk analysis.

She and her local colleagues discovered that, because of poor sanitation in the markets, women who were working in the markets were suffering from very high rates of urinary infections. We weren't even looking for that information, and it wouldn't have shown up in public health records. Even if it had, it wouldn't have been attributed to the lack of sanitation. She also found that there was a very high rate of injuries in the construction trades. This was not a surprise, but it did not show up in official statistics. No information on occupational health was available from official sources. The interview information also provided a context to help us interpret other information that we collected. We found, in part through official statistics, in part through this qualitative information, that there was a reasonably high rate of diarrheal disease. Yet water supply in Quito is in very good condition and sanitation is reasonable in most of the city. But the interviews revealed that poor sanitation in the markets and at home in food preparation looked like an explanation for the diarrheal disease rates. More epidemiological work is necessary to verify that link, but at least it is plausible.

The process was successful largely because of the individuals who were involved. Linda was experienced in working with people in "more technical" professions, particularly engineers. She was assertive and self-confident, articulate about the value of her discipline, unshaken by the fact that a lot of the other people on the team had never worked with an anthropologist, and persistent and patient. She kept putting the information out there until the other team members saw the value of it. At the same time, the other team members weren't ogres. They gradually recognized the value of the qualitative input. Also, during the team planning meeting, we made sure that individuals on the team had a basis for collaboration and appreciated each other's disciplines. We had prepared the team to work together.

Community-Based Environmental Management

Looking forward, the next step in building a truly participatory risk assessment is getting the community to participate more actively than just being interviewed. Since the Quito assessment, May and I have put together a model for community-based environmental management. (It's described in WASH Technical Report No. 90, available from the Environmental Health Project.) It is a model for involving community organizations and community members in all phases of environmental management, starting with identifying and assessing the magnitude of problems and continuing through setting priorities, developing and implementing solutions, and monitoring the results.

The model includes training in technical subjects and group process work and involves working with an NGO to establish a repository for the skills that are necessary to continue the process. We're now in the process of finding opportunities to test this model. When I started working with USAID two years ago, the notion that communities could participate in the risk assessment process was not on my screen. It moved onto my screen only because of the persistent efforts of a colleague. The baby step that we took in Quito worked out well and was enough to convince me to try to build a broader model for public participation in environmental management.

Discussion Session

Is Participation Granted or Won?

Glen Prickett: As moderator I would like to ask if participation comes about through donors and government conceding it or through the participants demanding it and creating it? My own answer to this question is based on my experience working for the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#), an NGO that was often considered irritating by the U.S. government and others. One of our main purposes was to help environmental and other NGOs in developing countries attain technical knowledge and political space so that they could participate in the policymaking processes. One of the best experiences we had was with an environmental NGO in Sri Lanka, which came to us with concerns about the government's proposal to build a 900-megawatt, coal-fired power plant in the Trincomalee harbor. The world's fifth largest natural harbor, it's a great site for a power plant because it's so cheap to bring in coal.

The environmentalists were concerned about the impact of thermal pollution on the fish and acid deposition on the tea estate in Sri Lanka, both highly complicated technical questions. We were able to provide them with some assistance in sorting through the technical matters. But, getting to the question I posed, that NGO had already created the forum for participation a few years before when it had lobbied for a law that required the government to carry out an environmental impact assessment and prevented the director of coast conservation from approving the project before the assessment was completed and the public had had an opportunity to comment on it. I could give other examples in which donors, including USAID and the multilateral development banks, have tried to impose participatory requirements in similar situations without nearly the same effective conclusion.

Can the Public Acquire Enough Technical Knowledge to Participate?

Glen Prickett: In my professional experience the most difficult challenge is how groups like the NGO in Sri Lanka acquire the technical knowledge to participate effectively and rationally. When you open up highly technical decision-making processes to public participation and you don't start with an equal basis of technical knowledge and capability, bad science or allegations of bad science can ensue.

Nena Vreeland: This question is not peculiar to developing countries. I live in Montgomery County, where one community recently went through a free-for-all with the National Institutes of Health regarding the building of a disposal system. Clearly the community was not totally knowledgeable about the technical issues, and yet they managed to line up resources to make a cogent argument, and NIH apparently backed down. According to my local paper, the persistence of the community, non-knowledgeable though they might have been, forced the ball into NIH's court. NIH had to prove something in a way that was understandable to the community.

Hiram Larew: At the intersection between participation and technology, the core of the issue is the expert versus the public. In the United States, we are in awe of experts. I'm not certain that that's necessarily wise. Is there a similar sort of awe in developing countries, or is there kind of a refreshing willingness to question experts from the outset?

Glen Prickett: In the Sri Lanka case I worked on, our local partner NGO was fond of referring to the engineers in the Ceylon Electricity Board as the "lords of power." They were extremely competent technically. There was a mystique about them.

Keith Pittman: In Bangladesh, and also in India, there's a tremendous gulf between the professional and the normal person. The normal person in Bangladesh has four years of education and is in awe of the professionals who represent power. Sadly, most of the debate of the Flood Action Plan took place among the intellectuals in the community, who represent about half of one percent of the population. True public participation will be very difficult to achieve and will be very long term.

Anthropology Is a Science

Diane Russell: Anthropology is a science, and part of the science of anthropology is understanding local knowledge systems. When local knowledge systems are incorporated with more traditionally scientific views, the result is a much better understanding of local systems. I'm particularly knowledgeable about local resource management systems. Farmers have taught me about local resources and how to use them in a much more detailed and knowledgeable way than extension agents and scientists who don't understand the local system.

Outside Pressure for Participation

Molly Kux: In Bangladesh a number of events made things happen which people were having a difficult time getting done. The elections were one such event. They made the government much more responsive to the idea of public participation. It would also be interesting to know how the government assesses the impact of the pressure donors exert for public participation.

Keith Pittman: Ironically, the election also had a negative effect. Before President Ershad stepped down, he tried to develop decentralized planning. Therefore, one of the first acts of the new democratic government was, in fact, to react by repealing that system of local administration. For the last two years there has been virtually no local government. Therefore, one of the problems we have is that there's no mechanism for projects to be carried out at the local level. So there are flaws that go with democracy as well as with dictatorship.

In Bangladesh the NGOs have been strengthened a lot by the freedom to publish and disseminate results. Five years ago, it was very difficult to publish anything. The newspapers weren't as free as they are now. Journalists weren't particularly well trained. Now there are a few programs to upgrade the environmental awareness of journalists so that they at least understand what the issues are. The quantum leap in information has led to reforms. Things look quite good, but we still have a long way to go. In fact, there is a feeling in government that participation has gone too far. Last week one of the secretaries of government stated that donors had dual standards: "You have power groups and power lobbies in your countries. Think about in the West, for example, the cattle ranching and the forestry interests. Why can't we have the same interests? And yet you tell us we can't. You have a double standard."

Education for Participation

George _____: This is a question for Keith. If you had X amount of dollars now, thinking about the sustainability of the participation process that is beginning to unfold in Bangladesh, how much of it would you put into trying to reeducate the thousands of engineers who are in the system and are going to be in the system for the foreseeable future, and how much would you put on the NGO and local level?

Keith Pittman: I would put the money into local government, because grassroots development needs a local government structure to make it work. Then I think one might talk about education. The people at the top in the technical careers are well educated, and most are intelligent enough to change. One can accelerate that change. But education also is necessary for the project beneficiaries so that they won't for example, cut embankments, thinking that will improve things. Public information programs on television, for example, would raise an awareness of rights and responsibilities in terms of the landscape and the environment.

Notes from the E-mail Bag

This session of the Participation Forum prompted a number of fairly long e-mail offerings. Most are summarized, with a few interspersed excerpts. In addition, we owe many thanks to Dana Fischer, Maria Beebe, and George Carner, who sent along papers and cables reporting project experiences involving participation. We look forward to circulating such material once mechanisms for collecting and disseminating "best practices" are up and running.

Mari Clark voiced her agreement with the points made by the two main speakers in the sixth forum and with Diane Russell's comment that anthropology is a science that can help us to understand

the world just as other (more quantitative) sciences can. "An anthropologist's skill...provides essential information to assess the appropriateness of technology transfers based on 'modern science' and a basis to communicate the transfer in terms that make sense." She cites a number of examples: understanding traditional patterns of property ownership can reduce conflicts over land and forest development and land reform; understanding gender roles important for grassroots organization efforts in any sector. "Too often," she wrote, "the human dimension is ignored, viewed as unimportant or at best included as a social-impact assessment appendix of a project design."

Joseph F. Stepanek sent a brief message pointing out that in his opinion Keith Pittman should have mentioned the "thirty- plus years of World Bank support for top-down massive engineering works" in his discussion of the reasons for the failure of the Bangladesh Flood Action Plan.

Michael Calavan sent some notes he had taken at one of a number of meetings organized by NGOs in Bangladesh to review the National Environmental Master Action Plan (NEMAP). This plan was prepared in a conventional way by an international consulting firm in conjunction with a few ministries. "Near the end of the exercise," he wrote, "someone decided to make it more 'participatory' by sending the draft final report to some NGOs for their comment." At the review meeting, the NGOs said that they were there to talk about the process, not the substance of the exercise. "After much negotiation, the outcome was that the NGOs (coordinated by staff of their national paramount organization) are running a massive national exercise -- 24 local meetings (each 2 days) around the country, a series of sectoral meetings, and a culminating national meeting with a broad range of public/private, urban/rural, professional/villager participants. ... The NGOs are largely financing the effort on their own." An excerpt from Calavan's notes of the meeting:

Attendees worked most of the two days in the five groups (each with about 10-12 members). I think that four of the groups are mixed, including farmers, housewives, artisans, teachers, etc. Then there is a fifth group of "intellectuals," isolated to some degree, since it meets upstairs, when the other groups meet downstairs and close to each other. The "intellectuals" consist of senior local bureaucrats and elected leaders. People noted ruefully that it was the intellectual group that had the hardest time wrapping up its work and agreeing on points they would make in the afternoon session. *Jean Meadowcroft* urged that we "change our orientation from development being something `done to people,' to something we carry out together." She believes that the lack of communication ability -- especially learning to listen -- causes many project difficulties. "As Americans, we have a can-do, let's-get-on-with-it orientation. We talk too fast and listen too little, while in some cultures local people, including government, are reluctant to express themselves directly or quickly."

Nena Vreeland's message addressed an issue *Joe Lombardo* raised in the e-mail section of the third Participation Forum. He said: "Participation...negates the blueprint approach to development programs. To the extent we posit specific sectoral outcomes, we will find ourselves manipulating participation to gain support for our program." Vreeland responded by saying that, while it is crucial to build capacity, USAID should not necessarily abandon objectives defined in "sector" terms. Her reasons, briefly, are (1) institution-building risks becoming an end in itself, (2) commitment and action are motivated not by a vision of improved capacity but of ultimate improvements, (3) genuine participation (which is closely related to capacity- building) has to be continually nurtured to be sustained, and (4) because Westerners might not recognize capacity in a specific host-country setting, they should define objectives as real improvements. She concluded by saying, "I define USAID's role in development as that of a coach: bringing possibility to people for whom possibility did not previously exist."

Diane LaVoy continued the debate by stating that, while she shares Vreeland's negative reaction to misguided efforts in capacity-building, "I'm talking," she goes on, "about a ...view of the development process, in which we...ask what are the factors that prevent the society from being able to ...work more effectively to address its problems?" Once those factors have been identified, then USAID, in collaboration with host-country actors, defines strategic objectives that address those factors. Defining its fundamental objectives this way would prevent USAID from focusing on the "evanescent 'targets'" of the Belize health project described in the June forum.

Nena Vreeland responded in a second message by saying that she has been critical all along of the "largely internal and unilateral strategic planning process of USAID," which in her opinion was in line with USAID's predominant culture at the time it was instituted.. "Genuine participation

basically requires the participants to 'yield' complete control over decisions about what the issues are -- this is very difficult for folks to do when they 'know' they are right!"

Margaret Bonner told how participation has been worked into the development of USAID's agricultural strategy in Ethiopia. Studies prepared as part of a structured approach to developing the strategy have their scopes of work "aired" with government, other donors, and NGOs. When the teams that will carry out the studies arrive, USAID hosts a what-advice-do-you-have session with the same three groups, and representatives from those groups participate directly in the studies. The study teams debrief these groups before departing and get input for the final draft study. "By the time the final report comes out, there has been active participation by those involved ... and hopefully it becomes a document which does not just form the basis for our strategy but which becomes part of the economic planning for the country as a whole."

Stuart Callison expressed great pleasure that "USAID/W management is finally coming around" to view development as a participatory process. He cited the recommendations of a "Sustainability Working Group" that he co-chaired in 1990. Missions should:

- Work closely with host-country leaders on Country Development Strategy Statements,
- Include key host-country actors in mission project and program planning at very early stages,
- Actively strengthen host-country capacity to do its own strategic planning,
- Strengthen and use local management systems wherever possible in project design and implementation; and
- Monitor and report on the success of collaborative strategic planning, institutional reform, and host-country provision of recurrent costs."

Christopher Timura described a system of indigenous mapping used in the Darien region of Panama and the Mosquitia region of Honduras. It is a low-tech cartographic technique that can be an alternative to a GIS system or used in conjunction with GIS. As its name suggests, indigenous mapping promotes participation; it was used to gain more understanding of the relationship of indigenous populations to the land than higher-tech methods might provide. The surveyors were selected for their knowledge of the area and were encouraged to use whatever mapping style made sense to them. Through a series of workshops, the information they collected was collated under the supervision of professional cartographers to form a composite map, which was judged by Panamanian cartographers to be the most accurate and detailed available. Timura's message ends with an assessment of this mapping methodology: "The mapping process...could act as a catalyst for local populations. With a solid base of cartographic and demographic information, and strengthened lines of communication between members of the local populations, government and NGOs, as well as members of the local populations themselves, each party will be better equipped to assess emerging issues and generate solutions to development problems."

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

The Participation Forum (No. 7)

Participation and Gender

November 17, 1994

At the seventh session of the Participation Forum, three speakers examined the ways in which thinking about gender is basic to thinking about participation, and what can be and has been achieved when gender issues are considered. Margaret Lycette, Director of USAID's Office of Women in Development, drew from her field experience in Pakistan, Zaire, and Morocco to identify four factors that often result in women's exclusion from development efforts. Ken Ellis, Director of the Office of Central American Affairs, shared observations of USAID programs that have performed poorly because women's perspectives were not adequately considered. Michael Bamberger, with the [World Bank's](#) Gender Analysis and Policy Group, described features of women's participation in a cooperatives project in El Salvador. Colin Bradford, Assistant Administrator for USAID's Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, opened the program. The discussion, moderated by Margaret Lycette, highlighted the experiences of a number of Forum participants.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Multiculturalism, Institutional Bias, and Betting on Women

Colin Bradford

Multiculturalism, it seems to me, is vital to thinking about development. It's not just an academic problem that has to do with what's taught in universities. Think about how important it is to have some reflection of your image in your own culture or to have some resonance of your cultural voice in your surrounding society. Think about the fact that values underlie institutions and that we know from our work in development that institutions systematically discriminate against the disadvantaged, whether they be disadvantaged by gender or by income or by race. One way of thinking about our work in economic development is that we are about correcting the systematic bias of institutions against the disadvantaged. So we are in some sense, as we think about gender and participation, really testing the openness of global society. We're seeing to what extent we're going to be able to correct this systematic bias against women in development. One of the reasons that we're trying to correct that bias is that women, I think, have been seen to be much more committed to family, to communities, and to the fabric of society than are men. When we have few development dollars to spend, we bet on women.

A question which I raise for you, feeling a certain amount of intimidation, given my own gender and race, is this: have we concluded that men in those disadvantaged communities are irresponsible and unwilling to pay attention to the fabric of family, community, and society? I don't know the answer, but it strikes me as a provocative question. I welcome this discussion.

Adjusting Projects to Overcome Constraints on Women

Margaret Lycette

To respond a bit to your question, Colin, we're not saying that men have abrogated responsibility. Rather, what the "women in development" community has focused on is the less-than-full participation of women. Sometimes we called for equity in the distribution of benefits between women and men. Sometimes we proclaimed improvements in women's productivity as the key to increased project effectiveness. Now we speak much more boldly about the need to support women's empowerment. In the end we're talking about participation and acknowledging the important roles that all members of society must play in achieving sustainable development.

Four Factors that Constrain the Full Participation of Women

Women have both productive roles in the home and outside the home, as well as reproductive roles. This dual burden, and women's limited control over their reproductive lives, constrains their time and their options for choosing to participate in activities that might interfere with their double day.

Women are poorly educated relative to men. Low rates of female literacy and inequities in girls' access to education persist worldwide. Consequently, high proportions of women cannot obtain information about opportunities in business, employment, and participation in political life.

Cultural constraints regarding the sexual division of labor and the extent to which women can appropriately interact with men can limit women's participation in virtually all arenas. Restrictions on women's mobility are sometimes cast in the guise of concerns for their safety.

Women often face legal constraints, such as prohibitions against land ownership, or participation in education or family planning programs without the consent of their husbands or fathers.

The combination of these factors often results in women's exclusion from development efforts. For example, in a large USAID agricultural extension and credit program in Zaire, extension sessions were well attended and loans were being disbursed, but agricultural productivity was not rising. Why? In the region of Zaire where the project was being implemented, women are the agriculturists. Because they are also responsible for the maintenance of the household and for child care, and they face cultural restrictions on their participation in male-dominated public life, they didn't attend the training sessions. In addition, women cannot legally hold title to land and therefore could not participate in the credit program.

Concerns about girls' security and reputations prevented parents in Pakistan's more conservative provinces from enrolling their daughters in new USAID-funded coeducational schools. In a national vocational education program in Morocco, female participation was confined to training in homemaking skills, which led to virtually no increase in employment or even income generation.

Project Adjustments to Improve Women's Participation

The good news is that there are approaches that can improve the extent to which women can contribute to and benefit from development, approaches that support women's participation by adjusting project design and implementation to take account of women's particular roles and constraints. In the Zaire project, for example, an extension program was eventually put in place to work with women farmers only. Training and demonstrations were scheduled to accommodate the women's needs, and their participation was enhanced because they did not feel constrained by the presence of men, to whom culturally they should defer. The result was an improvement in yields and a more effective mix of crops, as well as improved household incomes and nutritional status of children. Men eventually got involved in the program, and they benefited as well.

In Pakistan, the education program involved the local communities in an education needs assessment and secured their involvement in raising funds to support the training and salaries of locally hired female teachers. Where necessary, boundary walls were constructed to segregate girls and boys attending the same school. The result was a major increase in the number of girls enrolled in and attending school. In Morocco, community outreach garnered the participation of parents and businesses and acceptance of the notion that girls should learn marketable skills.

Girls learned drafting and electronics skills, got jobs, began to contribute to family income, and gained improved status within their families.

It might be interesting, as we listen to the presentations that follow, to think about which of the four factors that I've mentioned as constraints to women's participation come into play. I think we also want to listen for how solutions were crafted around these constraints to improve both women's participation and project success. We should consider the activities of both men and women and should recognize that addressing the constraints that women face will result in the greater participation of both women and men.

Lessons From Projects That Overlooked Women's Input

Ken Ellis

After 20 years of experience working in Latin America and making a lot of mistakes, I think that I've learned some lessons along the way. In my opinion, participation is a lot more than sharing the benefits of a project. Women won't share the benefits until they participate at the project design level. One of the lessons I'd like to pass on is that our solutions, as development specialists coming from a different culture, are often not acceptable to the people that we're trying to work with.

We Often Misread People's Values

In Jamaica in the 1970s, USAID and the [World Bank](#) set about to reform the marketing sector. The marketing sector in Jamaica is almost the exclusive property of women, who are called higglers. These women sit on street corners, work in local markets, and sell the produce from small farms throughout the island. The idea was to streamline and decentralize the sector to make it a lot more efficient. By setting up modern facilities all over the country, the project would keep these women from having to make a long trip to Kingston every day. But because the idea was met with hostility by many of the women, especially in the countryside, we decided to look more deeply into the marketing system in Jamaica and we hired a local woman sociologist whose mother happened to be a higgler. Her study found that the Jamaican marketing system is more than just a marketing system, it's a social system, where people talk to one another, where information is exchanged, such as prices and how crops are doing all over the island. Based on this study, we downsized our plans considerably and concentrated on upgrading some of the facilities that already existed. I think it was, in USAID's terms, a successful project.

Interventions Sometimes Do More Harm than Good

Sometimes our interventions can actually do damage to the people that we're trying to assist, especially in the case of women. Throughout Central America, we have from time to time pursued the idea of small-farm irrigation, to give an opportunity to raise, market, and sell high-value crops. The problem is that in these semi-nomadic agricultural societies the men plant the staple crops early in the year, and then they go off to pick or plant cotton, cut sugar cane, or harvest coffee. The women are left at home to take care of the children, collect wood, carry water, and, in this case, take care of another crop of high-value cabbage or tomatoes. Instead of assisting these women, we are adding to their already unbearable workloads.

Unforeseen Results Can Be Beneficial

Despite all of our planning efforts, sometimes the unforeseen results can be the most beneficial. In the Dominican Republic in the mid-1980s, we had some money in a project that the Ministry of Agriculture was not able to spend. We got all of the extension agents together and told them to go out and find good projects in the rural sector, and we would fund them. They zealously pursued bringing in project ideas, mostly in the water sector. When I visited the sites, I found that almost all the people associated with these projects were women. What was really important to them was not that they now had clean water, but that they didn't have to walk two kilometers to get to the

water supply. It cut their workload down tremendously. This unplanned activity proved to be very beneficial to them.

Again, I'd like to leave you with what I think is the most important lesson that real participation is more than just sharing the benefits of projects, it's sharing in the design of those projects as well.

World Bank Project in El Salvador: Conflicts and Benefits

Michael Bamberger

I was asked to present a case of a WorldBank project where women had been actively involved in participatory processes, so I've taken the case of a cooperative in El Salvador, which gives some interesting lessons in what participation is all about.

The Low-Cost Housing Foundation in El Salvador was a participatory program of self-help construction housing projects, with the objective of capacity building at the community level. One of the cooperatives that the Foundation started was a clothing and carpet-making cooperative which had 53 members, of whom 52 were women. The cooperative was relatively effective, in some cases doubling or tripling members' income.

Participatory Processes

The idea of being the owners of a cooperative was sometimes a difficult participatory experience for the women. Whenever there were problems, they weren't quite sure who to blame. They still assumed there was a management entity somewhere which was responsible for running the cooperative.

A second participatory process was the women's exposure to the outside world. Because all of the women had their lunch together in the cooperative and they listened to the radio, many of them had an opportunity to discuss national and world affairs for the first time. It also exposed them to the trade union movement. During the time when this cooperative was developing, there was a strike, and trade union members asked the cooperative for financial and other support, resulting in a significant debate. A lot of the women said, "We have so many problems, we really can't get involved in other people's problems. Others said, "We're all part of the working class. We need to show some kind of solidarity."

Another process was what I call moving from a paternalistic idea of what a cooperative is to facing the hard realities of the market. It was a difficult lesson to accept that participation means standing on your own feet, facing the competition, and maybe even losing your markets.

Impacts and Issues

Women's incomes rose significantly, at least in the short run. It was harder to assess what the total impact was on the household income. Very clearly, the women gained more control over resources, income, and how the income was used. There were many examples of women gaining greater independence, a major issue being to choose one's own clothing and to cut one's hair.

There were quite a lot of conflicts in the families, of men feeling that their role was being threatened. The cooperative got involved in these issues in a number of ways. In more extreme cases, they set up protection for battered wives. Also, they tried to market the idea of the cooperative to the men. There were also some conflicts at the community level, because the cooperative had to close the door to new members in order to maintain a livable income for its members.

The implications of focusing fairly narrowly on women, which this brings out, are being raised in debates about credit programs for women--the Working Women's Forum in India, the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, among others. I think there are a lot of programs that started with a strong

feeling that they should just work with women, that men are irresponsible. But there's a lot of concern that this does not really benefit women, because of the conflicts.

The question is, how do you involve men? In El Salvador, the cooperatives for men were much less successful. A lot of men traditionally work independently, and find it difficult to work regularly every day to fill orders for big stores. Many programs now are trying to move to how you can generate credit programs for the household as an economic unit rather than just for the woman.

Discussion Session

Managing for Participation and Program Integration

Ikufumi Tomimoto: At JICA, we set up several training courses related to the participation of women in development, inviting many policy-level people, as well as practitioners, from various countries. Recently we established a special study group for participatory development and governance, and we discussed with our colleagues in USAID how aid agencies can best tackle this issue. One concern is that aid agencies, like USAID, the World Bank, or JICA, have to perhaps slow down the process of project lending or technical assistance because it takes some time to identify what is needed to encourage the participation of the local community. This requires great patience on the part of the donors, so that the people can think about what they really need in their communities.

Diane La Voy: Our guest from Japan has raised a very fundamental issue as he points to the management implications of participation. It takes time, especially in the early stages of project development, and we have to accept this, especially as we think of the pressures that we face in obligations for a given fiscal year. That theme has been raised over and over again, but it doesn't have an easy answer.

Elise Smith: A lot of us on the NGO side see that rural women's NGOs have mechanisms to make the participatory process work well, but that donor agencies still haven't fully taken this experience into account. If there could be real dialogue between donors and women's NGO movements in the countries, cross-sectorally, I think we could have much stronger development programs.

Elise Storck: Margaret, I appreciate your sense of how women's multiple roles can help in program integration across sectors. To what extent can more intentional emphasis on gender help us design more appropriately integrated programs? I'm thinking in particular of the so-called population and environment debate, where the gender impact on environment has typically been characterized by women's reproductive behavior.

Margaret Lycette: I think that's a very interesting question. It's very appealing to think that because women have such strong reproductive roles, household production roles, and productive roles outside the home, that a focus on women would be a way to integrate several issues. I think that we have to be cautious. We have to listen to what Ken said about how we may unintentionally add to women's burdens. There's a tendency to funnel through attention to women all the problems and issues that we should have faced all along in thinking about how programs affect people. There is room for synergy, but in the environment area, I think that we have to take a look at all of the agricultural and economic policies and market failures that actually have a much greater impact on environmental degradation than does the woman who is fetching wood each day.

Prescriptions for the Participation of Men

Elise Smith: I think we need to look for innovative ways to work for men's involvement. People are realizing now that if you do not engage men from the very beginning in whatever kind of program you're trying to support, you're not going to reach the maximum impact. Male focus groups is one approach I've seen that's worked in six African countries. Where males are brought in early, they can play a continuing, ongoing role. Perhaps what's needed is a task force to determine what's working and what's not working in terms of men's involvement.

Mayra Buvinic: I think today we have been talking of two different things, which perhaps we can expand on in another forum. One is grassroots participatory approaches and the other is women's participation in development projects.

I'm going to disagree with Elise a bit on a prescription for the participation of men. I would encourage the participation of men in projects in those sectors where women have traditionally been included, namely population, health, and nutrition. By all means, give men information on family planning and include them in the family planning and health decisions within their families. In the productive sectors, including credit, enterprise, and agricultural extension, when you're benefiting women, I really see very little reason for, and even a difficulty with, including men. I hope we can discuss this further at a future forum.

Charles Stephenson: I would like to pass along a comment from Perdita Houston from the Peace Corps, who recently spoke at USAID. When asked whether men are one of the constraints to women's development and participation, she responded that in some situations they may be. How do you address that? First of all, she suggested, you pay attention to them. If you are having a difficulty, you pay attention.

Avoiding Pitfalls--Lessons from Sierra Leone and Zaire

Ann Hudock: There is a palm oil processing project in Sierra Leone in which the women seemed to be participating very well. I attended a meeting where there were a large number of very enthusiastic women. As I left, I remarked, "This is a great example of women's participation." My boss at the NGO looked at me and said, "You just didn't understand any of that. The elderly woman in the back who said what a great project this is, was saying how wonderful it was to be working on a water project. But, of course, they were doing palm oil processing. The chief had gathered together a lot of the women in the community, had dictated that they be there, and quite a few of these women were his wives anyway. I think that this example underscores the ignorance of outsiders. When we ask for the participation of women, we should be very careful about not using it as something which can actually exploit them in the end.

Diane Russell: I want to bring up the example of Zaire again because I was one of the people who worked on the extension project there that Margaret mentioned. One of the mistakes that was made was getting women involved in maize production projects where they weren't the initial maize producers. In fact, their labor on maize took them away from their labor on other crops that were essential to both good nutrition and their income. What we tried to do was to focus on women's crops, on the crops that women actually produce both for their families consumption and to sell. I think that getting women involved in activities where they are going to be taken away from their primary sources of income and nutritional well-being for the family can be a big mistake, and that it is important to support them in their primary activities.

Pat Martin: A mid-term evaluation of an agricultural and environmental protection project in Honduras that had a large gender component found that it had actually reinforced gender segregation. They then redesigned the project to train both men and women extension agents to work with the entire family, and to get women extension agents not just as home economics type workers, but as agronomists, so they could work with the men too.

Adding Women's Voices to Policy Dialogue

Carol Yost: Fortunately, I think there is increasing attention being paid to the need to get women's voices into the policy-making process at all levels. Women often are the ones working in agriculture and microenterprise development, and yet there are inadequate channels for them to get their views heard about what changes need to be made. With the trend toward democracy and pluralism worldwide, I think there are a lot of opportunities now for women to share ideas and resources about how women can have a voice in the policy-making processes.

Pat Martin: We need to focus not only on working around the constraints that women face, but also on actually removing them. In the Policy Reform Project in Honduras, one of the efforts underway was to change the agrarian reform law. The law was over 20 years old and had proved unworkable in numerous ways. The USAID Mission got the peasant women's organization in

Honduras involved in this dialogue. The law precluded women from owning agrarian-reform land, because this law was passed during the conflict with El Salvador in the 1960s, when it was feared that Salvadorians would come over and marry Honduran women and take Honduran land. The peasant women's cooperative succeeded in getting the law changed to remove that provision, as well as breaking the logjam on a lot of other issues through this initial dialogue.

Research and Resources

Nagat El-Sanabary: I want to note that the Asia and Near East Bureau has been supporting research by local women in four Middle Eastern countries -- Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Yemen -- to examine these legal and regulatory constraints, and will host a regional conference in Tunisia where approximately 40 women from USAID-assisted countries will discuss how they can overcome them.

Gretchen Bloom: I'd like to speak on behalf of Barbara Thomas-Slayter with the ECOGEN Project, which is funded through USAID's WID office. ECOGEN has produced three valuable documents:

- "Tools of Gender Analysis; A Guide to Field Methods for Bringing Gender into Sustainable Management," uses a variety of different tools for doing gender analysis at the grassroots level.
- "Managing Resources in a Nepalese Village: Changing Dynamics of Gender, Caste, and Ethnicity," examines an intervention at the village level from a gender perspective to understand who participates and what the outcomes are.
- "Engendering Resource Management" is written by a Filipino student of the ECOGEN Project, who applied the tools of gender analysis in the Philippines through a technique called PRAGEN (Participatory Rural Appraisal and Gender). To order these resources, call 508-793-7201.

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March 17, 1994

The Participation Forum (No. 8)

The Role of Participation in Conflict Resolution

December 15, 1994

How can a participatory approach help to resolve conflicts among peoples with different ethnic and national identities, conflicts over resources, and challenges to the legitimacy of national governments and leaders? What can participation possibly mean in settings where people have been killing each other? At the eighth session of the Participation Forum, four presenters examined these and related questions. Dick McCall, USAID Chief of Staff, opened the discussion with some observations from the Greater Horn of Africa. Jennifer Douglas, Senior Policy Advisor for Humanitarian Assistance in PPC, presented highlights from the recent USAID-sponsored conference, "Honing the Tools of Preventive Diplomacy." Gordon Wagner, OFDA consultant, drew from his 14 years in the southern Sudan to describe how bottom-up development activities can be used to help break through conflict situations. Jerry Delli Priscoli from the Army Corps of Engineers and president of the [International Association of Public Participation Practitioners](#) presented examples from the U.S. and overseas to illustrate factors that are key to successful participation in conflict management. The presentations were followed by a discussion session that brought out the experiences of several Forum participants.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Good News from Somalia

Dick McCall

Creative Projects

About three weeks ago, I chaired a Somalia aid coordinating body meeting of bilateral and multilateral donors in Geneva. The purpose of the session was to get a handle on managing the gradual UNOSOM pull out which will be complete at the end of March.

During the session, a number of non-governmental organizations and the [World Food Program](#) told some of the good news about Somalia mainly about events in areas outside of Mogadishu. Some very creative projects have been carried out, for example, using food to pay teachers, doctors, and health care workers to get clinics started again. There are local projects education, health, and basic rehabilitation that reflect local ownership. The local communities themselves are primarily in the driver's seat. The point is that once these activities get started, security is no longer a problem because the communities have an investment that cuts across political faction lines.

In some areas of Somalia, these projects represent the first time that people didn't have to wait for resources to meet basic needs to come trickling down from the central government. This is an example of how participation and local ownership help populations themselves to begin reconciliation and to manage their own crises in a more effective manner. Such management cannot be imposed from the top. The biggest mistake UNOSOM made in Somalia was attempting to impose structures from the top instead of taking advantage of the traditional structure, which

despite the violence within it, is highly participatory and democratic. The clan mechanism brings in local communities to discuss issues and attempt to reach a consensus. Its a slow moving process, but when a decision has been made within a clan, and when consensus has been reached between the clans, the result is a more durable solution.

Bringing Government Institutions Closer to the People

In Ethiopia, USAID and the European Union have a difference of opinion on the issue of decentralization and the push by the government to provide greater autonomy to the various regions, which historically have had ethnic rivalries. I can remember lengthy discussions with the EU representative on the Greater Horn, who made the point that, given the spread of Islamic fundamentalism throughout that region, it is important to have a strong central government in Ethiopia. I argue that the facts prove otherwise. Countries threatened by Islamic fundamentalism have highly centralized governments that haven't been able to successfully control fundamentalism. The Ethiopians recognize that rather than attempt to control fundamentalism, they should decentralize and bring government institutions closer to the people, give people greater control over those institutions, and increase their capability to hold those institutions more accountable. What Ethiopia is doing is rather experimental within the African context. But it is worth close examination, because the old way of dealing with ethnic diversity has precipitated much of the violence that has characterized Ethiopia over the past 25 years.

Lessons for the Aftermath in Rwanda

We are struggling with Rwanda now, looking at the aftermath of the genocide. Hutu and Tutsi competition goes beyond clan rivalry, it is conflict based primarily upon control of resources. In many ways, Somalia is easier to deal with because clans have a traditional way of reaching consensus. But there are areas of Rwanda where interactions between Tutsis and Hutus historically have demonstrated that they can live together, work together, and participate in enterprises together. Therefore, one of the fundamental focal points in dealing with the Rwandan crisis should be to figure out a way to break down the barriers at the local level with projects and programs in relief and rehabilitation that are directed at bringing people together to focus on common problems and find common solutions.

Striving for a Social Contract of Participation in Sudan

Gordon Wagner

Sudan is now in its twelfth year of civil war. It is estimated that upwards to a million and a half people, mostly civilians, have died during this period. Millions more are living as refugees in neighboring countries or as internally displaced persons in their own country. We now are only beginning to comprehend the complexity of this emergency and, as such, are beginning to realize that much of the humanitarian assistance provided by the international community has done as much to deepen and prolong this crisis as it has to soften and reduce the suffering of the people.

In early 1993 USAID/OFDA began a critical review of funding criteria in the past, which necessarily challenged the relief/development dichotomy. This new thinking took inspiration from the 1992 congressional "Horn of Africa Recovery and Food Security Act" (PL 102-274), which is premised on serving the needs of the people with life-saving resources, while building upon the enormous production possibilities of the people to restore first their subsistence capabilities and then their capacity to handle their own affairs and provide for their own needs through a real participatory partnership among all the humanitarian actors operating in southern Sudan.

Participatory Approach in Practice

Relief food has saved lives during the last two years, but it has also fueled and prolonged the war through forced diversions by the combatants. At the moment, the WFP is adopting a food economy methodology which would allow a better targeting of the needy. Much work remains to be done.

On the other hand, food production has increased dramatically, despite the doubting Thomases at the UN and within the NGO community. In the greenbelt of Western Equatoria, the August/September and December/January harvests are being purchased to feed the displaced in the area and refugees in places like northern Uganda. Production has increased because programs have emphasized food production by local residents and to a smaller extent by the displaced people living in camps, rather than relief. Several NGOs are assisting to revive the very successful cooperative movement in Western Equatoria of the 1980s.

Turning over responsibility for managing the affairs of southern Sudan to the southern Sudanese themselves has been critical. Three levels of local organization capacity building are getting attention. The first and most important is at the grass roots. Several NGOs are emphasizing restoring family self-sufficiency through empowerment of the villagers. Without the empowerment of people at this level, work at the other two levels would do nothing more than restore the old system that the rebels opposed. Second, we have begun to target the NGOs. A growing number of indigenous NGOs are appearing on the scene. Many of these, however, are just "honey pot seekers," so the Sudanese, with full support from OFDA, are tightening their criteria for recognizing such groups.

Third, workshops are being held with the humanitarian organizations associated with the two main rebel movements. Both have been too tightly connected to their respective military overseers. They are becoming quite aware of the fact that any funding of these organizations in the future is critically dependent upon both groups translating their rhetoric on participation and self-sufficiency into substance. Currently, both groups are discussing the values and principles which ostensibly underpin their objectives. Whether this will lead to structures which are facilitating and supportive of local initiatives remains to be seen.

The Need for a Social Contract

Both the Horn of Africa Act and the current Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI) must be seen as truly radical departures from the Cold War thinking of the past decades. Here we are beginning to see politics at its proper vocation. To speak of partnerships is one thing. But to create and sustain effective partnerships first requires a consensus on fundamental principles. Interestingly, there is a commonality between principles laid down in PL 102-274 and those to which the rebel movements have given official support. The key, however, is translating these principles from paper to real social contracts.

In fact, there are already signs that such principles are beginning to be realized at the lowest level of operation. For example, in the case of scores of marketing cooperatives in Western Equatoria, small groups of like-minded people are writing simple constitutions which include the principles mentioned above and the all-important one-person-one-vote decision-making procedure. This is nothing less than economic democracy at work. At the level of operations in the field we are beginning to see local authorities coming together with NGOs and the [United Nations](#) to form local coordinating committees.

To be effective, however, social contracts based in common principles must be pursued aggressively. The example of the Combined Agencies Relief Team (CART) in Juba should be noted here. In 1986 eight very independent and not so cooperative NGOs came together in recognition of their inability to handle the humanitarian crisis which was unfolding in Equatoria. While the record of CART has been mixed, it is also a fact that its successes over the last nine years have been a function of its working constitution, which is based in common humanitarian principles including the one-agency-one-vote decision rule.

This approach needs to be replicated everywhere. It is at the local level that resolution of local conflict has the best chance of being handled. The same kind of social contract should be made between the government, its international partners, and the people. The approach described above will not likely be implemented successfully without being framed in a working social contract at all levels of operation.

Espousing common principles based in real partnerships should not be seen as excessively naive. Indeed, to ignore this opportunity will yield more of the same of the past: wasted resources, prolongation of crises, donor fatigue, and neglect of the suffering peoples of the world.

Participation in Conflict Resolution

Jerry Delli Priscoli

At the [Army Corps of Engineers'](#) Institute for Water Resources, I've been involved with developing public participation programs and what we call alternative dispute resolution programs (ADRP) for the last 20 years. The following stories illustrate the concept of participation in conflict resolution.

Participation of Stakeholders

In south Florida land development and in southeast Louisiana, where permits had been requested for exploratory oil drilling, typically, we would wait for a permit, review it technically, fight about it, and go to court. Hundreds of these requests would occur per year in each area. Instead of going through this process again and again, we tried something new. We figured out who was going to be fighting in the local community the citizens, a variety of environmental groups, lawyers in New York and we convened them, giving them the opportunity to talk about setting the specifications for these permits. If they came to agreement, this agreement would, in effect, be the permit. If they didn't, then we would go back to the old system.

The Truman Dam, a major dam in the Missouri River is the scene of another participation success story. People have been fighting about its operation since it was built, complaining that thousands of fish were being killed. Navigation, hydropower, ecological and other interests would fight over proper operation. So we brought all parties together and challenged them to write the operating rules for the Truman Dam within broad specifications of technical acceptability. What they produced became the operating plan and it is still used today. We have learned that agreements resulting from negotiations from the ground up are broader than those from the top down. Lawyers and engineers can often use their expertise, even if unconsciously, to limit options as opposed to expanding them. The common thread with these success stories is the participation of stakeholders and the articulation of their interests. These interests inform one another and transform the negotiation process into a learning process, building a confluence of dispute resolution, collaboration, and participation.

Having said that, I must point out that the two concepts diverge as well as converge. The field of dispute resolution is driven by values of efficiency, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, and decision making. The participatory notions of creativity, open access to government, and the self-helping citizen are less evident in dispute resolution. For example, the techniques of dispute resolution may be used to plan \$400 million or \$500 million waste incinerators. Agreements may be signed but implementation stops because some significant interests in the community do not want the stuff burned. Significant stakeholders in the community were left out. Only the in-crowd produced the agreement.

Creative Solutions through Participation

When I began 20 years ago, I discovered that social scientists are sometimes the least likely group to be implementing the participation activities. They want to study the problem but not be present with it. Of course, they are well-meaning people and turn out superb information, but they often make little link between the information and building participation. I heard some stories recently when I was facilitating a Global Environmental Facility Meeting with the [World Bank](#) and [UNDP](#). After someone from IMF had said something like, "We have an anthropologist to study this," somebody from the Amazon community being discussed, in pure frustration, said, "Who knows the community better? The anthropologists or we who live here?" I think this example demonstrates that there are different ways of knowing and bringing knowledge to bear on a problem.

On the issue of building a relationship between the technical experts and those whom they would be serving, I often hear people, especially engineers, ask why we are doing this thing called participation. The answer is easy: we get better technical results. Why? Because the process is a creative process. Participation can create options that no one had thought of before, or a

combination of alternatives that, in effect, present a different option. Instead of saying, "We have three options: channel right, channel center, or channel left" a participatory approach may show that greenspace is the best option. Getting the technical experts to think in such creative terms is the issue, and liberating technology in a way that makes sense to people is what participation is all about.

Beyond participation at the project level, participation at the cross-sectoral level, in the case of water for example, can make an enormous difference. There the question is how to trade off different uses of water for agriculture, for industry, and so on. The notion of participation deals directly with the ideas of governance, authority, and relationships that are value-driven, and not merely technical. We fall back on the notion that development is a technically defined process because we can't deal with the notion that it is value-driven and based on some idea of what is good in the world. That's too tough. But until we get it right, more process activities will be invented to deal with the value-driven aspects of relationships required for development.

Technology in the Service of Participation

On the other hand, it is possible to use technology in the service of participation. In the last few years, some phenomenally useful interactive computers have been developed to allow ordinary people even illiterate people to join with political and technical people to create and design, in our case, water systems and contingency plans for drought. Their results are equivalent or better than the complicated hydraulic models produced by smart academics.

An Ethic of Informed Consent

In conclusion, infrastructure issues such as water resource development, can provide great learning ground for creating a civic society through participatory processes. Old notions of paternalism in development are giving way to a new approach that is driven by an ethic of informed consent within communities. I also think we need to look at our technology and use it to serve some of these participatory beliefs.

Discussion Session

Local Ownership on a National Level

Barry Sklar (International Center for Economic Growth): All the speakers referred to local ownership, a concept that has been the basis of ICEG's philosophy in dealing with local institutes and communities. Working with them on projects that they believe in and will press for with their national authorities is the only way to effect change. In the category of conflict resolution, ICEG participated in a project in El Salvador sponsored by the USAID mission to bring together for the first time the various political groups, the private sector, and the former revolutionaries at the same table.

Jean North: In Rwanda the mission supported some interesting processes to help people in the public and private sector develop some common ownership of changes in the way national finances were managed. Until chaos came, there was a lot of give and take to get agreement on the common good in terms of the management of national finance. We shouldn't limit our concerns for participation only to the local levels.

What Role for Central Government?

John Eriksson: As I heard some of the observations on Somalia, Rwanda, and southern Sudan, it struck me that these experiences may contain the seeds of a new paradigm. The conventional paradigm is working directly with the central government. The new paradigm is working directly with local communities, while not completely ignoring the central government. For official donors, that probably means having to go through NGOs.

In the case of Somalia, I have a vision of working to strengthen institutions and governance

wherever one may find them geographically notwithstanding whatever semblance remains, if anything, of central government. But how long can a situation like that go on? How meaningfully can we talk about sustainable development of local communities without any reference to the essential functions that we've been trained to believe are the responsibility of the central government, ranging from transportation networks to monetary and fiscal policy, to international trade, the whole gamut of those kinds of responsibilities and functions?

People have a tendency to underestimate what happens in societies like Somalia. The civil war was basically fought over the issue of a strong central government. Most Somalis don't believe that they need a strong central government. They want a highly decentralized system.

What happened in Somalia? Everybody said that "everything" had collapsed. But about a year and a half ago, an economist working for REDSO looked at the banking system and was told, "There's no banking system. He went into the marketplace and found bankers with laptop computers doing their transactions. In the countryside, normal commerce has resumed. I think we tend to underestimate the resilience of traditional economic and political structures. Somalia may never be anything more than a federation of states, but that federation of states will represent more of a consensus than what we've had in the past.

Ken Kornher: While the history of development shows us that the problems that we've encountered have more often arisen from the exercise of central power than the contrary, I don't think we should get caught up on the idea that only the exercise of decentralized power can be legitimate. In appropriate circumstances, both can be legitimate. The exercise of any power is made legitimate if there is a social compact, an agreement by the people that the use of power, whether it be central or local, is legitimate. That's the first thing. And the second is to reject the idea of sovereignty of the central state in favor of sovereignty of the people.

Dick McCall: There is a distinction between central power as a mechanism for control and central power as a mechanism to create rules of the game in a society where fairness and justice are accessible to all people in the society. I come from the West, Nebraska and Wyoming. Why were programs that brought irrigation districts and soil conservation districts so successful in turning this country into a surplus food producer? They were successful basically because they were producer-controlled associations. The federal government had an important role to play, but beneficiaries run the REA boards. The farmers run local irrigation districts. They lay down the rules and regulations. They know they have the local ownership.

The Lessons without Borders program brought a lot of things home to me that I had never really thought about. A lot of programs, however well-intentioned, will not work. For example, a national program for microenterprise development will not have much impact at the local level, because it doesn't reflect local reality and ownership. In Boston, representatives from HHS and HUD went into the community and said, "We can do this and that for you." The response from the community activists was, "No, you can't, because you don't understand our local reality. It's not a matter of what you can do for us. It's how we find a way to do it for ourselves. The federal government has a role in trying to inculcate policies that open up the processes in our country to broad-based participation and access, but cannot be looked to for the solution to every conceivable problem.

Gordon Wagner: I would like to see the U.S. government articulate a set of principles as it reaches out to southern countries in emergency situations. One of these would have to do with participation. In Somalia, these principles are being accepted by the rebels as the substantive basis for a partnership. Ultimately, however, to resolve conflict at the grassroots level, the central government has to come in. The center has to be the adjudicator of last resort.

Merging Traditional and Modern Techniques of Conflict Resolution

Chuck Kleymeyer (Inter-American Foundation): I would like to report on a series of workshops which have drawn together over a hundred grassroots leaders in the Andean countries. The purpose of these workshops is to design a dispute resolution and negotiation training manual. The manual will be used to train village-level and federation-level leaders.

One of the most interesting cases presented at the final workshop concerned a federation of about 140 communities in Amazonian Ecuador that sent two representatives to Plano, Texas, to

carry out a 13- hour marathon negotiating meeting with ARCO. At the end of the meeting, the federation succeeded in getting all five of its demands met. This is not only a marriage of Western and traditional techniques, but its a marriage of participation and conflict resolution.

Jerry Delli Priscoli: I remember some time ago, the [Asia Foundation](#) funded some training in Sri Lanka in dispute resolution techniques. Participants discovered that there's a great tradition in mediation in Sri Lanka that had been suppressed under British rule. Similarly, in my field of water resources, there are all sorts of local traditions in the Islamic world for conflict resolution and participation.

The Danger of Paternalism in Applying Conflict Resolution Techniques

Jerry Delli Priscoli: The [Kettering Foundation](#) and others have criticized the field of conflict resolution for falling back into the paternalistic paradigm: instead of the traditional substantive expert, a new "process" expert comes in and says, I'm the mediator or the facilitator coming in to help with this situation. This criticism needs to be taken seriously and addressed.

Highlights of a Conference on Preventive Diplomacy

Jennifer Douglas: Id like to mention some of the major findings of the recent two-day conference, "Honing the Tools of Preventive Diplomacy." It covered early warning and prevention, lessons learned from the Greater Horn, and the role of culture and religion in conflict and its resolution (A summary I prepared of this event is available through E-mail to all members of the Participation Network).

Today there are 84 active internal wars around the world, not only between states but also between peoples, and there are approximately 252 minorities now at risk, with 52 considered to be severely at risk. To deal with so much conflict, we must learn to think strategically, and in preventive terms, look for the root causes of conflict, and muster the political will to address those causes. It was recommended that U.S. embassies include personnel that have expertise in the areas of religious affairs and conflict resolution.

Also discussed at the conference was the role of media in conflict prevention and early warning. Media can contribute to conflict if they are used by one group to demonize another, but if they are neutral and accessible, they can be used as a tool for early warning and as a channel to promote constructive communications between opposing sides.

Culture and language are important tools in conflict. They can be used as tools of war as well as tools for peace. Although the traditional religions in Africa historically allowed people of different beliefs to live together, when Christianity and Islam were introduced, people began to proselytize, in turn, dividing people and contributing to conflict and to war.

Some of the participants at the USAID conference were also at an international conflict resolution conference in Addis Ababa in September. The Addis conference stressed participatory approaches both for identifying root causes of conflicts and developing strategies to address them. Another point made was that conflict resolution skills are value-free. Unless they are used with a code of ethics, they can be used to co-opt people. The final point was that although no African leader has promoted the use of pre-colonial traditions, we're now hearing people talk about elders and the role of traditional decision-making models in conflict resolution. Formal governmental leaders in countries that are challenged may not want us to work directly with people who make decisions in a more traditional and participatory manner. We need to attempt to forge constructive linkages between traditional leaders and government leaders.

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meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development

The Participation Forum (No. 9)

Participation When There is No Time

January 19, 1995

The most persistent refrain during a year's worth of Participation Forums is that participation takes time. And yet, what do we do in a situation where there simply isn't time? Results are needed yesterday. Perhaps the usual institutions in the country are not functioning. What do you do? Addressing these tough questions at the ninth Participation Forum was Rick Barton, Director of the Office of Transition Initiatives. Mark Schneider, Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean, introduced Rick and participated actively in the subsequent discussion.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Engaging People Who Have a Stake in the Outcome: From El Salvador to Haiti

Mark Schneider

My view, going back to my [Peace Corps](#) experience in El Salvador, is that participation is an essential element of solving problems, and it doesn't matter whether you're dealing with a long-term development problem or a crisis. If you fail to engage people who have a stake in the outcome, you ultimately fail to understand the needs that are involved, you fail to understand the problems that are at issue, and usually you fail to find the right solution.

I've had an involvement with participation as part of crisis situations over the past 20 years in various Latin America countries. Three years ago, I was an observer-participant in the transition from war to peace in El Salvador; the [UN](#) was developing a national reconstruction plan in El Salvador and I was the [World Health Organization's](#) representative. The experience gave me two perspectives on how to proceed in Haiti. In general, the nongovernmental organizations and grassroots organizations in El Salvador that had been active in providing services and responding to the crisis in the years of conflict had not been consulted in any way in the negotiations to develop the plan. In one area, however, in issues regarding displaced persons and refugees, all groups involved had a chance to define the problems, their needs, and possible solutions. In Haiti, as we attempted to define a response to the emergency in terms of longer-term development, I was determined to ensure participation from all who had a stake in Haiti's ultimate recovery.

The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) provided a ready-made entity to help us grapple with the problem of ensuring participation in defining solutions to our problems. OTI represents Brian Atwood's views that crises must be dealt with not only on a short-term basis, but as a first step towards a future, longer-term development program, a sort of "preventive diplomacy." OTI fills a gap in a new way; it is not only helping us move through this period of transition but also ensuring that the next stage, recovery and reconstruction and development, is likely to be more successful.

OTI: Political Development Through Grassroots Initiatives

Rick Barton

Mission

When it was created, OTI was going to be turbocharged democracy. I'm not exactly sure that's what it has ended up being, but I think it's fair to say that OTI is the office that participation built. At the core of our mission is one fundamental truth about participation: if you're ever going to get to a system of the people, by the people, and for the people, then you'd better engage the people as early as you can. Our job is to bring fast, direct political-development assistance to nations emerging from distress. We're supposed to operate in the period when systems have broken down, leadership is feeble, the economy is disrupted, there is violence and intimidation, and few freedoms. Our office is supposed to fill the gap until the larger-scale new justice systems, maybe formal elections, and other pieces of the governmental development take hold. It is a time when there is a real need to pay attention to the political development opportunities.

The "Gersony" Approach

One of our key early influences was Bob Gersony, who told us about a project on the Atlantic Coast region of Nicaragua. The area had been overrun by two armies, and then a hurricane for good measure. People were hanging around wondering what to do with their lives. Bob went there for 60 days. He rented a boat, went up and down the rivers, and he met with anybody he could find who could talk about what was going on.

He came back with a straightforward conclusion that the people needed a certain kind of Colombian rice, a certain kind of machete, and roads to take the rice to the markets. He arranged to provide all these elements, got people back to rice farming and set up work crews to build the roads. The farming cut back on the people who were kibitzing or worse. The road crews, small teams that included the entire spectrum of the political combatants, became a practical mechanism for reconciliation.

One strong point was that the approach mixed theory with reality, that there was a little bit of money to go with the civil education, and the other pieces. Another was that it drew heavily on the field for wisdom on how to proceed. Problems were that there's only one Bob Gersony and he's not that available and that the approach takes too long. We knew we had to move faster, and we knew we had to move beyond just one guru.

Our next experience was in Sarajevo. The NATO truce was holding, things seemed to be getting better, and we thought that Sarajevo might be the building block that we could use to create a real program in Bosnia, a beginning toward reconciliation. After three days of official meetings, we really didn't know much more. But we got lucky. The mayor offered us a guide, one of the rare breed of literal people, who when we'd say, "Gee, why would anybody want to have a baby during this kind of situation?" would say, "We will go to the maternity ward." We'd say, "What is life like at the front line?" and she would set up a meeting at the front line. Or we'd say, "Tell us about some of the young people and what dreams they have," and she set up a group of young gymnasts.

Through interviews and focus groups and community meetings, we suddenly got a good cross-section of what was going on in Sarajevo. As a result, we concluded that there wasn't the political will to move on. What's more, the middle class, the lifeblood of the community, was being sucked out of the city. The only solution we saw was to stop the brain drain and even that had only about a 10 percent chance of working. Brian Atwood's conclusion was that our involvement there wouldn't have much chance of success. And subsequent events have confirmed this view.

From Intimidation to Local Empowerment in Haiti

Haiti became the next focus of our attention. We knew that the U.S. military intervention was taking care of security and that the USAID programs were feeding about a million people a day. We thought that success would depend on the military engagement being brief. To have a successful hand-off, you cannot have the military in a dominant role, so you must have a significant civilian presence all over the country. We began to think about a decentralized model. It would also have to be a real presence; after you've had 20,000 troops, you can't just have 15

USAID people. We also thought international aid would not be felt in the countryside for a long time, that most of it would be centered in Port-au-Prince even though 70 percent of the people live outside of the capital.

These were our assumptions, but we needed enlightenment from the field. So we built a core team here of people from all over USAID. In addition, our grantee, the [International Organization of Migration](#) (IOM), hired a half dozen people, now the nucleus of those permanently located all over Haiti. The two groups spent a couple of days in Port-au-Prince and then went out into the field for 12 critical days: the five days before Aristide arrived, the weekend that he returned to the country and five days after. They met with over 500 Haitians, including some 130 local elected officials who hadn't gotten together for several years, in virtually every conceivable setting. They got a pretty good assessment of how fragile security was, how huge the Haitians' pent-up demand was to take some control of the situation, and how everything is a priority in Haiti. This information refocused our efforts and formed the basis for the program that we have now.

We think there are three central political development issues in Haiti: restoring legitimate government, not just President Aristide, but at every level; moving from a system of intimidation to one of broad public participation; and decentralizing control and empowering people at the local level. Everything we are doing with our program goes through those filters. If we're not addressing one of those three things, then we shouldn't be doing it. Our program mixes the product, which is political development, with the byproduct, which is a series of quick-start, quick-impact, micro-cost projects, so that the real needs of people in the community become the focus of the political organizing. Each project includes a straight, political development component, some kind of civic education.

We have 13 teams covering 16 areas of the country. Every area of the country now has two internationals. We've also already hired about 50 Haitians and plan on hiring a total of 150. We go beyond people who speak our language and have formal education and seek out natural community leaders. In a sense we're running an on-site, on-the-job political development institute, which we hope will be one of the sustainable pieces. These teams have the decision-making authority to spend up to \$5,000 on any project. Each project must be run by a citizen board or community group. Many are extragovernmental, anything from a voodoo event to more traditional groups. We've tried to reach to include more women, more young people, groups that have not historically been involved.

Examples of Projects

Participation is inherent in all the little initiatives we're undertaking because we're in a facilitating, rather than in a dominant, role. For example, a certain dam had a silt problem but the central government wasn't providing the money to pay the silt cleaners to make it operative so the electricity was not getting to the people at the bottom of the hill. The people down the hill thought electricity should be free because God provides the water and why should you pay for the water that God provides. The silt cleaners who lived in the immediate area weren't getting any electricity either. It seemed to be an intractable situation. Our job was to figure out how to help the local people find a solution. The community came up with the idea that there should be some charge for the water rights from the dam and that the silt removers could be paid from that fund. They now have created such a fund, run by a local board.

One of my favorite examples had to do with water distribution. In this case, the water company and the electric company were known as being inept and corrupt, with long histories of favoritism. The only people with reliable water and electricity were the local army barracks and a few selected houses. Eleven community leaders spontaneously got together with some reinforcement from our operation and from the multinational forces, to address the problems of water distribution and illegal taps. The upshot was that the group voted on whether to create a new distribution pattern. The local Haitian army representative and the local manager of the water district all voted against it. But those for the new system won. The new system is completely extragovernmental. And one of the ironies was that our team lost their water because, unbeknownst to them, the residence had an illegal tap.

In other cases, we have supported initiatives to make accounting systems more transparent so that people know where their dollar or their gourde is going. In one town, people were wondering why they didn't get lights more than 8 to 14 hours every second or third day. We helped them

understand that the problem was that revenues collected for electricity would pay for only about 40 hours of light per month. People now understand that something will have to be done about collection of revenues, that people are going to have to start paying.

We also made reporting about toll revenues more transparent. This time it had to do with one of the three major highways in the country, which has so many potholes that you can only go about 5, 10 miles an hour. The toll is 5, 10, or 15 gourdes. Truck drivers, tap-tap drivers, and other people who use the road met to discuss the rates and how the money should be used. As a result, people now get a receipt when they pay their tolls, and the amounts collected are posted. Now, when the potholes get filled, people see that it's their gourdes at work. Again, it's a very basic system of local governance. But all politics is local, as you know. In all these cases, we have helped to get these groups going. Sometimes, our local representative may even convene the first meeting, but thereafter, his/her role is just supportive, trying to find out what is needed. The groups are very much on their own. We are just providing a little bit of the juice to keep them functioning.

Early Results

It's too early to claim success, but I think participation has done a lot for us. First, it helps us refine our strategic plan right from the beginning because it involves real people rather than officialdom. Second, it adds to our confidence in our program, because it reflects what is happening on the ground. Third, it reduces the risk of paternalism, a worry for all of us. Fourth, it increases the likelihood of success because we're doing what's needed versus what we have projected. Next, it increases the long-term viability because people are involved in the solutions from the beginning. And most important, it creates the democratic foundation that sustains and will sustain long-term economic, political, and social development. Whether people like our program or not, almost everybody likes the decentralization, the hands-on involvement, the flexibility, the ability to respond to what's there in the community rather than basing activities on a pre-designed plan. One of our competitive advantages should be that we are closer to the people than any other part of the U.S. foreign aid, foreign relations package. Sometimes we are, and in others, we know we could do better.

Discussion Session

Participatory Monitoring

Ann Sweetser: In working for sustainability, are you incorporating any participatory monitoring?

Mark Schneider: For monitoring the emergency jobs program, we ask the local NGOs that are managing the program whether what was proposed initially has succeeded. And the U.S. PVOs themselves bring together all the local NGOs that are carrying out the health services in the Comit, de Sant,, and they look at what is being done.

Rick Barton: In the OTI program we have a couple of ways we're keeping track of what's going on. For each of our projects, we have a simple front-and-back-page reporting form that asks how many Haitians and what other organizations are involved and what the political development component is. We also keep a straightforward count of how many people are going through our civic education programs. We have yet to decide how we'll review what has happened over the longer-term, but I expect we'll involve some of the Haitians whom we're working with. I think our success in doing that is going to be measured on whether we are, in fact, having an influence on people at the grassroots level.

Lasting Political Change

Derek Singer: President Aristide has said that it is the second democratic election that really defines whether a democratic transition is going to work. What is OTI doing to lay the basis for this second election in Haiti?

Rick Barton: A lot of our civic education, which is giving people an increased sense of ownership and helping to meet some of the rising expectations that surfaced with the return of Aristide, will help to stabilize the political environment. We will also serve as a platform to facilitate candidate forums and some of the LAC and Democracy Center initiatives. Our contacts all over the country should be helpful in the case of later justice or environmental initiatives.

Audience: In Eastern Europe, after the first flush of democracy, the second wave has returned many of the earlier government technocrats. Are you looking at that in terms of Haiti?

Mark Schneider: I cannot conceive of the Haitian people voting back into power, to take it to the extreme, the Tonton Macoute or the Mevs. On the other hand, it will be necessary to demonstrate movement. If over the next year, people don't believe they have more economic opportunity, more chance to express themselves and participate in the political process, then support for the overall democratic process could diminish.

Rick Barton: Aristide's refreshingly honest campaign promise--"from misery to poverty with dignity"--means that we are starting from a basis in reality. Still, the whole situation could easily unwind. One of Eastern Europe's problems, also true in Haiti, is the thin layer of people who can speak World Bank and speak USAID and speak whatever else. There is no farm system. Part of our goal at the local level is to create potential leaders.

OTI Role

Kathleen Campbell: Does OTI see any role for itself in areas where long-term insecurity is an issue, such as rebel-held areas?

Rick Barton: Brian Atwood said, after we came back from Sarajevo, that we should be a "post-bullet program." Still, we are in a couple of such places. In Angola, we're looking for an opening. We've helped fund the preparation of a demobilization plan through the UN and we're looking at the land mine situation. We're also in central Bosnia, looking at some of these quick-impact reconciliation projects between the Muslims and the Croats, not where the Serbs are, and where there is limited peace.

Hal Gray: Given the limitations in personnel in OTI, how do you institutionalize? Can some of the work be passed on to the LAC Bureau so that Rick's free to go on to other hot spots? Is the approach sufficiently proven to form the basis of a full-fledged project? Would it be the same or a little different, if the development people were running it?

Mark Schneider: In the case of Haiti, we're going to have a transition to the [United Nations](#), with the UN, most likely, picking up the contract with IOM. Ultimately, the government of Haiti should take over financing the same kinds of activities. In addition, we've got two local government projects in which we could replicate the model that's been set up.

Haiti: Favorable Conditions

Mark Schneider: There are three circumstances that helped make the program in Haiti possible. One is that the three political development goals that Rick mentioned were also part of President Aristide's proposal, so our program meshed with what was being promoted from the new, restored democratic government. The second is that the DART team has been a fundamental link between the military, the incoming civilian government, and our ongoing A.I.D. program. So part of the needs for safety, food, and shelter were being dealt with. Third, prior to the return of President Aristide, we had been working through the NGO community, so that our program benefited from a network of participation that was feeding information and concerns in, and emphasized the need for this kind of program.

Diane La Voy: I'd like to explore further the issue of notwithstanding authority. Rick, my understanding is that one of its most important uses, for you, was simply in being able to avoid a lengthy, competitive bidding process for your principal implementer.

Rick Barton: That's right, but there is another even more valuable factor that has helped us: having someone, Doug Stafford (AA/Bureau for Humanitarian Response) in particular, who says at the end of every day, "Are you making a difference?" It's the mind-set that says "Hey, go ahead. You're the venture capital of this business...get out there and do things....." We don't have to waste all our time checking and providing reports.

Participation and Public Opinion

Danielle Roziewski: Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot has said, "It's not a question of what's good for Russia, but whether Russia continues to develop in the manner that's good for American interests and values." What ramifications do you see the current political climate and rhetoric having for USAID's ability to continue to facilitate and encourage participation?

Rick Barton: We need to be more assertive about the value of USAID and foreign assistance. We need to make the larger case that it is a good preventive expenditure; it helps produce a more stable world. Our success is going to be measured based on whether we are having an influence on people at the grassroots level. Power to the people seems to be a concept that everybody in the political spectrum, both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans, holds as their own. This program gets away from our tendency to be overly bureaucratic. It gives us the satisfaction of knowing that we have made something happen.

Mark Schneider: Our assumption is that participation is an essential element in helping to bring about successful change and development. Ultimately, that is in the United States' national interest. If it fails, then we will have to face other kinds of crises, use other resources and it will be both more expensive and contrary to our goals for the international community.

Rick Barton: Haiti is a good example of this principle. It's probably the most popular U.S. intervention since World War II. The soldiers have virtually been carried around on the shoulders of the Haitian people. If you're going to have anything sustainable, the vast majority of the public has to believe in what's happening. So it's a good measure for our involvement.

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

The Participation Forum (No. 10)

Strategies for Community Change: Top-Down or Bottom-Up?

February 23, 1995

How can donors promote participatory development in urban communities? Participants at the tenth session of the Participation Forum heard and discussed presentations that approached this question from two different directions. Kay Pyle of the Inter-American Foundation described the work of Brazilian NGOs that train members of poor communities to negotiate with local government and to develop initiatives of their own. Hal Minis, Senior Development Planner for the [Center for International Development, Research Triangle Institute \(RTI\)](#), described Ivory Coast's Municipal Development Support Project and the Tunisia-based Local Government Support Project efforts aimed at strengthening the skills of both local government and community organizations to deal with each other. The session was kicked off by David Hales, Director of the Center for the Environment in the Global Bureau.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Thinking About Participation in Decision Making

David Hales

I've spent a lot of time as a regulator, making decisions from the upper levels in an organization where, in politically correct terms, we would be "participation challenged." From my perspective as a decision maker, I think about issues of participation along four continuums. First, as environmentalists we have a sense of urgency because we realize how fast resources are being lost, but we also recognize that, to be sustainable, the decisions can't be just top-down. Second, as North Americans, we tend to want to depend on scientific expertise, but there are other forms of expertise that we should also bring in, though this may be more difficult. Third, there is the continuum that runs from a rational decision-making structure to what I might call a traditional structure. And finally, there's the continuum that deals with benefits and costs. Benefits are often in one sector and costs in another or benefits are enjoyed by one group, and the costs paid, sometimes involuntarily, by another.

I suggest these points as guidance. First: decisions are almost always best made by those closest to the problem and those who have most to lose as the result of a decision-making process. Second: choices don't exist unless those who are involved in the decision process perceive them to exist. Finally, the most useful skill that anyone involved in a decision process can cultivate is the skill of listening.

An NGO-Centered Strategy in Recife, Brazil

Kay Pyle

Recife, in northeast Brazil, provides a case study of how NGOs and community associations can

affect public policy. It's a poor city, with 800,000 of its 1.3 million inhabitants living in favelas. At the same time, it has a propitious environment for community participation. In part, this reflects Brazil's 1988 constitution, which has led to regulations that city plans must be made with community participation. In addition, Recife is located in a region with a history of community participation and has a sympathetic government, a mayor who has voiced commitments to the community and involved NGO leaders in his government.

We decided to support community efforts by funding clusters of NGOs, which are numerous in the region. We felt that this would have a larger, "sum is greater than its parts" effect. We've supported at least 10 to 15 groups over the past six or seven years. They all work on something slightly different, but there's a great deal of collaboration in spirit as well as on specific projects.

The result is an impressive community-participation record in Recife. NGOs are providing training for city workers such as teachers and education department supervisors and have been asked to staff a number of city departments. An advisory group, required by the constitution, meets every two weeks to address issues related to the city plan. An organization composed of five NGOs monitors land use legislation that impacts the poor and holds special meetings to monitor public budgets. Other institutional networks in Recife involve community leaders as well as NGOs.

People's Perceptions of Democratic Participation

Citizen participation takes education and organization -- just how much came to light in a survey of citizens and community leaders carried out by one of the NGOs. People were asked about community participation and democracy, and it turned out there was a great deal of confusion. First, people often equated democracy with jobs, decent salaries, housing, and social services. Second, residents had a low level of community participation; less than 20 percent participated in any kind of community organization. Third, they saw participation as a way to get services, rather than as a way to shape public policies and practices. Fourth, they defined participation as voting; that is, they elect their officials and that constitutes participation, even though the officials may buy votes or use their offices strictly for patronage. People did not see participation as coming through institutional channels.

In summary, the researchers concluded that the most important law of a democratic country is not the constitution but the law of survival. One-third of the residents and leaders felt that the military period, for instance, was better than the current democracy because they got better services and the economy was stronger. This illustrates that NGOs and neighborhood organizations need to understand the perceptions of low-income people and to change those perceptions--this is really key to promoting democratic participation.

Empowering Neighborhoods Through Information

One community research NGO in Recife, ETAPAS, has developed a model of action-oriented participatory research involving residents associations in low-income neighborhoods. Typically, the neighborhood will ask for help and ETAPAS will go out and train people how to do socio-demographic surveys, how to determine the number of schools, residents, electric lights, paved streets, bars, churches--everything about the neighborhood. ETAPAS tabulates the results and incorporates them in illustrated, easy-to-read booklets. These are then given to the community, and a seminar is held on the findings. The community uses the findings in negotiations with the city, in meetings, and in efforts to organize itself around various issues.

Using income figures, the surveyors learned not only that hunger was a major problem in this neighborhood, but where the hungry lived. To meet the immediate crisis, the community arranged for local supermarkets to donate food and the residents association to distribute it to the poorest families. To address the problem in a longer-term way through job creation, women with dressmaking skills were organized, and a community-run credit fund granted them a loan to get started in business. These women are now marketing their wares.

In another ETAPAS survey, transportation was identified as a major problem: the community was located on top of a big hill and the bus route was at the bottom. The walk to the bus was long and sometimes dangerous, running through a high-crime area that was subject to mudslides during the rainy season.

Using the survey, the community negotiated with the secretary of transportation to have the bus come to the top of the hill. This seems like a simple solution, but it didn't happen until these people did the survey, got organized, and decided to negotiate.

Time-Consuming but Effective

I'll summarize the pluses and pitfalls, or challenges, of an NGO-centered strategy. A major challenge is that we don't live in the community. It takes a lot of effort on the part of the funder to make good decisions at the community level. It's a time-consuming, labor-intensive process for community residents to begin to understand the potential of participation. But development takes place over time and requires ongoing support.

On the plus side, as outsiders, we are in a better position to mobilize the various actors to work together. Moreover, this kind of development is substantial, meaningful, effective, long-lasting, and has a good cost benefit. It also avoids providing money to governments, which can be ineffectual because of either corruption, negligence, or inept management.

Strategies to Make Local Government More Participatory

Hal Minis

I'd like to talk about facilitating participation in urban development. How do we help promote a more participatory process, what are the intervention points, and who should our partners be?

Government and Citizens

The general framework that we're using at RTI, drawn from several of our project experiences, comprises on one side local government, which includes the elected officials and the staff who implement policy and provide services, and on the other side citizens, who may represent themselves individually, in groups, or through NGOs. Local governments deliver services that should respond to what the citizens want, and the citizens judge whether their streets are paved, their garbage is collected, and so forth. Local government can also provide information about its budget, resource allocations, and local conditions. Participation takes different forms: the electoral process; tax payment or nonpayment; administrative procedures or partnerships set up by the local government.

In a complex, sophisticated participatory environment, lots of channels of communication exist. Where we work, local government is fairly closed and there are very few channels of participation. Our objective has been to build these channels.

One basic strategy is to build communication linkages going both ways, from the community to the local government and from the local government back to the community. Although this is a function of the legal framework, more and more we're finding that participation really takes place through the discretionary powers of a local government. What counts is the number and types of meetings held by the local government, how and where the meetings are held, the kinds of public hearings that are held, and the number of citizen commissions that are established. In Tunisia, where we're doing a lot of work, the municipal councils generally meet three or four times a year. In Chapel Hill, North Carolina, the council meets four or five times a month, and in the evening, so citizens can attend.

The other basic strategy is to strengthen the capacities of both sides government and citizens to engage in a process. This involves both skills and behaviors.

Ivory Coast Experience

We worked for several years in the secondary cities of the Ivory Coast attempting to strengthen municipal capacity and open municipal processes. Our focus was on local government because this was where the chief constraints lay. The mayors were not accustomed to public meetings. Consultations took place through the political party. The service directors had the prerogative to deliver services the way they wanted. People were not aware of potential ways of developing partnerships between the community and the local government. Neither the mayor nor his staff had the tools to engage in that kind of dialogue.

In the small cities in which we worked, we took a multifaceted approach to developing more participatory mechanisms. Mayors in Francophone Africa have a lot of power, so we focused on increasing the mayor's awareness of the need for participation. There were conferences for the federation of mayors on techniques for building confidence between local government and citizens. We sent teams to individual cities to meet with the mayor and the staff and discuss the city's problems and the potential benefits of participation. We trained staff on budgeting, resource mobilization, and provision of services. At the same time, teams of social workers carried out neighborhood assessments, both to increase local awareness about neighborhood conditions and to learn about needs and complaints. Small booklets and slide shows were developed to promote awareness of the results. Finally, for the first time in many cases, open public meetings were held that brought elected officials and staff together with community members. Afterwards, the municipalities were asked to develop an action plan.

Consultation with municipalities served not only to increase their awareness and gain commitment but also to get access to town resources such as trucks or a meeting place. Working with communities resulted in increasing the community's awareness about how they could interact with the municipality.

This process has produced a variety of results. For example, in one small town, community awareness of garbage collection problems led to the establishment of a youth association which collected garbage in the neighborhoods and left it in central locations for municipal pick up. This greatly improved sanitation and gave work to some of the unemployed youth. Elsewhere, a municipality provided support to a women's NGO to carry out sanitation activities, after the mayor learned of the group's interest in becoming involved. In a third example, market vendors and slaughterhouse operators came to an agreement with the municipality after a dramatic scene at a public meeting. The authorities, noting that the butchers' payments were low compared to other cities, had asked the butchers to pay their slaughterhouse fees. The butchers got up, left the meeting, caucused, and returned with the proposition that if the services in the slaughterhouse lighting and waste removal were improved, they would pay their fees. This was the first time that the market vendors and slaughterhouse operators had ever talked to the municipality about their needs, and the upshot was that the improvements were included in the budget and the capital investment plan.

The approach of involving NGOs, private-sector interests, market vendors, transporters, butchers, and the like with the local government officials and staff has proved very successful in Ivory Coast. It has now been expanded to Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea, using local consultants trained in the Ivory Coast.

Tunisia and Beyond

In Tunisia, the Local Government Support Project aims to improve local governance through community participation and improvement of municipal capability to implement policy decisions. We are working with the Federation of Tunisian Cities to produce a guide on municipal management practices and a newsletter and to plan a conference on working with neighborhood organizations. We're also beginning a national training program for municipal staff. We did a study that showed that Tunisia has very few NGOs in urban areas.

In two pilot cities, which are really laboratories for innovation and participatory approaches, the kick-off activity was a day-long participation roundtable, which brought together elected officials, staff, and representatives of local NGOs. This was the first time that the three had gathered to discuss the benefits and the obstacles to partnerships between the local government and local NGOs. I was amazed at the level of interest and the participation the amount of discussion and the number of ideas that emerged.

We are also planning an observational tour in the United States for teams from these pilot cities, and we intend to provide ongoing assistance once participatory activities get underway. One major activity is CIMEP Community Involvement in Managing Environmental Pollution an approach that includes community involvement in identifying environmental problems, municipal and NGO staff training, and discussions by all parties of problems, both at the local and the national levels.

Just as Ivory Coast has been the laboratory for West Africa, so many of the Tunisian activities have been the laboratory for broader activities in the Near East North Africa (NENA) region. USAID's Regional Housing and Urban Development (RHUDO) Program has sponsored activities at a regional level which aim at the same objective. A regional conference in Cairo last September focused on participation theory and policy. A second Cairo conference in June will focus on implementation. A regional governance and democracy study is examining the status of participation activities in these other countries, based on the Tunisia framework. There will be follow-up in some countries, networking and information sharing, and probably another CIMEP activity in a second country. Using the lessons learned from Tunisia, we're trying to create momentum for a participatory approach in the entire region.

To summarize, if you work at the local level, particularly in an urban setting, it's critical to work with NGOs and with the local government. Obstacles to participation exist on both sides, and both must work together to have effective participatory approaches.

Discussion Session

Trust, Expectations, and Time

Bachir Souhal: In the World Bank, we find that participatory approaches require building trust and raising expectations in the local communities and institutions. Our approach is to be frank with the local population. For example, in a project with Bedouin in Egypt, we say that the project is just a drop of water in the desert; that it could be used to blossom flowers; but there will have to be the bees if they want to harvest any honey. The message is clear that a process has been started to prepare the project and that it's their responsibility to carry it out. Each community has a kind of contract with the project if they want to participate, so there is no paternalism.

Diane LaVoy: The case you cite is described in the [World Bank Sourcebook on Participation](#), isn't it? I'd like people to be aware of this resource, which will be in final form in a few months.

Bachir Souhal: Yes, exactly. I titled it, "Gaining by Losing Control" which means a lot.

Audience: In USAID, we also must address the implications of building expectations as we're building trust. As times become more uncertain, are we really going to be there, in those communities, participating at the level we now anticipate?

Tony Marcil: Some projects shouldn't be undertaken at all if they can't remain in place for a certain period of time. At the World Environment Center, we had two projects with five- and three-year commitments, because that was judged, in consultation with USAID, the period necessary to make the activities self-sufficient. But after one year in one case, and two in the other, USAID decided to withdraw from the country. Very, very small amounts of money were involved. If we had been talking about \$10 million, they would have listened because it would have made sense to do the paperwork to be able to stay there.

La Voy: That's a painful and relevant point as we continue to close USAID missions.

Peter Gottert: Our experience as the [Academy for Educational Development](#) running nutrition communications projects in West Africa has been that there was so much emphasis on showing results in extremely short periods of time, that this Forum comes as a complete breath of fresh air. In fact, we did show that working in a participatory manner not only created the most trust, but also brought about the greatest change between baseline and final evaluation surveys.

Win/Lose Situations

Derick Brinkerhoff: Most of the cases discussed seem like win-win situations, where everybody comes out ahead. What happens when there are heavy costs, when some people are losers?

Pyle: In Recife, a developer wanted to build a hotel on a point of land that was already being used by a community of fishermen. The hotel would have provided jobs and tourism and the city approved the project. The fishermen, however, were concerned about the environmental impact and acquired help from an expert in environmental mapping from one of our NGOs. Hearings were held, the hotel complex has not been built, but no final resolution has been reached either. It may not work out the way one party or the other wants it, but what was important was the atmosphere of negotiation, that all the people were at the table.

NGOs or Governments?

Mike Lippe: I'd like Kay Pyle to say more about her statement that supporting NGOs "avoids providing money to governments." Do you really believe that money should not go to governments, only to NGOs?

Pyle: No, I think that government is very important. And although our money at the IAF typically does not go to government, our grants go to NGOs in communities like Recife with potential for collaboration with the government. We think that's the model of greatest return.

La Voy: The strong NGOs in Brazil that are grantees of the IAF in some ways carry out the functions that RTI would be carrying out with USAID funding. They are purveyors of that nice mix of social and technical expertise, and they call in other experts as necessary. Local NGOs have the advantage of on-the-ground knowledge and, presumably, the potential for sustainability in their society. On the other hand, they may be locked into the limits of their own knowledge, approach, and previous struggles and may not be able to bring a fresh look.

I'd like to ask Hal how RTI expects its work to last if they are not cloning themselves into local institutions of some sort? And similarly, Kay, how does IAF deal with the issue of sustainability?

Minis: Human resource development has to be a fundamental aspect of the project so that the people who are participating in it learn the necessary skills and techniques. Also, a facilitative approach, with a lot of consultation among all the concerned parties at all levels, is key to having people take over the approach themselves.

Pyle: Although the IAF may have to bring in the technical skills, they don't remain behind unless a training component is built into the project. On the other hand, in our approach, the people we work with are there after the project is over.

Learning North-South or South-South

Gary Hartshorn: Hal, you mentioned participatory tours to the United States. We in the environmental community have had a lot of success doing south-south interchanges, and it would seem to me that holds great potential when you're dealing with participatory efforts and capacity building. Are you doing that?

Minis: In the Tunisia-based project, we've opted for a U.S. study tour because the examples are so much richer here, even though the context is much different. But I agree that in many cases the south-south exchange is very critical, and that's certainly the approach we used in West Africa. We had tours to the Ivory Coast, for example, from Mali, Senegal, and Guinea.

Effects of Past Development Work

William Miner: In both Tunisia and Brazil, there is a history of USAID local development work back in the '60s and '70s. Did you find residuals of this work, and did it help or hinder the newer efforts?

[Editor: neither speaker could identify specific effects. We invite readers to consider the question and send their observations.]

Slogans of Partnership?

William Visser: We tend to take for granted that participation is a good thing. But in my own experience, I find some incisive criticism of the whole notion coming from academic sources, NGOs, and honest and good government people in developing countries. The argument goes like this: "Listen: We're not accustomed to democracy. Basic breakthroughs are taking place, and we're trying to strengthen our own democratic processes. Then along come development assistance organizations with these slogans of partnerships and participation, which basically circumvent the rules and the changes that we have established constitutionally. Is it possible that we are imposing new notions on the south?"

Pyle: Since the IAF responds to proposals from community groups, the ideas come from them as far as I know. With the opening of democracy and increased democratization, we began getting proposals for the type of projects I discussed today.

La Voy: It's an important point, but the problem is least likely to occur in cases like IAF, which funds unsolicited proposals and judges them on the longstanding track record of the proponent organization. The real question is whether the NGOs coming forward may undercut local government or represent some sort of alternative to representative democracy. In general, the NGOs that I've known most are certainly not doing this. They're trying to strengthen democratic government. Many of the NGOs see their roles as organizing, facilitating, strengthening the voice of people, helping them communicate as citizens within existing governmental structures.

Hales: I would like to comment on the concern that we're imposing participation on people. I heard that criticism most often about the civil rights movement in the South in this country. You can hear it wherever entrenched interests feel threatened by those who would look for effective sharing of power. I would be a little bit suspicious of the motives behind this concern.

Minis: Certainly, participation is a slogan to a certain extent. But in West Africa, in Ivory Coast particularly, everyone realized that there was a tremendous institutional crisis. The mayors we were working with knew that their cities were in serious trouble and they needed to find a new approach. They entered into the process with some trepidation. But when they saw that garbage collection was better, that municipal revenues increased, they agreed that it was a better approach. Tunisia is still a highly centralized country that is facing a delicate political situation, and it's going to remain centralized. We're trying to adapt the idea of participation and governance to their context. Let them take the parts they want. If it means working slowly with a couple of NGOs, fine. But clearly there is a demand.

Communications from the E-mail Bag

Strategies, Challenges, and Practices in Participatory Urban Development

Local Government and NGOs Complementary Roles

Steven Sharp: "Community decision making can be achieved by mobilizing the energies of both local government and NGOs. Both have clearly defined roles local government for service delivery and land-use planning, and NGOs for mobilizing citizens around the common issues. In many USAID countries, local government is an ineffectual extension of central government, and NGOs often fill a vacuum in service delivery and articulation of local needs. The issue is not whether USAID should fund urban services or NGO operations it cannot do either in a sustainable manner. Rather, USAID should target those areas in the relationships between the two to enable a

participatory process for community decision making. NGOs have a role in mobilizing citizen participation to make the local government accountable to the citizens. And, for people to have a stake in their government, it must be seen as a means of making their lives better.”

"Jump-Starting" Participation by Strengthening Local Institutions

Claude Salem: “The following preliminary conclusions grew out of World Bank monitoring of six community-based pilot projects in Manila and Kathmandu focusing on water and sanitation and on waste disposal.

- “The municipal (institutional) framework is often the most intractable constraint to effective community action planning: the fragmented and deteriorated state of relations between elected officials and the informal community leadership structures constitutes a first line of resistance to any kind of concerted discussion and/or action.
- “It is not always clear that the NGOs (or community-based organizations or users’ associations) represent the communities beyond their immediate membership or even their own leadership. Work with these groups is still effective, but concern remains that ‘community action plans,’ which are often derived through a less than representative process, may not be sustainable in a longer perspective. “These findings lead to the idea that preliminary actions could be taken to revitalize the role of local institutions that are at loggerheads or lack strong ‘vital signs’ in order to ‘jump-start’ participation. My question is whether external agencies can effectively assess the presence or absence of such social vitality. And if we can’t, what is the gap and how do we assist in filling it? “In the 1960s and 1970s, Africa was rife with models and pilot projects in ‘community development’ and ‘animation rurale’ approaches which basically assumed that the rural, traditional communities needed to be awakened, organized, made to evolve, etc. These models failed because they did not recognize the multifaceted persistence of traditional societies. It is most likely that public life existed where external observers failed to see it.

“First, we must acknowledge the existence of such complex underlying social realities in urban communities. We must then assist fragmented community segments into finding their respective niche in a nascent public area. Working with public officials, while only part of the answer, can often be more helpful in encouraging community action than initiating direct work with or by NGOs to the exclusion of a role for these officials.”Environmental conditions in urban communities have so deteriorated that development actions need to be more modest, concrete, deliverable in a short time frame, and sustainable over the long term. This is a tall order: to put ‘product’ and ‘process’ in a symbiotic relationship rather than as competing options. Yet this is exactly what the communities we monitored were insistent on doing: ensuring that ‘action on a product’ (some kind of implementation activity) was concurrent with the establishment of a ‘consultation process’ a kind of good faith gesture reflecting the external agents’ trust in the community’s judgment of what is in their own best interest.”

History Makes Participation a Big Challenge in Russia and Other ENI Countries

Robert Herman: “In contrast to the survey referred to by one of the speakers on local attitudes about democracy, in Russia and many of the other ENI countries that have made headway in political reform, citizens are not so much ill-informed as cynical. For many, perhaps a majority, democracy has become synonymous with political disorder, social upheaval, and declining economic fortunes. Moreover, with the dominant perception that the locus of causation in their lives is completely external and with a strong culture of dependence/paternalism, there is little institutional basis on which to foster a participatory ethic.”

Participation a Must in Population CBD Projects

Richard Cornelius: “In the population sector, operations research suggests that community participation is important in setting up sustainable systems for community-based distribution (CBD) of contraceptives. Evidence suggests that CBD systems that are designed and imposed from the outside may achieve short-term gains in contraceptive use, but they tend to require heavy financial and technical input from the outside, and are not sustainable. For example, communities may not be willing to provide any financial support to CBD workers, making it difficult for such workers to take time off from productive activities to do contraceptive education and distribution. On the other hand, when community leaders and women are consulted early on concerning the

need and involved in designing the program, they are more likely to get behind an effort to train and support CBD workers.”

A Problem-Focused Approach

Kristin Loken: “Often local governments are just as weak as the civil society organizations. Providing assistance to NGOs for programs at the local level without involving local governments undercuts that local government’s ability to govern and the community’s ability to decide priorities for itself. When our objectives include decentralization, we need to strengthen partnerships between citizens, local businesses, community groups, and local governments. This will require assistance in improved management (public and private), training in participatory practices and decision making, and improved information access, analysis, and utilization. Such assistance can’t be carried out without a problem-focused approach.

“In the 1985 CRS Health Education project in the West Bank, villages that wanted health educators were required first to organize a town council (if they didn’t have one) and then to decide how they would help pay for (a very small) portion of the program. It always amazed us how, once the village got this part organized, they were off and running. Within six more months, they’d have a kindergarten or a generator or whatever else they decided they wanted next. The key was to get that initial community decision-making process working. “I’m new here in El Salvador, but as I understand it, through our Municipalities in Action Program, open community meetings are being held for the first time in some municipalities. It has just started and there’s still a gap between an open discussion and actual participation in decision making. These meetings, which are a requirement for access to certain public resources and USAID project support, are problem-focused. To date, the program has focused more on the local government side of the partnership, but our next amendment (now under design) will increase support for non-governmental participation as well.”

(*Michael Deal* also sent E-mail about this program. He notes that the open town meetings in nearly all of the 262 municipalities “fostered a strong sense of accountability in locally-elected officials.”)

Best Practices on Participatory Urban Development

Timothy Alexander: “In Indonesia, the first efforts to integrate community participation in urban development activities occurred as part of the Kampung Involvement Program (KIP). The program concentrated on upgrading or providing new microlevel infrastructure to low-income urban communities. A kampung committee is consulted on priorities and on the layout of services. In 1991, the KIP program in Jakarta began a major effort to expand the role of community organizations by introducing use of memoranda of understanding between district-level officials, or Lurahs, and citizen committees, in setting priorities for infrastructure improvements. Success in overcoming an authoritarian culture, central planning style, and budget-cycle-driven orientation of local governments has varied widely. Most recently, in about 10 kelurahans, NGOs have begun to train local government officials on how to organize local leadership groups.

“In the Philippines, a key component of the USAID-supported Community Mortgage Program is the organization of community associations that enable their members to obtain mortgages for the purchase and development of their home sites. Over 300 communities with over 35,000 families have already benefited and the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation is actively working with NGOs to expand and improve the program. “RHUDO/Jakarta recently engaged a consultant to solicit community views of infrastructure priorities. The consultancy aimed at ensuring that infrastructure proposals favored by the community would be incorporated in the municipality of Tasikmalaya’s (West Java) capital investment plan.

The analysis demonstrated that the local community was willing and able to prioritize needed infrastructure services, that the consultative process improved the siting of proposed facilities, and that participatory practices helped to motivate the community to take increased responsibility for maintenance of the new facilities. However, the consultant found that people at the local level expected compensation for participating in what they regarded as a governmental function and that such payments were not an established budget item.”

The Long View

Deborah Prindle: "In 1984, I designed the first multi-year local government training program in managing community development and working with community groups for Ivory Coast. It's nice to see that the work not only bore fruit but is a model for community participation."

The Case for Focus on Local Government

Sigifredo Ramirez: "As Hal Minis said, obstacles for participation exist on both sides (NGOs and local governments). However, a well-oriented and -trained local government is the more productive, and projects with local governments are more effective and sustainable. NGOs have neither permanency nor 'loyalty' to the community; once the project is completed and/or the funds are exhausted, the implementing NGO disappears. The local authority is always there. The need is to place more trust in the local authorities, provide them with the necessary training and technical assistance, and teach them how to work with their communities in a more effective manner. "Until I had the opportunity to work with local governments, I believed that it was very difficult to achieve anything through them. Working with them over the past 15 years has shown me how wrong I was. Local governments in developing countries need three basic elements: working capital, training and technical assistance, and trust. If we can achieve those three elements, we can guarantee local development and effective community participation."

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

February 23, 1995

The Participation Forum (No. 11)

Customer Service Plans-What's New?

March 23, 1995

"Customer surveying," "customer service plans," "customer outreach": are these terms just "newspeak" for what we have been doing for years? This Forum session began by focusing briefly on several examples of innovative, energetic approaches to "customer outreach" and participation. Against this backdrop, the session focused on the question, "So why do we need 'customer service plans'?"

Presenters and other participants emphasized the value of making customer outreach a regular part of operations, of focusing more on the ultimate consumer, and of recognizing the right of the customer to hold us (and the various partners between the customer and USAID) accountable for meeting standards to which we've committed ourselves.

Speakers included Sher Plunkett, Customer Service Officer; Diane Russell of USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (Nicodeme Tchamou, of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Cameroon, assisted in the presentation); Cynthia Rozell, Mission Director for Malawi; Jim Anderson, Mission Director for Niger; and Paul Zeitz, Child Survival Technical Advisor in the Global Bureau's Center for Population, Health and Nutrition. Finally, Pamela Johnson, on loan from USAID to the [National Performance Review](#), and Phyllis Dichter-Forbes, who leads USAID's reengineering effort, challenged the group to consider how setting customer service standards empowers our customers to influence our performance. Lively discussions and E-mail followed.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Making Our Best Practices Part of the System

Sher Plunkett

"Customer focus," a "core value" in USAID's reengineering, is probably the most exotic term used to date for describing the most familiar and the most prized value for all of us working with USAID.

Customer focus as a part of reengineering has essentially two roots: first, the mandate provided by Executive Order 12862, September 1993, in which the administration mandated all federal agencies to develop customer service plans; and second, the traditional USAID commitment to deliver development assistance to poor people while achieving foreign assistance goals. The new mandate and our traditional focus have twined together nicely as the agency attempts not only to reengineer internally, but also to convince the American people that what we do is meaningful and important to our overall foreign policy objectives.

The reengineering task force examined the term "customers" and determined that, in the USAID context, it meant the end users of our program services: the people whom we exist to serve. A complication for USAID is that our "ultimate customers" are often linked through a chain of intermediate customers. Mission people often tend to think of intermediaries, like counterpart ministries, as their customers, because that's who they deal with most. In fact, USAID's links to its customers are like those of the manufacturer to wholesaler to retailer to consumer. A customer service plan looks at the relationship of customer X to customers Y and Z and tries to determine what USAID can do to help or encourage customer X to reach customers Y and Z. Further, the

plan also looks at customer Z—"the end of the line"—to find out if the services are wanted or being delivered or both. In other words, in customer service planning, each operating unit in the agency identifies its customers, traces customer linkages, defines the needs at each link, and analyzes service gaps between the promise and the performance, through systematic feedback.

USAID has tried to get at this before. The "New Directions" of the 1970s forced us to examine links down to the end users using techniques like social soundness assessments, social institutional profiling, and social marketing. These efforts were too low in the scheme of things, too little, too late in the process, and too marginal to the critical management decisions in our development assistance. Some say that customer service is what every good project officer does pay attention to their people. That's true, but it's not currently systematic or institutionalized, and it's not sustainable, given mission turnover. Reengineering involves taking our best practices, including customer outreach, customer focus, and customer services, and making them part of the system. Customer service planning puts resources behind the "customer focus" core value.

Other aspects of the executive order include developing and monitoring service standards and reporting both to USAID and to the customers, saying, "This is how we think we're doing. How do you think we're doing?"

A Dialogue and Learning System

Diane Russell

Three years ago, I was a research fellow at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, which had opened a new humid forest station in Cameroon. Although we did not call our effort a "customer service plan," my Cameroonian associate and I were in fact dealing with farmers as customers. Our goal was to create a dialogue and a learning system between scientists and farmers, which would lead to the design and adoption of better technology in the field. We used a number of different social science tools: a literature review so we could find out what people knew already about the wants and needs of the customer; interviews with different leaders and members of our society to identify critical issues, problems, and players; and later, focus groups. Only after these steps had been taken did we use formal censuses and surveys to give us some scientific understanding about the population and its needs.

After two years, I turned my job over to my associate, botanist Nicodeme Tchamou, and asked him to continue with the customer feedback loop that we had started by bringing farmers to the field to look at experiments and trying to get scientists out to the farmers.

Nicodeme Tchamou: I had a really hard time convincing the scientists to go to the farmers first and look at their priorities and problems. But it is necessary if we are to achieve the goal of creating adaptable technology for the farmers. One thing I did was to hire a woman as the fifth person on our staff. We were four men, but out in the fields, women are responsible for weeding. My boss thought a woman couldn't stand such work, but I pointed out that the women farmers are out in the sun all day, anyway, weeding the fields. So hiring a woman was a way to build a relationship between farmers and researchers.

Asking Ourselves Whom We Weren't Talking To

Cynthia Rozell

When Diane La Voy talked about participation at the mission directors conference about a year ago, my reaction was that, in our plans for developing our country five-year plan, we had all the bases covered. I kept thinking, "Oh, of course we're doing that." Back in Malawi, our first reaction was again that we know what we're doing; we talk to people; we know what our customers want.

In our ag sector programs, for instance, we have a series of beneficiary surveys. We spend three months each year with beneficiaries to see what happens with their lives, and we repeat the

process each year in the same villages to look at any changes that have occurred. In our democracy/governance programs and in our health programs, we go out to villages regularly and do serious focus group work to get feedback on what's working and what isn't. In addition, we have the demographic and health surveys which are important in showing what's happening in population and health. Finally, we have public and private sector committees that meet regularly, quarterly or twice a year, to track the objectives and the results under each of our program areas.

The new government of Malawi has set up another set of systematic consultations--a change after a 30-year history of little consultation. They've set up 11 poverty alleviation task forces, which mobilize just about every organized group in Malawi, including the donors, the government, the semi-government, and the private sector.

We were feeling pretty comfortable until we decided to look at the question differently and ask ourselves whom we weren't talking to. It didn't take us long to come up with a substantive, if not long, list of people who were important to the society of Malawi but were either not direct USAID beneficiaries or not people directly involved in our programs, people whom we had no systematic way of reaching. They were traditional leaders, tribal chiefs, village chiefs, religious leaders, retired people who might have been civil servants for 20 years or more. A problem was that none of the mission staff is fluent in Chichewa, the language spoken by most of them.

The solution--and this is probably not the right answer in every case--was to ask a Malawian, with whom we had a longstanding relationship, to help in drawing up a list of people across political party lines and traditional and modern sector lines. (He happened to be the newly elected vice president.) We called the list of about 20 people that he prepared for us the Senior Advisory Group and invited its members to participate during the Country Program Strategic Planning (CPSP) period.

For most of the mission people, this turned out to be one of their most rewarding experiences in Malawi. The group met three times during the CPSP. As concerned citizens, they were eager to participate, though there was nothing in it for any of them: no job, no funding. Their only concern was with what made development sense for their country. They contributed both a fresh view on priorities and a validation of what we'd been hearing from our other client groups. This group is being continued, now that the CPSP process is finished. Once every six months we will sit down and review progress on some of the strategies they helped us develop.

Niger Experiments with a Customer Survey Plan

Jim Anderson

As a country experimental lab, Niger is developing a customer survey plan as part of our effort to incorporate the four core values -- customer focus, results orientation, participation, and teamwork -- into the strategic planning process. Our aim is to make this more than a plan with a list of targets that can be measured. We want it to become a state of mind. We want our officers to pick up on where a customer survey is needed to address an issue that has come up in the context of implementing a program. Our staff must be sensitive to what is happening with their programs from the standpoint of participation.

The participation plan and its customer survey aspects will require us to reconfigure our human resources. We need staff with the skills to understand what is going on, to ask the right questions in the surveys, and to implement what has been learned. Practically speaking, we can't get by with French in Niger if this is to be a true participatory mission. We need people who know Africa, who know the Sahel, people with negotiating skills. I'm looking more closely at the criteria that we're using for selecting our U.S. direct-hire staff. I'm also using our Foreign Service national staff differently. They have more of the needed skills than do the Americans, and they will have to be permitted to do things that they are currently prohibited from doing.

We're moving from an ad hoc to a more systematic way of listening to customers. For example, we have a microenterprise project that provides investment funds to the rural areas, especially women, to finance modest activities like purchasing an oil press to enable them to make and sell peanut oil. If the money isn't forthcoming, these ladies--half the cooperative--will come into the

capital city and sit on our doorstep telling us that we've got a problem. Now we've begun to use customer surveys to learn about these problems. And when the group feels we are being responsive, it creates a less confrontational operating style.

Participation in Designing a Child Survival Project

Paul Zeitz

The Process Explained

In Zambia, the child survival project design team I was part of in January and February had a tricky assignment: we were mandated to design a project that supported the country's health reform process and we also were trying to incorporate USAID's participatory or customer-oriented approach in our work. Zambia's reforms, which followed the 1991 elections, seek to devolve responsibility and resources to the district level. They have strong donor support; however, as with any radical reform process, there have been bumps in the road. Moreover, some Washington staff were concerned that a participatory or customer-oriented approach could jeopardize technical quality. There was also resistance within the mission and lack of experience with participatory design approaches.

We defined our ultimate customers as the people of Zambia, specifically the mothers and children. Our partners were health staff at all levels: local, district, provincial, and central as well as nongovernmental organizations and private sector providers of services and child health commodities, and other multilateral and bilateral donors. Our core design team included full-time UNICEF representation and representation of nongovernmental organizations.

We started with key customer or partner and stakeholder interviews. This helped turn around many who had preconceived, negative views of USAID. We then held a child survival strategy workshop with the same partners, and again, they were surprised that USAID would openly discuss its comparative advantages and disadvantages. Then, together with staff from the Ministry of Health, [UNICEF](#), and NGOs, we spent two weeks in the field. We met with health officers and staff from the provincial level down to the local health facilities, and we also went to the community level. In some districts, we held focus group meetings with community leaders and village representatives; in others, we just walked into the village and had local translators help us talk with community members. Once we talked with a group of mothers that were waiting for a vaccination session to start.

Proposed project outputs and indicators were developed and reviewed after the field visits, using logframing and involving a variety of partners and processes. All the partners then commented on the design and the proposed outputs at a project design workshop. We are planning for annual participatory monitoring and evaluation. This will give us the ability to redesign the project annually, which we need to keep up with the reform process in the government. This approach will replace the traditional midterm evaluation.

Pros and Cons of the Process

We have built up some goodwill, which should help us implement the project and develop country ownership of the child health program. I also believe that the technical quality of our design actually improved. We gained new insights from NGOs and other donors who had been working in the country for years. Whether sustainability will really increase remains to be seen. But we hope that the process leads to improved efficiency of donor resources and to genuine coordination and reduced duplication of efforts.

On the down side, the process took longer than usual and was therefore more expensive. A 10-person team spent a long time in-country, and meetings were professionally facilitated. There were delays in designing the project, and the participatory processes kept the technical team from comparing notes about our own perceptions and experiences. Dealing with such a large number

of people was hard. Because our partners couldn't be involved in deciding funding allocations, there was a question as to whether the process was genuinely participatory. Similarly, although we had a lot of interaction in the field with district- and provincial-level staff, these staff were not really involved in the workshop decisions.

Another question is whether this approach can continue through project implementation. In our case, one experienced individual (HPN officer Paul Hartenberger) brought this process to Zambia. If it hadn't been for him, it probably would not have occurred. Finally, there is the lingering question about the technical direction, and therefore the quality, of the work. My opinion is that the results will be positive. We're evaluating the process, taking a survey of our core team members and partners, with the intention of building the results into project implementation.

A Government-wide View of Customer Focus

Pam Johnson

From my stint at the [National Performance Review](#), I realize that USAID has been ahead of the rest of the government in the participatory area. Only a handful of government agencies have had a clue about the kinds of tools that USAID has been using for years--focus groups and social marketing, for example. Nobody in the federal government has an assessment tool as valuable as the demographic and health surveys. USAID has built a knowledge base unique in the federal government. We have a tremendous amount to be proud of.

What I didn't expect to hear was validation of some of the things I've been working on at the NPR: the implications of what happens when you really start talking and listening to your customers; the discussions about the importance of the front line, the importance of missions, front-line action officers, front-line employees; and the need to go out and ask customers what they want.

This is exactly the same kind of thing we're seeing domestically, and I could tell lots of wonderful stories about it. For example, the IRS surveyed its customers -- which we all are -- and found things that surprised them and that they didn't even like to hear. They thought that if they were just friendlier and nicer, people would like them more. "Well," people told them, "the less we hear from you, the happier we are." They have taken this into account in their business plan and said, "How can we minimize the impact of our interactions--not make them friendlier and not have everybody have smiley faces?"

Challenges for USAID

One particular challenge for USAID is how to relate participation in project design and strategic planning to implementation. For example, what can the director of a health clinic do if a vaccination campaign is planned and the vaccine hasn't shown up? Who can he call? How many steps must he go through to get that vaccine delivered when and where it's needed? One of the reasons this customer image is so powerful is that we all interact as customers so often in our daily lives. For example, L.L. Bean wouldn't be selling too many plaid shirts if it told a customer trying to order a shirt in size M that he or she should call the Ministry, and the Ministry said to call the USAID office, and the USAID office had to send a cable, etc. Of course, L.L. Bean doesn't have 3,000 outlets; they have a centralized supply. The analogy suggests, however, that USAID must organize to be responsive to the needs of the front line.

Other countries are engaged in the same kind of effort we are. The United Kingdom has drawn up a citizens' charter for all of their government offices and has created Charter News, a service quality newsletter. Some 35 countries were represented at a conference in December 1994 on services to the citizen. Yesterday, I received a paper from the OECD on service quality initiatives that examines worldwide what's going on. The interest is all coming from the same place: fundamental erosion of trust in government; fundamental problems in terms of resources; new management styles in the private sector.

The NPR has put together a book of standards for serving the American people. It's the government's first collection of customer service standards. USAID is included in the chapter entitled "States, Localities, and Other Partners" because it resembles the federal government in

that it too depends on partners -- states, localities, and grantees -- to deliver services. We and our partners are delivering services to the end users that we share.

Service Standards: Committing Ourselves

Phyllis Dichter-Forbes

Though I've heard a lot of positive statements about involving non-USAID people in the work that we do, I've not heard anything about the standards of a customer service planning process.

We've defined the customer of this agency as the end user, the ultimate beneficiary, the reason for which we exist. We've identified the U.S. PVOs, the Congress, OMB, and the various development groups as the stakeholders who, like the shareholders of a corporation, care a lot about what we do. They give us money to service somebody at the other end. If children don't get better educated, if mothers don't have fewer babies, if their children don't survive longer, if people in the rural areas are not getting richer, then theoretically we have no reason for existing. The presentations have suggested that it is very difficult to reach the end users. That is exactly what customer service plans are about--reaching such people both by direct contact and by ensuring that our grantees, bilateral or NGOs, do so.

It is obvious from today's presentations that USAID is asking people for their opinions. But have we started to systematically look at and codify the opinions so that something can result from them? What can we say has changed as a result of talking to the customers? What did we commit to? What do the customers know about the changes? For example, using the story about the district health person and the vaccines, would that person know whom to contact for the vaccines? Or even that he could make such contacts? I doubt it.

Asking for opinions is important, but so is recognizing that the opinion you've asked for has validity and should be used in some manner. If it is worthwhile, it commits us to a change. In USAID, the Office of Procurement agreed to make noncompetitive awards within 90 days and competitive awards within 150 days. That's their customer standard. It's printed in a booklet. You can contact them if they're not doing it. That's a lot different than a procurement officer's simply saying to you, "I love you. I want to be a good procurement officer. I'm going to make your grants in 150 days."

What about the customers of our services overseas? Whether they are direct customers or CARE's customers or the Ministry of Health's customers, are there sets of standards for serving them that allow them to say, "You said I'm going to have a health service within 10 kilometers. I'm 15 kilometers from a health service, and it's been two years?" If we're supposed to be increasing child survival and mothers are telling us that it's hard for them to get to clinics, that they're uncomfortable with the way the clinics are organized, that they don't feel their children are getting good services, this is valuable information. We can use it to provide the right kinds of services at the right times to make more people feel comfortable.

Finally, we ought to be working with our grantees to ensure that they recognize the value of customer standards and are prepared themselves to conduct their own surveys.

Discussion Session

Addenda to Developing Service Standards

Diane La Voy: Phyllis has made clear that we haven't really emphasized standards. Now, I'd like to give the presenters a chance to come back a bit at her.

Jim Anderson: To add a point, we haven't given much thought to how host country officials and end users can take ownership of the process of participation. For example, if we are not getting the results we have targeted, we may need to shift resources. But it shouldn't be us, the donor,

forcing that decision.

Paul Zeitz: Our process focused on partner involvement. To do what you're proposing, really getting in there with ultimate beneficiaries, would have been a lot longer and a lot more expensive.

Cynthia Rozell: You need to involve the end users in defining results, the standards. Once the customers have been involved, everyone who has a role in achieving the result must be part of the process. If people haven't agreed themselves to perform, whether it's a project or a program design or a strategic-objective result, they're not going to be committed to it. Setting up a system that allows the U.S. to provide drugs at a health clinic in Malawi may respond to a specific problem at a specific time in the fastest way possible. But the real challenge is to involve all Malawians who deal in drug procurement and to get their commitment to an end result. That is time consuming. But it's systematic change.

Phyllis Dichter-Forbes: How many people in this room have taken the recent survey by our Office of Human Resources? Are you going to feel that you really participated in the change process if people ask you questions, but a year later nothing really has changed out of it?

Gerry Britan: I'm reminded of how Joe Califano, when he was secretary of HHS, traveled around the country talking to people about the programs that the department funded. He had great information on how much money they'd sent to this district, how many people the program served. But he kept getting blindsided by his audiences, who would tell him about problems with service delivery or how the services weren't what he thought. He didn't know the answers. He needed to get into much closer touch with his customers. So he set up a series of what were called service delivery assessments to get a picture of what key programs were actually delivering across the country to people. He wanted to be able to show up in Chicago and have answers to people's questions.

Maybe that's the most basic thing we have to commit to knowing--at least to develop a standard for knowing what difference our programs are making among those at whom they are aimed. And when they're not making a difference, then feeding the information back into the decision-making process.

Identifying Truly Representative Advisory Committees

John Magistro: I have a question about involving advisory committees, as was done in Malawi. How could you be sure that the group that was identified was representative of the groups you were trying to reach?

Cynthia Rozell: That was a concern. But we weren't using any one advisory group as the final say in the end result. The issue is how to systematically bring all the opinions together. In Malawi we were pleasantly surprised to see the degree of agreement at the beneficiary level on what the priorities should be.

Learning to Listen, Learning to Reach Women

Diane Russell: Doing customer surveys may require learning to feel comfortable about asking questions, comfortable about being a little uncomfortable and not knowing what's going to happen, to take off the tie, throw away the briefcase, and sit for a while just listening to what people say.

Pat Martin: A cautionary note: for 20 years we've been working in women in development, and we're still not doing a good job of reaching women, of integrating them into the process. It's not easy. Nico's example was good. So was the comment about the importance of knowing the language and country in Niger. We're doing better. But we haven't approached this as systematically as we should.

Communications from the E-mail Bag

Credibility and Customer Expectations

John Grayzel: "Is USAID ready and capable of responding to its customers' inputs? The credibility issue is number one: For example, we do various community sessions and repeatedly the community brings up a relatively small project, like a water system, that is their first priority. Usually the priority could be responded to at a relatively minimal cost but the 'audit-correct' response is: 'Oh sorry, that is not in our mandate. Or even worse, 'We'll get back to you on that.' Result: Our credibility in empowering them is dead at the start. Another example: Our customers want lower transaction costs, but we are still raising the costs. Our smaller and more disadvantaged customers find the Agency's new rule that we can give only 30-day instead of 90-day advances a killer of a requirement. Result: Credibility dead. Somehow we must be prepared to be rapidly responsive both procedurally and programmatically to reasonable customer desires."

Maria Beebe: "How does a participatory process deal with responses that go beyond a project's parameters? How do we as an agency rethink some of the bureaucratic constraints that shackle our creativity? How do we avoid falling into a trap of 'asking' but not being able to respond or deliver? How do you 'survey' without 'raising false expectations'?"

Kristin Loken: "How do we open up local participation, especially on needs and problem-definition, without creating expectations that USAID programs will follow through on the priorities identified? Some ideas: Make customer surveying at the macro level more of an ongoing activity; combine efforts with other donors and local universities so that it is not so directly a USAID endeavor; wait for operating year budget (OYB) levels and then focus customer surveys within approved sectors and funding levels; include USAID/W people whenever possible to keep everyone informed and on board."

Diane La Voy: "I think we can get part of the way toward addressing the issues of heightened expectations. We should try to avoid setting up situations in which the basic question is, 'What do you need?' Instead, aim to get people's perspectives on the situations they face (e.g., what are the reasons that their daughters don't attend school?), on their priorities (what are they already doing or trying to do to address a problem), and on their satisfaction with the services or support they receive through USAID-backed programs."

"In doing this, it's important to be quite clear, among ourselves and with our various customers and partners, that we are not assuming that USAID (or any donor) can or should fill all the gaps that people identify. Rather, the idea is to ensure that all of us engaged in the development process--customers and partners--understand the situation well in order to make all of our efforts and investments as effective as possible. Doing some of this customer outreach (surveying) with and through host-country entities--including communities themselves--can sometimes help set up more realistic expectations."

Rewarding Results and Customer-Oriented Behavior

Lynellyn Long: "I like the customer service approach and consider the American taxpayer my boss. Having read a book on total quality management, I spent a lot of time during my last RFA (request for applications) ensuring that potential applicants had access to information and knowledge about the process. Given that a lot of nongovernmental organizations were not accustomed to working with us, the effort took hours. The payoff was a record number of exemplary applications."

"My reward was seeing successful, innovative programs that have received lots of publicity and kudos. Unfortunately, from within, our system is not designed to reward either those grantees or those who take this initiative. Only a few months later, I have watched all this set aside for larger political priorities."

"My comments/questions are: (1) How will incentives be structured in the current system to ensure that customer service-oriented behavior is rewarded? and (2) When will we as an organization be sufficiently empowered to set an agenda and move forward from start to finish?"

Sanath Reddy: "Accountability does not appear to be as simple as selling a product or

maintenance contract to a customer. In development, success and lasting benefits depend on the customer's bringing to the table an input or behavioral change his part of the bargain. Accountability is a two-way street. If we focus on impacts and results and we achieve them in large measure, I think the 'accountability' test will be answered."

Suggested General Approaches for Customer Focus and Participation

Frank Alejandro: "The methodologies and approaches we work on are experimental. During each presentation, I could not help but think of Odonna Mathews, Customer Service Rep. for Giant Food Inc., the supermarket chain. She and her colleagues followed a basic framework to put Giant Food on the map, and they almost tripled Giant shares in the past 15 years or so. This framework followed accepted principles, keeping the customer in mind:

Identify the customer.

Provide quality service, quality products, and a fair price: the customer is willing to pay for the service and the product.

Find out how well you are responding to customer needs, through timely focus-group surveys and interviews (on-site and with sample products, if possible).

Collapse survey data from representative samples of customers (in our case, missions with similar demographics).

Report findings quickly to customer base or respond accordingly with better service (for the missions this would include responding fast with vaccines, loans, water, or other interventions identified by customers).

Revisit the cycle and reidentify the customer base (as we all know, the customer never remains dormant, especially in development work)."

Maria Beebe: "Community-based participation must be planned or it will not happen. Planning and designing the priority-setting process should take place in collaboration with a multi-stakeholder group or planning team and involve the following:

Define the level of participation, which will depend on the time and resources made available for planning and the size, composition, and diversity of the population and its institutional community.

Define target communities and target groups, and include those traditionally underrepresented.

Design the priority-setting process. Consider what activities, methods, and tools are appropriate to use with each group and the resources and time available."

"The multi-stakeholder group then implements the plan to consult, as follows:

Conduct a general information campaign, including what to expect and what not to expect from the priority-setting exercises.

Identify community issues, problems, concerns, and proposals for solutions. Consider surveys, community meetings, focus groups, participatory radio shows, mapping, etc.

Analyze issues. Consider workshops, force field analysis, environmental scans, SWOT, etc. to allow for new information and extensive discussion among participants.

Move toward consensus to select a few issues for priority focus. At this point we should be ready to implement what the community has decided (within the parameters laid out during the planning process). We should NOT at this point say, 'We will get our consultants to design a project to respond to your priorities. It will take us six months to two years to get back to you.'"

Frank Pavich: “Recently, I proposed this two-step approach for clarifying the (Cairo) mission’s ‘Customer Focus’: 1) Asking ourselves and our Customers (end-user beneficiaries) questions about Customer involvement, including ‘How are end-users involved in our projects?’ ‘What do end-users know about the USAID project and what is expected of them?’ ‘What is the impact of end-user involvement?’ and ‘What lessons can we learn from analyzing this involvement and the USAID development process in which they are involved?’ These questions are intended to start the process of systematic thinking about our Customers. Hopefully they will lead to more sophisticated approaches as they are discussed. 2) (The Mission’s Participation Forum) will decide on the final list of questions to reach our Customer Focus objectives as well as methodologies to be used in finding the answers. We will also consult other Missions and Offices around the USAID world.”

Recommendations

Favor Host Country Procurement

Joseph Lombardo: “If participation is intended to increase ownership and sustainability, should we be looking more closely at policies that favor host country contracting and procurement, at least for procurements like vaccines that are expected to be recurrent needs beyond the life of the project? For example, procurement of vaccines will not end with the project but can be expected to become an element of the country’s ongoing program. USAID may be able to procure commodities faster, but we are undermining the ability of the country to develop the business relationships with suppliers that the country will need beyond the next project life.”

Focus on Customer Involvement During Implementation, Not Design

Paul Hartenberger: “There is a point of diminishing returns regarding numbers of folks involved in a design process. In Zambia we had at least 125 to 150 persons. You can have all the grassroots participation in design you want, but if the end result or service is lousy, it’s all for naught. I would build in participation during the implementation phase and consultation during the design process, to the extent that’s feasible.”

Support Missions’ Customer Service

Paul White: “Our strongest asset is our field missions. They are closest to the action, interact on a daily basis with our main customers, the people in developing countries, and are best able to understand the needs and identify appropriate development responses. Washington should be servicing the needs of field officers so that they can better serve beneficiaries in developing countries. Too often, Washington attempts to determine what should be done, how, over what time frame, and with which instruments. Washington should spend more time and effort learning how to support this customer relationship.”

Incorporate Customer Service Plans in Standard Program Document

Barry Burnett: “How would customer service plans be presented to Washington? As part of an operating unit’s strategic plan, an element in the Results Review and Resources Request (R4) report, or as a separate document/presentation? I think that they should be incorporated in a standard program document. This would lead to better integration with the proposed or ongoing program.”

Values of Participation

John Magistro: “I view the customer survey approach as a fundamental element of doing good anthropology. I am somewhat biased in believing that any good development work must involve extensive consultation with the ‘end-user.’”

Tulin Pully: “The points that have emerged from Forum participants seem to be right on target. In Jamaica, we struggled with the same question, ‘Why do we need customer service plans?’ in our reengineering workshop and pretty much came up with the same points. We developed a draft

customer service plan to make customer outreach a regular part of our operations and achievement of results. The plan will help us focus more on our customers rather than on the partners we are used to working with.”

Shirley Hunter: “Direct involvement of our customers or end-users in our agenda will provide honest feedback on our accomplishments or lack thereof, enabling us to utilize our program funds more efficiently. We will be able to move ahead or retract an implementing activity on a timely basis, according to our customer response.”

A Dissenting View: The “Customer” is the American Taxpayer

James Hester: “We are making a fatal error in defining our beneficiaries as customers. To use the term ‘customer’ and all that it implies for our beneficiaries, instead of the American taxpayers, misses the whole point of redesigning government. If USAID is to continue to exist, it has to be responsible to the American people because it is they whom we serve and it is their money for which we are being held accountable. Perhaps the term ‘customer’ is not well-suited to our situation. The standard definition of customer in the dictionary is ‘one who buys goods or services.’ Our programs are grants so there is no buying from the developing countries or even their citizens. So long as we offer, they will accept because they do not have the power of a paying customer to take their business to another company that can provide superior goods and services.

“The American taxpayers are buying increases in export markets, decreased threats to U.S. national security, and fulfillment of a personal sense of social responsibility to help those less well off. The crisis that USAID seems to be facing now is that these ‘customers’ are questioning whether they want to buy this anymore, and if so how much of which parts do they want to buy? “I understand completely the essential need to work directly with our beneficiaries. Local public participation is so basic it is amazing to me that USAID did not do it to an even greater extent in the past, but that is not the point I am making here.”

La Voy: “The commercial paradigm has its limitations, no doubt. Our customers do not themselves pay. But they are the reason we’re in business. Levi Strauss would be out of business if it focused its energy primarily on preparing eloquent statements and reports for its investors. It’s successful only to the degree that it can focus on the people who will wear its jeans.

“Feel free to replace customer with ‘beneficiary’ in your own thinking, as long as it leads you to participation of host country players not just in the sense of consultation, but engagement built on mutual accountability.”

James Hester: “Participation from host country publics is essential to building quality international development widgets, which is a must if we are going to get American taxpayers to buy them, but if we don’t simultaneously get the taxpayers fully participating in telling us what kind and how many they want us to produce, then they won’t buy our widgets.”

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

The Participation Forum (No. 12)

From Clientelism to a "Customer-Service" Orientation

April 20, 1995

Research on successful programs in Northeast Brazil has challenged the current thinking on public-sector reform, which calls for downsizing, stringently controlling, and otherwise diminishing the powers of government. MIT development economist Judith Tendler found that government workers are more likely to be effective if they are allowed to exercise discretion and feel accountable to the community in which they work. Empowering workers this way requires transformation at two levels: a change in the structure of the government agency and a change in the relationship between the worker and the customer that increases the ability of the customer to hold the worker accountable. In emphasizing the oft-forgotten frontline or field-level worker, Tendler drew parallels with the corporate reengineering literature, which emphasizes the importance of worker commitment; of defining workers' jobs broadly and permitting worker discretion in implementation; of customizing services to customer needs; and of building relationships of trust between workers and clients. Tendler was introduced by Ramon Daubon, DAA/LAC.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Switching from the Negative to the Positive

Judith Tendler

I've always been perplexed as to why performance in the public sector is good in some situations and not good in others. My first focus, 20 years ago here at USAID, was on the failures, on looking for what didn't work. This became depressing and at a certain point, I became more interested in trying to understand why and how things that government did that worked were different from those that didn't. In my most recent research project, I focused on Ceara state in the northeast part of Brazil because it had had a lot of good press for being innovative and having good programs that received a lot of international attention.

Four Success Stories from Ceara

Ceara has a population of a little under seven million people. Northeast Brazil is poverty-stricken; a third to a quarter to a half of the population live below an absolute poverty line. Fifty percent is rural and earns its living through agriculture. The region is semi-arid and afflicted by droughts. Like the other states of the region, Ceara's government is known as being clientelistic and corrupt.

In looking at the successes, I wanted an explanation, but one that was not specific to any particular sector or related to the political leadership. Although there had been two reformist governors during the period, I believed that the successes had earlier roots.

I looked at programs that had sustained a generally good performance over a six-year period. These were in four sectors.

One was an outstanding program in preventive health with 7,000 paraprofessional health agents -- sort of barefoot doctors -- who were hired at the minimum wage from their communities. These people had serious training: three solid months. This was unheard of in the public sector. In only a few years, infant mortality and other indices of sickness and morbidity had declined dramatically.

The second related to public procurement of goods and services. The state had decided to switch about a third of its expenditures to small and microenterprises, mainly in the interior. The program was outstandingly successful. Not only did the costs of the goods and services acquired drop, but unemployment fell and developmental effects were stimulated in locations where the small firms were located. The third was a massive, employment-creating public works program instituted in Ceara because of recurring droughts. The program had a reputation of being clientelistically run, in terms of both who got jobs and the types of projects and how they were chosen: they were often within properties of large landowners, or at least the landowners had the principal say in deciding on the projects.

The fourth was in the agricultural sector, where there had actually been no successes, although the [World Bank](#) had had a succession of major integrated rural development projects for 15 years. But with 50 percent of the labor force in agriculture, I couldn't overlook the sector. My focus was several small-farmer associations that substantially increased productivity. The research examined the state's role in agricultural expansion, credit, and so forth, and why it worked in one case and not in another.

Public Sector Reform: The Conventional Wisdom

I want to project my own findings against the backdrop of the current thinking about the public sector and public sector reform views that are held widely in the donor community, in the academic literature, in this room probably. My representation is crude and it doesn't cover everything, but it does cover some important things.

Four approaches are now in vogue on how to deal with poor public sector performance in developing countries. One is simply to downsize the public sector and let others take over some of its functions. The second is to change policies that make it easy for the remaining civil servants to misbehave and reduce programs or regulations that give them discretion such as import licenses, provision of goods and services, and subsidized prices, since these often open the way for graft and bribes. The third is to subject this downsized public sector to incentives and pressures to perform. One way is partial privatization, with government agencies competing with private agencies to deliver services. The other is pressure from consumers and citizens who now have a greater voice in determining what agencies do and in monitoring them. Finally, overlapping the third, is the growing interest in decentralization-taking power from the center and turning it over to local governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), private firms, citizens. This leads to the great interest in participation, the idea that the consumer in a sense knows best, or at least knows considerably more than he's been given credit for.

Reasons for Successes in Ceara.

Turning to the patterns that emerged from the cases in question, it's striking that some of the programs were successful in agencies that had other programs that were not successful. Others were parts of programs that were successful in certain municipalities but not in other municipalities. Four points stood out in the successful cases.

Worker Commitment/Community Respect

Workers in successful programs were incredibly committed to their jobs. Their commitment and dedication were much higher than in the other programs or than when the same workers were working in the other programs. They felt appreciated, they felt trusted, and they felt respected, not only by their supervisors, but by the communities in which they worked and the citizens and consumers to whom they were providing services. They talked more about the respect they felt from the citizens than about respect from their supervisors.

Customized Services: Worker Discretion and Trust

Surprisingly, these workers were working in a much more customized way with beneficiaries or groups of beneficiaries than that usually associated with the public sector. Agricultural extension agents, for example, instead of giving a standardized message of how to improve productivity, of how far apart rows of beans should be planted, were working in the opposite way. Individual groups of farmers were telling agents where they needed help: "We have a problem with a fungus in the beans and we want you to help us with that." The extension agent would do the research and return with an answer. The same thing happened in small enterprise areas. Instead of giving courses, the business extension agent was working on the shop floor with the individual firms, focusing, for example, on a public procurement for 1,000 desks with 12 firms all located near each other. It was very customized work, different from the usual perceptions of how the public sector works. Customized work involves discretion. Workers have more discretion than usual and need a wider range of skills.

Trust: Community Pressure to Perform

Did increasing worker discretion mean more bribery, corruption, and graft or "rent-seeking"? Did it introduce greater problems of monitoring and supervision? In fact, the pressures on government agents to perform were greater than usual, but not through improved formal supervision and monitoring. What happened was an interesting combination of monitoring and trust. The pressures came from outside, from the citizens and the clients of these agencies. In some instances, one agency would watch another. This customized approach fostered trusting relationships between the workers and the citizens. Workers performed, not just because they were being watched by the citizens who were monitoring their performance, but because they wanted to please the people they were working for. In sum, the result is a combination of watchfulness and monitoring, in which people who already trust officials make sure they don't do anything wrong.

Publicity Improves Morale, Raises Consciousness, and Provides Constraints

One of the most important pieces of the puzzle relates to something the state government was doing, perhaps without understanding the positive impact it was having. The government started making public relations gestures: giving prizes for good performance and advertising it in the paper, inviting delegations of congressmen to visit the projects. The motive was to boast about their successes, pure PR. They were extremely effective and efficient as PR agents in a part of the country that journalists don't normally pass through. Within five or six months, articles appeared in the London *Economist*, Newsweek magazine, Time magazine, the Christian Science Monitor, the *Washington Post*, the New York Times. The effect was that the workers felt tremendously recognized, ennobled. They felt that they were working in very important programs. They were helping to save babies from dying; to give employment to the unemployed; to move their state out of backwardness. In the health area, the state gave prizes for the municipality with the biggest drop in infant mortality, the biggest gain in immunization rates. In part, this was for a different reason: it was an effort to entice these municipalities to collect data. Meanwhile, the prizes again made these workers feel tremendously recognized and appreciated.

Another action, which had the same effect as the publicity, was that at the outset the state advertised the programs, particularly through radio, which is the most widely used medium in the interior. This served both to raise the consciousness of local people and to clarify the programs, informing the community of what it should expect from the workers. In terms of liberation theology -- coming not from the liberation church, mind you, but from the state -- the message was: "You have the right to demand things from your government. You have the right not to be underdeveloped. You have a right not to have your babies die. You have to stand up for your rights. You are equal as citizens, and you have a right to demand these things from your government."

In terms of spelling out the purpose of the program, they said, "This is your health program now. These are the workers who are working in it, and this is what they should be doing. They should be at work from 9 to 5. They should be living in the communities where they work. They will be

walking around with a uniform of blue jeans and a white T-shirt with the name of the health program on it. They will be wearing a blue backpack, because they'll be coming into your households, where they will carry the health supplies. And, most important, they are not allowed to distribute campaign literature. They are not allowed to distribute campaign literature when they come to your house."

It's common knowledge that field agents of government services often distribute campaign literature and campaign for local officials. This is clientelism; this is the problem. In this case, the government made clear that if any agent had come from another community, or was distributing literature, he or she was to be reported to a supervisor, or the government directly. The message was repeated during training of the workers, and even to job applicants. In short, this was a combination of consciousness raising, inspiration, promising better lives, and teaching how to monitor.

Finally, the government exercised a certain power over the mayors by explaining publicly what their role should be, including what positions they should fill and what percentage of municipal funds should be spent on the program. Citizens were urged to complain directly to the mayor if these stipulations weren't met, and if that didn't work, not to vote for him in the next election. This was extremely effective.

Overturing Conventional Wisdom on the Public Sector

In many ways these programs, though they appear decentralized, were really just the opposite. They worked because the state government was in a sense putting a squeeze on the municipalities, trying to force them to do what they were supposed to do in accordance with some grand plan for decentralization.

Likewise, these programs were not participatory in the usual sense. They were not designed in a bottom-up way; they were top-down. They had participatory effects, however, because once people know they have a right to make demands of their government in health or public procurement, they start to do so in other areas as well.

Finally, to compare these findings with the current wisdom on public sector reform: it must be fairly obvious by now that the interest in reducing the size of the public sector has tended to crowd out concerns with how to work with the public sector that's left. Moreover, the focus here was giving greater discretion to the remaining government workers, not less. Third, the focus in these cases was on customization, not the usual resort to standardization to deliver services to large numbers of people. Fourth, these programs were not strictly customer driven. Rather, they were a complex combination of top-down and listening to the people or doing what the people wanted. Suggestions for improvements in programs were based primarily on listening to the workers and managers.

Lessons from the Private Sector

To conclude, though these findings are a little surprising in terms of how we think about public sector reform in developing countries, they are in certain ways obvious to anybody who has been reading or thinking about the reform of large corporations in the private sector in the industrialized world. Particularly in the last 10 years, research has come up with similar findings about what leads to high productivity or increased productivity in firms that are restructuring. The keys are the centrality of worker commitment to the job; multi-skilled, multi-tasked jobs, or people doing several things instead of just a few standardized things; customization to achieve what the consumer wants; the centrality of trusting relations between either firms and their clients or workers and their clients or firms and their customer firms. Various terms are used: flexible specialization, worker participation, quality circles, loose coupling between units in large firms. But the findings are familiar.

Discussion Session

Training Public Sector Personnel to Work Effectively with

Communities

May Yacoob: Our concern in the Environmental Health Project and its predecessor, the Water and Sanitation for Health (WASH) Project, is how to create local committees that are able to manage infrastructure effectively over long periods of time. For about five years, we looked to the public sector. When this wasn't working, we turned to the NGOs, but we became disenchanted here too, although in Latin America, the experience was far superior to that in Africa, North Africa, or the Middle East. About seven years ago, we determined that the public sector must become involved if communities are to change the way they use water and their environmental resources to attain health improvements. Now our focus is to train public sector personnel in the specific, well-targeted skills they need to make them more adaptive. This should enable them to return to communities where they have not been in 20 years because they're afraid of the demands that people will make on them; they don't know where to begin because the rural and peri-urban areas have expanded so greatly.

After five unsuccessful years in Belize, during which USAID invested in putting in water systems, developing health messages for health workers to deliver to people at specific times, spraying, and setting targets, we turned during the project's final year to creating the enabling conditions for the public sector to work in teams. Public sector staff were trained in how to identify high-risk behaviors and local resources they could harness, how to solve problems, and how to communicate sensitively with community members. We found that the teams at the periphery needed the support of their supervisors, and we had the teams inform the policy makers precisely of the constraints they were facing and their needs.

The exciting news is that this happened three years ago, and instead of its dwindling to nothing, the teams have expanded to include other teams, other ministries: agriculture, education. The supervisors, the policymakers at the national level, are delighted with the input of the technical staff. Based on this experience, we're creating a municipal management training center in Tunisia for the entire Near East and North Africa region which will develop municipal technical teams to work with communities in peri-urban areas.

Lessons on Accountability from Nepal, Thailand, and Bangladesh

Mike Calavan: Some case studies in Nepal, Thailand, and Bangladesh raise certain points that weren't underlined in the presentation but which strike me as important. One is that in the centralized public sector programs discussed, the people who were doing the work on the ground, face-to-face with customers, were locals. Using locals explains, I think, why a lot of public sector programs have worked in many parts of Thailand and haven't worked so well in the mountains of Nepal. In Thailand, most of the school teachers, the extension agent for the local traditional irrigation systems, the person from the agricultural bank, are all locals, they speak the same language, they understand the local traditions, they know from the bottom up how to interact with people. This means better accountability than if a person comes from another part of the country. In the hills of Nepal, however, a young Brahman man from the lowlands may be expected to interact with young women from a different cultural group who are far more sexually experienced than he is about family planning, for instance. He doesn't have a clue and he doesn't know where to begin.

Another point: in the health program, the people from the center, from the state level, began with the most receptive local areas. We very seldom do this in our programs. Particularly when we're sensitive to poverty alleviation, we often work with areas, localities, and local leaders who are the least promising. Beginning with those who are most enthused means better prospects for some success. The neighboring municipalities will see those successes and want to get on board eventually.

Finally, you stressed the importance of people understanding what the program is supposed to do. This adds an important extra-bureaucratic accountability to those internal accountability mechanisms like computers and management information systems that receive so much attention. Without external accountability, even for central public sector programs, there is very little accountability at all.

Judith Tendler: On the subject of using local people, it is true that using locals can be advantageous, but at the same time, the concern remains that people from a given area may be

more vulnerable to corruption and bribery. It's a complex issue.

"Sharing Information is Power"

Eric Chetwynd: In the Municipal Finance and Management (MFM) project in the Newly Independent States, we work with city leaders: the finance director, the mayors, vice mayors, and so forth, in an effort to improve municipal management, make it more open, more accountable. When we bring these leaders to the United States on study tours, they are very, very surprised at the degree of openness and participation in this country, at the degree of neighborhood participation. Where they come from, over the past 70 years, the code has been to retain information as a way of retaining power and minimizing risk.

When these leaders go back and work on specific programs sponsored by MFM, they actually do get a sense that sharing information is power. In some instances, mayors have held news conferences in which they've talked about their budget process. Or they publish details about the budget in the newspaper and they'll answer questions. There have been call-in shows. It's heartening, in an area of the world where information has been so tightly controlled, to see people beginning to exercise the power of sharing information.

Integration of Services

Meri Sinnott: In the Mothercare project in Guatemala, a team approach was used to address the problem of neonatal mortality. When a woman was referred to a clinic, the traditional birth attendant (TBA) would go along and if surgery were necessary, the mother, the TBA, the nurse and the doctor would all go in together. They formed an integrated team instead of a segmentalized system. The woman was treated in a very respectful manner. Between 1989 and 1992, neonatal deaths decreased by 17 percent, and the approach is being replicated. I think the integration of services is important.

Gender and Performance: Men and Women's Employment as Health Agents

Pat Martin: In your article on the Ceara health program ["Trust in a Rent-Seeking World: Health and Government Transformed in Northeast Brazil," J. Tendler and S. Freedheim, from *World Development*, December 1994, copies available at the forum], you write that the supervisors and the vast majority of the health workers are women. Do you have any comments on the extent to which gender influenced performance?

Judith Tendler: I'll defer to Sarah Freedheim, with whom I collaborated on the article, because she looked at a program in a neighboring state which replicated the Ceara program except that the agents were not women. I had thought that one of the reasons the Ceara program worked was the use of women agents.

Sarah Freedheim: In Ceara, one of the requirements of the program was that 95 percent of the health agents had to be women-both because they were trying to provide employment for women and because they thought local women would be more open to discussing the intimate subjects involved with women agents. In the rest of Northeast Brazil, the requirement was viewed as discriminatory and it was thought that men would oppose it. I found that using males as health agents had some positive aspects. For the first time, men became involved in health issues that we normally think have an impact on women; they became knowledgeable about breast feeding, about the health of their children, about nutrition. To avoid the awkward issue of a male showing a woman how to breast-feed (very few did), the agents would talk with the father and mother together, engage the entire family.

Many of the health agents and supervisors of health agents liked working with men, because they found that men have more time as well as more energy to bike from place to place and from house to house. They were also able to mobilize the community and obtain amenities like electricity or pavement. Perhaps this was because they weren't as good as women at dealing with the health issues and so they relied on other ways of mobilizing the community.

In Ceara, people were appalled when they learned that men were being used in other places. They see one of program's purposes as employing women. It's an interesting issue that needs to be studied further.

Judith Tendler: None of the other programs that we looked at dealt directly with women or had large numbers of women workers.

Public Participation in HPN Programs

Dick Cornelius: In the provision of family planning and primary health care services by community workers, I can cite three parallels to your theme of the importance of public participation.

The first is that health workers are drawn from the community; they speak the language and are known by the clients. When communities provide some compensation, the effect is to set up a certain amount of mutual accountability between the worker and the clients.

The second parallel is our emphasis on repeat household visits, to establish a strong rapport and a kind of a client-service motivation on the part of the worker. Such contacts have helped motivate workers to do a good job.

Finally, and this may differ a bit, we found the most successful programs tend to be those in which community leaders and clients participate in problem identification and solution. If local leaders and local clients believed they had a hand in developing the program, the programs tended to be more successful. You said the programs you started were not so participatory, but you also mentioned customized approaches. There must have been some communication with local clients and leaders in developing these customized approaches.

Challenge for USAID

Judith Tendler: I'd like to close with a question: what can or should USAID do in this more minimalist era? I worked for USAID at a time when money couldn't be spent fast enough. Now, I'm curious what your clients think you ought to be doing and what you're best at helping them with. I don't know if any evaluations of this nature or research on your own programs have taken place. I've never done any, but in conversations with people in the field, I'm always struck that what clients appreciate is totally different from what I would have expected.

Communications from the E-mail Bag

Government Workers: The Missing Link in Local Participation

Frank Pavich: "Too often host governments are seen as the bad guys; those who would prohibit citizens' access to information and other public resources; those who do not encourage participation at the local level. My experience proved otherwise and supports Tendler's findings that (some) public servants are committed to their work and that their work can support local participation initiatives. Limiting factors are host country laws, regulations, and bureaucratic procedures. But there is local flexibility.

"A great deal can be done to promote local participation within a centralized administrative system if there is willingness to allow lower levels to develop the means. In Pakistan we used focus groups to bring different levels of provincial government and local people together to form governing boards for local NGOs.

"In Egypt we are doing research with local administration, elected local officials, and USAID customers to develop a model of participation. Even in this highly centralized administrative system, it is possible for local participation to take place.

"While decentralization may be a highly desirable objective, it cannot be achieved in a quick way

-- it's too risky for the government. We should look to a transitional approach which capitalizes on existing opportunities for participation while we study the administrative system to find ways for it to work more effectively through improved information systems, information technology, and training. A decentralized administrative system needs trained and experienced staff and citizen leadership to make it work."

Robert Herman: "Tendler's focus on frontline government workers is to be applauded, for they are often the missing link in the participation/local empowerment story. A famous book called 'Bringing the State Back In' points out that the role of the state as a political actor has been given short shrift (for a variety of reasons, including the turn to more sociological approaches in political science). Similarly, Tendler reminded us about how an enlightened government can facilitate grassroots empowerment and how government authorities can encourage pressure from below for more responsive institutions."

James Hester: "Successful programs (long-term) require government employees to be appreciated and respected by their governments. Failure to give them their due is a serious problem both in our client countries and here at home."

Deja Vu

Jerry Van Sant: "Most of what I read in the Forum meeting summaries sounds familiar to those of us who were involved in development in the '80s, especially the early '80s. The ample participation literature of the '70s and '80s addressed such issues as:

1. Participation throughout the project cycle (implementation and assessment, not just design);
2. Participation in policy dialogue and policy determination;
3. Blending local knowledge with external technical knowledge;
4. The role of NGOs and community organizations as intermediaries;
5. The importance of the culture of organizations and agencies employing staff who have interaction with beneficiaries;
6. Empowering people; and
7. Decentralization (which became a dirty word in the late '80s).

"What has changed is the application of these ideas to additional areas of USAID involvement, for example, community participation in environmental risk assessment and the link of participation to local governance. Here there is a body of knowledge from U.S. domestic experience that is genuinely new to the international development discussion. But a lot of this is not new. We struggle simply to get back to where we left off."

Diane La Voy: "There is significance in 1) applying the ideas to broader arenas, such as our internal management reforms (trying to become customer driven); and in 2) making these principles Agency policy from day one."

Dirk Dijkerman: "A lot of this talk smacks of a repeat of the 'community development' literature of the 1950s and the 'basic human needs/integrated rural development' literature of the 1970s. In both of those previous 'cycles' of USAID's endless swings to improving its people-level impact, there is a lot that could be learned as we repeat ourselves. This current customer focus is in many ways little different. The farming systems research literature of the 1970s is -- a little bit of a simplification here -- an attempt to get researchers to interact as equals and listen to farmers' needs, e.g., deal directly with the customer."

Experience with Host Country Public Sector Projects

Dana Vogel: "The public sector, for all of its problems, including corruption, is a major stakeholder and provider of services in many countries, and I think it tries to respond to client (beneficiary) needs. In Tanzania, the MOH is the source of supply for over 70 percent of family planning clients. It has the primary role in setting strategic targets, establishing national guidelines and standards for service provision, and establishing national training curricula for the training of family planning personnel. Workers are employed by either the central or local governments and are definitely accountable to the community. For most facilities, the staff are deployed from the locality and are

paid by municipalities or other local government departments. The MOH has sought to empower the beneficiaries by increasing the amount of information available on family planning and their rights as clients to safe, effective family planning methods. Again, central government takes the lead in this and tries to instill these precepts in the service providers. Many programs in health are designed from the community level.

"USAID should explore ways of collaborating and supporting selected parts of central government, perhaps with an eye to creating more autonomy for some of these more effective branches. In Tanzania, where the government has been particularly responsive to client needs in health and education, a rejuvenated, and probably much smaller, government infrastructure is needed now that can still provide services needed by those unable to access more costly private sector services."

Paul Delay: "In Africa, especially Kenya, increased participation/'ownership' is being achieved by providing district health boards (on which local community leaders serve) with ongoing health surveillance statistics, e.g., deaths from measles for the district, etc. Normally these types of statistics remain within the public sector. Sharing this information with local leaders fosters a sense of accountability and prioritization of health problems on which to base dialogues between the district health councils and public sector officials."

Joel Kolker: "The government of Indonesia just recently announced a comprehensive decentralization plan which targets one city in each of the 26 provinces for special devolved authority. The idea is that, based on these 'demonstration' cities, additional authority would be devolved to all local government units throughout the country. The GOI has given this a lot of attention in the press, and the key ministries, including Home Affairs, Finance, and Public Works, are all involved. We have some concerns but support the GOI's overall efforts."

Re Forum #10: Strategies for Community Change: Top-Down or Bottom-Up?

Ron Bonner: "Just a brief tidbit from the field on the subject of Forum 10. In this month's Education Discussion Group for Ethiopia, four interesting common themes emerged:

1. Communities need to be more than initially consulted. They must actually take a management and oversight role of the activities being implemented in their localities.
2. To the extent possible, NGOs should integrate local experience (culture, art, drama, history, etc.) into the development and implementation of their activities.
3. In all cases, villages were asked to make tangible contributions to the NGO efforts as a way to build ownership.
4. Even in sectorally focused activities such as education, NGOs must be willing to contribute to other development needs of the community. Such help does not take much or any additional resources, but should convey the NGOs' concern for the communities' welfare generally."

Diane La Voy: "Two powerful ideas there: 1) participation involves a lot more than consultation at root, it's a matter of assisting (perhaps engendering) and building upon local initiative; and 2) people (and communities) don't come neatly divided into sectoral interests."

Eugene Szepesy: "In the summary of Forum 10, Kay Pyle's assertion that promoting democratic participation is about changing the perceptions of low-income people seems very strange, as does her implication that there is something wrong with, i.e., people are 'confused' when they believe participation should result in jobs, decent salaries, housing, and social services...and receipt of services. What does she put forth as a better reason/justification for people to want democracy and participation?"

Re Forum #6: Improving Technical Rigor Through Participation

John Daly: "In reading Gene Brantly's remarks about the risk assessment in Ecuador, I was surprised that Ecuadorian epidemiologists were not included in the environmental health risk assessment and by the absence of discussion about Ecuadorian social scientists. Not only can local professionals play an important role in increasing the technical soundness of USAID work in-

country, but their involvement means the work is more likely to be sustained."

Ruth Buckley: "In response to Nena Vreeland's and Joe Lombardo's E-mail dialogue, I agree that participation and gaining specific sectoral outcomes do not have to be contradictory. I recently worked with the Ministry of Education (central and regional), USAID/Namibia, and Namibian teachers and learners to develop a basic education project. It was the most participatory effort I have been involved with to date. It was, however, not without drawbacks:

1. Participation by potential host communities was elicited after the initial parameters of the project had been designed;
2. The project ended up at a different place than the mission and external design team had originally hoped;
3. The design took up too much of too many senior education officials' time;
4. The final design and resulting jointly developed scope of work did not initially lend themselves to performance-based contracting. Notwithstanding, the process defined specific sectoral outcomes which are socially, politically, and economically sound and economically sound.

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

April 20, 1995

The Participation Forum (No. 13)

Do We Need To Practice What We Preach?

May 18, 1995

Long-time participation practitioners at USAID argue that to be able to engage host-country people in development processes that affect them, we need to build participation more into the internal workings of the Agency. The thirteenth session of the Participation Forum tries to get a handle on this reasonable sounding proposition by examining the linkages between internal and external participation.

Such linkages do appear to exist for people implementing development activities on the front lines. In [Forum Twelve](#), Judith Tendler discussed her findings about good public sector programs in northeast Brazil. She found that when workers felt empowered and were given some latitude by their own agencies, they were able to develop relationships of trust and mutual accountability with their clients.

But do these linkages hold true for USAID? Forum participants tackled the question experientially through an exercise in active listening led by Camille Cates Barnett of [Research Triangle Institute](#), who, as city manager of Austin, Texas, led that city through a customer-oriented reinvention. The forum session was closed by Frank Almaguer, DAA/M for Human Resources. A wealth of additional insights about practicing what we preach have come in by E-mail.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Opening Presentation What Has Become Clear about Participation

Camille Cates Barnett

I would like to share with you my experience with government organizations that walk their talk on participation that say they believe in participation and teamwork and practice what they preach. Things work differently in these organizations. They have more fun. Politicians like them better. They work better, cost less, and are better for the people who work for them.

Having watched the change process take place in many settings over the years reminds me of something Ralph Waldo Emerson used to say. When he'd meet friends he hadn't seen in a while, he wouldn't greet them the way you or I would: How are you? How's it going? or these days, You still here? Emerson would greet them with this question: What has become clear to you since we last met?

What has become clear to me is that participation is a value, not just a skill.

Working to build values is different from working to build skills. Enhancing participation must be approached as a culture change, not a training program.

Values are shared. Not everyone shares the values. Practicing skills can encourage changes in values.

Values are transmitted. People watch what you do, not just what you say. Renaming a committee a team doesn't make it one. Jargon doesn't build credibility; action does.

Values are powerful. Complex organizations are run by systems of values. Employee relations are a mirror image of customer relations. How we treat workers is how they treat customers. People who experience participation can better promote participation to others.

What has become clear to me is that participation needs a purpose.

Is participation an end or a means? If participation is a value, is it always a good? Should we have participation for participation's sake? Is there supposed to be only one right way to do our work by endlessly participating? What's the role of leadership if everyone is participating?

One of the most important and effective ways to use participation is to clarify your participation mode, the purpose of participation. Frustration occurs when participants are in different modes. For example, here are some shorthand labels for different modes of participation: tell, sell, test, consult, join. The tell mode is giving information or giving direction. The sell mode is giving information and wanting the participant to agree with it. The test mode is being fairly certain you know what direction to go in or which decision to make, but you want to test ideas with the participants to see if something is missing. The consult mode is where you are not sure of the definition or solution and you want the participants ideas on what they would do. The join mode is where you delegate tasks to participants or forge partnerships with the participants to solve problems.

Each of the modes involves a different level of participation and each is appropriate to different situations. Problems arise when there is confusion about what mode you are in. For example, if I'm in the tell mode and you're in the consult mode, we are both going to be frustrated. I'll think you are overstepping your bounds and you'll tell me I'm not walking the talk. My department director and I used this shorthand on modes of participation to be sure we were communicating well. At department head meetings, for example, I would say, Here's the issue. Here's what I think we should do about it. What do you think? This sounds like either the test or consult mode. As the participants gave me their ideas, if I did not accept them, they would say, Are you really in the consult mode or have you already decided what to do? Are you in the sell mode? This helped me realize that indeed sometimes I was closer to a decision than I realized.

What has become clear to me is that participation is both fast and slow.

Participation takes time. Cultural change takes years. A lot of participation focuses on incremental change, a steady series of improvements. It also never really stops.

Participation can also be fast. To use the language of learning organizations, it can be a leverage point for lasting systemic change. Participation can produce breakthrough change.

What has become clear to me is that participation changes power.

Expect resistance. Some people don't want to give up their power.

Expect disconnects. The questions you are raising now and the inconsistencies you are seeing now are typical. Discouraging, yes, but typical.

You can't change an organization without changing yourself. It is not their fault. I first realized the importance of my role-modeling in changing an organization when I worked in Dallas. That is

where I got the nickname Dragon Lady. I realized that I had to behave in a more open and participatory way if I was going to encourage those values in the organization.

What has also become clear to me is that talking about participation is not the way to make the point about participation.

Video Presentation

Participation Empowers Austin Government Employees

A segment of the video "Hidden Assets: Empowering America's Workers," made for television by Gannett Broadcasting, was shown. The video focused on fundamental changes in large organizations that happened through participation, or empowerment. The segment shown was on the Austin case, the only public-sector example in the video. Barnett noted that her four principles of participation were evident in the way the change process worked in Austin city government a billion-dollar-a-year organization with 10,000 employees who, before the reforms, suffered from an image of incompetence and obstructionism. The reforms, she added, took place in the context of a politically charged atmosphere, in the midst of hostile budget cutting. The segment looked at the participation process from the perspective of four types of Austin municipal employees: janitors, telephone operators, truck mechanics, and building inspectors. The following excerpts from the sound track provide some insight on how Austin turned itself around.

Janitors

In the midst of millions of passengers and million-dollar airplanes, there is a team of three people here who don't make very much money, who don't have much education, who work through the night when most of us are home. They are janitors, and they are remarkable. They work without supervision. They schedule their own breaks, their own lunch hour, and with one, one-day exception, they haven't missed a day of work in the last six months. Their job isn't exciting or sophisticated, but it's theirs. They do great work, but why? Is it the money, \$6.50 an hour? Or is it that when they re-assigned to a room, they decide how to do it and when, and when it's clean enough, they not a supervisor decide when to move on. And in that responsibility there is pride.

Telephone Operators

The service has improved at the water and light company owned by the City of Austin. A year ago, 70 percent of callers used to get a busy signal. Today, every call is answered. A year ago, the average hold time was five and a half minutes; today, the average is 11 seconds. And the operators have been trained to handle almost any call, business or residence: turning power on or off, a late bill, an incorrect bill. They don't shuffle you from one department to another any more. They make decisions on the phone, even on questions involving money. The reason is that the operators have a lot more power and authority now.

Truck Mechanics

Service Center One is a maintenance garage for 550 trucks owned by the city. Two years ago, there were five supervisors here. Now there are two. On any given day, 44 trucks were parked outside waiting for repair. In the last year, that number has been cut in half. There are a lot of reasons why this shop is more efficient today. One of them is that these mechanics now have more authority over the work they do. If you make them a part of it, they are proud. A janitor, a telephone operator, a truck mechanic. At any level and at any pay rate, when employees are allowed to make decisions about their jobs, they work harder, better, faster. And that can translate into millions.

Building Inspectors

Motorola is in a race against the Japanese. Austin is trying to help with an idea that most cities haven't even thought about yet: on-site inspection, on-site decisions. The city employees who enforce the building codes have their own trailer at the construction site. That means instead of

endless phone calls and meetings and trips downtown to study every change, every new drawing, these inspectors can make decisions on the spot in minutes. The days of second-guessing and red tape, of inspectors having to call their boss, who had to check with his boss, who had to call somebody else, are over. On code interpretations and modifications, they've given the inspector the ability to go ahead and make some decisions and judgments himself. But he is accountable for the decisions that he makes.

Announcer: But why bother? The City of Austin is a monopoly. It doesn't have to compete in the marketplace. There's only one airport. Why does it matter if it's not perfectly clean? Travelers have no choice. There's only one way to get power or water or sewer service: the city utility. For Motorola to get its building permits, by law they have to go to the city inspection department. So why get more efficient or faster when you don't really have to? But there is a marketplace. Austin is competing with Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and every other city over what firms come to do business and which ones don't. If Austin doesn't create an effective climate for businesses, they'll leave.

Another reason is that government is too important. Government services touch every corner of our lives: justice, education, housing, commerce, the environment, health, safety, on and on. If government doesn't work and work well, we're all in trouble. Society can't function without government; the whole fabric of our society depends on us doing our job well. It's not an alternative to raise taxes forever. It's not an alternative to keep increasing the size of government. We can't do that. We have to get better and smarter with the people that we've got.

Audience Participation

A Participatory Approach to Analyzing USAID's Participation Initiative

Barnett involved the 54 attendees in a two-part exercise, aimed at eliciting their views on the Agency's renewed emphasis on participation and also at involving them in a new kind of participatory dialogue that would enable them to reflect on how their own analytic processes could be sharpened by teamwork. The first part of the exercise consisted of participants offering their views on the successes and failures of USAID's participation effort by answering three key questions in writing on 4x6 index cards. The second part involved discussions by pairs of participants in which one identified his or her view of USAID's one major weakness in participation and the other probed the proposition by asking Why? five times. The pair then reversed roles, with the questioner making the problem statement and the partner digging into the assertion with a series of Whys? Forum participants were subsequently provided a summary of the responses. It has also been presented to senior USAID management. Below is an abbreviated version of that summary.

Part 1: Summary of the Answers to Three Key Questions

1. What three things are going well in USAID's renewed emphasis on participation?

The participants gave high marks for the initiative's success in increasing awareness throughout the Agency of effective ways to improve participation in USAID programs. The administrator and some other senior management staff were applauded in particular for strong leadership. Employees throughout the Agency, including foreign service nationals, have been widely and consistently involved in dialogue on the subject. More outside organizations (nongovernmental organizations, small businesses, etc.) are taking part in program decisions. The net result has been a growth in individual esteem, pride in work, and staff enthusiasm.

2. What three things are not going well in USAID's renewed emphasis on participation?

Participants were critical of senior management who were perceived as not practicing what they preached of clinging to control and centralization rather than seeking to empower employees. USAID processes and practices were also viewed as remaining too bureaucratic, quashing initiative and experimentation. In addition, some participants noted confusion about the participation initiative: the need for it, the relationship between internal and external participation,

its relationship to macroeconomic policy, its benefits. Some believed that the initiative is just a new buzzword for an old approach; others dismissed it as a luxury during a time of straitened circumstances.

3. If, with the stroke of a pen, you could change one thing about USAID's renewed emphasis on participation, what would it be?

Many participants proposed greater commitment to participation on the part of some senior management. Specific suggestions included the following: Senior management should operate in a more participatory fashion, for example by meeting regularly with rank-and-file employees; they should understand and be committed to empowerment and teamwork; they should give credit to staff for being participatory and reduce liabilities associated with speaking out. Other proposals included having staff at all levels actively embrace participation and share information better; ensuring more client (grassroot-level) feedback; decentralizing authority over budgets, programs, and staffing; and expanding agency training on participation.

Part 2: Assessment of the Why Exercise

The problems discussed by the pairs of participants were based on the recommendations made in question 3. To pinpoint the major problem with USAID's renewed emphasis on participation, participants were instructed to turn their recommendations into problem statements. The line of why questioning pushed participants into a deeper analysis of their initial points. For example, in one case, the point was made that management is still in control. The series of whys led to the following expansion of the point: 1) management is old style, not up to date on current management approaches; 2) people are afraid to let go of power; 3) they don't know any better; 4) it's ignorance, attitude, and fear of change; 5) core values must change if participation is to work. Or again, management shows an inability to share power because 1) people have hidden agendas; 2) people think they have all the answers; and 3) there are insufficient individual incentives or sanctions that would lead to change. Following these two activities, Barnett asked for audience reaction.

Barnett: How many of you found that you and your partner had a similar issue? [Lots of hands.] That tells you that some common themes are going to come out when all the cards are typed up. And it also shows you that you may have a way to process these, because you've got some concurrence.

Were you ever surprised by the answer? A surprise is when we have an assumption challenged. Surprises are very important in terms of discovering new places for inquiry. If nothing surprised you, you might want to ask the question why five more times.

How many times did you find yourself making assumptions versus having a data-driven decision? How many times could you think of data to support your answer versus your impression or your feeling? It's important to distinguish between information that is perception and information that is fact. If you have only perceptions and no data, it's very unlikely that you're going to convince anybody else, particularly higher-up people, that something needs to be changed.

Also, did you ever reach the point at which the answer was a genuine I-don't-know? If you did, you have stumbled across a gem. That tells you where you need more information. That means you have the opportunity to collect more information. What did you find out about participation? How did it feel to have somebody really listen to you? How did it feel to really listen to somebody else? What are some of your process comments and observations?

Audience: It takes work. It's an effort. It is not simple to actively listen to someone else.

Audience: It really helped to clarify the issues; they're restated constantly until you're satisfied.

Barnett: Having somebody listening to you helps you get clear yourself. It also shows you the difference between a root cause and maybe a symptom.

Audience: There's a little frustration in not being able to affirm. You want to be able to say, I agree, or I disagree or Let's explore that further.

Barnett: Why is it important not to affirm or deny?

Audience: You just want to listen. You're there to be an active listener.

Barnett: That's right, because you don't want to take somebody on your track. You want to find out where their track leads to.

Audience: I noticed a strong tendency not just to actively listen, but to clarify in the process. This became an exchange in the repeating back, whether it was supposed to or not, and in fact, we got much deeper in our thoughts through this process.

Concluding Statement

Frank Almaguer

USAID's clear objective is sustainable development, which requires the participation of the beneficiaries. Many of us would argue, probably correctly, that we've always taken the beneficiaries point of view. But we have tried by ourselves to determine what the beneficiaries wanted, rather than asking them. In the personnel business, I must also think about what my customers want and need so that they can do their work. My customers are the employees of this Agency, and they need to be satisfied with the services I provide. The Office of Human Resources recently sent out the first-ever worldwide electronic questionnaire. Twenty-nine percent of Agency employees answered. We sent back the responses we received even though they were not glowing. They gave us some ideas on how to be more responsive to the needs of USAID employees, so that they can do their work on behalf of sustainable development.

We want to ensure that the almost 9,000 people in USAID, both here and around the world, are ready for the changes that they will be exposed to between this spring and October 1. These will be fundamental changes, not only in systems and processes, which will in many cases be radically different, but also in the values that are embodied in those changes, including teamwork, which cannot succeed without participation. Core values will be stressed as extensively as the systems and processes themselves.

At the same time, we have to realize that this is a new Agency, one with a big heart but a very, very small and perhaps shrinking pocketbook. In this new Agency, we must maintain a learning capability. We have to use every training experience and instrument available to us, both formal and informal, including technology like CD-ROM. All employees can and should avail themselves of these experiences and be able to grow and mature as professionals without being totally focused on classroom opportunities. This is quite a challenge.

During a meeting yesterday, in which USAID employees discussed the state of play on the Hill, one speaker was a former congressman who is heading a coalition of forces in support of the foreign affairs account, the 150 account. His rather pointed advice was that we continue to believe in what we do. We are not about to move away from the reengineered systems, from the core values of the Agency, from the start-up date of October 1, and from ensuring that the Agency truly believes in what it does, and that participation is a central part of it. As a long-term career employee, I think I see a bright future for USAID.

Communications from the E-mail Bag

Making the Connection

The following E-mail was received in response to Diane La Voy's questions: What is the connection between the way we work together our ability to work effectively in teams and to be empowered and accountable within USAID and our ability as an Agency to build opportunities for our customers to participate in decisions and processes that affect them? Is there really a

connection between the way we work together and our ability to engender customer participation? If so, where do you see the connection? Why might it matter?

Karl Schwartz: There is a natural and good tendency within USAID to see the socially and economically deprived as clients, beneficiaries of our largesse, rather than as decision-makers. This is reinforced by an organizational structure in which decisions tend to be made at the top of the management unit so that those who interact most with our clients do not see themselves as decision-makers either.

Empowered and accountable teams flatten out the internal decision-making structure, thereby making it easier for us to see others as decision-makers, as people who make choices. But we have to strengthen this perception of our customers among ourselves. This is the bottom line of what is coming out of our customer-needs detection work. The staff who have participated have all come back from the field impressed with how much our clients know about these topics and with a new respect for them as choice-makers and customers.

Hence, while I can trace a connection between the way we might be organized and participation, the more fundamental question is related to whether we perceive the socially and economically deprived and ourselves (to a lesser extent) as decision-makers. If we organize in ways which make us decision-makers, then, probably, it will be easier for us to recognize the poor as decision-makers and, hence, as customers whose participation in our planning and judging is important.

Anne Sweetser: Two factors predispose to difficulty in treating the recipients of aid as decision-makers or customers, rather than clients. First, there is a tremendous conviction that we have The Knowledge. We have such faith in our rationalism and the science which is based in it that we have great difficulty seeing and responding to others' myths or beliefs as knowledge also. We overlook, or deny, the fact that our knowledge is one among many systems of culturally constructed symbolic meaning. Second, it requires a special sort of courage to give up the prerogative of being the one who makes the decisions.

John Grayzel: Perhaps the single most troublesome aspect of practicing what we preach is that we as USAID employees cannot commit ourselves to our partners to any extent greater than the Agency can commit itself to us. One of the first things a child learns is to manipulate the concept of promise. Keeping one's word is fundamental to working together. On a much more sophisticated level is the judicial doctrine of stare decisis (to stand by decided matters) whereby once a matter has been reasonably determined, it rests unless there are truly compelling reasons for reconsideration. The capricious way USAID constantly changes decisions makes it almost impossible for us to make any commitment to our partners (though we increasingly ask them to commit themselves to us).

Jose Garzon: My sentiment is that we are not yet practicing what we preach. Budget reductions and a generally hostile environment are driving people to be more protectionist of their turf, more centralist in their management style, and sometimes more cynical in their outlook. There is also a disturbing tendency to create programmatic boxes to protect the integrity of one's program. Different technical offices push for separate Strategic Objectives to protect their areas of interest. To fail to do so in today's climate can prove disastrous. Deferring to other colleagues who are better equipped to solve a problem; listening to the field, subordinates, and customers; risk taking; innovation these are the behaviors which suffer under the current climate.

What is needed to create a customer-oriented agency with a global vision is not simply a change in structures and procedures, but a thorough change in organizational culture. It will not, repeat will NOT, come about through training courses. A change in organizational culture will come about when the Agency rewards the right kinds of behavior and punishes the wrong kinds of behavior. We seem to be on the right track with the new employee evaluation procedures, but all the same budgets and other rewards are more likely to go to the most aggressive, not the best team players or the most service-oriented.

The process of organizational change will take years. All we can do now is to begin, not only with new systems, but with a conscious effort to reward the right kind of behaviors and people and separate out those who cannot mend their ways.

Vic Duarte: USAID cannot get the participatory approach to work outside before it shows its belief

in the approach, and learns its strengths and limitations, by trying it internally. The absence of a supportive environment for a participatory approach can lead to the isolation of those who do not share the views of the leadership at the starting line. In such instances, decisions are made without a reasonable amount of information or scrutiny, while staff members who object are ostracized. The absence of a culture of participation means that some staff just go along with the power structure, and give the power structure a false sense of the correctness of its decisions. Those who would present a different view that might lead to better decisions are marginalized.

Dayton Maxwell: The private sector has developed analysis techniques for providing objective results of customer surveys on employee performance. Xerox, widely recognized as the industry leader in reengineering, IS ROUTINELY USING this tool as one element in evaluating employee performance. Thus, in addition to customer surveys on program satisfaction, customer surveys on USAID employee performance are possible.

These employee performance customer surveys include FSNs and partners, who carry out most of the work for us in the field. The effectiveness of our FSNs and partners depends both on how effectively we acquaint them with reengineering behaviors and methods and on how effectively we work with them in a participative manner to achieve customer goals once teamwork practices are understood and applied. The importance of U.S. and indigenous NGOs, universities, and other partners is growing, thus the importance of how well we as employees can work effectively with them is growing. Direct feedback on our performance has a way of attracting our attention and making the connection very clear.

Frank Pavich: The proliferation of teams forming around themes and tasks reminds me of the choose-up basketball games in the school yard. Everyone is picking the same (best players) to be on their team. While I think the move toward reinvention and reengineering is an absolute must, I can't help remembering Terry Brown's words when he visited Cairo, The greatest challenge will be to integrate the new tools for doing business with the best of the old, and not throw out the baby with the bath water.

Leroy Jackson: In today's private sector, old adages like "Know your customer" still are being used. My sense is some USAID people may be confused about a focus on participation and customer focus. I hear things like it's like the Holy Grail. Perhaps we need a hook or more succinct message to our people rooted in how a dynamic and successful private sector functions. I suggest an emphasis on the critical need to 1) know more directly the people we want to help and 2) have them tell us what it is they will buy, i.e., identify as their own priorities, and what they will gladly perpetuate once USAID has come and gone.

S.O. Teams Empowerment within the Hierarchy

Michael Farbman (excerpt from USAID/Morocco response to the Administrator's request for comments on reforms): In November 1994, USAID/Morocco restructured its program management around a concept of strategic objective teams, each composed of officers from throughout the mission, and possessing a mandate to oversee performance in the S.O. area, liaison with outside stakeholders in the S.O. area, and cooperation with the Global Bureau and PPC counterparts. Design, performance monitoring, quality control, and similar responsibilities all were delegated to the teams.

Notwithstanding mission-wide commitment to the principles and benefits of this type of participation, the question was raised whether mission executive management could, or ought to, delegate to S.O. teams the right of ultimate approval, without executive review, of such actions as work plan review, strategy or performance indicator revisions that affect the mission's contract with the AID/W Bureau, waivers, etc., concerning which the S.O. teams are charged with primary oversight.

The question here was whether, even under the most liberal interpretations of reengineering, the minimum hierarchical requirements and responsibilities which cannot be redelegated by mission directors does not ipso facto make a mockery of the empowerment principle that lay at the heart of what mission management was trying to achieve through its restructuring. Not surprisingly, we were unable to come up with a concrete resolution to this issue.

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development

The Participation Forum (No. 14)

What Can Change When We Listen Harder

November 1, 1995

Karl Schwartz, the team leader of the Country Experimental Lab (CEL) effort in Bangladesh that rethought the mission's democracy program, described how mission personnel set out to listen harder and what changed as a result. Using rapid appraisal methods, the mission's D Team went directly to the poor of Bangladesh to explore their democracy needs. The findings of the appraisal led to a redefinition of the democracy program, while the CEL experience led to broader participation by USAID and partners in program development.

Anne Sweetser, [AAAS](#) fellow with the Participation Initiative, added some observations based on the three weeks she spent with the mission this past spring, training the D Team to listen with new ears, see with new eyes. Margaret Carpenter, Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East, introduced the session.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Applying Theories of Participation to Real Conditions

Margaret Carpenter

From my experience in Washington, being part of senior management and spending some time with our missions admittedly on very brief visits my conclusion is that USAID would be a much better place if all of us desk-bound bureaucrats in Washington would just be quiet and listen to people in the field. They are the ones who are really doing development: taking the theories of participation and reengineering and applying them to real people and real conditions in the field.

The experiment in Bangladesh has been very important for our bureau. We have all learned a lot from what they've gone through so far. The benefit of this kind of presentation is that it lays out the whole process and really gets us to think about how it changes peoples' attitudes over time. The heart of today's discussion is to look at how the Bangladesh experience could be used in other situations.

The Democracy Needs of USAID/Bangladesh Customers

Karl Schwartz

The Bangladesh mission acquired its experience with participation as a Country Experimental Laboratory for program design and implementation. This meant we went back to ground zero in terms of our design practices and built an alternate approach based on the core values of customer focus, diversity, empowerment, teamwork, managing for results, and accountability. We

then tested this alternative approach by designing a new democracy program. The model was tested on democracy because this was the next design activity out of our chute. During the design process, we formed a partnership with two organizations that will carry through implementation, The [Asia Foundation](#) and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). The bottom-line result is that the alternate approach increased participation and reduced design time by about 75 percent. As many as 40 people participated directly in the design process, not counting the approximately 500 customers from whom we gathered information, yet we went from initial design concepts to implementation in about five and a half months.

A Quick Walk through the Model

The model comprises nine steps.

Strategic Phase

- Empower the core strategic team. The team has delegated authority to approve and sign implementation orders necessary to achieve the desired results.
- Detect the needs of the ultimate customers. The customers are contacted directly and asked about their needs.
- Select partners and incorporate them into the core strategic team. The process includes establishing selection criteria, soliciting concept papers, and negotiating and signing a Development Agreement outlining operational relationships and working procedures for strategic planning.
- Develop strategic plan. Using results of the rapid appraisal of customer needs, the core strategic team establishes strategic objectives, program outcomes, and performance indicators and estimates resource requirements.
- Validate desired results and program outcomes. The core strategic team goes back to the customers to validate the strategic plan.
- Obligate funds at the strategic objective level.

Tactical Phase

- Form a tactical team with partners to develop activities packages and customer service plans. The customer service plans identify the customers and standards for serving them, describe the services to be provided, and explain how needs were identified and how customers will be involved in evaluation.
- Develop a customer service plan for interacting with partners. (Plan is similar to plan in Step 7.)
- Negotiate an implementation amendment to the development agreement signed in Step 3. The amendment incorporates specific activities and customer service plans.

The model is simple because it is carried out by an empowered multifunctional team; that is, a team which has all the skills it needs to complete its work without external reviews, clearances, or approvals. This is reflected in Step 1.

It's a customer-focused model in that it starts with our customers perceptions and assessments of their relationship with the democratic institutions and practices of Bangladesh. That's reflected in Step 2.

The model also validates planned results with customers; that is, it asks them if the strategic objectives and program outcomes are desirable and feasible and involves them in monitoring results. This is reflected in Steps 5 and 9.

The model involves our partners in the definition of strategic objectives and program outcomes, and USAID staff in the preparation of activities packages. In short, strategic and operational planning become shared rather than divisible tasks. This is reflected in Steps 3, 4, 7, and 8.

We found that the model can be further simplified. In practice, Steps 4, 5, 7, and 8 tended to merge, so that we actually ended up with a six-step model. There were three reasons for this. First, we began to worry that we would not finish on schedule if we dealt with these steps separately. Second, as we built team skills and confidence, we became more adept at using work

groups and consultation. The team found it was able to work on several tasks simultaneously while keeping everyone fully informed and involved in decisions. Third, a natural dialectic developed between our strategic and tactical work. There is little value to be gained by separating what we wanted to accomplish from how we were going to accomplish it, because the two informed each other.

We believe this model is transferable to other sectors. We are using it now to develop new programs in family planning, health, and economic growth.

Increasing USAID's Participation. In this new model, participation by USAID staff increased because design decisions were shifted from management to the staff through the use of an empowered multifunctional team. Also, the use of rapid-appraisal techniques to gather customer information increased the mission's reliance on Bangladeshi staff, involved more of them in the design effort, and deepened their participation in its substantive and analytical aspects.

Mission management was able to step back from the review-approval process, because management set the team's membership, its mandate, the criteria for judging the team's work products, and the out-of-bounds conditions; that is, the issues over which management and the team would consult. In selecting the team's membership, management was careful to ensure that all the skills necessary for the team to complete its work without outside reviews were represented.

Management agreed to judge the team's work in terms of its fit with the agency's democracy strategy and implementation guidelines and the customer needs as identified by the team. For its part, the team agreed to consult with management over potential or actual violations of acquisition regulations, work delays and the reasons for them, substantial revisions to the experimental design model, breakdowns in the team process, including relationships with the partners, and results of the customer-needs identification- and-verification work. The team also agreed to document its decisions so that management could track the team's work on a timely basis. This was done by creating electronic documents accessible to all mission staff.

Public sessions were held at critical points in the process, at the detect-needs and validation stages, for example. Everybody in the embassy was invited to those sessions.

Mission management honored its commitment to empowerment and never attempted to judge the team's work on any but the agreed criteria. This increased the team members' level of involvement, ownership, and commitment, and made them willing to accept accountability. Team morale remained high throughout this process.

Customer Involvement and USAID Participation

In the new approach, customer involvement was linked to increased USAID participation. We accepted agency guidance and defined our customers as the socially and economically disadvantaged. We then began to think about how we might best establish and maintain direct links with our customers. At this point, Anne Sweetser gave us a quick course on rapid appraisal. We had never used rapid appraisal techniques in the mission and had to develop the active listening skills necessary to use it successfully. This we did with Anne's help.

Her training also helped us realize that our design should begin with our customers' perceptions and assessments of their relationship with democratic institutions and practices. To develop this information, we fielded a detect-needs troop of 20 Bangladeshi staffers, 11 men and 9 women. Members of the troop were recruited from all mission offices, because the democracy team was not large enough to accomplish this task on its own.

The fieldwork was conducted in three rounds of one week each. During each round, four teams, each comprised of two men and two women, traveled to different areas of the country to conduct interviews. Both group and individual interviews were held. Men interviewed men and women interviewed women. We estimate our interviews covered 500 customers. Our sample was purposive in that we tried to capture gender, age, occupational, ethnic, religious, and regional differences among our customers.

The field teams used open-ended topic guidelines for their discussions rather than specific questions such as might be found in market research or public opinion polls. The topical guidelines were developed by the interviewers as they practiced their active-listening skills and thought about democracy in Bangladesh.

Our methodology explicitly called for the interviewers to record their interviews and distill significant findings at the end of each day in the field. At the end of each week, the findings of each field team were shared and discussed with other teams.

Based on these discussions and field notes, Rosalie Fanale, a member of the democracy team, prepared a weekly synopsis of our customers views, which was reviewed and updated by the field teams following their return to Dhaka. This allowed us to complete our customer-needs report while the information and findings were still fresh in the minds of the interviewers.

We used the same basic approach at Step 5 to validate our strategic objectives and program outcomes. At that point, however, we focused on whether our customers thought the objectives and outcomes were desirable and feasible. We will use this approach again on an annual basis for program monitoring and assessment.

The combination of active listening to our customers and analyzing what we heard increased the number of USAID staff involved in the design effort and deepened their participation in its substantive aspects as well.

The detect-needs troop found that even though our customers are poor and most are illiterate, they have a fairly sophisticated understanding of how the democratic institutions and practices of Bangladesh can work against their economic interests. As a result, we have moved our new activities packages downstream, closer to the lives of our customers, to address the democracy needs important to them. Our program now emphasizes local elected bodies rather than the national parliament, and seeks to increase the number of women elected to local bodies and to expand the capacity of local associations to advocate on behalf of our customers. We have also given increased emphasis to enhancing alternate dispute resolution mechanisms at the local level.

The model's reliance on rapid appraisal raises a number of issues. First is cost. Each complete cycle costs an estimated \$25,000 for per diem and travel. We hope we will be able to continue to afford the costs of rapid appraisals.

The second is the difficulty of adhering to the rapid appraisal methodology. Public opinion polls or market research surveys and their quantifiable findings are more familiar. The iterative process whereby the interviewers build their understanding of our customers relational world tends to be abbreviated because it is seen as too time consuming.

Finally, there is a tendency among the educated to restate or redefine the stated needs of the less educated. This tendency was the topic of many discussions as we struggled to stay as close as we could to the relational world of our customers. For example, one of the partners argued that it would not have undertaken a successful rural sanitation program if it had listened only to its customers, because none of them requested latrines. Further discussions made clear, however, that the customers had identified poor health as a problem.

The task of the team in such an instance is not to restate the customers needs, but to identify activities which address the needs in the way that sanitary latrines contribute to improved health. The role of analysis in designing programs is to apply the partners knowledge about such things as germs and disease vectors to meeting our customers stated needs.

Establishing Effective Partnerships

Our goal was to select and involve our partners as early and as extensively as possible but in a manner consistent with acquisition regulations and our desire to maintain direct contacts with our customers. We did not want to become dependent upon our partners for customer information, nor did we want them to become simple intermediaries implementing a program we designed.

At first we thought these conditions meant we had to define what we wanted to procure by establishing strategic objectives and program outcomes before we could involve our partners. This would have prevented them from getting involved until about Step 7. So we decided to build our model on Handbook 13 guidance for assistance agreements, which allowed us to involve partners fully in the design process.

Although these actions converted what had always been a judging relationship into a partnership, we did nothing fancy; we simply issued a request for applications. And we selected our partners from those applications on a competitive basis. Because we were selecting partners rather than service providers, the evaluation criteria may have been a bit unique. They emphasized compatibility between the applicant's and USAID's core values, the applicant's ability to involve and support diverse partner organizations so that participation could be further extended, and the applicant's commitment to the proposed approach.

Our partnership experience taught us that effective partnerships can take many forms. Our partnership is a joint venture rather than a team. This mode was preferred because each partner was able to retain its institutional identity while working towards a common goal, whereas in a team the partners merge their identities. Defining the precise nature of the partnership must be left to the partners themselves, and USAID guidance on this issue should be as flexible as possible.

We also learned that, given the variable nature of partnerships, it is critically important that the partners clarify their expectations and define the nature of their relationship early on. There is a tendency, however, to want to get on with the work at hand and to allow relationships to emerge as the work proceeds. While it's possible to delay these clarifying discussions, the downstream risks are substantial: misunderstandings, a lack of mutual trust, and, eventually, collapse of the partnership.

We found out that our partners need to have a level of empowerment within their own organizations equivalent to that of USAID. This balances the relationship, makes it easier to reach consensus, and allows the partnership to complete its work without outside reviews and approvals. Finally, the partners need to give attention early to sorting out roles within the partnership. Critical roles include leaders, facilitators, process monitors, members, recorders. These roles can be shared in a variety of ways, but they are critical to the efficiency of the partnership and to promoting its health.

To See and Hear with New Eyes and Ears

Anne Sweetser

I am committed to an anthropological approach to research that fits with the notion of a learning organization, the heart of reengineering. The opportunity to work with the Bangladesh mission last spring meant that I could bring my experience in social anthropology into the changing USAID. I believe it was a good match.

Discovering the Unexpected

The greatest successes in research come not when researchers find what they expect, but when they find something that they do not expect. When they notice something that doesn't fit, something that is wrong or discordant, they begin to learn. This open, creative notion of research contrasts with research conceived as verification of pre-set hypotheses about relationships among dependent and independent variables structured into rigid questionnaires. It avoids predetermining which topics are relevant and avoids preselecting a sample of a particular size and constitution.

Customer surveying under reengineering is a way to seek definitions of issues or problems as perceived by USAID's ultimate customers. Researchers have to be willing to admit that they are not sure even what the right questions are. They have to ask themselves, How can I go about finding out what I am now unaware that I do not know? This is the only honest starting point in a

cross-cultural research endeavor. But it's not easy; it's a real skill. It requires a very special sort of courage, and also a particular sort of consciousness. It's extremely simple and extremely difficult at the same time.

People conducting this kind of research have to be conscious of the fact that their own culture both allows them to understand and gets in the way of their ability to understand. To the extent that their culture works for them in their own society, allowing them to send out and read signals, both nonverbal and verbal, it allows them to function as human beings and to be competent adults. And the more competent they are, the more pride they take in that competence, the more attached, both emotionally and intellectually, they are to viewing the world through that set of precepts. And this is especially true for people who have become experts in something. Professional training allows them to adopt a particular vocabulary and set of concepts, to develop competence using these, and be rewarded by others for their expertise. The more expert they are, as members of their own culture or of a profession, the more their skills may prejudice their ability to be truly open to other frameworks of understanding, experiencing, and expressing reality.

The courage that is required is the courage to recognize and acknowledge one's own cultural biases. This is what social anthropologists do when they conduct participant-observation research over an extended period of time. Such research involves a lot of stumbling, mistaken assumptions, embarrassment, and a growing tolerance for discomfort, because it facilitates learning in unanticipated ways.

Essentially what the observers/researchers need to cultivate is an ability to look and listen as if they have never looked and listened before; they need to shed the eyeglasses of their own culture. The ability to deliberately stop the natural tendency to jump to conclusions about what is heard and seen is the key to successful rapid-appraisal work. It allows one to notice what is unexpected or different.

Training the Detect-Needs Troop

I arrived in Bangladesh immediately after Camille Barnett of [Research Triangle Institute \(RTI\)](#) had worked with the democracy team and the detect-needs troop. Their strong motivation to work as a team facilitated what I wished to communicate.

In the rapid appraisal the troop worked on sample interviews in the morning and spent the remainder of the day discussing them, reinforcing the willingness of each person to see things differently, to discuss those differences, and to clarify the things that did not fit with what they expected. Thus the troop was able, in a matter of three weeks, to begin to see how the ultimate customers in Bangladesh understand democracy. The troop would not have been able to reach this understanding if they had relied upon their own cultural expertise at responding to what people say and putting what they heard into their own framework of interpretation as members of that culture.

Bangladesh is a very hierarchical society. Therefore, it was important to try to get the members of the troop past the idea that their special education meant that they could understand the issues better. I believe that the troop was successful in ferreting out ideas and frameworks of understanding that poor people in rural Bangladesh hold about democracy because the members of the troop were willing to try to learn in a new way, to become a learning group, part of a learning organization.

Discussion Session

Gender Aspects of Rapid Appraisal

Bill Alli (Management Planning): Did the religious context in Bangladesh where women are treated as second-class citizens complicate the attempt to move towards participation in democracy?

Schwartz: I have spent half my adult life in Islamic cultures in various parts of the world. They're all very different. They also change. Through our democracy detect-needs work, we found that

men in Bangladesh thought local elected bodies would be more responsive to the needs of the poor if there were more women elected to those bodies, and they would be happy to vote for women to sit on those bodies. The culture of Bangladesh is opening up to increased women's participation in the political system, certainly at the local level. The national level is a bit more difficult because of the constraints on women in terms of travel and campaigning.

I think USAID has a very good opportunity here to increase women's participation, because it's something men in the society see as helpful to them.

Sweetser: Were you to ask Muslims whom I know from several years of living in Pakistan about the position of women, they would say they're absolutely equal in Islam. They hear a question referring to a broad range of family, economic, and political issues exclusively in terms of religious ideology; they appear to be insensitive to a distinction between ideal and real. But Islam places responsibility for the treatment of women in society on men. Thus, where democracy refers to justice as well as to governance, there is in Islamic ideology which, as I have just said, is the habitual frame through which Muslims think about social issues the basis for an argument favoring men's active support of women's search for equal treatment under the law.

The Use of Questions in Rapid Appraisals

Elise Stork: Your handouts list some of the questions which are used for the rapid appraisals. Could there be a dichotomy between the open-ended questions and the iterative processes? Does constantly massaging and reconsidering the findings on a weekly basis drive you into more specific questions? Might you begin to predetermine outcomes based on what you think you're getting?

Schwartz: We used the discussions to identify areas that required further exploration. When we saw or found something that we didn't expect to at all we had to go back and get more information on it. But we tried to go back with generic topics rather than a specific question to which people would say yes or no.

Sweetser: We developed a set of themes and sub-themes to which team members could refer while they were carrying on conversations with people in the field. These themes were generated through discussions among members of the team; this process simultaneously helped them clarify their own presuppositions or prejudices. Later they reviewed the themes and were free to revise them as a group if their learning to that point led them to recommend improvements. No attempt was made to ask each person a specific set of questions.

Procurement Issues

Adele Liskov: With the increasing push to involve more partners in the design, what advice would you give on how to avoid running afoul of competition? *Schwartz:* The reason we went to Handbook 13 assistance instruments is that they don't have the same procurement restrictions as a contract does. We did everything very much like a contract procurement. So we issued an RFA, we established evaluation criteria in the RFA, we had a technical review of the applications as they came in and assigned points to the criteria, we held follow-up discussions with each of the applicants as we looked at their proposals, and so on and so forth. So it all went fairly smoothly and we stayed very close to what people recognize as an open and fair competition.

La Voy: A document put out by the Office of Procurement jointly with General Counsel in August might be helpful. It is a readable, short piece on guidance for consultation to avoid conflict of interest or problems with the Sunshine Act. (General Notice 8/17/1995)

Rapid Appraisal Process: An Aspect of Democracy

Jay Nussbaum: Karl scared me by saying it took \$25,000 of scarce OE money for each three-week rapid appraisal cycle. Why does it have to be OE? As you've talked, it's become apparent that the most valuable thing you've accomplished so far are these surveys. What is democracy? It is very hard to define, but one of its attributes probably is communication between the governed and the governors. Information generated by a rapid appraisal can be valuable to the governors. Even in dictatorships, the governors still want to do good for the governed. The rapid appraisals

are not just analysis, not just part of finding out what the problem is. I'd try to find a way to make them part of the solution.

Johnson: What we do in USAID obviously is a small piece of the overall picture of what happens in development. In most countries the biggest part of that picture is what the country itself does with its development budget. Do you think, based on your experience to date, that the donor community should look into transferring some of these new ways of doing business to countries? The Canadians and now USAID and many other donors have tried to reinvent the way they do business, but I don't know to what extent there's been an attempt to transfer this new way of thinking to the countries themselves.

Schwartz: One of our program outcomes relates to trying to get local elected bodies to accept and follow best practices. At that level, we're doing what might be seen as a version of reengineering. At the national level, the government and the donors have been talking about improving the efficiency and the effectiveness of civil service (what today is called reengineering). The political situation is such that there has not been any progress on that since I've been in Bangladesh, and there probably will not be any in the immediate future, but the idea is always there. We've been asked to send people from Bangladesh to the United States so they could meet with the vice president and talk about reengineering. We haven't been too enthusiastic about it because we don't see any commitment on their part to really change. BRAC has reengineered as much as USAID has, and The Asia Foundation was only a little bit behind BRAC and USAID on that issue.

Validity of Rapid Appraisal Results

Curt Grimm: In a country the size of Bangladesh, 500 people the number you say you reached is statistically fairly unimportant. Also, concerning the selection of partners, there are lots of representative groups that could be interested. How did you get input from interest groups that exist in Bangladeshi society and how did you feed that input into the process of selecting partners?

Sweetser: On the issue of statistical significance, if you look in a statistics book, you'll find that statistical validity depends, first of all, on being sure that the answers that you're getting correspond with what you think you are asking. And until you have done the type of research that I'm suggesting, this very open, qualitative work in a rapid appraisal, I'm not sure that you can assert that a sample is or is not going to give you statistical validity, precisely because of that problem. I mean, you're not sure you're asking the right questions until you've done some much more open work. *Schwartz:* We don't think there are a lot of other opinions out there among our customers that we did not encounter. We think we have an accurate sense of our customers' thoughts. We validated that in Step 5: after we had identified strategic objectives and program outcomes, we went back to our customers and asked them specifically if the plans were desirable and feasible. That is not a statistical check, but it is a validation.

Bangladesh is about 120 million people. A statistically valid sample of that population is about 1,000 to 1,100 people. However, our goal was not to reach a statistically valid sample of the entire population as in public opinion polling, but to talk to enough of our customers to ensure we understood their relational world; to develop an insider's perspective on our customers' understanding of their interactions with the country's political institutions. The test, therefore, is not one of statistical validity, but whether through the iterative process of rapid appraisal there are no more surprises or unexpected findings. We think our detect-needs and validation efforts meet this latter test.

To address the second part of your question, we're aware that other groups have an interest in democracy in Bangladesh. But we were focused on our customers, and we wanted to know what we could do to work with them and to help them. The stakeholders have a very different agenda than our customers, and to a great extent it is the stakeholders' behaviors that we're trying to change. One has to be careful not to allow intermediaries and interest groups to set the agenda of the program.

Effect on the USAID Mission Staff

John Grant: As we know, consultation sometimes can be a little messy and time-consuming. Sometimes it can be a little unsettling and frustrating to change plans and strategies that were set.

Was this process frustrating for the staff in the mission, or was it universally energizing and empowering? Did some people have difficulty taking off their cultural lenses to hear what people were saying?

Schwartz: The final reaction is very positive. In fact, the mission has made a decision to go ahead and reorganize itself on the concept of empowered multifunctional teams and move away from offices. But it is also true that some people had a hard time taking off their hats. Some never succeeded. As we did fieldwork, some people found it difficult to give up the fact that they had a degree and they were talking to people who didn't have degrees. The biggest difference, though, was in the role that women and support staff played in Bangladesh. Some of our secretaries have bachelor's degrees and master's degrees in sociology, in psychology, in political science skills that were kind of buried. On the detect-needs troop these people just blossomed. We figured out that we ought to be using these people in a more substantive way. So the democracy team now has two people who we thought of only as secretaries before but who had a lot of interesting things to say. In Bangladesh, women still need to talk to women.

Overall, the experience maintained mission morale through the difficulties of reengineering and what was happening to the agency as a whole. We didn't just hear about reengineering; we did it. We saw it made a difference. We discovered that it is possible to involve people in a very positive way.

Arthur Silver: Is there anything that you noted or observed about this experimental process that might have been due to the fact of its being an experiment and under observation?

Schwartz: We operated on a voluntary basis. We sought volunteers for two teams: one developed the design approach, and the other implemented it. Not everybody volunteered. We sought volunteers for the detect-needs work as well. Not everybody volunteered initially. In fact, some people thought it was a waste of time, that reengineering was a silly fad that would go away eventually or that it was different only in name from what we've always done.

As we moved forward and began giving out our reports, the morale in the exploration team, as we called the first group, stayed high, in fact, it soared well above other committees. More and more people volunteered and eventually we had to limit participation in the detect-needs troop.

I'm not sure anybody in Washington was really watching us very closely. But the enthusiasm the experience generated within the mission influenced people in the mission to think more positively. A lot of the concerns were whether teams could be effective and what individual roles on the team would be. We discussed these questions extensively.

Possible Role for Intermediaries

John Anderson: In the selection of partners to work with, is it possible, or even perhaps desirable, to completely avoid intermediaries groups that represent some interest in the selection of partners? Do we really want to bring in partners with no script, with no ideas, without an agenda? Don't we want to find partners that are very much advocates for an approach of one kind or another, particularly when we're talking democracy?

Schwartz: A distinction must be maintained between interest groups in the political sense, who are trying to affect public policy, and stakeholders and other groups that might contribute to the program. I think you're using the term interest groups in the latter sense. We are going to involve more of those. What we have are prime partners, and we expect sub-partners to emerge from this relationship. Under the umbrella of the Association of Development Agencies of Bangladesh, we held an open workshop on the approach last month for all NGOs in Bangladesh that might be interested in working on one of our five program outcomes. That was followed up by separate meetings in greater detail on each program outcome. The NGOs who participated now should be in the process of deciding if they want to participate and preparing their proposals. After another month or so, we will have a number of sub-grants working on the five program outcomes.

Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation

Carpenter: You said at one point that you wouldn't know for up to seven years whether or not you

took the right path. I would certainly hope that we would find ways, and I assume you have thought about this, to integrate participatory methods all the way along, not just in the very beginning, so that there is an ongoing rolling assessment of effectiveness enabling us to make course corrections along the way. Could you comment on how your thinking about participatory project design has affected your thinking about monitoring and evaluation?

Schwartz: Our approach includes a monitoring and evaluation plan. We will use the same rapid appraisal approach to gathering qualitative information about people's thoughts on the indicators and benchmarks. We report to Washington on results, request more resources on the basis of those results, and adjust activities as we go along.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

My thanks go to all the contributors to this Forum's overflowing E-mail bag, most of whose communications had to be shortened drastically in the interests of space. Diane La Voy

Listening to Whom?

Curt Grimm: I don't agree with Karl Swartz that the ultimate customers and a USAID mission staff alone are all that are needed to design and implement a democracy/governance activity. It takes a very broad variety of different kinds of individuals and organizations even some driven by a very strong, one-sided agenda to identify all the constraints that exist and know how to successfully implement an effective program in a given country context.

Diane La Voy: Knowing the perspectives of the range of potential partners and other citizen groups is part of understanding the lay of the land. I don't know whether that was neglected in Bangladesh. But I do welcome the mission's fulsome focus on ultimate customers, not only because that is too often given short shrift, but because a grounding in the customers priorities and perspectives is necessary for the mission or any external player in assessing and interpreting the approaches of the various NGOs and interest groups.

Max Goldensohn (Development Associates, Inc.): Are there any arguments in favor of limiting participation? Time pressures have been mentioned once or twice and dismissed. But what about local politics and interests which may warp the participatory process?

After 25 years in the field, I believe strongly in the participative approach and in process-centered development. But I have also seen cases where local interests conflicted dramatically with national or global interests. How do you solve these problems?

Ramon Daubon: I can see where a local viewpoint represented by citizens and government at that level could be contested by an outside actor who professes a broader view. But alerta! who or what legitimizes these outside actors? They could be powerful corporations representing only themselves but speaking out for all sorts of noble ideals, or experts of sundry sorts speaking out to save humanity, or a national government that professes to speak for the good of the whole country. All of this rests on the assumptions that local interests are unable to see beyond their own selfish interests. And while there is a lot of truth to this concern, it is no greater than the self-interests of the corporations, the experts, or even the national government. Given the choice of risks, I'll side with the citizens, who I believe are quite capable of looking at the broad interest. And if we feel that their judgement is not quite up to it, then let's educate their judgement (to paraphrase Jefferson), but let's keep the authority with them, where it belongs.

Mari Clark: A point to be stressed is that the team in Bangladesh took care to ensure that the voices and concerns of women as well as men were heard.

Rapid Appraisal: Quick? Dirty?

Timm Harris: Use of rapid rural appraisal (RRA) as a quick and sometimes dirty method of getting people's views and opinions is extremely effective in certain cases. In the Bangladeshi case it was effective in saving calendar time in the design process and incorporated more people than

normal. In that particular case it worked well. However, it is extremely dangerous to assume that this could be a universally applicable model, since design requirements can vary so greatly. There are many instances where RRA may not be an appropriate method for gathering information and perspectives, where too many voices may blur focus and actually lengthen design time, where 20 staffers are not available for three weeks each.

Anne Sweetser: Re: RA as quick and dirty. Alas, this is what is so often done under the name of this method it ends up being a hybrid, sort of a short-cut (probably nonrepresentative?) survey. In truth, the method, when properly executed, is anything but quick and dirty. It is a truly qualitative method, a variation on participant observation of social anthropology in which questions are clarified and new dimensions brought to the fore.

Sharon Epstein: Rapid Rural Appraisal is not new in USAID and it is one of a number of useful devices for gathering and testing information and opinions. However, in my experience, its utility can also be severely limited if people who participate don't have a solid grounding in the subject matter of the exercise and in the history of the program, as well as prior experience doing fieldwork. The wrong conclusions could easily be drawn from RRAs.

Second, I think it is premature to conclude that as a result of the exercise in Bangladesh, the program will be any more effective or have any greater impact than the program under the old programming system. The period of time to produce a program may indeed be shortened and I would like to say that this is an unqualified good thing in USAID, because it takes too long from program idea to implementation, but the quality of the product may be negatively affected by shortening the period too. In the case of the program in Bangladesh, that remains to be assessed over time.

Third, for some time I have been concerned that there is an inherent bias against knowledge and experience of technical staff (who, in USAID, also possess considerable project design/implementation skills and experience) in the discussions of empowering teams. It is fun to participate in some teams and to do RRA on some subjects, particularly at the mission/country level. In the process, a person can learn about development issues he or she has had little prior exposure to. However, it is also possible for people who know little or nothing about the subject to come back from team/RRA exercises with entirely facile, even goofy, notions of what should be designed and implemented.

I hope that in the enthusiasm for empowerment, we retain a healthy respect for the specialized knowledge of USAID technical staff. Everyone's opinion in a team, in my humble opinion, is not equal.

Diane LaVoy: You raise good cautions all-around: we need to strengthen and make better use of our technical expertise, not appear to have found a quick-fix alternative to it. The mark of a real development professional, in my estimation, is someone who can BOTH set aside her expertise (in order to listen with new ears, see with new eyes the customers worlds), AS WELL AS apply that expertise effectively, engaging the customers, in solving problems and changing their circumstances.

Bobby Herman: I especially liked Anne's use of the word courage to describe the process of asking what one doesn't know. I also believe that becoming a better listener requires a capacity for empathy.

Sher Plunkett (from an off-the-cuff response to a query from a mission about how to include large numbers of FSN in a customer appraisal process): I think that to continue to develop depth of experience, it is good to have a core group maybe only one or two people to follow through the whole RA exercise and be responsible for the results, and to document the process. However, those who are not able to spend full time doing RAs could do desk work such as examining village studies or local newspaper articles, etc., on the topic, or key informant interviews, that would round out and triangulate the RA data. RA is really only one leg of the stool.

Listening to Customers in Nigeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Yemen, and Panama

Stella Goings: Nigeria. Participation is a key element of the USAID-Nigeria Implementation Strategy. We convened a Listener's Conference several months ago. We believe the approach was novel and, from our perspective, the results were well worth the effort. A few excerpts from the report on this conference follow.

The meeting brought together middle-level spokespersons from nongovernmental organizations in northern Nigeria, U.S. implementing partners (mainly U.S. cooperating agencies) and USAID staff. Decisions about the agenda and the presentations at the meeting were made by the northern NGO representatives. USAID and its IPS were required to listen rather than talk. This forum gave northerners the opportunity to fully express their views about the development needs of their communities as well as their concerns and apprehensions. The group members offered their assessment of opportunities for donor-assisted development efforts in the north and candidly appraised the potential obstacles and constraints to USAID programs.

Michael Yates and Olivier Carduner: Bolivia. The Bolivia mission is working closely with the local Izoceo Guarani Indian Federation (CABI) to develop a new wildlife management program in the Chaco to help meet our Environment Strategic Objective. We've learned A LOT by listening closely to these customers, including the following:

- The Izoceos have a long tradition of indigenous conservation awareness and action, and have used their cohesive social organization to regulate hunting and fishing in selected areas. We will use this indigenous base to guide further program development.
- The traditional healers (Ipayos) play an important role in teaching respect for the environment, and in particular the need for a balance between plants, animals, and Izoceos if all are to survive. They can become leaders in raising awareness about biodiversity conservation, and the mission will incorporate the Ipayos in program design and implementation. This was clearly something we had never considered.
- Izoceo leaders are more intermediaries for their communities than real decision-makers, and we learned that these leaders will not make decisions on behalf of their communities without returning to those communities for in-depth consultation. While this takes some time it also assures strong community participation and support, and should be strongly endorsed.
- The Izoceos feel VERY strongly that they (rather than the GOB or an NGO) should be in charge of resource conservation in this area, and of the possible wildlife management program with USAID. This has played a key role in internal mission discussions/debate of how to structure this activity.

Given the difficult institutional capability requirements for prospective grantees, the mission decided to begin its collaborative relationship with the Izoceos by using a purchase order. The deliverable will be an Izoceo outline of a proposed wildlife management program, and one that already incorporates consultation with the 21 Izoceo communities; with this USAID reiterates once again its firm intention to design a program targeted to Izoceo needs and capabilities. Nevertheless, the need to rely on a purchase order (rather than beginning with what many felt was a preferred option, a small grant) highlights the potential conflicts between reengineering's emphasis on working with the customers and existing federal procurement regulations.

Duncan Miller: Egypt. We are still going strong with our USAID/Cairo Participation Forum and much appreciate the inputs from you all. As a part of our mission strategy planning, our Forum provided assistance to Strategic Objective team efforts at customer service planning and later for the Mission Customer Service Plan (CSP). Although frustration abounds in many areas, the CSP has become a very useful tool for us to get participation out of the conference rooms and into the field.

Joyce Davidson: Yemen. We will be doing a WID Assessment soon here in Yemen, and it is obvious that this customer-focused approach is the way we need to do it. I look forward to hearing more about the experimental labs!

David Mutchler: Panama. USAID is working through NGOs with impoverished communities in the Panama Canal Watershed to help them develop rapid appraisals of community assets and priority needs and then to develop a community strategy for acquiring the outside resources they need to carry out a development plan.

USAID/Panama has held focus groups with over forty of Panama's newly elected mayors to access their vision of community needs throughout the country. We are now helping the mayors conduct focus groups of their own with their constituents, teaching them to listen to the community. Solid waste management has emerged as a priority problem of all municipalities, rural as well as urban.

The communities present proposals for small-scale community potable water systems, footbridges, one-room schools, etc. USAID selects those proposals which will benefit the most needy communities. USAID supplies the building materials, government agencies supply the technical assistance, and the communities themselves do all the construction work. The result is extremely high community satisfaction and pride in the completed project, and meticulous community maintenance of the infrastructure.

Diane LaVoy: There are a couple of points I would like to highlight. One is the obvious but very important one: there's nothing more energized and sustainable than an effort that people have, themselves, determined to undertake. The other point that interests me is your work to enable mayors to listen to their own constituencies. There is also some very promising work being done in this field, with support from the Environmental Health Project, in the Middle East/North Africa.

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development

The Participation Forum (No. 15)

What Participation Means in Disasters and Conflicts

November 30, 1995

Mary Anderson, the principal presenter at the fifteenth Participation Forum, argued that participation in the provision of disaster assistance may be a risky proposition especially in conflict situations but it is always possible. The well-known author and consultant on development strategies in emergency situations provided snapshots of what participation looks like in emergency assistance. When authentic participation seems impossible, she stated, it is usually because all possible options have not been considered.

Anderson's ideas gave rise to a discussion that spilled out into the hallway after the meeting. The flavor of the give and take is captured in the summary of the discussion and E-mail comments, many by persons with extensive experience in negotiating this tricky terrain.

Doug Stafford, AA/Bureau for Humanitarian Response, kicked off the spirited session by contending that the first wave of a man-made disaster is not a time for participation.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Role of Participation Varies by Type of Disaster

Doug Stafford

The role of participation in conflicts and disasters depends upon the type of disaster. In natural disasters quite a lot can be done in terms of participation and training. USAID has been extraordinarily successful in this area. For example, in Bangladesh USAID developed an early-warning system for typhoons and built typhoon shelters that can be used on a regular basis for other purposes. These have saved thousands of lives. Information gathered from talking to Bangladeshis who have been through these storms helps USAID to improve its efforts.

Paul Bell, whom I have known since the Peace Corps in the 1960s, has devoted himself to training many countries in the handling of natural disasters. This summer, in dealing with a volcano eruption on Montserrat, within 48 hours Paul arrived on the scene and told me that everything was under control. What he meant was that he had trained this group of people before; they had been trained in volcanoes specifically. USAID went in with a volcanologist and wired the volcano to see what it was going to do next, but all of the evacuation plans had been thought out several years before. The people in charge in Montserrat knew what to do.

The situation is different in the first few days of a man-made disaster. An example is Goma in Zaire. In the space of five or six days, a million refugees from Rwanda poured into a moonscape type of setting, where water, food, sanitation, and camp organization became problems almost immediately. In such a situation the task is to coordinate the international agencies that have come to help to make sure that everything is covered. Once you're through that first wave, the way the camps are set up makes a whale of a difference in how they are going to be run. For example, it is preferable for the women to run food distribution. There's a time for participation, but not until

the emergency has stabilized.

The Lessons and Challenges of Participation in Disasters

Mary Anderson

Participation means different things to different people. As I reviewed The Participation Forum summaries before preparing this presentation, I was struck at the number of different uses to which the term participation is put. We may struggle to understand the concept of participation, but deep in our hearts and souls, we know it's a good idea and are committed to it. We know that people have a right to participate in decisions that make a difference in their lives. We also realize from a practical viewpoint that if people participate in projects and programs, they take ownership of them and accept responsibility for producing results. Yet in any given situation, it may be a struggle to understand the role that participation can play.

At the heart of the issue of participation is the outsider-insider relationship donor-recipient, programmer-beneficiary. When people with resources and that includes both physical things and managerial competence and so on join with people who need resources the poor, the disadvantaged, the unempowered to try to change the status and the prospects of the latter group, participation is the key to whether the effort succeeds or doesn't succeed at all. This is nowhere more obvious than in disasters, both natural and human.

Lesson One: Participation Is Always Possible

The first lesson I've learned about the role of participation in the difficult settings of disasters and conflicts is that it is possible always, everywhere, and under every circumstance, to provide emergency assistance in ways that rely on and promote the participation of the people receiving the aid. That's a flat-footed lesson. You may wonder how I can claim this with such determination and insistence. I think I can claim it because of experiences I've been through. About 10 years ago, some of us working in disaster assistance asked ourselves how we could provide emergency assistance in disaster situations in a way that would promote rather than undermine long-term development and that would leave people better off instead of more dependent. We found, through a study of 45 cases in different places in the world, that the prevalent disaster response focuses on the needs that people have in a disaster and emphasizes urgency, time, and efficiency to meet those needs and to save lives. The primary motivation is to be accountable to the people providing the resources. That's the dominant paradigm of disaster response.

Nonetheless, we also found that some agencies and individuals were able to do more, without sacrificing the sense of urgency and compassion for saving lives. From very early on in a situation, almost from day one, these agencies and individuals recognized the existing capacities of the people who were suffering from the dislocation or the problems of the disaster, the so-called victims, and relied on and supported those capacities as they developed the emergency-response system. Therefore, the people who received the aid participated in the decisions about their own relief assistance. This is not a theory. We observed it in practice in place after place.

Five Snapshots of What Participation in Disasters Looks Like

What does participation in disaster assistance look like? It does not look like a series of long meetings in which everyone explains and identifies their needs and in which they together, as a group, identify strategies for meeting those needs those meetings that we all know about. Neither does it look like lengthy, involved, ethnographic studies: information-gathering enterprises in which donors try to get information about the environment in order to be sensitive to local culture and traditions and so on.

To describe what it does look like, I will give five examples and then step back and explain what I think they have in common.

Example One In the Philippines, after the Mt. Mayon volcano eruption, a small group of field staff

people from an NGO moved into the shelters with the dislocated people and started holding public events each evening. Some of the events were simply fun; others were meetings where the people organized themselves and made collective plans for their return home that would enable them better to withstand future disasters as a community.

Example Two An international consultant was asked by a U.S. NGO to travel to Central America to assess housing needs after an earthquake. When he arrived, local people gathered around him to inquire what kind of housing the NGO was going to provide. Instead of making promises, he asked them to take him on a walking tour of the town and, as they walked together, he asked them why this building was damaged, why another fell, why another remained standing, etc. The people answered from their experience because this one was built weakly, that one was not reinforced, this was built with solid materials, etc. At the end of this tour, the consultant told the people that they already had the knowledge of how to build well in their setting and, rather than supplying new houses, designed by some outside expert, he recommended that his NGO simply provide support to these people to rebuild their own houses.

Example Three A feeding program in an Ethiopia drought provided food to people near their homes rather than in a feeding center, in order to ensure that they carried on with normal life and were ready to replant as soon as rains came. A feeding program in Somalia during the war hired a commercial enterprise to transport food through warring lines since this commercial firm was well-connected and able to ensure delivery without theft.

Example Four In southern Tajikistan, the international staff of an NGO that was involved in reconstruction of damaged housing relied on self-appointed village committees of older women who took it upon themselves to mediate housing disputes that came up when Garmi refugees returned to their homes to find they had been occupied, while they were absent, by Kulyabi people.

Example Five. In a recent program arranged by [UNHCR](#), Rwandan refugee women from one refugee camp were taken to a new camp to meet with the women there. Those from the first camp were able to share the experience they had in establishing a system for welcoming newcomers and for monitoring the impacts of aid (who was getting it and who was not) in their camp so that the women, in the new area, could set up a similar system.

Common Themes

These five examples show what participation looks like in a crisis situation. What common themes could be drawn from these examples that would help us get a handle on the issue of participation in disasters?

First, the promotion of participation depends on an attitude more than a set of events and facts. Participation grows out of a deep respect for the people who are already in the setting and a recognition that local people have capacities and are trying to cope. In fact, all who work in disasters know that the immediate response in a disaster is handled by local people. When outside relief arrives, a lot of good stuff is already happening in every disaster situation.

The second theme is that participation fits into what is happening. Disaster response workers with a participation bent look at who's in the situation and what's happening with them. They do not come in with preconceptions about what is needed or with ideas for setting up new systems. They ask, What's already going on here? Where are things happening now?

The third common theme is future orientation. In each example, the approach linked what existed before the crisis and what would remain after the crisis. The interventions in the examples were not time-bound. In southern Tajikistan, disaster workers may have been there briefly reconstructing housing, but they understood that the residents were going to live there a long time, and tension between the Garmi and the Kulyabi was going to last a long time. That is why they chose to work with the village committees.

The fourth common theme is an increase in people's awareness of their own efficacy. Participating in local disaster response efforts gave local people a sense that they were doing something that was worth doing. The outside agency legitimized what they were doing, gave it some support, came in behind it. That, of course, made the people feel able to do more. When

people find they can succeed at one thing, they know they can succeed at other things.

Lesson Two: Participation Is Practical and Principled

The second lesson is that it is inexcusable not to include participation in disaster assistance from both a practical and a principled perspective. Practically speaking, if participation is possible, why not do it? We know that a better, longer-term outcome ensures ownership and saves resources up front.

From the perspective of principle, if disaster assistance personnel know that omitting participation leaves people worse off than they were before aid was given them, then it is their moral obligation to be mindful of and sensitive about the role of participation.

Participation in Conflict Settings: Pitfalls and Challenges.

When one enters into a conflict situation in particular, civilian-based civil wars a number of things change in the participation formula and present a challenge to all of us. I have spent the last year and a half trying to figure out how we can provide better international assistance in conflict. Is it possible to help local people take ownership of the processes even in a conflict situation?

The first stage of that work led me to write a paper called *The Negative Impacts of International Assistance in Conflict Situations*. The discouraging finding of the paper is that international assistance in conflict situations, even when it is effective on its mandated terms, at the same time often exacerbates and reinforces the conflict. The negative effect is brought about in two ways.

The first is through resource transfers. Stories about resources being taxed or stolen by warring parties or used to free up local resources to support warring parties are well known. In other words, the outside resources help pay for the war and reinforce inter-group competition to gain power and control over others. Resources represent power in conflict situations. When resources are introduced into a resource-scarce environment where people are in conflict with each other, those resources become a part of the conflict.

The second way is through the implicit messages carried by conditions under which aid must be provided in conflict situations. I call these the implicit ethical messages of aid. For example, if we hire armed guards to deliver humanitarian assistance or negotiate with warring parties for access to the people who are in need, in essence we are saying that it is legitimate for arms to decide who gets access to aid. While our explicit message is that everybody has the right to assistance, the implicit message is more troublesome.

In the effort that I'm engaged in right now we're trying to find out if there is a way to provide aid in conflict situations without exacerbating the conflict. Are there examples where people have done something else? What can we learn?

Looking Harder for Options. We are finding that the choices about how to deliver assistance are loaded in conflict situations. They are loaded politically and in terms of balance of power.

We're trying to develop a diagnostic tool that people can use in the field, which will help them find out who gains and who loses given certain choices. If we decide to do one thing to deliver aid in a specific conflict situation, who is going to gain and who is going to lose? Knowing this will help them make better choices. We find there are always options. One should think through options a, b, c, ... until an option is found that yields the best outcome.

It is difficult to admit, but in a conflict situation where warring parties are in control, it may be better not to have participation, because those who participate are legitimized or empowered in the process. In Goma, UNHCR people said to me, "But, Mary, we did what you always said." We worked with local leaders. But the local leaders in Goma were the Hutu who had just committed the genocide. I had not said to UNHCR people that they should work with any local leader; the analysis that we use suggests ways of thinking through who any leaders are and who they represent. In conflict settings, one should be careful about reinforcing leadership that is engaged in war. The point is that, in such a setting, simple participation might make things worse.

In spite of the inherent dangers, there are opportunities for participation even in conflict situations. These exist because in all societies there are local capacities for peace, people who are trying to disengage from the conflict, who think that the conflict makes no sense, is not solving any problems, and is being perpetuated by opportunistic leaders or bandits. Those people often get silenced in conflict situations. But they are there.

International assistance can be provided in conflict situations in a way that provides space and opportunity for the peaceful people, that enables them to participate in creating new space for disengaging from the conflict and setting up alternative systems for solving the problems that the conflict is putatively there to solve.

These opportunities are probably not to be found among existing leadership in conflict situations because the leaders represent the warring factions. To see the opportunities, one must take a giant step back in the conflict situation and see who is going to gain, who is going to lose, and where the options are for participation.

Discussion Session

The Difficulty of Understanding Conflict Situations

Nan Borton: Ninety-five percent of OFDA (Office of Disaster Assistance) resources go into conflict situations in which the persons with whom we are working are themselves hostages of the sides in the conflict. The more advice we can get about how to provide assistance in a way that does not endanger people the better.

There seems to be an assumption that those who provide the assistance understand the conflict situation, but I believe that in most conflict situations the relatively helpless and frequently uninformed include those who are providing assistance and not just the PVOs, but the donors as well. The conflict situations we face are so complex and such a long time in the making that disaster assistance personnel may not appreciate the effects of their actions.

In thinking about our work, we should keep in mind that anarchy and peace (or development and disaster) are on a continuum. We need to recognize that disaster assistance is an event in a much larger process.

Participation in Needs Assessment

Mike Mahdesian: I first got into disaster assistance during the Armenian earthquake in 1988. I noticed that a lot of people with good will tried to push assistance on people without knowing what was going on or what was needed. For example, many churches sent over donated shoes or clothes or cans of Campbell's soup that weren't needed and that clogged up the arteries of the relief networks and prevented essential materials from reaching Armenia.

When I got into USAID, I was happy to see that OFDA had a long practice of doing assessment training. OFDA was constantly battling people in other departments that had ideas about what should be provided in a given disaster situation but that had not done their needs-assessment homework. The idea of participation in the sense of talking to people to find out what the needs are and what is culturally sensitive or likely to cause dependency is ingrained in practice.

Alternatives to Working with Illegitimate Political Leadership

Rick Barton: How can we avoid working with illegitimate political leadership? In OTI (Office of Transition Initiatives), we'll work with any group that we think has some of the power of the people behind it. But it is a little bit like the Force : such groups are hard to identify at times. How do you reach the captive majority?

Mary Anderson: My reaction is that we need to work harder to identify options. It is important to think of every possible way to work in the situation that might do less to legitimize the illegitimate government. For example, if you are making decisions about how to deliver food, you might try to think of the possible ways to deliver food. Doug Stafford mentioned an interesting way: delivering it through the systems in the society that food for consumption usually gets delivered through; that is, through women. In African society, women are responsible for household food, by and large, and men are responsible for cash crops. If you distribute food through women, at least the implicit message is that this food is for household consumption. If you deliver it through men, the implicit message is that the food is related to markets and power and income. Food can be delivered through commercial firms that may or may not be party to the illegitimate government.

The point is that we are far too quick to say that we don't have any options. If there is really no choice but an illegitimate group, then maybe the choice is to say we shouldn't work in that situation. If what we're doing is so bad, maybe we shouldn't do it.

Diane La Voy: What options have any of you considered that may move you away from a losing situation?

Rick Barton: In Liberia, the government has been illegitimate for so long that now the only way to get peace is to have the warlords be part of the government in waiting. We are trying to finesse that problem and see if there is some way to move into a community-based design that may get some of those resources that are now held captive in greater Monrovia. It's an interesting design, but we run up against the apolitical traditions of many disaster relief people: we are saving lives; we don't do politics. It's hard to push politics out, even though there is a great desire to do it on the part of the various NGOs on the ground. The public is perhaps ready to express itself, but still people are insecure. If they speak out now, they will probably die. So our offering them liberation may be a bit premature.

The Impossibility of Pure Humanitarian Assistance

Linda Howey: I see a paradox or a conundrum in the notions that we should be providing disaster assistance apart from the political context and that participation therefore may not work in all instances. I cannot think of an instance where there isn't some sort of participation, where we are not sending some sort of ethical message. Can we actually deliver pure humanitarian assistance? Because there is no such thing as pure humanitarian assistance, we have to have options. We really have to think about what we are doing in a different way. We are embodying participation to some degree or another, I would reckon, in every situation in which we're operating.

Nan Borton: I would disagree with Linda. There are areas I'm thinking particularly of Rwandan refugees where the programs are going forward in a totally nonparticipatory fashion or in a pseudo or semi or sort of superficially participatory fashion because the populations are not free. The populations are under military control in the refugee camps themselves.

Diane La Voy: I will ask Mary to have the last word briefly, and this is very much too bad, but we do have to be out of the room early today. And all additional comments, we will just troop down to our office, and you can talk further with Mary if you'd like to there. *Mary Anderson:* I am thinking of participation more as a way that we're recognizing capacities and relying on those capacities to make things happen. Sometimes it may be preferable for the external agency to keep decision-making within its own control. That may help local people who want to disengage from the power struggle to find the space they need to develop new options and alternatives.

First: Do No Harm

Mary Anderson: We cannot empower people. Outsiders never empower people, but they can certainly disempower them. Likewise, outsiders cannot liberate people or fix their governments or design their master plans, but they can certainly make things worse. In disaster assistance, we are stuck in a place where we can never get it all right. We can certainly get it all wrong. We are trying to minimize the damage that we do and support local people so that they can do the good stuff. In some sense it's not ours to do.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

The e-mail bag for Participation Forum 15 was full even before the session was held. The announcement of the seminar was enough to start many thinking and commenting about participation in disaster situations.

Pre-Forum Comments

Importance of Local NGOs and Community Groups

John P. Grant: The barriers to local participation are many in both disaster and conflict situations. In both, your typical local and community organizational structures may well have broken down as a result of the situation, so new bases for participation have to be established. In conflict situations there is the added factor of fear and suspicion, and sometimes hostility, of some groups. One of the challenges for the USAID worker is to maintain the appearance of neutrality, and not get identified with one side or another. In any conflict or post-conflict situation the aid worker faces the challenge of winning the confidence and trust of the local population. I certainly faced this in a small way in Haiti right after Aristide was reinstated people on both sides wanted to be reassured about me and my motives before talking frankly about their situation.

Clearly one of the solutions to the participation problem for the outsider coming in (who is inherently an unknown and source of suspicion), is to try to identify those key people in the local community who are leaders and/or have the confidence of important segments of the local population, and can mobilize local participation working with the outside aid worker.

Brian Williams: Local NGOs need to be brought into the loop sooner as emergencies evolve. The justification for international NGOs doesn't last much beyond a month or two, but they tend to last forever. Everyone knows that although all NGOs (or at least most) have a genuine humanitarian motivation, they also use emergencies to some extent to achieve secondary objectives.

Ruth Buckley: Information and dialogue are critical from day one of our involvement because individuals are never only victims. Rather all people have their own perceptions and priorities to offer and everyone makes specific choices based on their own assessment of the situation.

In addition to ignoring the local context in our haste to save lives, we too often attempt to establish committees to do our work (monitor commodities we deliver in a way that is acceptable to us) and then claim we have had local participation. We also get annoyed or cut off funding because our rules, priorities or standards are not adhered to. We rarely take the time to establish ground rules and benchmarks that are fully understood, let alone ones which have been developed in a participatory manner.

We are also now encouraging U.S.-based NGOs to develop partnerships with local NGOs. However, rather than true partnerships, local NGOs are again being asked to conform to our standards and are being assisted according to western models, to use western systems, and define problems and solutions in western terms. We end up with NGOs which can deliver emergency assistance according to our rules and regulations cheaper than U.S.-based NGOs but in a manner which is not necessarily appropriate or representative and may be little understood by the local population. Rather than promoting this type of partnership shouldn't we be looking at empowering local populations to participate with us on their own terms and in areas they deem important?

Arthur Silver: The single most successful program I have seen in over three decades (!) in AID is the Guatemala earthquake reconstruction program. The key to its success was resisting the political power of US PVOs wanting to do their usual thing, and make them work with empowered local ag cooperatives doing THEIR own thing.

Barry Burnett: NIS: February, 1992: Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the U.S. wanted to dramatize its support for the former republics as they undertook difficult economic and political reforms. Operation Provide Hope was launched and was highly successful in providing food and medical supplies.

I was assigned to the Republic of Turkmenistan. The involvement of NGOs was substantial and made a difference in terms of reaching the neediest groups and ensuring accountability of the commodities (food and medicine) in question. These groups insisted that the supplies be distributed to townships at some distance from the capital of Ashkhabad. Indeed, we were flown to these outlying regions at the host government's expense, to ascertain need and ensure delivery. Local units of the NGOs made the necessary arrangements so that we could inspect facilities housing older people, orphans, and sick people...some of the most vulnerable groups in the country. When the supplies were delivered, these same local organizations assured the delivery and accountability of the food and medicine to the target groups. Although we had no formal diplomatic relations with Turkmenistan at that time, the cooperation could not have been better by both the host government and the NGOs.

Opportunities for Improving Life Skills in Refugee Camps

Helen Soos: Many human resources are congregated at refugee camps. It is a perfect opportunity for involving people in obtaining life skills (while they have few competing demands for their time), such as literacy, family health, child survival, reproductive health; gardening, nutrition, natural resources management, better use of fuel wood, planting/protecting trees, etc. There could be food-for-work motivations. There could be women's empowerment, discussions about traditions which are coming apart, community development. The areas where refugee camps are set up could benefit from these activities, and then people could implement some of these things when they get back to their communities. There are many opportunities, some of which could reduce the cost of maintaining the camps. We cannot provide subsidized support to all the refugee situations that keep erupting. And for countries which cannot feed their people but which have income, such as Angola with oil and mineral revenue, some of our relief services should be cost-reimbursable. They have less incentive to resolve conflicts when the USG takes care of their people.

Participation in Disaster Preparedness

Steven Sharp: Participation in disaster planning, mitigation and preparedness is an issue that is of particular interest to me. Engendering participation to prepare for an event which may never occur is particularly difficult. Urban Programs and OFDA, through a memorandum of understanding, have been working together on shelter and urban aspects of disasters. One project in Caribbean involves (among other activities) the organization of an NGO/private sector network in the Dominican Republic to have a response mechanism in place in the event of a disaster.

Learning about the Local Culture

Arthur Silver: I wonder if there is time, in disaster/conflict situations (or at least in the protracted ones) to contract or better, a quick work order under an IQC for a summary anthropological literature search, to find whatever might be relevant and useful in the affected area, e.g., traditional dispute resolution practices, food preferences, volatile ethnic mixes, etc. Might save a lot of money in the medium term.

Looking Back: Comment on Forum 14 on Listening Harder through Rapid Appraisals

Barry Burnett: Cost of Rapid Appraisals: I would respectfully disagree with the participant who argued that \$25,000 was a high cost, particularly if OE-funded. We have typically spent multiples of \$25,000 for project and program design work, often carried out by consultants paid from program resources (PD&S). Leaving aside the funding source question, I think this level of funding is quite reasonable to gain an appreciation of the customer's needs and perspectives. While the OE account is indeed tight, we should not sacrifice objective, customer-based design work over a modest investment of this magnitude. We should also keep in mind that we will probably be allowed to use up to \$25 million in program funds for OE purposes. Partnerships with Donors: I do not believe the guidelines on strategic objective teams have been drawn so tightly that we can't accommodate a range of options for interfacing and engaging partners in a common intervention. In any event, we should gain more experience and inputs from other operating units before considering revisions to the current operations system guidelines.

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

The Participation Forum* (No. 16)

Field-Washington Teamwork in Planning and Reporting Results

February 15, 1996

In the 16th Participation Forum a panel of USAID/ Washington personnel discussed how the core values empowerment and participation are faring as the Agency embarks on its first "R4" season. Panelists and participants voiced serious criticisms but also shared ideas for ways to do a better job of working as a team. Discussion centered on several questions: How can USAID/Washington break the habit of being judgmental instead of empowering? What are the criteria for determining how and when USAID/Washington should be directive to the field? How can Washington learn to speak with one voice?

How we work together, Washington and the field, and the topic of "participation" are linked. Our ability to maintain effective, consistent, honorable partnerships with people in the host country depends on how well our internal processes work. When people who are on the front lines must often reverse themselves or do not know whether they can speak for the Agency, those collaborative relationships with host-country people become extremely difficult. Members of the panel were Terry Brown, DAA for Asia and the Near East (ANE); Elizabeth Warfield, formerly of the Guatemalan mission and now in ANE; Jon Breslar of the Africa Bureau; Joyce Holfeld, of the Population, Health and Nutrition Center of the Global Bureau; Nils Daulaire, DAA, Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination; and Michelle Adams-Matson, also of ANE.

A brief summary of this Forum, drafted at the Administrator's request, was sent as an executive message to all staff in March 1996.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

The Temptation to Invent New Review Systems

Terry Brown

Two questions concerning field-Washington teamwork interest me. First, as we in USAID/Washington let go of the old lines of control of review, authority, intrusion with our missions, can we possibly resist the temptation to create new ones? Second, can we, as both responsible and responsive partners with our missions, speak with one voice to those missions?

Letting Go

Under reengineering, the formal relationship between Washington and the field is relatively simple and focused. The relationship starts with the joint development of a country strategy, which specifies all the resources that USAID is providing that country. That strategy document is reviewed and accepted by both the field and all Washington bureaus and offices with an interest in that country. Once accepted, this document sets the framework for an annual "R4" document: Reporting on Results and Requesting Resources. It also indicates any changes in the strategic-objective framework or indicators.

The R4 document may be thought of as a contract with the mission and the basis upon which the mission proceeds with its implementation of its strategy for the next fiscal year. There are no PIDs (Project Implementation Design), no Project Papers, no new activity descriptions, no individual or ad hoc delegations of authority, no semi-annual project reviews. In other words, the system has been simplified and streamlined.

Two Stories

I have two stories to tell about how this is working in practice. Last year we reviewed the strategy and R4 of one of our missions, found it acceptable and reasonable, and let the mission develop a new seven-year program. In doing so, the mission followed a very intensive participatory outreach process and developed a request for competitive grants (RFA). Some virtual team members in Washington who were involved felt uncomfortable about parts of the RFA and brought it to the attention of the ANE Bureau. No regional bureau member was on the virtual team for this particular activity.

In looking at the RFA, which is not normally a Washington review document, the bureau concluded that the mission appeared to be varying significantly from the approved strategy and R4 documents in that the RFA, which laid out the implementing grants for the next seven years, did not even include the strategic-objective framework. After some back-and-forth, we stopped the RFA from going onto the street and worked with the mission on defining and incorporating the S.O. framework. Eventually, after the snow and the furlough, the RFA was released.

The second story involves a mission's congressional presentation. Again, this is not normally a review-and-approval document. However, the way it was presented, it was not conveying the program in a way in which we felt comfortable for the Hill.

Several days ago I called the mission director and asked for a modification of the CP. If we presented it as the mission drafted it, it would inevitably raise questions on the Hill because this country's CP is one of the few that anyone on the Hill reads or cares about. Not only was there insufficient results information, but also the framework deviated from last year's CP.

Are these stories examples of USAID/Washington creating new levers and points of review that are ad hoc and seemingly disjointed from the new system? Or are we concerned legitimately about responsiveness to Congress, budgetary issues, earmarks, the things Washington deals with that affect mission programs? Can we carry out our responsibilities without creating intrusive systems that ultimately retract the delegation of authority and disempower missions?

Teamwork and Empowerment

Elizabeth Warfield

Reengineering is not an end in itself; it's a means to an end. As members of the USAID team we are all trying to achieve dramatic improvements in development results for our customers. Core values in this process are teamwork and empowerment.

Barriers to Teamwork

What really struck me coming back to Washington from Guatemala was the need to really break down the barriers that sometimes exist among bureaus, between Washington and the field, and within missions. There is frequently a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities, more within the Washington context, and redundancies among the different parts of the organization. This leads to a degree of tension. In the spirit of reengineering and streamlining our processes, we in Washington have to look at breaking down barriers across the organization. It is important to remember that we're not dealing with a *mission* strategy, we're dealing with a *country* strategy, which involves people both in the mission and in USAID/Washington.

The concept of joint planning and joint programming might need a little further definition. Joint planning and programming rely on the concept of "virtual" team members from Washington. It's not clear who is a virtual team member or what the responsibility of a virtual team member is. It could be a technical relationship, or it may be perceived as a judgmental relationship.

Avoiding Micromanagement

In ANE we carried out a customer survey and got informal feedback on how the action plan or R4 strategy process worked last year. One of the main feedbacks was that USAID/ Washington does not speak with one voice. It's very difficult for missions to reconcile all the different opinions that come from Washington. There was also strong feedback about the lack of timeliness of response.

In Guatemala, when we looked at the delegation of authority in empowering mission staff, clearances which at one point had taken two to three months were reduced to two to three weeks, sometimes even to two to three days. These reductions in clearance time can be very important if you're trying to get a contract or a grant through the system to have an impact on your development partners and your customers.

In ANE we are going around to all the offices and bureaus in Washington to clarify what our roles and responsibilities are in this R4 process. We are trying to determine what questions we can ask and questions we should not ask the missions so that we avoid micromanagement. We are asking office representatives to be empowered to speak for their offices when they come to R4 meetings, so that when it comes time to clear the R4 cable, it takes two weeks and not two months to get out a feedback cable.

Setting Parameters

Jon Breslar

I think a bit of the organizational culture in the Africa Bureau was that we didn't involve people from M, PPC, BHR, or the Global Bureau before a strategy was written. We expected that when the strategy came in, we'd duke it out. Now we are trying to do things differently. We are trying to set parameters early on in the strategic planning process and arrive at a common understanding early on in the process among all of us in USAID/ Washington. At the same time we also want to get a view from the field as to where they see themselves going. In melding these two perceptions we can actually come up with something in the name of good guidance early on in strategic planning.

To make a long story short, we've done this five times: with Namibia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, and Somalia. It's a little too soon to say how it has worked.

We found out that in the case of Ghana, and probably Namibia, when we have good development partners, a good development context, and a program that is fairly well established, things go pretty well. We can establish parameters pretty well, and there's a lot of consensus at the beginning.

In Kenya, which comes up for review in another month or so, the process was much more contentious. People were almost at bipolar opposites in talking about Kenya. The main question was what to do when the development situation is good and the results are positive, but where the political and human rights context is dicey.

We found early on that having a dialogue among ourselves and with the field for parameter-setting has been useful even if we have not arrived at a consensus. It lets us see where we disagree early on in the process, and it lets us send out some kind of guidance to the missions that helps them know what will or may not be accepted even before they start.

Joint Programming in the True Sense

Joyce Holfeld

In the PHN Center (Population, Health and Nutrition) we really want to work on the one-voice approach to programming and working together toward shared objectives. A couple of case examples show how our attempts are working. We are trying to develop relationships with the various bureaus so that we do have one voice.

Each bureau, each mission, each program brings a different perspective in the programming process. The PHN Center may have a technical view, PPC has the policy view; the regional bureau has the regional strategic view, and the mission has perspective on whether a strategy will work in the country and whether it's appropriate for the country.

In the PHN Center, we are developing programming team interfaces. To make programming joint in the true sense, we formed joint programming teams that include members from the mission, from the REDSOs, from the regional bureaus, from the Center, and in some cases, from PPC. Our liaison person is usually the head of the PHN strategic-objective team. In many cases we also have a host-country reference group made up of ministry of health personnel or customers.

For example, in Morocco last year, at the strategic plan time, we discussed phasing out our sector by the year 1995. We formed a team, mission, bureau, and global, to address the phase-out problem, and came up with a strategy that everybody agrees with. It will be presented and reviewed in the R4 forum and hopefully we can move toward implementation.

In this case there was no second-guessing. All sides have had a chance to articulate any problems they see. There won't be any surprises. I think we will be able to implement this strategy in a timely and efficient manner, and we're all in agreement on the road we're taking.

The Dynamics and Dilemmas of the Field-Washington Relationship

Nils Daulaire

No field is less amenable to standardization and central control than development. Considering the difference in what matters and what works from one country to another and the extraordinary cultural and economic variability in the places that this agency works, it's difficult to conceive of a single centralized approach that will be effective. That's a dilemma that we face on a daily basis in dealing with policy issues here at USAID.

View from the Field

All through the 1980s, I was working in Nepal as a child-survival advisor. At that time, USAID's definition of child survival was oral rehydration therapy for diarrheal disease and immunization, period, end of discussion. Early on in my stay in Nepal, it was quite evident that there were other factors that ought to be part of that equation. The major killer of children in Nepal was pneumonia, a disease that was nowhere on the twin-engine horizon. For years while I was in Nepal, we tried to get USAID/Washington approval to work broadly in the issue of childhood pneumonia but ran against tremendous resistance. We did continue to work in the area, but quietly and without making a big fuss with Washington, because they would have shut us down.

In the late 1980s, I was part of a team designing a new child-survival project in Papua New Guinea. I knew that Papua New Guinea had probably the highest rates of childhood pneumonia of any place in the world and thought it would be a fascinating place to do some design work. I was taken aback when, at the end of a discussion with the USAID/ Washington person, I was told, "And this will be a great opportunity for you to learn more about our most recent thinking about child survival." To me it was classic. Here was somebody from Washington trying to regulate a

situation that should have been driven by the realities of the field. As it turned out, we worked very nicely together. The project that wound up being designed in Papua New Guinea included childhood pneumonia as well as the twin engines. And in late 1991 or early 1992, USAID/Washington itself accepted that the largest killer of children in the world probably should be part of our strategy for child survival.

Dilemmas

In the area of population and health, where I have focused, there are four strategic objectives: reducing unintended pregnancies, reducing child deaths, reducing maternal deaths, and reducing the transmission of HIV-AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. These are certainly not the entire spectrum of health needs around the world, but they are, based on a vision of how we can best accomplish a coherent goal with very limited resources.

When we start talking about approaches, we start having trouble. The more closely we try to limit and define what approaches we should take, the more we revert to the situation I faced in Nepal 10 years ago. If our approach to reducing child deaths is only oral rehydration therapy and immunization, what do we do about something which is the biggest killer of children? My view is that USAID/ Washington should focus on the strategic objectives and leave maximum flexibility to the field in terms of developing, testing, and applying the approaches.

But the final dilemma is that in Washington, we are not free agents. We have friends about three miles to our north who are very interested in what we do. This year's legislation contains a Child Survival and Diseases Fund. Earlier this week I was up on the Hill to discuss with congressional staff the activities to be authorized by this fund. Congress wants every activity described in advance to make sure that we do not define everything as child survival and diseases.

Similarly, USAID faces restrictions in the area of population. We can only argue up to a certain point with powerful forces on the Hill about what it is we mean in population or family planning, and after that, it will be counter-productive. People in the field need to understand that we work under those restrictions.

Reengineering's Triple Challenge

Michelle Adams-Matson

USAID's core values have been around for quite some time, and they do affect our effectiveness and efficiency as an agency. Participation, customer focus, and teamwork are not just nice concepts to promote. Ultimately we promote them because we are trying to concentrate on achieving results. What we do needs to be placed in that context. In looking at some of the dilemmas between the field and Washington discussed here today, often it is difficult to define what falls into the category of clearly wrong, versus experimentation, versus a valid difference of opinion. Such situations highlight the fact that missions in USAID/Washington need to work together to build mutual trust as a team rather than as adversaries.

The Spirit of Reengineering

The first of the three challenges that are key in moving forward with reengineering is that staff have to understand the broader principles behind reengineering. Many have interpreted reengineering to mean new terminology, training, computer systems, and that kind of thing, and we have seen some fatigue out there in that regard.

But reengineering is much broader than new computers. It provides individuals with the opportunity to reexamine processes and procedures and to identify where greater efficiencies can be obtained. For example, one of the geographic offices in ANE submitted a set of suggestions to senior management on how to save operating funds. That is as much a part of reengineering as the new directives.

Checks and Balances

The second challenge is to understand the reengineered system as a whole system with checks and balances. For example, the value of empowerment is obviously mirrored by accountability. But empowerment is also mirrored by teamwork. The idea behind the strategic planning directives was that once agreement on the strategic objectives was achieved, Washington could delegate to the field the responsibility for implementation.

But the other fundamental premise of the system is joint planning. There should be collaboration between Washington and the field as the strategic planning process goes forward so that Washington understands the mission program and so that, when the mission comes in with the R4, the technical folks back here understand the progress the mission is making toward its objectives and can make reasonable budget decisions. Obviously, the idea behind teamwork is that you pull together expertise early in the process of planning for greater efficiency. We're trying to change the nature of our work processes and to move away from a sequential process where individuals pass a piece of work from one person to the next until one person in the chain raises a major issue and then we start at zero again.

The Need for Management Training

The third challenge is that managers have to understand, support, and implement new management principles at all levels. Some operating units have attempted to manage by consensus. Others have created teams but have not truly empowered those teams. When should managers step in to make decisions or resolve conflict, or when should they step back and allow a team to function as a team?

We need to establish a common base of understanding of what our management principles are and how we use them from a practical standpoint. We all understand that teamwork is one of our values. But teamwork is also not equal to holding a meeting. It requires greater discipline: defining the team's common objective and individual roles, responsibilities, and contributions. In one case the ANE Bureau tried to get virtual team members to participate in a mission strategic planning process. People wanted to be virtual team members, but sometimes they didn't fully understand that being a virtual team member required a commitment of time and resources.

Joint planning and being a virtual team member may not be the same thing. Joint planning is the idea of Washington speaking with one voice, bringing people from policy and technical people around the table and coming to consensus about the message that should be sent to the field. Virtual team membership means that an individual in Washington is providing individual expertise to a team in the field. It is critical to get clear definitions of these concepts.

Discussion Session

USAID's Ability to Control Its Environment

Harriet Dessler: We need to be honest about our ability to control our environment. We're going through a process of change, and despite the Africa Bureau's valiant effort to set parameters, when a mission sends in its R4, the parameters may have changed. (You followed our guidance, you gave us three funding scenarios, and now we've decided we don't love you anymore.) We need to have a helpful process for deciding what to do then. How do we apply our values of decency and helpfulness in resolving situations that we don't have control over?

We should also explore other basic things that we can do to be helpful. For example, on a limited scale there are opportunities for cross-bureau working groups to identify and resolve issues.

Marcy Bernbaum: There are always situations outside of our control: the beautiful strategy comes

up and suddenly somebody from the Hill or from another agency or somebody who hasn't been in the process here jumps in who has more clout. I would be interested in getting your reactions as to how these sorts of situations can be anticipated.

Nils Daulaire: Being able to anticipate the unforeseen is one of the strengths of a team. If the team is reasonably constituted, then it will consist of people who know the country situation well enough to know that the ambassador is likely to jump in, to take an example. It includes people who are dealing with the political process well enough to know that direct congressional input may be expected and people from USAID/Washington who are more familiar with the dynamics of decision-making than the people who are on the front lines doing the design. When teams are put together, we have to include people who know what the outside influences might be. We can't anticipate everything, but we can anticipate a lot.

Checks and Balances

Sarah Wines: What positive aspects of the check-and-balance system that we've had for years are being incorporated within this current scenario of reengineering?

Terry Brown: The check-and-balance question has always been a difficult one because we aren't dealing with a bottom-up planning system, really. We're dealing with a bottom-up and a top-down system. Missions don't have a blank page on which to develop their strategies and deal with resource allocation. We are trying to find the middle ground where missions are informed of the resource and directive environment in which they must operate, but are free tactically to decide, if they are going to get X amount of money for biodiversity, how that can best be used in a country context.

However, there is an expectation that we really do have a bottom-up system. And if you don't understand the complexity of this two-dimensional process, then it looks more like oversight and control.

Evaluation

Sarah Wines: How does the evaluation system play in reengineering? Does our evaluation system provide an incentive or a disincentive to behave one way or another?

Terry Brown: The new evaluation system works if the people who are using it apply it, but if they deal with it as a mere form, then it's about as bad as the old system. The evaluation structure is open to looking at performance in results terms and in team-performance terms if the person is operating in an environment in which that is possible.

Timeliness

Joyce Holfeld: Timeliness is a key issue. If people know what the parameters are up front, they can deal with them. But feedback is harder to deal with at the end of the planning process. We seem to be so busy here in Washington that sometimes we don't focus on an issue until it is too late.

Pirie Gall: I know from my own experience in my last overseas post that bringing folks in from Washington early on in a strategy exercise made the process go smooth as silk. Half the review group was involved in writing the strategy. Parameter-setting clears out the underbrush and says, "Okay, here's the range of things we have to talk about." Then we can argue within that about how fast and how far and how much.

Lack of Clarity about Procedures/Management Structures

Harriet Dessler: We in Washington need to have a little humility right now. We are asking missions and operating units to implement procedures that we are inventing or to follow guidance that we are still clearing and haven't even sent out.

Pirie Gall: We may be beating ourselves up a little bit for not being perfect in the first year of

reengineering, when we are still writing the book. No wonder that we aren't all following the scripture. For example, suppose you are trying to work with a colleague on a CP for two years out, and your strategy review isn't for three months. So what do you do? You have to write something in the CP that sounds like the strategy that hasn't been approved yet. Those are the disconnects that are happening with us right now.

Elizabeth Warfield: On the question of being judgmental, what we're dealing with now is ambiguity because all the rules haven't been written. We need clarity in the management contract on where Washington has a say and where we can only suggest.

Teamwork Issues

Charles Stevenson: I heard one person say that a drawback to teams is that it takes an awful lot of time to get everybody together and interact.

Cate Johnson: Concerning teamwork and other managerial devices, the latest scientific research shows that teamwork does take more time, but the end result is more effective and efficient in the long run.

Harriet Dessler: We have to be selective in what we ask teams to do. The team concept implies a shared commitment and a shared involvement and a result. However, there are some things that we don't need a team to do. We need to be clear about when we need a team, when we need a committee, and when we need a worker bee left alone to do some work.

Diane La Voy: One of the things that stands out in my appreciation of teamwork is the importance of an up-front investment, particularly in working out people's different roles. Sometimes a team may start off by assuming that they are all in it together and all equal in the sight of God. A better model is a medical team, where each member, the anesthesiologist, the surgeon and the nurse, each has a differentiated role.

Elizabeth Warfield: In Guatemala, our lesson learned from about five years of teamwork experience was that teams be limited in size to five to eight people and be product- or task-oriented. Both temporary and more permanent teams had a role.

Peggy Schultz: On the concern that was raised before that teams take more time, I think one thing groups that are becoming teams should understand is that there are predictable stages of development for a group. The first couple of stages are pretty messy, but you have to work through them.

A group of people without a clear purpose on what they're trying to accomplish is not really a team. It takes time for a group of people to arrive at a common understanding and a shared vision of what they're trying to achieve.

There are proven tools and techniques that groups can use to guide the time that they spend in meetings, which is what teams do a lot, so that they use the time productively, whether it's to generate ideas, whether it's to reach conclusions, whether it's to analyze something.

Susan Walls: The Management Planning Office is just finishing up the technical review panels on five new IQCs that will provide help in team building and other management functions.

Barriers to Collaboration

Harriet Dessler: Maybe we ought to talk about what some of the barriers are to effective collaboration. One of them is the ability for us to move between the field and Washington. Are we putting our travel money where we need it, when we need it, to intervene in a helpful fashion?

Another is barriers which we ourselves create. The way we handle drafts and tentative presentations often makes missions hesitant to share their stuff up front.

The Effects of Budgetary Cutbacks

Larry Cooley: The context of reengineering is dramatically altered by budgetary cutbacks. Particularly in the field, where people are very committed to the programs they're trying to implement, it is difficult, no matter how devoted you are to the precepts of reengineering, not to fight for your own survival when you see the prospect of a major cut or a major diminution of whole strategic objectives or parts of strategic objectives. It's unrealistic to expect that during a period of high uncertainty, there's not going to be a certain amount of effort on the part of missions to defend programs, even if that means trying to find ways to use the system to advantage.

Effective Dialogue

Pirie Gall: We would do well to follow the motto "trust but verify." If a management contract is fraying around the edges between Washington and the field, much depends on how we approach the issue with the field. There are a lot of ways to ask the question, "What the hell are you doing out there?" One is, "Could you fill me in a little bit on...?" Washington has been in the habit for a long time of saying, "What the hell are you doing out there?" "Could you fill me in a little bit on such-and-such?" says "I trust you, but I'm verifying something here. Can you help me out?" rather than, "I really don't trust you. I'm sure you're trying to get away with something, and I think I caught you in the act. Ha!"

Elizabeth Warfield: Washington can suggest and then it's up to the mission. Mission personnel should be confident enough in their work and capabilities to receive suggestions for improvement without flipping immediately into a defensive posture. This is always a challenge at the personal as well as the organizational level.

Jon Breslar: Right now some folks in USAID/Washington are almost apologetic if they have to bring up an issue or be a bit contentious in a review. In a couple of the reviews we have had, S.O. teams have worked with host-country counterparts, NGOs, the donor community, everyone who's in the sphere of influence in a strategy. Then they come to Washington with ownership of the exercise. In our Mali review, for example, mission folks said, in effect, "We talked to three million Malians. How can you send us back empty-handed or how can you make great changes?" But we are also part of the process back here in Washington. We want to be decent and to respect what the field is doing. But by the same token, we have to come to some kind of joint agreement recognizing all the involvement and all the ownership that mission teams have in what they are doing.

Cooley: In reengineering there seems to be an inverse relationship between the extent to which missions pursue active participation on the host-country side and the awkwardness of the relationship with Washington, because it's hard to build relationships in both directions at the same time. Jon's notion about parameters as being the most intelligent way to address that problem is exactly right. Mission teams will need to be as clear as possible about where the boundaries are, when they begin the internal-to-the-country consultation, and confident that, at least within limits, the discussion thereafter with Washington will be a professional dialogue and not a direct oversight relationship. It's extremely awkward for the missions to take the participation dictum seriously, to go through a consultative process, sometimes up to the point that it's almost a ratification of a strategy, and then to have to go back to host country partners and beg off and say, "Well, we're sorry, but certain things have changed in our external environment." People are realistic enough, I've found, in the host-country side not to hold that against the mission, but it's embarrassing for the mission to be in that position.

Communications from the E-mail Bag

Pre- and Post-Forum Comments

The Need for Creating *Common* Understandings

John Grayzel: "USAID culture rewards being judgmental over being participatory. How can that be changed, and how can USAID/W become a learning rather than an enjoining culture?"

"We recently experienced this challenge in working on the indicators for our democracy program. Taking seriously USAID/W call for Global and missions to work together we used the \$75,000 provided us by Global to jointly develop a Scope of Work, and to have Global send over two outstanding specialists in their fields to help us work jointly on our indicators. What we found, not surprisingly, was that working together with people in Global created a common understanding between us and working with the specialists provided by Global resulted in a refined common understanding between us and the specialists, and that we and the TDY team, working together with our partners, created common understandings among us all. The lesson was obvious: you get common understanding by working directly on problem solving. "BUT!!!! when that common understanding was presented in Washington we heard back from various channels, including visiting partner representatives in Washington, that the audience reaction seemed to be one not of a group ready to learn but a jury ready to condemn. The participation of USAID/W seemed not to have helped communication; the feedback we got indicated that the basic judgmental behavior of USAID was expanded to include the Global specialists who assisted us, under an unconscious presumption of guilty by association. "In reflecting upon this I at least have extracted the following tentative conclusions as to major constraints in USAID/W participating with missions:

"First: there is not a general established atmosphere in USAID/W of learning from missions but rather one of judging missions. ! "Second: USAID/W has not specified who is or is not a member of the mission assist team. Individuals not directly involved repeatedly pop up and exert the putative authority by challenging rather than contributing. Those who have worked closely with the missions, rather than being respected as representatives to convey understanding, sometimes actually become surrogates to be flogged in the absence of the mission. To us they are heroes but to some of their Washington colleagues they seem to be traitors! "Third: A major factor behind USAID/W judgmental attitudes is lack of acquaintance with field realities. In particular, lack of travel means few USAID/W personnel really get to see the field anymore and seeing is still believing."

"Fourth: Many USAID/W personnel, particularly critical contract personnel, do not know who we are. USAID seems to rely more and more on contracted expertise that presumes that USAID and missions lack expertise (when in reality it is more that we lack time). As a result, many of the responses that come from Washington appear almost patronizing and unaware that our missions are staffed not only by highly experienced personnel but also by personnel whose qualifications and achievements are often superior to contracted specialists."

"The solution to these problems involves both USAID/W and the missions. Missions must learn better how to communicate and teach; but USAID/W has to learn better how to listen and learn. One key is working together, for the obvious solutions are part of the process of real participation. But since everyone cannot participate in everything, the question remains: How can USAID construct a culture that respects the learning of those who have participated and learn from them?"

True Empowerment

Barry Burnett: "The Agency must do better at developing strategic objective teams and subsidiary teams involving representatives based in both the field and Washington. The "virtual" team member concept must be implemented, particularly as we face reduced travel budgets. For example, if mission x is planning an intervention which will be supported, in part, with food aid, appropriate BHR staff should be asked to join the team. On the other hand, if OFDA is gearing up to address a disaster in country y, they should organize a disaster assistance team which includes appropriate reps. from that country, including USAID, Embassy, Host Government, and possibly NGOs, the UN, etc. This is also important if we are to truly implement the "empowerment" core value. I fear that USAID/W-based bureaus and offices are trying to maintain excessive controls and, in the process, thwarting empowerment to operating units closest to the development or humanitarian problem. We can and must do better if reengineering is to be more than a paper exercise."

Anonymous: "Empowerment is the biggest issue. The field is full of directors who are used to fairly

authoritarian styles of management and decision making. Some missions have spent a lot of time on reengineering. There is not much to show for the investment in time. What I fear is that we will have is two parallel systems, the old and the new."

Open Questions and Hot Topics

John Jessup: "How do you balance the ADS chapters and mandatory directives to the field against the value of empowerment? What are the criteria for determining how and when USAID/W must be directive to the field?"

Frank Pavich: "The question on the minds of the reengineers in Cairo is: Why can't management stop everything and delegate authority to SO and RP teams to meet the demands of their responsibilities? We have been stuck between the new and old systems far too long, every one waiting for the other to give the command. The runners are ready, where is the starting gun?"

Tony Pryor: "A big issue for me is the tendency in our missions to get so tied up with the USAID teamwork issues that we forget to work on links to our external partners."

Views from the Lusaka Mission

Craig Noren: "Following are the ideas of various mission staff on USAID/W-Field teamwork." "Teamwork works best when the players in Washington and in the field are personally known to each other from previous working relationships. For example, my working relationships with AFR/SA, AFR/CP, and to a lesser extent LPA are easier because I worked previously on the South Africa desk in Washington. Without the personal touch, teamwork becomes a lot more difficult."

"We do, from time-to-time, get offers out of the blue of help on key themes/issues. This is helpful because it is clear the person offering the help is willing to take the extra steps which are almost always necessary to get a useful product out to us."

"I am concerned that Agency official 'Networks' and 'Hotlines' appear to be much less effective than was obviously intended. From recent experience, one key network appears to be manned in USAID/W by only one knowledgeable person. The information is unavailable when that source goes on TDY. Responses from the field in answer to network questions are very sparse!! Clearly, this needs looking into. Perhaps we need a biweekly 'All-Hands Network Report' to tell field people what issues have been sent in and responses to them."

Team-based R4 Review

Karl Schwartz: "A team works best when its members share trust and confidence in each other. The issue is not whether missions have a "blank slate," but whether USAID/W has the confidence to trust missions to pursue their agreed mandate to separate policy and regulations from practice. USAID/W management units need to develop operating procedures based on their increased confidence in missions rather than the assumption that they need to be controlled."

"One way this can be encouraged is to experiment with a team-based R4 review process in which an empowered, multifunctional team of not to exceed ten USAID/W officers would approve a mission's R4 submission. The functions included on the team would be technical, financial, and contractual, with policy included in technical. The balance of functions and size of the team would depend on the nature of its partner mission. A fully delegated and staffed mission would require a smaller USAID/W team than a smaller one with more limited authority. A fully staffed mission has individuals with the same functional skills as USAID/W staff who would be prospective members of the USAID/W team. These individuals are equally aware of and committed to the agency's policies and strategies. It would be up to USAID/W R4 team to determine how it would achieve its task of approving the mission's R4 most efficiently, a process sure to identify existing review practices with little or no added value."

"Take this as a Pepsi challenge. My bet is, the aftertaste of a team-based R4 review will be much more pleasant."

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development

The Participation Forum* (No. 17)

Real-World Participation Issues: Teamwork, Time Pressures, and Personalist Politics

March 20, 1996

The seventeenth session of the Participation Forum looked at participation issues as experienced in the real world of USAID missions. It explored the relationship between the way USAID personnel work together within USAID and their ability to maintain consistent, honorable partnerships in the host country. Marilyn Zak, director of USAID/Dominican Republic, described how reengineered systems and approaches were put in place as the Dominican Republic mission became a country experimental lab (CEL). In spite of the tumult of politics in the country and the pressures of the USAID budgetary process, the mission was able to facilitate and support Dominican initiatives in democracy and education. Zak's candid appraisal of the CEL experience was put in context by Marcia Bernbaum, currently with PPC but formerly with the LAC Bureau. The session was introduced by Acting Deputy Administrator Jill Buckley, head of the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs, who pointed out that participation is a core value even in USAID's relationship with Congress.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Opening Presentation: Participation on Capitol Hill

Jill Buckley

The constituencies that I deal with are generally outside the agency, where I think it's essential to develop a sense of teamwork and to encourage participation. Teamwork-building with the folks on Capitol Hill is a fairly challenging exercise. But members of Congress certainly are among the most important stakeholders that USAID has. Without them, USAID would not have any money to do anything. It is not politically realistic to ignore them, be angry with them, or not try to figure out a constructive way to build a team with them.

Looking for Common Interests

It has been difficult to interact with a Congress that has been seemingly so hostile to the agency; but, if we can get Congressional representatives to participate with us in understanding and funding development, we will be much better off. That is done, in my view, by trying to get them to invest in problem solving, to invest in what we are doing. For example, I had an experience this morning at a hearing with a senator who is not a big fan of development or USAID. He comes from a big-business background and is very interested in microenterprise. We should be able to start building a teamwork relationship with him on the basis of that common interest. Maybe he could gradually be persuaded to like something else that we do.

Congressional representatives deal with issues from A to Z. There is no reason that they would know about or understand what we do. In order to get them to invest with us and become partners, our policy is to be honest about our successes and failures. A government agency that never failed strains credibility. Also, it is our policy to make sure that they have way more

information than they need. If we tell them all about what we're trying to do, for example, in the Dominican Republic, if we keep providing them with information that illustrates what we do and why it is important and valuable, soon they're going to know more and have more of a reason to participate with us as a team.

For years USAID concentrated on our oversight committees on the Hill, a handful of people. USAID has got to get out and talk, particularly to new people. They have no reason to know about us or to be invested in us. They have no reason to feel like part of our team. None of these folks got elected based on foreign aid.

We have got to try to find a way to create partnerships with those stakeholders as good as the partnerships we're creating around the world with host governments and with indigenous populations. We've got to do that here at home with a group that's probably, in its own way, as difficult as any overseas.

It is not a matter of pandering, or not standing up for what we believe. It is a matter of investing the time and the listening gradually to build a team with enough of the Congress so that we can begin to turn around the budget numbers.

The Challenge of Working with Non-Congressional Stakeholders

We should also try to get other stakeholders or constituency groups to work with us in a participatory and teamlike fashion. They would like to work with us and would like to have a much greater say over what we do and how we do it. They would like to persuade us to work in their area and abandon other areas. Trying to maintain some kind of balance in working with them is almost more challenging than working with the Congress.

I am increasingly cognizant of how important it is to listen. We tend, in my part of the agency, to get very defensive about what we do, because we're often in the situation of defending a program, a request for money, or our reason for not doing what XYZ PVO wants us to. The more experience I have, the more I understand how much I have to listen in order to do my work well.

Promoting Participation: A Take from the Dominican Republic

Marcia Bernbaum

I would like to set the stage for Marilyn Zak's presentation by telling a little tale about a country in the Caribbean, which has a very active and vibrant civil society. It's also a tale about an individual who has gone through several metamorphoses over the years as she and her country have evolved. Finally, it's a tale about a USAID program that started several years ago to consciously lay the seeds for reforms that enhance democracy by working through a number of NGOs in a participatory fashion.

APEC and EDUCA and Jacqueline Malagon

Back in 1978, when I was fresh out of IDI training and assigned to the Latin America Bureau, my first assignment was to arrange appointments for Jacqueline Malagon. Jacqueline was a woman twice my age, with four times my energy, who was the head of an NGO in the Dominican Republic called APEC, which was established by the private sector with USAID assistance to address needs in the area of vocational training.

My next contact with her was in the spring of 1989, when I was a deputy in the Education Division of the LAC Bureau. I was asked by the mission in the Dominican Republic to assist a local group of businessmen that was in the process of organizing itself into an NGO. Again, enter Jacqueline Malagon. She was now no longer just the head of APEC; she was about to become the head of this new organization, called EDUCA, which was a spinoff of APEC. Over the years, these businessmen realized that to be effective in addressing the needs of their country and in forming a

qualified work force they had to focus on primary education as well as vocational education. The group wanted also to serve as the vehicle for influencing the government to exercise reform in education, specifically to increase the budget.

Four years later I was the director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs on my initial protocol visit to the Dominican Republic. I saw that EDUCA was off and running. The organization had its problems, but had accomplished quite a lot. In a very participatory fashion, EDUCA leadership developed a 10-year plan and was successfully lobbying the government, in fact, so successfully that they got Jacqueline Malagon named minister of education.

Participation "Without" and "Within"

Through a highly participatory process, the mission also launched other activities with NGOs or helped to establish NGOs, focusing on civil society and on economic policy reform.

During the spring of 1994, Marilyn Zak arrived in the Dominican Republic as mission director. Marilyn and I spent a lot of time on the phone. Every morning at 7:30, I would get an update on the elections. I couldn't wait to get into the office to hear the latest. While the going was tough in the elections and the outcome wasn't ideal, I was struck with the way that the mission was reaching out to the NGOs that it was working with. Most of the mission's portfolio was with NGOs, especially the democracy project. NGOs were working for openness and transparency in addressing the election process. If a mission is following a highly participatory approach to a problem, the solution doesn't always come out exactly the way you want it to.

When I returned to the Dominican Republic in the spring of 1995 to assist the mission with reengineering, just before going over to my current job in CDIE, I was struck with EDUCA's progress. The organization was doing even better, except that Jacqueline Malagon was running into some serious problems and subsequently was relieved of her job as the minister of education. I was also struck with the progress of the democracy project and the emerging difficulties of economic policy reform. But I was most struck by the approach that Marilyn and her deputy, Mike Deal, were taking not only to promote Dominican participation without but to promote participation within the mission.

The Challenge of Participation in the Dominican Republic

Marilyn Zak

The culture of the Dominican Republic is unique. Imagine a 15th century Italian court with Machiavelli learning the game of life from Joaquin Balaguer. That gives the flavor of the Machiavellian intrigue that goes on. Balaguer, at the age of 89, is blind, but he is in full control. He's a master.

According to the constitution, the President has almost dictatorial powers. He controls more than 50 percent of the budget and is very much into infrastructure and not much into social spending. Balaguer's current term ends in August 1996.

The Dominican Republic is a society in transition. Elections held in May 1994 were considered "difficult." A post-electoral crisis was solved by a political accord called the "Pact for Democracy." By the terms of the pact, Balaguer's term was cut from four to two years. However, I do not rule Balaguer out, and I am not taking vacation until after the August 16th inauguration.

A Culture in Transition and the Need for Reform

Within Dominican society there is a true interest in change and moving on to a new era. However, authoritarian attitudes are incredibly strong. They show up in the youth and in polls on leadership: Dominicans want strong authoritarian rule, a powerful father figure telling them what to do. Authoritarian attitudes are also reflected in NGOs. They can carry out participatory programs, but

they can be very authoritarian internally.

Dominicans have remained silent at critical times. When there was major fraud and irregularities in the 1994 elections, they stayed silent. Civil society is changing now. USAID is supporting a movement to have the civil society fight for free and fair elections this May and June. However, Dominicans have known death squads as recently as the early 1970s. A few who have been outspoken have disappeared. This atmosphere affects people's willingness to participate.

Corruption, a nonfunctional judicial system, and a culture of impunity are also aspects of Dominican society. Scandals are everywhere. And no one pays a price for bad behavior. Malefactors might go to court and they might sit in prison for a little bit; but seldom is there a judicial decision against them. Society has an incredible way of forgetting. Past crimes and misbehaviors can disappear, and you never know who's going to be resurrected. However, the judicial system is the high priority for reform throughout the society.

How do the Dominicans handle conflict? They're extremely courteous and try to find solutions when conflict arises, but there's no strong pattern of cooperation. Dominicans look to the top to solve problems. They will try to get along in a partnership and cooperate for a certain length of time, but if it doesn't work, they are like Mt. Vesuvius erupting. They will go public, get on television, pay for ads in the newspaper. Then all of a sudden, poof, it's back down to nothing. One has to be able to adjust oneself to these immoderate eruptions.

The United States plays a dominant role in the Dominican Republic. We have invaded the island four times this century, twice on the Haiti side and twice on the Dominican side. The United States also played a major role when the Marines came in 1965 and made it very clear to the Dominicans that Balaguer was our choice to become president. Now it's very hard to make a Dominican believe that the United States is neutral in an election. In 1965, the United States wanted the Dominican Republic to be the role model in the Alliance for Progress, the democratic alternative to communist Cuba. Hundreds of USAID officers and contractors were running the government throughout various ministries. Now when USAID asks for participation in our projects, we must understand the Dominicans and the history that comes with any American request.

The current USAID program is 90 percent with NGOs and focused on civil society. We look at it as a transition strategy. We're waiting for a reform-minded government to come into power in August 1996. If this happens, it will be a transition of major importance and something the United States has to pay attention to.

The Democracy Project: Fostering Ownership

Previous USAID management should be credited for their vision and sensitivity when they started reaching out to the Dominicans in the early 1990s, and saying, "Let's do something on democracy." The mission director and the deputy brought the Dominicans into a slowly evolving dialogue. They were determined that the Dominicans were going to design this project. There would be no expert design team coming down from Washington. They reached out and got Dominicans who were teaching political science and sociology in the U.S. to come down and help design the program.

The mission approach was that the Dominicans would be up front, leading, and USAID would be a half step behind. A consultative group of 21 individuals representing different constituencies was formed, with one-third of the members rotating off each year. What is truly notable is the commitment and sense of ownership of this committee.

USAID wanted a 50 percent counterpart contribution. This was very hard for the groups to match, but it showed a willingness to commit. (Eventually we had to lower the 50 percent requirement on counterpart to 25 percent. It was too onerous a requirement for organizations being asked to do things that they hadn't done before.) The Dominicans wanted a 10-year time frame, and USAID agreed.

The consultative committee spent a year and a half getting itself organized, a considerable portion of which was developing the ethics of running the democracy project. When I went to the Dominican Republic as mission director two years ago, you can imagine the grumblings I heard: "What's wrong with this project? It is not moving money."

The administrative unit for the democracy project is one of the Catholic universities. It has been an excellent vehicle through which to provide administrative support to the consultative committee, although, as a recent evaluation of the project found, there are too many rules and regulations. We are going to see how we can reengineer the administrative unit to loosen it up a bit.

What has been accomplished in four years? The consultative committee members will say that they learned about democracy. They learned compromise and how to get consensus in spite of differences in views. They had never experienced this before.

A leader of Participacion Ciudadana, the local group now doing election monitoring, was an original member of the consultative committee. He has told me that one would not have had this activism, this commitment to democracy, if it had not been for the consultative committee.

In establishing its rules and regulations the consultative committee also showed that it is possible to compete fairly. A person on the committee could not get his or her own project approved simply by virtue of membership on the committee.

The committee has reached out to a wide diversity of groups, groups that USAID has not previously been involved with, especially in the barrios. Three-quarters of the activities are outside of Santa Domingo.

The project was doing well until just before the post-election crisis in 1994. And we sat in the embassy and in USAID and figured, "We've got to think what we're going to do for the presidential elections rescheduled for 1996; we can't think 10 years now." We gathered members of the consultative group together and went out to dinner. The Americans came out of that dinner depressed because the Dominicans had a long-term view for democratic development, 10 years out; they didn't want to focus on the 1996 election; they couldn't be pushed; they weren't prepared to take on the problems presented by the new elections. USAID was supposed to stay a half a step behind, so we decided not to rely on this project to do the types of things that we thought were important.

We sought other ways to do them, involving a broader action group. We worked with Participacion Ciudadana to craft a broader-based coalition, because we felt that any group that was to do local electoral monitoring needed protection. We knew what would happen to any group trying to go against certain norms. It would be the first time in a long time that one might have free and clean elections. This is not the tradition in the Dominican Republic.

As USAID has moved along with the democracy group and the consultative committee, a small window has been opened and projects to help support the election are being funded. USAID let things happen; we did not say, "We want this." When the attacks came from the Cardinal against the local observers, against the United States and USAID, the Dominicans could say that they were doing this on their own, with no interference or direction by the United States. They are there fighting, and they will decide what level and what speed that they will go. We can only help them.

The Primary Education Project: Forging a Consensus

The Dominican Republic has one of the lowest levels of social spending in the hemisphere. After Rafael Trujillo was assassinated in 1961, a major transformation took place in education. APEC was formed, and then years later the private sector and USAID recognized that the focus had to be on primary education if the society was to become productive, and they set up EDUCA. Jackie Malagon and Gustavo Talveras, one of the principal founders of APEC and a leader in the education movement, put forth an incredible effort to develop a 10-year plan for a more productive society through education. They had over 50,000 people, from both the public and the private sector, participating in building a broad-based consensus on their plan. When Jackie Malagon was named minister of education in 1991, she kept the role of executive director of EDUCA. That is a conflict of interest, in our terms, but not in the Dominican context. When I arrived on the scene, I found that she played both roles very effectively.

Then *RUMBO*, a magazine that does investigative reporting, did a major report on the Ministry of Education and Jackie Malagon. It was a scandal, a major corruption issue. Jackie and others were

hailed in front of a court. No one went to jail, and it was never clear what really happened. Jackie ended up getting fired by Balaguer, and the issue was, what happens to EDUCA? Most people would think this would hurt EDUCA. Well, it didn't.

Last December, EDUCA had a seminar for teachers and principals as part of the educational reform. Initially, it was planned for 300-400 teachers. Two weeks or so before the seminar, the number rose to 700, then 900. The day before, it was 1,100; the day of the seminar, 1,400 teachers filled the room. Jackie Malagon was there talking to them about education and commitment.

Much to my surprise, when the administration unit for the democracy project consultative committee came in with its list of people for the consultative committee, Jackie's name was there as the *reformista* candidate. Since there are no legal charges against her, she became the government's party representative on our democracy consultative committee.

The Economic Growth Project: Participation without Ownership

The problem with the Economic Growth project is that it had a consultative committee without ownership. The project was initiated in 1992 with the goal of encouraging the adoption of and adherence to sound policies to promote investments, productivity, export-led economic diversification, and sustained economic growth. The highly innovative project attempted to promote policy change by strengthening, deepening, enhancing, and making more dynamic the participation of NGOs in economic policy design and implementation. The Stanford Research Institute won the bid for the cooperative agreement. They managed the project. Local NGOs carried out most of the activities.

An evaluation of this project came to the following conclusion: "There is widespread confusion concerning the relative priority to be given to the objectives of the project, i.e., whether the project should actually achieve policy reforms or merely stimulate broad discussions of reforms by the NGOs. The project participants have, therefore, been free to take actions based on their own set of priorities, and have caused the project to become a focus of controversy as different actors are judging actions against different criteria."

USAID asked a group of leading economists to design a project on economic reform. They designed the project and gave it to USAID, but USAID internally redesigned the project with an NGO focus. The redesigned project kept the group as a consultative committee as a one-year activity to look at the priorities for the NGO's activities. In that, the mission made a major error, because the members of the consultative committee did not agree with the project's NGO focus as redefined.

So, after a long, frustrating time, the consultative committee exploded. Letters were written that could be called undiplomatic at best. Stories appeared in the press on why the project was not good. The explosion made USAID realize that the Dominicans truly needed to have ownership of the project. While the NGOs were quite happy with their small activities, there was no broader support for the project.

Since 1991, there has been no major economic policy change in the Dominican Republic. There is no environment for policy reform. With the current government, it just won't happen.

USAID is winding down this project and looking at ways to use the remaining money to focus on poverty and policy change for a new government in August 1996.

Reengineering within the Mission

When I arrived in Santo Domingo two years ago, the mission was managed in a command-and-control mode, micromanaged, very much top-down. The action plan was a once-a-year document, presented up here in USAID Washington, defended very well, brought back, and put in everyone's desk drawers to be pulled out the following year when we had to account for what happened. Now, this is not my personal style. I like participation, I like creativity, and I do much better in a situation that is not regulated with rules. When reengineering was offered to us, I thought, "This is the perfect match." I liked the idea of change, the ability to challenge how USAID operates, but

what was important to me was participating in teamwork. So after our post-electoral crisis, USAID staff met in a retreat to define how we were going to function as a reengineering lab.

Setting Out Values

On that retreat, we set out our values: (1) go for the whole bag of marbles, be risk-takers, (2) use your best judgment, (3) manage for results, and (4) practice good communication. When I look back now after a year and a half, the one thing that I hear most from everyone, from the staff, and which I say to people most often, is, "Use your best judgment."

When doing reengineering, we had to change ourselves internally before we could go out and talk to our customers and clients. USAID-Washington was telling us to go out right away and talk, but we said no. We all had to talk the same message, to be consistent. So, just like the consultative committee members for the democracy initiative project, we had to learn participation internally within the mission. Now, I must say, it was not so easy to do. USAID culture is fairly directed and action oriented.

We've also focused in on how to do things better. We got together with our partners and improved our horrendous subgrantee process. It was taking an average of 18 months for a grant to make it through our process. We were able to package the strengthening of civil society project in an impressive two months.

S.O. Teambuilding

We ended up having to have another retreat because my deputy Mike Deal and I saw the need for team building. It cannot be assumed that folks are going to be good team members. Teamwork involves totally different skills than individual work. As part of that retreat, we decided en masse that we were going to do away with our technical offices and just have Strategic Objective (S.O.) teams.

We had decided on four strategic objectives. I let people sign up for the teams they wanted to be on. I left the choice of teams up to the individual employees because I knew they were going to make the right decision based on their interests. Then each team, before they knew who their leader was, had to write out a code of conduct that they expected from their team leader. Then we appointed the team leader, who had to agree to that code.

Teamwork is hard. Team leaders are not supervising; they are coaching. Individual team members can't do things alone. They've got to get their team to work with them.

When it works, it's fantastic. For example, on a Monday, USAID Washington gave us our allotment of \$800,000. We had been waiting and waiting. And it had to be obligated by Friday! We laid out what we had, and the one key factor that I thought was critical was the piece for our judicial administration project for next fiscal year.

Our young intern, who has had to switch from microenterprise to judicial reform in the broader commercial side, didn't have the time given everything else he was doing. But when the team met, it became possible. Both program people and controllers are on the team. The financial analyst spoke up, and said, "I can do it." She came up with a way to package the information by Thursday.

Not everyone is comfortable with reengineering. I'm as happy as can be when there are no boundaries, but not everyone is like me. The staff is having to adjust for those who like the security of knowing what the rules and regulations are.

Teams have different characteristics. They need a Myers-Briggs test for teams. Some teams are introverted. We have had arguments back-and-forth, and some meetings haven't gone well. We've all left unhappy, and then we've got to go back and figure out what worked and what didn't work.

Mixed Messages from Washington

The messages from Washington on delegation and empowerment are always mixed, to our frustration. We don't have the resources for training and we can't get them. But training is critical to reengineering. Reengineering is staff-intensive and time consuming, and management has to devote time to it. It's easy to have one person write a project paper. But if you want a program and a project to really work, it takes time.

Reengineering also demands flexibility among the staff. They have to do things that are not in their job description. In the future, to be able to change from private enterprise to judicial administration must be recognized as a good move.

In reengineering, I, as a manager in the agency, don't get my own way. I have less ability to dictate. I can't tell the staff, "You do it this way because I want it this way." I have to keep saying that as long as I know we agree on the strategic objectives and we know where we're going, I don't care so much how we go about getting there, because we are attuned to results.

In reengineering, team members are creative, resourceful, and better able to work outside with our partners with this very same message. And anyone who visits us knows the difference.

Unfortunately, reengineering doesn't give us one penny more or one centavo more in resources. No matter how good we are, we're still being cut. This is frustrating. The agency is going to have to make some critical decisions in the future about the limits on participation and what we can afford to do on our OE budgets. And for the Dominican Republic, which is going through a transition period of historical proportions, I will have even less resources than I do now, when and if a reform-minded government is elected. That is truly the challenge for us all.

Discussion Session

Coping with the Lack of Structure

Charlotte Young (Argonne National Laboratory): I'm curious about how you're working with USAID employees who need more structure. How are you coaching them along and supporting them?

Zak: It takes both my time and my deputy's time in sitting with them and talking it through. We have to be sensitive and watch for signals when someone is too uncomfortable, and to go back and make sure we are patting people on their backs. There's a lot to congratulate people about. When they take a bit of a risk and it pays off, we should be there saying, "Keep at it."

Indispensable Team Members

John Grant: When S.O. teams are established, sometimes different groups feel that one person is indispensable. Three different teams may want to have access to one person. How did you deal with the problem of people who are in demand by several different groups?

Zak: We have to sit down and negotiate. Also, we have started once-a-month meetings of team leaders. On the management side, each team signs an S.O. pact specifying what we expect them to accomplish. This is management's way of holding the team accountable and negotiating who's going to be committing what part of their time. From that, we realized we have to get the team leaders together and start having once-a-month meetings to deal with the broader issues.

It's not so much that someone is in more demand; it's that individuals are in demand at the same time, especially in our controller's office. When crunches come and they have to meet deadlines, it's a challenge. We just try to work it through, and sometimes it's not as satisfactory as we would like.

Impressions of an Evaluator: Kudos and Challenges

La Voy: I would like to ask Erin Soto, who has just completed an evaluation in the Dominican Republic, to comment a little bit on what felt different there.

Erin Soto: I was one person on a six-person evaluation team, and I spent the better part of two or three days in the mission. The first thing I noticed is that the value statement is posted everywhere, at the reception desk, on doors in the bathroom; it's a constant reminder.

I was really impressed with the more junior staff, or the staff from other parts of the mission, like the financial management office. These persons are strategic objective team members. I was impressed at the democracy S.O. team's level of understanding of the project, the history of it, who the key players are, what the concept is. They understood that thoroughly, as well as any other team member or the team leader. And they had opinions on what was working, what wasn't, how to improve it. In the last year I've been to four or five different missions, some of which are reengineering labs, and I haven't seen that level of understanding elsewhere. Ultimately USAID is getting a bigger bang for the buck, particularly from these lower-level staff. They want to contribute more and they have a lot more to contribute.

In the evaluation itself, we met with one of the financial management officers on the democracy S.O. team and the project assistant. A particular problem was raised to our attention: the frequency of financial management reports, every month. The democracy program awards a large number of small grants, most to grassroots organizations. Vouchering every month is difficult.

The administrative unit forces them to do that, tells them that's the way it is. It is a very rigid unit, as Marilyn mentioned. Also, the financial management person says that even though it's a cooperative agreement and the regs allow for vouchering less frequently, the way this particular cooperative agreement is set up, they have to voucher every month.

So the evaluation team asked them how they could improve this situation. The project assistant said, "Okay, what is the objective here?" And I chimed in, saying, "The objective is to provide the support that this group needs to run these grants and to get the money out to the civil society groups." The financial management officer says, "Okay now, what don't we need to do?" They were just going through this process in their minds: Do we really need this? What would change if we did it every three months instead of every month? And they concluded that they could get together and talk with the administrative group and try to reduce the frequency of reporting. To find that flexibility in a project assistant and a financial management officer, both FSNs, was impressive.

One comment on the challenge that still is there. In the democracy project, USAID has veto power over the grants, but in practice, it is clearing all the grants. The trick is to find a way for the FSNs and the people in the mission to provide input to make the grants stronger and better without making the recipients of the grants feel like USAID has all the power. That's one challenge. And the other challenge is that the university, as Marilyn mentioned, runs a very rigid administrative operation. Staff of the administrative unit say they are rigid because that's what USAID wants. When I mentioned reengineering, they said, "Oh, well, Marilyn will soon be gone, and sometime a new administration will come and this will all change." I tried to convince them that reengineering was part of a movement that was even bigger than USAID, but I'm not sure I succeeded. It's a challenge to convince them to trust us.

Zak: The university has been the recipient for USAID for a number of years, and university staff know what it's like to be audited and also to be questioned and to be attacked by the ultra-rightists. They've had to open up. They've invited the ultra-right to come in and look at their books, and they felt very proud that every penny was accounted for. We've got to figure out what we really don't need. The issue of responsibility versus control still needs some work.

Budget Woes

Jay Nussbaum: How can the team be a mechanism for intelligently taking cuts, which I think is going to be the business of most of our teams very soon?

Zak: We have scrubbed the budget. We gave up one of our office buildings. We can't cut any

more unless we cut bodies. In the Dominican Republic, we have recently taken on the controller's responsibilities for Guyana and for the Eastern Caribbean, as they phase out, without any increase in staff. And what's even more frightening, we have got to figure in an inflation factor, that salaries will increase a little bit, and there's no room for that. USAID Washington has got to make critical decisions on what is cut and what isn't. If USAID Washington wants participation and reengineering, it has to make the hard decisions that it can't do everything.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

Attitudinal Obstacles

Paola Barragan: "I think many people around the globe would like to hear some 'anecdotal' experience about how attitudinal obstacles, especially in former (still current?) PROJECT managers, have been overcome in the transition from PROJECT MANAGING to TEAM MANAGEMENT. My inquiry implies knowing in what specific ways managing is being carried out in teams."

An Observation on Forum 14

Bob Mansfield: "I am particularly taken by 'What We Can Change When We Listen Harder.' From a purely selfish motive, I'm finding I learn more about my own universe and beliefs by listening to others and theirs than by expounding on mine. That's pretty empowering and motivating in itself."

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development

Participation Forum (No. 18):

Engaging Civil Society and Governments on the Greater Horn of Africa

April 25, 1996

The Greater Horn of Africa Initiative has received well-deserved attention recently in Washington, not only on its own merits but also because it has permitted USAID to test some new ways of doing business. These include taking seriously our rhetoric about local ownership and working in teams to provide coherent responses that cross borders and transcend the usual divisions between relief and development assistance. The eighteenth session of the Participation Forum featured Gayle Smith, who recently completed an extensive consultation process throughout the region as USAID's point person for the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative. She described the initiative and drew out some themes on participation. Pat Rader, Director of the Greater Horn of Africa Task Force, told how the effort appeared in USAID/Washington. Dick McCall, the Administrator's Chief of Staff, who has played a key leadership role on behalf of the Administrator in this initiative, highlighted a few points before the discussion session. All presenters grappled with the basic question of what citizen participation means in the context of a high-level regional initiative. E-mail on this session started arriving as soon as the topic was announced, and comments from attendees made for a lively Forum.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Concepts Behind the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative

Gayle Smith

The Greater Horn of Africa Initiative got started a couple of years ago because the humanitarian needs of the 10 countries of East Africa and the great lakes region are skyrocketing. The United States is spending twice as much money on relief — on a reactive response — than we are investing in development. Also the crises in the region are inextricably linked. What is going on in Rwanda cannot be isolated from what is going on in Zaire, Burundi, and Uganda. Similarly, the crisis in Sudan is linked to what is going on in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, and surrounding countries.

We needed to come up with some way of tackling both the problems in the region and our own problem, i.e., that we were spending more after the fact than before.

After USAID Administrator Brian Atwood traveled to the region in May 1994, a concept paper was written proposing that a two-pronged initiative be established concentrating on crisis prevention and food security. Humanitarian needs in the region are overwhelmingly for food, and overwhelmingly for famines, most of which are manmade.

The "relief-to-development continuum" concept in essence means not to look at a crisis in terms of discrete phases—emergency, rehabilitation, and development—but to provide emergency assistance in such a manner that both relief and development are outputs. The assistance saves people but also enables local people to run their own affairs. On the development side, it also means investing resources to prevent conflicts or crises in the future.

The concept paper for the initiative discussed who USAID's regional partners might be and proposed that we work with what was then called the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), a regional body that was set up in the 1980s. Other partners include other U.S. government agencies as well as both international and indigenous PVOs, the private sector, and research and professional networks. The paper proposed that USAID should take the lead in this initiative but that we would also engage the State Department, the Department of Defense, the intelligence community, the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Information Agency—the whole spectrum of agencies that are involved one way or another in these crises.

Several thousand refugees from southern Sudan have fled to northern Uganda. The conventional way to deal with such a situation is for one agency to carry out development projects in northern Uganda and for another to maintain a relief program for the southern Sudanese refugees. For example, USAID's Africa Bureau might fund the development projects for the Ugandans, and the Bureau of Humanitarian Relief might provide refugee assistance to the southern Sudanese through the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with no connection between the two efforts.

The USAID Uganda mission has just sent us a proposal for a program funded by a donor consortium, which would simultaneously work with Ugandans, the host community, and the refugees, to render them essentially self-sufficient in food over a five-year period. This arrangement reduces some of the tensions that often come about between refugees and host communities and lays the groundwork for the southern Sudanese refugees to be more productive and in better shape when they go home, rather than completely dependent. In five years' time, if the program works, the budget item for maintaining X thousands of people on relief indefinitely can be cut. This is not rocket science, but it is a great improvement over the way we normally work. We tend not to take a long-term perspective and we tend to apply bifurcated, segmented approaches: I do relief, you do development, you do politics, and never the twain shall meet.

Consultation

One of the central elements of the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative has been, and we hope it will continue to be, consultation. As soon as the concept paper was completed, we proposed that the next step was to carry out consultations in the field with governments at both the leadership level and the sectoral level, with international and local NGOs and, most important, with our missions and country teams. The initial response to that idea, with some exceptions, was, "Do we really need to do that? We've got to do something. We've got to get moving. We've got to deliver on this. It's a presidential initiative." We insisted and eventually got our way. These consultations were supposed to take a couple of weeks but actually took three months.

We convened 68 meetings in which we presented the concept paper and asked for critical feedback. We presented it and asked people to let us know if we were off the mark. There's a tendency to think that consultation means I ask you what you think, and then I go back to my office. We were trying to ask people what they thought, stick around long enough to listen, and then incorporate their suggestions into our approach.

As a result of this consultation, the basics of the initiative didn't change, but it was fleshed out in an extraordinary way. The process took a considerable amount of time. I was involved almost exclusively in it for three months.

Was it worth it? Absolutely. We learned a lot, and the initiative shifted from something that had been invented in USAID/Washington to something that others began to feel like they had some say in and some ownership of.

Partnership

We are struggling with partnership. At the regional level, we have some exceptional partners. The region is going through a fundamental change. Formerly alliances were based on opportunism—in other words, you're the enemy of my enemy, so let's be friends, or let's join forces because we can get more money, or whatever it might be. Now alliances are increasingly formed on the basis of a common strategic vision of the region. The governments in the region recognize that their

own stability is dependent on the wider stability of the region, that they need to begin thinking about trade and cooperation, and that, at the political level, some of the best ideas about what to do vis-a-vis Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan, and so on, come out of the region. Quite often they have better ideas than we do.

We say we want to carry out the initiative in partnership with them. At one level, we have succeeded. We are learning to consult much more, to keep them informed, to take their advice. At another level, we have a long way to go before we recognize that these people are our equals. Despite our intentions, we all too willingly believe that we know what they need to do. There's a degree to which racism plays a profound role. It's a real struggle for people to fully embrace the notion that we are talking to equals and that it's their region, not ours.

The IGADD, which I mentioned earlier, had begun to reorganize before the initiative started. It was something that President Issaias of Eritrea and Prime Minister Meles of Ethiopia had on their radar screens the minute they came to power. Many USAID documents will say that one of the successes of the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative has been the revitalization of IGADD. We want to take credit, but really cannot. Their regional effort and our initiative converged. We're a bit quick to say, "Look what we did." Sorry. It would have happened with or without us. Real partnership means giving credit where credit is due.

Ownership

Another concept we talk about a lot is ownership. A good example of how "ownership" often works in practice comes out of Ethiopia. Generally, when a government is negotiating with the World Bank, it first negotiates a policy framework paper, which is essentially an overarching plan for the country's economy over a certain period of time. In actuality, the Bank drafts it and the country signs it, but it is "owned" by the government. The Ethiopian government proposed developing their own framework. They did so, but the negotiations were very rocky. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles's conclusion, stated at a GCA meeting, was that to the World Bank "ownership" means that the Bank defines its framework, the country defines its framework, and then they negotiate the Bank's framework. Since that time, the government of Ethiopia and the World Bank have negotiated the government's policy matrix, and together the two have achieved an extremely high level of true partnership.

We say we want government ownership of processes; we say we want governments to coordinate us rather than our coordinating them. However, we all went ballistic when the government of Rwanda took the initiative of expelling some NGOs. Now, they did it in a style which, in fairness, had a few bumps in it. But style aside, they are the government of Rwanda; they had 160 plus NGOs; it was completely unmanageable. They took the decision to reduce the number. When something happens that we don't like, do we say, "Well, you can own it so long as you're doing what I like"? It's a real test for us to see whether we mean what we say.

Another example is the food and food security issue. Increasingly governments and NGOs in the region (and if you talk to local farmers, they say the same thing) believe that the international community is dumping too much food aid for humanitarian relief. Regional governments are counter-proposing monetization, food for work, and so on. Do we in USAID say, "Let's engage and talk about it," or do we instead say (as in a meeting we just had), "Okay, we'll accept some monetization, but here's how you have to do it"? Are we ready to meet them halfway? On issues like this we'll be tested.

Recently the donors in the region initiated a meeting, invited some ministers, and came up with a regional food security plan. This plan will end up on your shelves sometime in the next year, and, if we move to a new building, you'll take it with you and put it on another shelf, but it will never get used. The reason is that it's not locally owned.

Local ownership takes a lot of time, and we are very impatient: "They need to have a food security strategy now! Where's their food security strategy?" The reality is that these countries have been grappling with war and famine for centuries. It may well take them four or five years to put together a food security strategy. A regional food security strategy could take a lot longer. If we push and insist that they have a food security strategy to meet our deadline because we've got to get document X in, are we going to get ownership? No. We're going to get governments and NGOs doing things to meet our standards.

The ownership issue also comes up in the initiative's effort to work with NGOs. Our grant to IGADD includes funding for local NGOs. What we're finding is that we can't seem to fund them until they replicate in our image. So long as they're genuine grassroots NGOs with their own determination of how much time goes into management and paperwork versus how much time goes into extension work, we can't seem to get to them. What we tend to do—and I don't think it's a willful, malicious thing—is to set up a construct that goes like this: "If you do A, B, C, and D, if you can give us this and this document, if we can see CVs for your staff, we will fund you." Otherwise, we can't. What happens is that these local NGOs transform themselves. Suddenly they hire new people to write the CVs or to fill our management or funding requirements.

An experiment we are going to carry out may offer a solution to this problem. When we get a proposal from a local NGO that we can't support because they don't meet some of our regulations, we will offer to provide them with a technical consultant who will do what needs to be done. This could be an alternative to skewing the organization because of what donors need and not because of what is needed in the field.

We have said that the initiative should be African-led and field-driven. We're going to be tested on the African-led part. We'll find out how far we can compromise and how far we are willing to trust that these people know their own futures.

Balance between Government and Civil Society

One of the key themes related to partnership and participation is civil society. I really hate this term. With it we set up a construct of inherently evil governments versus inherently virtuous civil society. I'm overstating the contrast, but not by much. We tend to romanticize that the way forward in this region, which is so beset by tumult and conflict, is through the empowerment of civil society. In Sudan, the National Islamic Front was the civil society until 1989. Things weren't very rosy then. In fact, civil society has the same vulnerabilities as government. Unwittingly we have promoted an adversarial relationship between government and civil society when it would be more productive to work for balance.

There have been some colossally bad governments in Africa, but just the same Africa needs governments. Anyone who thinks governments are absolutely unnecessary should go to Somalia for a while. On balance, government is helpful. We also tend to promote the notion that civil society does not have to be accountable, because it's already virtuous.

This issue comes up in our attitudes toward NGOs. I would wager that the Horn of Africa has more NGOs per capita than any region on earth. A lot of them are international. NGOs in the governance and democracy, conflict resolution, peacemaking, and peace-building field are also proliferating. Some of these are very good, but this has become a growth industry. They are there because of the existence of constant humanitarian crises. This huge NGO community stays for a long time, because none of the emergencies are cut-and-dried. In Rwanda, there were 212 at one point. In the 1984–1985 Ethiopia famine, 95 went in; 89 of them were still in place in 1991.

In and of itself, the presence of these NGOs is not bad. But what are the long-term implications of a small country's having 200 international NGOs? Where is the line between what government does and what NGOs do? What are the impacts of a huge international NGO community on the growth of indigenous NGOs? Do they quash that growth? Do they influence the nature and shape of those organizations? Are we, by continuing to romanticize civil society, promoting an adversarial relationship where there doesn't need to be one?

What is USAID's stance in all of this? First, we are trying to make sure that we are balanced, in terms of our interventions and our assistance. We want to make sure that our assistance at any given time in this region goes to governments, international NGOs, and local NGOs. We don't want to be all in one camp or all in the other. Second, we are grappling with how we can facilitate relations rather than take sides. In the Rwandan case, for example, many NGOs, when the government expelled them, responded by going back to their contributors. The contributors immediately came into the argument on the NGO side. That does not help.

USAID has been able to find discrete fora for a solid and growing core of both international and local NGOs and people in the various governments in the region to sit down and talk to one

another without us. Also, we hope that IGADD will hold meetings with NGOs in the region without us. We don't need to be at the table.

The Need for Agency-Wide Discussions

We have a tendency in USAID to limit discussions of countries and issues to the bureau that is providing the funding. In other words, if the Africa Bureau is funding an activity and the Bureau for Humanitarian Relief (BHR) isn't, then the Africa Bureau has the discussion. But if the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) is funding something and the Africa Bureau isn't, then OFDA has the discussion. What is needed instead are full agency-wide discussions. Whether funding to Sudan is relief funding or development funding, whether Ethiopia is getting a lot of development assistance or not, all of us should be at the table for discussions. If we want to have an integrated approach, we cannot remain divided between relief people and development people.

In USAID we are grappling with how to participate fully *as ourselves*. How do we remember, if we're having a meeting, to invite somebody whose money might not be on the table but who might have an interest or something to offer? On the field side, the formation of strategic teams has brought about a radical change in this regard. I am impressed by how integrated a lot of the missions are. Many are starting to look at resources like food aid, which often gets kept in a sort of relief cupboard, more developmentally. And some BHR people in the field are saying, "If you do this ag project, you want to think about X, Y, and Z."

Making the Initiative Work in Washington

Pat Rader

The Greater Horn of Africa Initiative pushes the limits on all USAID's concepts of reengineering. It's very exciting, but at the same time, it really points out how difficult it is to change a corporate culture. When I get frustrated, I think, "Well, the good news is that you're pushing the envelope. The bad news is that the envelope's made out of steel."

When we think about participation, we are thinking about servicing the customer. But those of us in Washington are a long way from Asmara—a long way from the customer. The question for USAID/Washington is how to stay excited about doing things differently, letting Africans take the leadership, and so on when you are sitting in Washington and there's no money for travel.

One of the key issues we're dealing with in USAID/Washington is communication among ourselves—among bureaus, among agencies, even within offices—especially communication about how we do what we're doing better. Probably 80 percent of the issues that we have among our offices and agencies, and even with our field missions, arises from a lack of communication, not knowing what people are doing and why. We are trying, in a reengineered USAID, to open up electronic communication among all partners, including PVOs.

Major Issues

A major issue is tension between decentralization and empowerment in the field. It is a corporate tendency, particularly right now, when USAID is under fire, to centralize and not to be transparent. To implement an initiative like the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative means having Africans take leadership and working with them slowly over time. This is difficult to do through a centralized agency under the gun on earmarks from the Congress, where two-thirds of the resources are managed from Washington. This tension inhibits our ability to do what we want to do and have the impacts we want to have and creates credibility issues with the Africans.

Another issue is just straight turf. People have spent years in agencies that are built along office lines where the funding comes from and where employees are evaluated. It is difficult to break down the tendency to protect one's turf.

Transition Teams

The most exciting thing that's happening in Washington is what we call our transition teams. Six teams have been set up to deal with different substantive and process issues. These teams are testing reengineering in the sense that they cross bureaus, they cross offices, and they cross agencies. Our PVO partners are involved on many of them. When the transition team on linking relief and development first met, it was several people sitting around the table from the Department of Defense, the U.S. Information Agency, different bureaus in USAID, the State Department—all with their bureaucratic hats on fighting over this issue. Over the course of about a year, the people who really were concerned about linking relief and development and making it work in the field stayed, and the rest disappeared. That left us with a core of people who took their bureaucratic hats off and now are transition team members. A couple of these members have said that, as things get a little tough in USAID, the reason that they get up in the morning and go to work is that it's so exciting to be sitting across the table from people that they had a conflict with in the past and really working towards a joint product that is right, that is good.

This transition team has produced an excellent draft document on the principles linking relief and development. It explains what the constraints are (most are bureaucratic; only a few are legal) and then offers concrete recommendations on what the USAID Administrator could do in terms of policies to address the constraints.

Now the team is thinking about implementation. All of a sudden the brakes have been put on. People are realizing that the evaluations and incentives of the personnel system will have to change and that pots of money will have to be mixed. Just in the past month or so people have begun to say, "Oh, this isn't a theoretical exercise, this is really going to affect where we work and how we work and how we're trained and how we're evaluated." The period of brainstorming is exciting. Then the organization suddenly realizes that to be better, it will have to change.

As we try to keep our eye on the customer and think about African leadership we must believe that the Africans have looked at their problems in the Horn and said, "If we don't stop our conflicts, we're not going to make it." Sudanese are talking to Kenyans, Ugandans, and Eritreans. These people, virtually at war with each other, are saying, "If we don't pull up our socks we're not going to make it." Part of the process of helping Africans to go where they want to go is for us to pull up our own socks.

Another excellent transition team that is struggling with difficult issues is the so-called "Radars Team." It's the team that deals with conflict prevention. Headed by the State Department, it has members from the Defense Department, the U.S. Information Agency, the intelligence communities, the PVO community, and the Africa and Global Bureaus. It's probably the most diverse team of the six.

The Donor Rule

What can donors do to help Africans to prevent conflict? Africans are asking themselves that, and we're asking ourselves that. But if USAID's goal is to push for African leadership and field-based programs, what can Washington bureaucrats do to help the process, rather than getting in the way of it?

The concept is that the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative will move out to the field and that REDSO/East Africa will coordinate the activities and the programs in the ten field missions involved. The role of Washington will be backstopping and policy advice. But strategy development, implementation, and communication will take place among USAID and other government entities out in the field with African counterparts. To the extent that the initiative stays here in Washington, we will have failed.

This is a very bad time for USAID. We're all overworked, and morale is suffering. While the good news is that the initiative can raise our morale, the bad news is that it is often perceived as yet another political layer on people who are just barely coping. When people break through and understand that USAID could do things differently and make a difference, it is encouraging but until then it feels like, "If I have another weight on my chest, I won't be able to get up."

The Difficulty of Doing Things Differently

An example how hard it is to do things differently concerns a line item in the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative budget to facilitate implementation. USAID missions and different private organizations smelled that money, and unsolicited proposals, from both in- and outside USAID, multiplied. We set up a number of criteria which must be met before we fund something. One criterion is that the activity must be African-led and African-owned. This is an issue, because there are U.S. entities that would really like to be first in line for this money. But we have to be clear that if we are doing things differently, it means that we are doing things differently. So missions aren't being encouraged to put old projects in new bottles and then come running in and say, "Look, we've met your principles." We are trying to say, "Is this a new bottle, or is this really restructuring the program that you have out in your country to look at regional impacts, to think about conflict prevention, to link relief and development?"

If we really had time to think about a results framework on the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative, we would have to be sophisticated about measuring results. We are not there yet as an agency. We need help from people who have thought through this process. It's a dilemma. The countries in the initiative are "good performers," and they're sending in great R2s. For example, the Rwanda program was seen as an excellent development partner with excellent results, but absolutely all results were destroyed because we were watching the wrong ball.

On the other side, some relief programs measure only keeping people alive, which is quite understandable. But are they always to be dependent, or at some point are we moving toward some kind of sustainable mode where

they can keep themselves alive? If we take the principles of this initiative seriously and worry about impacts, we have to think about results. What are the results if short-term economic gains are destroyed by civil war? What are the results of keeping children alive with no education systems, no way of self-sufficiency, and total dependence on free food aid?

Breaking Down Barriers That Inhibit Teamwork

Dick McCall

When I first started working on the Hill, the senator I worked for was chairman of the African Affairs Subcommittee, so my first voyages overseas were to Africa. Since those days I have seen a marked change in the region, particularly Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and Rwanda. The quality of the leadership and the intellectual capacity is unbelievable. I am struck time and time again about the seriousness with which they are looking at their problems and their understanding of the nature of what has precipitated a continual cycle of crisis in that region. These are extraordinarily capable and bright people with exciting visions. I am also struck by the tremendous quality and dedication of the people we have on the ground. People from the various organizational units—OFDA, Food for Peace, and so on—work as teams with an integrated sense of purpose and mission.

However, it is frustrating that, despite the crises in the region, USAID is not giving the people on the ground the tools to do the job. Fundamental to crisis prevention and management is food security. Right now our missions are getting directives from Washington to increase child survival and family planning programs. There are no food security resources. We have not empowered the missions to encourage the creativity in any way, shape, or form. As a matter of fact, the whole contracting and procurement process is more cumbersome than it has ever been.

Many donors are going through the same problems: cutbacks and lack of support from key constituencies. We seem to be unable or unwilling to look at crisis prevention, management, and mitigation in an integrated framework and to bring people together to look at what is required to deal with these problems more effectively. If we can't do that, I think it will eventually be the death knell for USAID.

If development professionals can't figure out some way to break down the barriers that separate us and to look at resources as not owned by one particular bureau or one particular donor agency, then ultimately we're all going to suffer the consequences.

Discussion Session

Integration and Performance

Participant: There's a lot of energy and time spent at the top on integration, but if we asked how integration fits into the objectives and performance of the deputy administrators or the administrator, I'm afraid I know what the answer would be. There are policy questions right at the top of the agency in terms of integration.

McCall: I agree. All too often you can get agreement on identifying the problems, but when it comes time for the rubber to hit the road, all of a sudden we're not there. It's as much a problem among the bureaus as at the top. We've got to tackle that problem.

Dealing Honestly with Agendas

Joan Atherton: My question is on the issue of representativeness in the consultation process. You talked a lot about governments versus civil society, but where we actually draw the line is national versus local government, which we tend to put in the civil society box. There's always an issue, particularly in the Africa region, of agendas, of political economy. I was wondering how you came to terms with the potential agendas of the various interlocutors with whom you consulted.

Gayle Smith: That's a good question. I've met very few people in that region or in this building or country that don't have agendas. Some agendas are good, some are not so good. One of our weaknesses in consultation is that we can't consult very well with farmers. At the end of the day we lack the language skills or the ability to go out and get dirty and dusty and also, quite frankly, sufficient commitment that that's who we should consult with. In the case of the initiative, our emphasis was more on government than it was with nongovernmental organizations. As a governmental organization, we saw the governments of the region as our primary connection.

In terms of weighting agendas, those of us who were involved in the consultation had a good sense of where our interlocutors were coming from. Some governments in the region, for example, went along with consultation big-time, because in their inside pocket is a list of \$40 million worth of projects or because they needed to get on the good side of the United States. We were pretty cognizant of that. We also understood the NGO agendas as well, because the missions gave us a great deal of guidance. These were all people they had worked with. It's hardest to read the private sector in some countries. They've got an agenda as the private sector clear and fair. Also, many of them are political animals. There's a dynamic between private sector and public sector.

What we tried to do was to record what everybody said. We composed a long reporting cable on each consultation and a final report which grouped together common themes. We got a fair amount of bull from people—not that we don't ever give that out—but we also got a lot of honest feedback.

Holly Wise: It was a terrific consultation process across the board. We hit most of the representative groups. Where we still have some more to do is with private-sector folks. We've built some good government-to-government bridges, and we're doing some important work now with NGOs. There's a lot of potential for working with private-sector folks. They've benefited from conflict, but they also have a lot at stake in terms of a stable region. We haven't fully exploited that in terms of looking for ways to pull the region together. The regional office in Nairobi has done some initial work on looking at trade barriers, on trying to join up trade associations and other representative groups.

Gayle Smith: Interestingly, one of the things that came up in the consultations, both from governments and NGOs, was that we needed to consult more with the private sector in the region, and in the United States.

If we are going to treat people as equal partners, we must be mindful of all agendas, including our own. Let's be frank. There's some good PR in this initiative. It's gotten a very high profile in a number of fora. Some of our agendas are not solely benefiting the peoples of the Greater Horn of Africa.

Predicting Conflict

Bonaventure Niyibizi: I am from Rwanda. I would like to make a comment on what Pat Rader said on Rwanda, how we made the judgment in the 1980s that, in economic terms, Rwanda was doing well, compared with other countries in the region. We were working on socioeconomic indicators, which were very good. But we did not see if the situation was going to be stable. We did not analyze the constitution, for example. We did not include in our analysis that several hundreds of thousands of people had left the country in the 1960s and were still outside. We did not analyze the impact of the internal policies in the 1970s and the 1980s. We ignored very important data, and the result was that Rwanda exploded.

I guess the next crisis is going to be in Zaire, in Burundi, in Uganda, in Tanzania, and in Nairobi. It's going to be much greater than what we saw in 1994. Are we going to react on an ad hoc basis in 12 months, in 18 months, in three years? What kind of approach can we take right now to prevent the crisis? All indicators point to a crisis. How will we react to it?

The Role of USAID Assistance Programs in Facilitating Local Cooperation

Bobbie Herman: Could you give some concrete examples, of how USAID assistance programs are facilitating cooperation, especially at the local level, to bring about the values changes and the ideational changes necessary for dealing with conflict prevention as a necessary precondition for sustainable development? What sort of strategies are we pursuing in order to make those linkages?

Dick McCall: I don't think we have very effective strategies. Europe and the New Independent States, as we're seeing with Chechnya and other areas, is rife with the potential for major explosions. I don't think our strategies for the region take that into consideration. In the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative we are trying to look at the fault lines within any given country and ensure that our present interventions—and the interventions of other external actors—do not cause tensions within society to erupt into violence. Certainly the French had a major role in Rwanda. Their policies were working at cross-purposes with what we were trying to do on the development side.

Somalia is a good example of where the donor community came together and identified in a limited way what was feasible. We put together a strategy that engaged Somalis at the local level with stringent conditions that imposed responsibility and accountability. There are areas in Somalia where that has worked very well.

We had a meeting yesterday at the Carter Center with the key international players in the great lakes region. I found it very frustrating that everybody acknowledges that the tensions are increasing. But we can't develop a policy that honestly deals with the fundamental problem. These are not refugee camps. These are safe havens for people with genocidal intentions. It's reminiscent of the humanitarian effort that basically saved the Khmer Rouge. And this is a modern-day Khmer Rouge right now, operating out of camps under the auspices of a humanitarian effort to save refugees' lives.

Gayle Smith: With respect to the initiative, there are very few programs designed or intended to find ways for people who are at odds with one another to get along. We've got to recognize that there's a limit to what USAID can and cannot do, and also to what it should or should not do. Neither USAID nor other donors in Somalia came up with a program to get two from each clan to

agree. What we were able to do to a limited extent was to foster responsibility and accountability in the hopes that that might trigger something else. We are trying to do three things. The first is to make sure we are not contributing to the problem. The second is to address questions of access to resources. A lot of the conflicts in the Greater Horn of Africa are resource based. Ethnicity is often a manifestation of a larger class or economic issue. Water rights are key in many of the countries, grazing rights, land tenure issues. Third, we should promote, provoke, and encourage an analysis at the international donor level that is deeper and more comprehensive than what we've done before. We did that in Somalia, with some success. We are trying very aggressively to do it in Rwanda. We're trying to say to the international community, "Okay, let's all wake up. Let's all agree on a common analysis of the problem and look at what our individual and collective policies are to see how we can respond." Only at that level can we address contradictions like the fact that our humanitarian food aid is feeding people who are planning for the next round of genocide.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

An Updating Communication—One Year Later

Gayle Smith: "In March of last year, IGADD became IGAD, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development, and signed a new Charter which includes a mandate for cooperation in the fields of food security, regional infrastructure and policy, and conflict prevention and resolution. A new Executive Secretary was appointed and is now staffing a re-organized Secretariat.

"In November 1996, USAID and State joined other of IGAD's partners at the official launching and heads of state summit. The international partners there indicated their intention to form a Joint IGAD Partners Forum to coordinate activities and efforts by IGAD and its international partners.

"Within USAID, the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative strategy has been in development and is aimed for completion by this summer. It is a challenge in that it includes multiple bureaus and, while following general USAID guidance, represents a new kind of strategy document given the nature of the initiative. REDSO/ESA now has a Greater Horn of Africa Initiative Coordination Unit, and is coordinating both the strategy development and the implementation of the Horn of Africa Support Project (HASP) with IGAD. Bilateral missions have been increasingly active, and initiative principles are reflected in several USAID strategies in the region."

E-Mails Received Before the Forum Was Held

As soon as the topic for Forum 18 was announced ("**What Does Citizen Participation Mean in a Regional Development Effort**"), e-mail began arriving.

Frank Pavich: "I spent seven years in the Horn of Africa, 1975-77 as a Disaster Relief Officer in Ethiopia, and 1981-86 as Refugee Coordinator in Somalia.

"Working with local groups on survival problems is a major way for outsiders to play a meaningful role. The effort must be gradual, focused on the real needs (defined by the population), educational and above all, participatory. Concepts like civil society will develop as things settle down in the Horn and government and governance are respected.

"The Horn of Africa—Somalia, Northern Kenya, the Ogaden (Ethiopia) and Djibouti—is populated primarily by Somali clans. While the clans do not always agree with one another, they do cooperate in the pursuit of common interests, as for example resisting a common enemy, and survival during times of natural disaster. . . .

"Too often in the past, relief and rehabilitation efforts in this region have turned people into welfare recipients, and their leaders into blackmarketeers eager to keep the disaster rolling. This approach has to be avoided. The clans need assistance to organize their own means for dealing with environmental problems, finding the means to reduce malnutrition and improve community

health, and formulating environmentally friendly economic development strategies ("African Ownership"). . . ."Regional cooperation starts at the diplomatic level and works its way down. Like the people, the four countries involved all share the same problems. Here is where 'cooperation' can start, but don't look for too much to happen in this regard in this century."

Zdenek Suda: "Concerning our image of civil society and multi-party democracy, the case of Uganda comes to mind, and, more specifically, the issue of Yower Museveni's concept of 'Movement Politics' and aversion to party politics. How does one deal with a regime which is essentially the salvation of a country that was mostly dead, but that does not want to hew to our idea of competitive democratic party politics? How hard do you pressure them? Should you pressure them at all, if they are generally non-abusive of their citizens (except maybe some, such as the "Lord's Army" operating out of Sudan and terrorizing the north) and adopt responsible economic policies? The NRM regime has restored property confiscated from Asians under Amin, and at no small political cost. Criticism of the government is tolerated. The economy is beginning to recover, to the point of being able to export food to Kenya. Given the desperate AIDS situation, the political, social and economic devastation from Obote, Amin, Obote, Okello, and the rest, and recurrent drought and unrest in the north, and now, attacks from Hutu gangs from Zaire, should we be harassing Uganda about their less-than-pure democracy? It's something to think about, anyway (much of the same could be said about Ethiopia and Eritrea)."

May Yacoub: "What the Environmental Health Project is doing in Tunisia is related to the topic of your next forum. The objective of the 'CIMEP' program (Community Involvement in the Management of Environmental Pollution) in Tunisia is to change the behavior of municipalities so that their plans address the environmental health conditions of the peri-urban neighborhoods rather than specifying how many pumps can be built with a budget line item. The closest we could approach civil society at the early stages of the project was the Comite de Quartier, which is really the extension of the Ministry of Interior into the grassroots. In time, the members of the Comite de Quartier decided that the households who live in poor environmental health conditions should form their own committee to manage neighborhood level interventions to address environmental health problems.

"This effort is now being regionalized. Stakeholders from the Secondary Cities Project of USAID/Egypt are coming to see how CIMEP was carried out in Tunisia. Based on what they see and how they interpret it to their context, they will be developing a vision and work plan that will transform the current "complaints departments" of the utilities to "consumers departments." This regional experience, although it varies from one country to the next, is still a frame of reference that is closer to the context than if the Egyptians were to visit Chapel Hill or New York where the institutional experience is very different."

Ramon Daubon: "Civil society is more than just the many organizations that compose it; it is a space where citizens can deal with public issues separate from the government (the only legitimate SINGLE "public" institution). It is where citizens can act out their role beyond the electing of a government. So, civil society becomes that action and interaction and jostling and debating and community action and lobbying and advocating and marching and protesting and all that other stuff that citizens ought to do to deal with public issues. By its nature, then, civil society, taken as a whole, is a very NATIONAL 'thing'. Special interests within civil society (business, environmentalists, etc.) can and should go beyond their borders and deal with counterparts in other countries on regional issues, but it's hard for whole 'civil societies' to do it.

"In the Caribbean, where an official process of economic integration has very slowly progressed for 25 years, business and environmental/NGO networks are providing a great integrationist thrust on their own and pushing against the limits of official integration. I believe that this pressure will give impetus to official integration far beyond what the official planners had been able to achieve on their own . . . a case of citizens leading their governments along (as perhaps should be the case!). Anyway, I think it's possible to further encourage and facilitate these non-official linkages and thus encourage integration—a "regional" issue par excellence—via the non-governmental route."

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore

how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development

Participation Forum (No. 19):

Where Can a Broad Consultative Process Lead in a Global Program?

May 16, 1996

Redesign of the Global Bureau's HIV-AIDS strategic objective has involved participation on a global scale of missions, international PVOs, HIV-AIDS advocacy groups, host-country governments and nongovernmental organizations, technical giants in the field of AIDS, and representatives of ultimate "customer" representatives. Jacob Gayle, Chief of the HIV-AIDS Division of the Global Bureau's Center for Population, Health and Nutrition (G/PHN); Holly Fluty, manager of the participation process for the HIV-AIDS strategic objectives; and Messaye Girma, participation consultant with Team Technologies and Health Technical Services, were the presenters in the 19th session of the Participation Forum. They outlined the main features of their participatory approach and offered answers to such questions as who should be involved, how the benefits of participation can be assessed, what stakeholder commitment means, and what resources are required for promoting global-scale participation. Their approach cut new ground but also drew on years of experience with participation in many old USAID projects. Nils Daulaire, DAA of the Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (PPC), kicked off the session.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Global Participation for Global Impact

Nils Daulaire

Few development challenges are more pressing or more all-encompassing than the HIV-AIDS epidemic. Twenty million are infected today, and an expected 40 million will be infected by the end of the century. Projections run as high as 100 million infected by the second decade of the 21st century. The epidemic has gotten through just about every net we have put out for it. We don't have a good technical fix on it. It's a disease which impacts as much on the social network and social fabric of countries in the developing world as it does on individuals. Because of its complexity, both its viral complexity and its social complexity, it has posed development challenges that go beyond anything we at USAID have seen before.

The program which will be described today is trying to work on a global level to achieve a lowering of the trajectory of increased cases. We hope to be able to measure impacts which will have enormous meaning for the lives of millions of people.

With HIV-AIDS, more than with many other health issues, we have to go well beyond simple medical models. We have to examine the network of social relationships and find out why people behave in certain ways and what can effect behavior change. That cannot be done by making a decision at the top level for a global program and applying it worldwide.

An effective program will be built on an understanding of its customers. This is doubly challenging because many of these customers don't know they are customers right now. Most of the 80 million people or so who will become infected in the next 20 to 40 years haven't the slightest idea that they're at risk. So we have to build our customer base.

Developing a global HIV-AIDS effort differs from many other participatory processes by the very fact that the program is trying to have global impact. For instance, it's relatively easy to define who

to reach out to, who to draw into the process, in a child survival program, where the principal customers are known and where activities take place at a country level. But the global HIV-AIDS effort deals with 20-30 countries, thousands of direct collaborators, and millions of potential beneficiaries.

Listening for Meaning and Understanding the Context

Jacob Gayle

Before I begin I would like to tell you a little story about Bobby Joe and his horse, Wrangler. Bobby Joe and Wrangler were crossing Roosevelt Bridge, when a reckless driver hit Wrangler and knocked both Wrangler and Bobby Joe off the bridge. They somehow made it to the shore with the help of the police. Later, Bobby Joe took the driver to court, asking for a big award in compensation for his injuries. During the hearing, the judge stated that the police on the scene had heard Bobby Joe say, "I'm doing just fine, thank you very much." "Were you fine or were you not?" asked the judge. Finally he let Bobby Joe tell his story. Bobby Joe explained that after the accident the horse eventually washed ashore. A policeman came by and said, "This horse is definitely in major pain. I will take him out of his misery." With that he pulled out a gun and shot the horse dead. Then he turned to Bobby Joe and said, "And how are you?" Obviously, Bobby Joe said, "I'm doing just fine, thank you very much."

The moral to that story is twofold. Number one, we have to listen for meaning. And number two, we have to understand the context of what people are saying. These are also two of the lessons we have learned through our consultative process to design a global HIV-AIDS program: listening for meaning and understanding the context of those involved.

A Culture of Inclusion

Working in the area of HIV, we have inherited a culture and an expectation of inclusion in discussions, in deliberation, in the direction of programming efforts, and in the evaluation of the activities. This culture was born very early in the epidemic out of what many people might consider guerrilla warfare. Our offices were taken over by organizations like Act Up. That and other experiences taught me how important it is to bring all concerned people to the table for HIV planning.

To that end, we, as the U.S. government, not only took a leadership role in convening 41 other countries, but also committed ourselves at the December 1994 Paris AIDS Summit Declaration to be as participatory as possible in our activities and interventions and in planning and evaluating them. In the spirit of what I call the HIV culture, we felt that the participation of all involved was vital.

Messaye Girma and Holly Fluty will describe the joys and sorrows, pains and agonies, thoughts and second thoughts that were involved in trying to understand who our customers, stakeholders, and partners are and how we include them in and obtain their commitment to a global effort.

Philosophy of the Design for Participation

Messaye Girma

The premise of the participation strategy was that stakeholder commitment and technical quality lead to the high performance of a portfolio -- in this case, the HIV-AIDS portfolio. The vision for our strategy was for stakeholders not just to come to agreement, but to become committed. Our approach can be summed up in one sentence: People support what they help create. Our participation strategy was to transcend consultation and create meaningful involvement.

Features of the Participatory Process

Whose commitment do we want? To identify stakeholders, we used a service triangle, with suppliers, customers, and "critical affectors" of a product or service at the three corners. Critical affectors include partners and those that can influence, both positively and negatively, the relationship between suppliers and customers.

In our case,

- the **development objective** was drawn from the mission statement of the PHN Center: the provision of quality field support, global leadership and research services;
- the **beneficiaries** (or "customers") are USAID missions and bureaus; host country national HIV-AIDS control program managers, and PVOs/NGOs working in HIV-AIDS;
- the **provider** of the services is the HIV-AIDS Division of the PHN Center; and
- the division's **partners** are multilateral and bilateral donor agencies working in HIV-AIDS, and, within USAID, PPC.

The participation process we wanted has four requirements: it must (1) generate commitment rather than agreement; (2) minimize risk by allowing periodic evaluation, correction, or improvement; (3) be transferable for use by customers and partners for their own strategic planning; and (4) build on already existing experience and best practices within USAID.

According to organizational behavior and social psychology theory, six major factors engender commitment:

- a commonly valued objective;
- collaboration
- stakeholder representation
- shared decision-making ("empowerment")
- a quality product; and
- feedback to and from stakeholders on process outcomes

When we designed the roadmap for our participation strategy, we incorporated all of those factors in a logical sequence.

Phases of the Participatory Process

The participation strategy was to be implemented in three phases.

The first phase—"Visioning"—was intended to describe the set of necessary and sufficient objectives in HIV-AIDS and produce a stakeholder-created Universal Framework of Objectives (UFO) for HIV-AIDS. This UFO was created by the collaborative effort of hundreds of stakeholders (representing the service triangle described above) at a series of town meetings and workshops in Beijing, Chiang Mai, Jerusalem, Kampala, Santiago and Washington. The creation of the UFO was a landmark achievement in that it reconciled previously competing perspectives such as biomedical versus behavioral approaches.

The second phase—"Focusing"—was intended to identify which of the UFO objectives should be pursued by G/PHN. In two workshops, stakeholder representatives selected a subset of objectives that G/PHN should include in its strategic objectives through the analyses of USAID's comparative advantage and the application of multivoting strategies.

The third phase—"Planning"—was intended to decide how best to achieve the objectives selected in the previous phase. A core team of major institutional stakeholders and USAID refined the results framework and created the results packages that would constitute the PHN's HIV-AIDS portfolio.

The Outcomes of the Approach

Stakeholder Commitment. There is no question that the participation process achieved customer and partner commitment to G/PHN's strategic plan for HIV-AIDS. The main elements of the plan were presented at:

- USAID Health Officers' meeting in Nairobi
- National Council for International Health in Washington; and
- XI International Conference on HIV-AIDS in Vancouver.

In each case, the stakeholders were able to identify their contributions to the design of the strategy; they evidenced a sense of co-ownership over the plan and reported their commitment to its success. In Vancouver, both the strategy and the participatory process by which it had been designed received a standing ovation from the assembled international stakeholders and experts in HIV-AIDS. There was evident a "crescendo of commitments" by increasingly specific groups of stakeholders to increasingly specific outcomes throughout the implementation of the participatory process: to the UFO in phase 1; to G/PHN's share of that UFO in phase 2; and finally, to G/PHN's strategic plan in phase 3.

Demand-responsive Design. The strategic objective plan is very responsive to the demands of G/PHN's customers. Every major theme that arose through the participation process was incorporated as a result, or as a cross-cutting theme, in the strategic objective plan. All results or cross-cutting themes have performance indicators associated with them, thereby assuring the accountability of PHN for their achievement.

High Technical Quality. Several features of the design of G/PHN's strategic objective plan for HIV-AIDS made it a quality product.

- The strategic objective plan, or results framework, describes a **holistic strategy** that is specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, and time-bound. Further, G/PHN has made a commitment to treating this results framework as a single strategy through improved programmatic coordination between itself and its customers and partners, and improved technical (horizontal) coordination between its implementing agencies.
- The strategic objective itself acknowledges the **pivotal role of field-level partners** in translating G/PHN's services into greater and more sustainable impacts on the epidemic. HIV-AIDS is a development issue as well as a public health issue, and effective responses will include the provision of basic care services for the infected and affected, the protection of the rights and dignity of especially vulnerable communities, and the empowerment of local actors so that they may be better able to respond to a pandemic that is here to stay.
- The chosen results represent those **programmatic choices** that maximize both the impact on the epidemic, and PHN's comparative advantages in HIV-AIDS.
- HIV-AIDS is here to stay, and **sustainability** is therefore emphasized as a result. Sustainability will be achieved to the extent that organizations working in other areas broaden their portfolios to include HIV and AIDS work; commercial firms provide information and services to their workers; and NGOs dedicated to HIV-AIDS are able to broaden their funding base and deepen their management skills. PHN, by virtue of USAID's experience and relationships with U.S. PVOs, the private sector, and the international networks of NGOs working in HIV and AIDS, is well-placed to take a leadership position.

Will G/PHN's HIV-AIDS portfolio be characterized by an expanded and more coordinated response to HIV-AIDS as a consequence of this participatory approach? It is too soon to tell. However, if the outcome-level achievements described above are supplemented by a participatory, flexible, and responsive management system during implementation, it is not unreasonable to expect that joint programming of the sort described above, mission buy-ins to the HIV-AIDS strategic objective, and aggressive donor coordination will increase over current levels.

Best Practices and Remaining Questions

Holly Fluty

This huge effort has been built on best practices. Much of our approach to developing and implementing the participatory process wasn't necessarily brand new, although it may have been applied in a new way or revamped. When I think about what has been learned through the agricultural extension experience in community networks; the distance learning from the education sector; capacity building from the PVC Child Survival Grants Program; community mobilization from the environmental sector; social marketing, which USAID pioneered; policy and advocacy tools; as well as the huge issue of empowerment of women, we certainly can apply those lessons and not necessarily reinvent them.

Nevertheless, we did use some innovative techniques which I think are worth mentioning. In particular, in the Washington town meeting in phase 1 of our process, we used the "open space" technology in which a workshop agenda is determined by the participants rather than by the organizers or facilitator. As a result, a wealth of topics that we had not considered appeared as foci for discussion, such as the role of kinship systems in prevention and care interventions. This was new for me. Not setting an agenda was rather risk-taking and difficult to explain. The common question was, "Well, what are you going to find out?" We knew the type of information we were going to find, but not exactly what the information was going to be.

Listening and Asking for Feedback

It was very interesting to listen to what other people were saying but sometimes difficult to respect the information. Active listening and respecting the information are a lot more difficult than one might think. However, we gained increasing respect for stakeholder input because the technical "giants in the field," as we called them, confirmed many of the themes that stakeholders were voicing. A skill that we had to develop was that of active listening.

While the participation plan was still being drawn up, I showed it to a fellow friend in the agency. Her comment was, "It's too top-heavy. It's still too Washington-based. You're still in the driver's seat, you're still trying to get the information." While I obviously thought that we had produced a beautiful product, I realized I had to listen. As a result, to actively involve the missions, we developed a tool kit for them using the open-space technique. It was presented as an opportunity to learn a new technique and as a way of eliciting information about what we were doing as well as about what the missions were doing.

Another aspect of listening is asking for feedback. I sent an E-mail out to all of the PHN missions about this Participation Forum and asked for comments. I only received one, and it was negative: Washington does not provide feedback on the results of the planning activities. I hate to admit it but this comment is right. We have relayed information on what we are doing and how we are doing it but have not been systematic about providing feedback on what happened and why. It's a lesson about participation. Don't ask people for information unless you get back to them on how you use that information. We all believe in this principle, but documenting outcomes takes a huge amount of time, and we haven't been as systematic about it as we should have been. At 6:30 in the evening, when I really don't want to put in an eleventh hour, it's tough to go that extra mile.

Working on a High Performance Team in a Learning Organization

I have lived the thrill of being on a high-performance team: a team with esprit de corps, with a common purpose. The team is made up of specialists in different fields but all are committed to a common goal. Team members aren't always trying to push their own agenda but are working together cooperatively. Once USAID staff have a taste of that, they always want it for everybody else and continually seek new opportunities for high-performance teamwork.

It's no small task to achieve real cooperation in this agency. If there are six USAID people in a room, there are seven opinions. USAID people are strong, committed, and passionate, but when they are able to set their own opinions aside and get to the seventh opinion—the team opinion—it helps make up for the difficulties of working in an agency that is being scaled down.

We made mistakes as we were implementing the participation strategy, but always made the effort to learn from them and to do things better the next time. We, as a team, acted, learned, achieved, and had fun.

Open Questions

Some major questions are still unanswered.

Number one concerns information: who needs to know what, when, and how much?

The culture of USAID is that everybody wants to know everything. Deciding who needs to know what and when affects empowerment, teamwork, and results orientation. There are no guidelines to rely on here.

I have learned that it is difficult to put aside my biases and my "filters" and to accept information provided by others as valid and worthy of inclusion. It is easy to talk about or to conceptualize, but difficult to do.

Another problem is how to incorporate your "product line" into people's lives when they may be interested in a completely different product line. USAID may be promoting a water system, but the community may be interested in jobs or roads, not water. We have been dealing with this dilemma as an agency forever and ever.

I have a real concern about the amount of time participatory planning takes. I can't get it all done. We are spending a huge amount of time in meetings. From a professional as well as a personal perspective, I have a real question on the return on the investment in participation. Has this process been worth it? Has it been worth my coming home and taking a deep breath and realizing that my to-do list is the same list that I left the house with, only it has more things on it? I don't know. It has certainly been worth it from a lot of different perspectives, but in terms of time and money, I'm not sure and won't know for three to four years.

Discussion Session

Feedback to Critical Partners

Carol Rice: Participation is arduous. It takes a long, long time to achieve. We are all convinced that it does result in better programming and more opportunities for people. But it's a hard road getting there, and the time it takes is enormous.

Feedback is critical. You have to cast a wide net and know when to reel it in. The important thing is feedback to those critical partners who put forth ideas and wondered why their ideas were not included.

Jacob Gayle: We have to grapple with the fact that we have turned to the world, literally, and

asked for their comments. When we take our strategic objective framework to the Global International Conference in Vancouver, some will say, "I spoke loudly, I spoke clearly, but I don't see myself on the universal objectives tree." We have to explain that in the process of participation, we may have heard and understood an idea quite well, but it was not reflected on the tree for some valid reason. Explaining that is the hard part.

Striving for a Multidisciplinary Approach

Fran Carr: The lengthy and comprehensive process that you've gone through in developing your plan raises a couple of issues. The first is the question of a multidisciplinary approach. No matter what the topic, we have to make sure that we make the best use of the different systems and experiences of the Agency. How did you choose the members of the team, and do they reflect a range of disciplines, to give the team, the benefit of shared experience?

Jacob Gayle: In the design of both the core team and the extended and virtual teams, we took into account not only the multidisciplinary and multisectoral needs as reflected in the discussions worldwide, but also the multidisciplinary needs in designing and implementation mechanisms. Hence, we felt it was very important to have the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Procurement, and other administrative and management bodies of the Agency as part of that team. In the beginning, we made presentations bureau by bureau, office by office, to explain what we were doing and to enlist involvement. We were able to get people from various specialties on our extended team and our virtual teams.

Elise Stork: I'm curious as to why there is no representative on the core team from the Bureau for Asia and the Near East, given current and projected seroprevalence in Asia.

Jacob Gayle: This is definitely a concern. Very soon, given the per-year increase in the epidemic, the annual incidence of infection in Asia will surpass that of Africa. For that, and many other reasons, of course, we turn not only to the Bureau for Asia and the Near East, but to all four regional bureaus for information and ideas and include bureau representatives on the core team. For very specific reasons, it was difficult for ANE to commit to core-team involvement. But we're involved with that bureau: they are helping us and hopefully we are helping them develop their strategic objectives.

Holly Fluty: This issue is difficult to resolve. There are only 24 hours in the day, and while I think many of us would like to sit on lots of teams and go to lots of meetings, we still have a job to do. It's just a reality. It hurts not to have an ANE representative on the core team, but it comes down to what can you do, where are your priorities.

Fran Carr: I know it takes a lot of time. Yet the multidisciplinary approach or lessons learned in what others have been doing is so critical in the long run. The question is whether or not you end up with a missing link. How can we share the lessons, be they research or some other types of programs in other areas, so that they are more available for people? There ought to be a proactive mechanism that will facilitate this process. It isn't just a matter of more information coming in on your E-mail. There has to be a better way.

Jacob Gayle: The Internet will be helpful in incorporating multidisciplinary lessons learned into what we're doing. We should get our information onto the Web site very soon. People need to see the universal tree that we keep referring to so that they can understand that this goes well past traditional definitions of health and really recognizes the multidisciplinary nature of our agency. If people can see the full picture, that might help them to identify what they can help us with. There is no way that we can have the kind of impact upon HIV that we want to have by thinking that our job is solely treating STDs, providing condoms, and trying to get people to change their sexual behavior. Life is a little bit more complicated than that.

This agency has great resources and should be able to fill in those other gaps. We've just got to know how to liaise better.

In the meantime, we've also got our E-mail address where people can speak back to us and let us know what it is they have to offer and to help. We are not shutting doors on anybody. We need all the help we can get.

Participation of NGOs

Elise Stork: The WHO Global Program on AIDS (GPA) elevated the role of indigenous organizations and HIV-AIDS service organizations in the national planning process. These organizations clearly fill a void that is sometimes left by government inaction, and they have clear roots in the affected community. PVO partners are working to help build up the capacity of indigenous groups. How do you see your ongoing participation with these three partners: the GPA, indigenous organizations, and PVOs?

Jacob Gayle: Because USAID is world leader in HIV prevention in developing countries, not only in terms of the bilateral activities but also in multilateral collaboration, our portfolio is split between the two, and we always have to look at what we are doing in both.

You mentioned the GPA, but since it closed the end of last year, I think you are referring to the joint United Nations AIDS program. Sally Shelton, the head of USAID's Global Bureau, is the chair of the board of that organization. Last summer, we were requested and seconded to Geneva to write their strategic plan. So that's one way we're collaborating.

In the Paris Summit on AIDS, the declaration that we signed committed us very strongly to working with indigenous organizations. The history of USAID activities in-country, especially those supported by field missions, has stressed collaboration with indigenous NGOs and community-based organizations. This is the only way that we're able to reach the so-called hard-to-reach population in a behavioral epidemic such as this in which we are dealing with dispossessed or almost invisible people. Even in the development and design phase, we've had people coming in from indigenous organizations to work with us.

Carryover from Design to Implementation

Anna Quandt: In a previous lifetime, I worked as a sociologist in an engineering firm. I was responsible for designing participation programs. During the design period, I could get a high level of commitment by getting the engineers involved in what I was doing and bringing them to meetings and introducing them to the actual villagers who were going to use the irrigation system. The problem was that then our design team went away, and it was very hard to see any carryover from what happened during the design team to the implementation team.

I tell this story because one of the concerns I've had about the Global Project on AIDS is that a number of years ago you put it all together into one big project. I don't know what your plans are for the future. But having managers on board who have learned everything that you've just been through and who are committed to it, should make implementation more effective. Are you going to have to go through the same level of investment when you start up a project? Have we put too much of this investment at the front load and not enough later on?

Jacob Gayle: If I can speak candidly, we are confronted by the staffing issue. Not only is it difficult to carry on the participation process while we are still managing our ongoing portfolio, but, also, in actuality, most of this work has fallen on one division, the HIV-AIDS Division within the PHN Center. This division went from thirteen people on the full-time staff to about nine in a twelve-month period. In the next two months there will be two or three more leaving. Given reductions in force and freezes on hiring and bringing people in, we're dwindling away at the very time that we need more people. That makes it difficult to know who the future managers will be. I agree with you, however, that all of our planning can go for naught if the future managers and leaders do not invest in it at this point.

Holly Fluty: I certainly don't have any answers on the issue of inheriting a contract or a cooperative agreement or a program that was designed by somebody else. When I inherit something, I don't inherit a lot of the philosophy and the background and the critical thinking that went into it. Our hope is to document the whys and the why-nots and explain the way in which decisions were made.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Ann Sweetser: Are you setting up a way of evaluating this process?

Jacob Gayle: We are incorporating monitoring and evaluation into almost every phase of what we do in the future. To that end, we're going to focus a full day on monitoring and evaluation in one of the technical input meetings discussed earlier.

Communications from the E-mail Bag

Regional Health Network in East and Southern Africa

Dick Sturgis: Where can a broad consultive process lead? No one knows!!

Sometimes when reading about USAID's renewed emphasis on the consultive process, it is easy to come away from the reading thinking that through a new ethereal development mechanism, all of the stakeholders, partners, would-be partners, and customers end up collectively concluding that SO1 and intermediate objectives 1, 2, and 3 represent "the way we should go." Tis not so! Has never been! Never will be!

At REDSO/ESA we have been building the Regional Health network over three years of step by step, insight by insight, recognition of the obvious, hard work, and the continual development of relationships. At present, the major players include the health ministries of 16 countries, a regional secretariat that represents 14 of those countries, two universities, a host of local NGOs, the active involvement of 10 USAID missions, approximately 12 Global projects, at least that many Global Bureau COTRs, the Africa Bureau (approximately 5 key players and one key project), and we are in the process of recruiting and incorporating major donors into the Network. Is it even remotely imaginable that one ministry, two COTRs, and the NGOs could conduct an easy (smooth and simple) consultive exercise among themselves and come up with SO1 and its IRS? Not a chance.

We believe the steps we have stumbled into and evolved are essential:

1) It is important to know where you want to go in the beginning. The broad consultive process does not discover the goal or objectives, but the pathways for getting there. The sooner that all players know the general ball game and the field on which they will have to play, the better. There are parameters. On one occasion I shared General Colin Powell's humorous comment with key personnel in a ministry of health. One time when asked why US forces did not invade Bosnia, Powell replied, "We don't do mountains, we do deserts." USAID does maternal and child health, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS. It does not do emergency medical care, i.e., ambulances and emergency wards, as was being requested by the ministry.

2) The consultive process is continuous, and this means—like it or not, with many partners—there will be changes, useful and important changes. For example, the Network has added the focus area on adolescent reproductive health and quality of care. However, post-abortion care, as obvious in hindsight as it is, did not come to the forefront until regional partners demonstrated the importance of this focus for the health of women and children and the costs to regional health systems.

3) Relationships based on trust are essential. They allow the process to move, hurdles to be removed or leaped, shared resources to be marshaled, and collaborative implementation to take place.

We have found that the concept is not the problem and the design is not the key; the potential for impact lies in the implementation. Relationships built in the process of "making it work," i.e., in implementation, provide the glue that binds the continuing consultive and collaborative process.

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development

The Participation Forum* (No. 20)

Bosnia: When Customers Tell Us What We Don't Want to Hear

January 23, 1997

The twentieth session of the Participation Forum builds upon some themes of past forums: participation where there is no time, what participation means in crises and disasters, and what happens when you listen harder. Presenters Mike Mahdesian of the Humanitarian Response Bureau and Jerry Hyman, formerly of the Europe New Independent States (ENI) Bureau and now with the Democracy Center in the Global Bureau, recounted just one small part of the story of USAID assistance in Bosnia. The focus was not on U.S. Bosnia policy, but, rather, on the ways USAID has found to identify and support local priorities, even when this means revising firmly held beliefs and opinions and rethinking programs. The discussion offered practical advice on listening, even when we don't like what we hear. Barbara Turner, Deputy Assistant Administrator for the ENI Bureau, framed the issues for the session.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Listening More Than Just Once

Barbara Turner

In my own work in the last few years, in Russia and the newly independent states (NIS), I learned that when there is no government to work with, USAID personnel are forced from day one to talk to a wide array of people. I don't mean to be suggesting that we don't have to work with the government. But we in USAID have a tendency to spend the limited hours that we have in the minister's office. We never seem to get out beyond official-dom. That's an interesting opportunity, because unfortunately, more and more of our assistance programs in the future are going to be aimed at situations of disruption and transition.

In Bosnia, by starting out essentially without a government, we were forced to work with other groups. Hopefully, we'll now try to institutionalize the process of bringing some of those groups in touch with their own government, easier said than done, but something we have to have as an objective. While it is not up to us to run the country, it is critical to try to get the government and nongovernmental groups talking to each other.

It's not good enough to listen once. To listen more than once may mean setting up a participation process so that participation will continue in some form. In Bosnia, some things we found out just six or eight months ago are probably already changing, not always for the better, in terms of what people want to do.

Turning Assumptions on Their Heads

Mike Mahdesian

One of the key things that I got out of my experience in Bosnia over the last three years was how important it is to listen to as many people as possible, because, quite often, U.S. policy imperatives or assumptions will clash with the reality on the ground.

U.S. policy in Bosnia started off supporting the Federation and then the Dayton accords. From my point of view at the Bureau of Humanitarian Response, U.S. policy also supported repatriation, the right of return; freedom of movement; a unified Bosnia; building Bosnian institutions; and, finally, jump-starting the economy so that a sense of normalcy could be brought back to the people of Bosnia. We wanted Bosnians to feel that peace is more important and valuable to their lives than military gains.

We found, though, when we listened to what was going on in Bosnia, that timing for the USAID programs sometimes is not in sync with U.S. policy imperatives and assumption. Bosnia was a case where many assumptions were turned on their heads.

Knowing When To Pull Back

My first experiences in Bosnia were in early 1994 when it was possible to believe in a separate peace within Sarajevo. My colleague Rick Barton went out to Sarajevo about a month or two after I had arrived to assess the situation. While he was there Gorazde was attacked by the Bosnian Serbs, and, within Sarajevo itself, there was increased sniper firing. In a meeting there with Barbara, myself, and Brian Atwood, Rick was describing the pinging sound of sniper bullets, which were hitting no more than a couple of hundred feet away. And at that point, Brian Atwood looked at Rick and said, "Rick, I don't think this environment is ripe for a transition at the moment." We wisely shelved the idea of a separate peace in Sarajevo.

Experimenting with Small Projects

In 1994, one of the great achievements of U.S. policy was creating a Federation between Muslims and Croats in Bosnia. Even though it existed more on paper than in reality, it changed the dynamics on the ground. We tried to see how we could support federal institutions and reconciliation in communities that were divided between Muslims and Bosnian Croats.

A multidisciplinary USAID team went out to Bosnia to look at various options. A big, thick study was written, and then we started to implement some of its proposals. We started experimenting with what we called "venture capital," about a million dollars' worth of small projects to test out the theory that the time was ripe for reconciliation between the Croats and Muslims within the Federation.

We created four criteria for green-lighting small projects. One was building Federation institutions; the second was multi-ethnic participation; the third was joint projects that would build physical bridges between communities, such as infrastructure projects; and the fourth was implementing projects in a way that builds on the democratic process. If we got two out of the four, we would green-light a project.

Some 30 projects were begun in various parts of the Federation. As things began to change during the summer of 1995, for example, the resurgence of Croatia and further gains made by the Federation army within Bosnia itself, suddenly the willingness of some of the participants in these reconciliation programs began to taper off drastically. In particular, the Bosnian Croats pulled back because they began to think that they would one day be part of a greater Croatia, and they suddenly became very wary of doing anything with the Federation.

Of the 30 or so projects, only six or seven were actually coming to fruition. Some of those were stopped at the last minute, not by the local people who participated in the design of the projects, but by central political authorities in Mostar or Sarajevo. Understanding that was very important for the future design of some of our projects.

The Gersonys' Iterative, In-Depth Listening

Before the Dayton negotiations started, Brian Atwood sent out two specialists, Bob and Cindy Gersony, to assess the feasibility of some quick-impact-type projects to help parts of a society recover immediately after a conflict. Brian wanted to explore how USAID could jump-start the economy in a post-Dayton environment in such a way that would further repatriation and normalcy inside of Bosnia.

Bob and Cindy Gersony spent three months going up and down Bosnia, talking to 400 or so people from all walks of life, government officials, intellectual elites, as well as people on the street.

In Washington the idea of using conditionality in our foreign assistance in the post-Dayton environment was being pushed. That is, U.S. foreign assistance would be a carrot or a stick, depending on how the localities behaved regarding cross-ethnic return, freedom of movement, and so on. I was supportive of using our assistance to achieve these purposes, but once I read the Gersony report and matched it with the reports we were getting back from our Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) projects, I learned that our assistance was not having an impact on the behavior of local officials. All politics in Bosnia were *not* local; all politics in Bosnia were central; and these were being controlled by the various entity capitals in Mostar, Sarajevo, and later in Celji.

We were thinking of supporting NGOs in projects with a reconciliation component. In other words, NGOs would have to go to the local communities and tell them that if they got involved in some reconciliation-type activities, they might get some assistance. That situation would be tantamount to NGOs' trying to conduct diplomacy when diplomacy really needed to be conducted by officials in the U.S. State Department. This was one of many reasons that we began to turn against using conditionality on a local level.

We began to realize as well that the time might not be ripe for making reconciliation the total focus of our program. Perhaps we should further other U.S. government aims, such as repatriation. What was realistic and possible at the time was repatriation in majority ethnic areas, not in minority return areas.

When questioned by the Gersonys, people first would say, "Oh, we miss our Croat or Muslim neighbors, and we think fondly of them." But when the assessors asked more in-depth questions, they heard people express resentment, if not outright hatred, for their neighbors for doing whatever it was that they had done. In fact, they did not want to live next door to their old neighbors at this time. They weren't ready for that. The passions were still much too raw. Again, that tracked with what we were getting back from some of the OTI experimental projects.

A More Realistic Approach

We began to craft a quick-impact program that would further repatriation, but do it in a way that was realistic.

We wanted a program that would build some physical space, and hopefully that would bring people home and have a chain reaction. We attempted to use local contractors to repair housing that was too damaged for a self-help type program. It would help jump-start the economy, and bring people who were staying in other people's residences in towns and cities back to the villages where they came from. That in turn would free up other space.

One of the six successful things that OTI projects had done was a shelter-repair project around the Kruevac area. The houses were built so well there that even attempts to burn them from the inside with phosphorus bombs did not succeed in destroying the structure. Homes were repaired, both Bosnian and Croat homes, and the people came back. But that was in the no-man's-land area, and it was in the interest of both sides that these people return. In other areas, it would probably backfire to try to push minority returns.

We tried to figure out the best way to repair these houses quickly because we had only a small window between the time the snows thawed in March and the time the snows came back in October. We had to be ready to go by mid-spring.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees had been pursuing a self-help program in which materials would be provided on the assumption that Bosnians are skilled and able to repair their own shelters. When the Gersonys asked people if they intended to rebuild or repair their own houses, everyone said, "Sure, that's what we plan to do." But if they were asked if they actually were going to wield a hammer and start repairing the roof, they said, "Oh, no. We'll just hire a local contractor. We'll oversee it and supervise it, but we'll hire a local contractor." In other words, the self-help project was just not going to happen.

Another assumption was that the best people to do housing were large contractors, and NGOs weren't staffed up to deal with large contractors. But in Bosnia, again, this assumption was turned on its head. The NGOs *had* staffed up. They had people that could build housing and small infrastructure. They knew some of the contractors; they knew the process of weeding out the good ones from the bad. We began to use the NGO model. It became the quickest approach. We completed over 2,500 shelters in the time that we said we would.

The Benefits of Listening

If we had not listened to the people on the ground, if our assessors had not kept asking questions to get beyond superficial answers, if our reporting had not been honest, even from people who ended up having their programs pulled out from under them, I think we would have made many mistakes and probably wasted a lot of money.

Diane La Voy: For the purposes of our discussion in a few minutes, let me pull out from your account two concrete methodologies for understanding people's views in a war-torn society. One is the "venture capital" idea: to offer to support people to do something they've identified, and to see what happens. The other is the iterative, in-depth interviewing approach used by the Gersonys.

Intellectual and Emotional Learning

Jerry Hyman

Bosnia is a place of dashed hopes, fairly large stakes, and assumptions overturned. A lot of things that we learned through participation, that OTI learned through the small projects and the Gersony trip and that we in ENI learned, were not new. It's that we learned them more in depth than before. We learned emotionally rather than just intellectually.

Four Realities

After the elections in September 1996, with the help of OTI, Susan Kazinski and I, Susan is with the USAID mission in Sarajevo, went around to three or four cities and tried to figure out what the elections foretold about the future of Bosnia and how our program could be responsive to the realities on the ground.

Four realities struck us at the end of that trip. All of them were things that we knew intellectually but not emotionally.

The first was that the election and the war leading up to it were about the shape of the state itself. In this respect Bosnia was unlike most other countries that USAID works in. Usually people contest who will control resources in a state whose borders are established and agreed upon. In Bosnia, the issue at stake was the nature and shape of the state itself, not merely who was going to control the political or economic resources of a "Bosnian state." The question was whether there would be a Bosnian state at all, and, if so, who would live in it and with what rights.

The Dayton accords provided the rationale for two very opposite views of what the future of Bosnia would be like. The Croat and Serb view was that, although there would be a Bosnian state, it would be a state of very limited powers. And the Croats and the Serbs would make sure that

those powers remained extraordinarily limited. The real power would reside in the lower-level entities, one of which was controlled by the Serbs and the other was a loose federation of Croats and Bosniacs. That's the level at which people's lives would be lived, at least politically and economically.

The view of the Bosniacs, on the other hand, was that the overarching state, not the two entities, was of prime importance. For them, Bosnia was a reality, although, to be sure, it consisted of two parts.

The point of the Dayton accords was to reconstruct a multi-ethnic, pluralistic Bosnia, but all three communities came to the same piece of paper with radically different visions of what that paper would hold for them in the future. Each party could find language in the accords for its own interpretation.

The second reality was that fear, not hope, not commitment, not passion, drove the September elections. One question we asked people was why the opposition did so poorly in these elections. Why had they done so much worse than expected? We were told that the same people who were there in 1990 had just been reelected, the same people who brought them the war were back in power. When asked how that had happened if it did not represent the will of the electorate, people responded that it was fear: the prisoner's dilemma. People in one community were unwilling to vote for the opposition party because they were afraid that people in the other community would vote for their nationalist party, rather than for their opposition. If one community split its votes and if the others kept all votes together, their nationalist parties would win. The community that cast some votes for the opposition would be divided for the next four years and would be on the outs, while the other communities would be unified. That was the rationale in each one of the three communities: the Serbs, the Croats, and certainly the Bosniacs. Each community voted its fears in response to what it thought the other community was going to do rather than what it thought was best for itself.

The third reality was the economic depression and its effect on people's visions of what they thought they could achieve politically and economically. They had an exaggerated notion of the value of their resources, especially their industrial resources, and each of the communities thought the others were trying to grab those resources away from them. The political life of Bosnia was dominated by the efforts of the three communities to create conditions in which they could keep those resources for themselves.

The fourth reality was the variation within subregions, or localities. We found out that there needed to be more latitude for local variations within the parameters of a general strategy than we had expected. There were differences within Republika Srpska and within each part of the Federation. We needed micro-strategies to respond to these variations.

Policy Impact of the Four Realities

The result of our trip was that after we'd listened to people, a number of our initial assumptions were turned on their heads. We assumed that we would be doing a lot of government institution-building after the elections. But the basic underlying political support for those institutions was not as strong as we presumed it would be. We concluded that this was not the right time to be emphasizing the institutions that were defined in Dayton and that were to be actualized by the elections. Rather, we needed to pay more attention to breaking the terror that people felt, breaking the fear, the isolation, and the control that the various central political authorities had over information. We needed to give people a stake in Bosnia itself by breaking down the isolation that had created so many misperceptions. So strengthening media became the number one priority in our strategy.

The second priority was to strengthen political parties as a vehicle for the expression of differing opinions. We wanted to make it possible for people to vote their hopes instead of their fears, and to have a more pluralistic political environment.

The third priority was civil society and the fourth was governance.

These priorities were actually a temporal sequence: what to do first and what second.

After we had listened to people from all three groups expressing their hopes and fears, the sequence that we had assumed we would be pursuing after the elections needed to be turned on its head.

Discussion Session

The Need for Political-Psychological Analysis

Joe Montville: I direct the Preventive Diplomacy Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). We have a big program in the former Yugoslavia focusing on religious communities, mid-level clergy, and religious lay people from all the faith traditions in Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia. We've been trying to help weave together the strands of civil society based on the commitment of these people to pluralism.

The more I hear about real-world experience on the ground, the more convinced I am of the necessity of integrated strategies that not only improve the cognitive learning that's served by independent broadcasting and media, but also pay attention to affective learning. What needs to be integrated into the grand strategies of USAID, State, and the World Bank is the capacity to tolerate softer interventions that have to do with affect, the burdens of history, the wounds, the lack of recognition.

The Serbs have a terrible problem with no one really recognizing their sense of loss over the centuries. And the Bosniac senior clergy on the Muslim side are resistant to an invitation from friendly third parties to all sit down around the table on an equal footing. The situation requires a profound political-psychological as well as developmental analysis. There needs to be a strategy where each activity reinforces the other. And this strategy must be developed, executed, and monitored in a participatory manner, with USAID and with the World Bank and other donors and NGOs.

Barbara Turner: Those of us that have worked in Bosnia would tend to agree with you. But making that idea operational is a lot easier said than done. At present our democracy efforts in USAID are under some criticism that we don't measure them enough. The nice thing about shifting to the housing project was that we could say, "X number of houses by Y date will cost Z dollars." It's very hard to quantify the reduction of fear. Such "touchy-feely" stuff is hard to sell to international donors. It also requires some staff on the ground to see that big mistakes aren't made. It is harder to mess up the construction of a house. But USAID and the State Department have a lot fewer people on the ground than we did in the past.

Rick Barton: Attitudes and behaviors are not particularly difficult to measure. Look at the dramatic changes in our society in the last 50 years and the huge impact of mass marketing on what we've decided we need on a daily basis to be a full-blooded American. Many methodologies that have been used by successful organizations to change our society might be used to get to the people of countries like Bosnia.

We should look for models that reach directly to people, not necessarily those that are institutional. As we used to say, if you have a kid with a problem, you can send him to summer camp or you can send him to a psychologist. USAID probably has to spend more time at the summer camps for the next couple of years, doing things, climbing the trees, dropping into the lakes, and seeing if that moves us ahead.

Diane La Voy: There is a natural overlap between thinking about what our strategy or policy should be and what instruments for participation can be used, including the "touchy-feely" stuff of listening to people to find out what is driving them. No matter what your strategy is, even if it's building houses, you need to know how to listen to people.

Matching the Pace and Scale of 'Reconciliation' to Reality

Landrum Bolling: I'm involved with Mercy Corps and Scottish European Aid in the project that Joe spoke of. I've been caught up, as an NGO official, with the efforts of a lot of well-meaning religious groups who have come to Bosnia over and over again during the last year. The people in the former Yugoslavia have become sort of weary with the delegations coming from fine academic and religious groups, trying to help.

I spent two days last April with a delegation of religious leaders from the United States who wanted me to take them around and introduce them to various local religious leaders, whom I had come to know quite well. And the spokesman usually started out by saying, "This is my sixteenth trip to Eastern Europe. I'm here on a mission of reconciliation, and I want to help you to achieve reconciliation." At the end of almost every meeting, I would walk away saying, "Oh, my gosh, these guys are not getting it!" There is a time and a place for all things, and the time had not come for "reconciliation."

The trips made to assess in-depth the attitudes on the ground provided a reality check. The heart of this reality was that reconciliation comes about very slowly, but we mustn't give up on it.

When I heard Gersony's briefing, I called my home office back in Portland, Oregon, and said, "Look, I haven't even unpacked my bags. I might as well go home," and they said, "Oh, no. If USAID has given up hope in reconciliation, we haven't. We've got a little bit of money. Stay there and try to do something." So I've been there for a year trying to do something.

What we decided to do was to start some workshops. We didn't call them "conflict resolution" or "conflict management." We called them workshops in "problem-solving." We started with our own staff. We had about 80 employees in the Tuzla area, mostly engineers and technicians who had been making housing and water supply repairs. The day of the first workshop fell on a nice Saturday when people wanted the day off to tend their gardens. I never had a more reluctant group of students sitting before me when the workshop was opened.

But, fortunately, we'd done enough listening on the ground and enough research about what their problems were. We came in with some scenarios of games to play as a part of the learning process to get them engaged. At the end of the day, they said, "When can we do another one?" and we've been doing others since then.

Now, this is an effort to promote civil society among people we have some natural contact with. We're not trying to reconcile Croats and Muslims, but on our staff there, we've got Croats, we've got Serbs, we've got Muslims all working together harmoniously, doing a job.

Jerry Hyman: It's hard to have to say to yourself, "Well, maybe some of the things we thought are wrong because our programs were premised on one set of assumptions, and maybe now they should be premised on another." Bosnia was particularly difficult because the issues challenged some fundamental beliefs of Americans. We believe that people should be treated as individuals and that we should have a pluralistic society. As an American, I was very reluctant to give up the idea that there could be a reunified Bosnia. To see the spirit of unity destroyed, not only in Sarajevo but all over Yugoslavia, was difficult, not merely because of our bureaucratic interests, but because of who we are and what we stand for.

Mike Mahdesian: It's important that we be ready for openings on reconciliation and other goals that the United States wants to pursue in Bosnia. There's a danger of not listening and of being too cynical and saying that reconciliation will never happen in Bosnia.

Barbara Turner: We have not given up on reconciliation in Bosnia. We are just taking different routes to it. One of the routes is the physical infrastructure route. For example, in building an integrated railroad system, you get railroad guys to begin to talk together, not about politics, but about the size of track. This kind of communication gets us a little bit closer to reconciliation.

Howard Sumka: I'd like to put a word in for how difficult it was to make physical improvements in Bosnia. ENI Bureau was designing a Municipal Infrastructure Program at about the same time that the Emergency Shelter Program, which Mike Mahdesian talked about, was being put together.

After a constructive and animated dialogue with various interested parties, the ENI Bureau concluded that, as important as it was for us to support the Federation, there were one or two things that really had to happen early on. One was to give people the sense that the war was over and good things were going to come with the peace. And some of those good things were having a house to live in, which was where the Emergency Shelter Project came in; having water and electricity; having a road that would allow people to get home during the worst weather; and so on.

Working with NGOs, civilian affairs representatives, and municipal governments, where they were functioning, we identified priority projects within the constraints that we were working with. We have a U.S. contractor that manages the operation but works with local construction firms.

We started the process with reconciliation and ethnic collaboration objectives but quickly realized that nothing would ever get built if we didn't move in a more directed way. Getting things going laid the basis for reconciliation activities. To build democracy people had to have a sense that their communities were once again going to be intact, that they were going to have a place to live and were going to be able to resume their normal lives.

The Reconstruction Finance Facility, which finances small business, has a similar objective: get the economy going again, provide opportunities for people to work, and that would be the basis for putting the society together. However, there is a chance that reconciliation will never come to the degree that we would have liked when we looked at the situation a year and a half ago.

We have looked for legitimate authority at the closest level to the people to identify projects and oversee implementation. That has meant working with municipal governments, identifying community groups, and getting demobilized soldiers working on small reconstruction projects. When we have had the opportunity, we've gone as close as we can to the people, who are the beneficiaries of these projects.

Listening Broadly and Repeatedly through In-Depth Interviewing

Bobby Herman: Listening is very difficult in war-torn, mobilized and highly politicized societies. How do you make sure that you are meeting with a representative cross-section? And how do you establish mechanisms for ongoing listening after you've done your initial assessments?

Mike Mahdesian: In the case of the Gersonys, I don't know how scientific their sample was, but it was voluminous. As I said, they talked to over 400 people. I don't think they got a balanced cross-section necessarily, but I think they talked to enough people to get a sense of public opinion.

Bob would never take a straight-up answer if he felt something was being held back. He would spend a couple hours with people and keep probing in a very friendly way. He doesn't try to put people on the spot, nor does he have a list of questions that he ticks off one after the other. The first thing he tries to do is create a sense of confidence and trust. Sometimes he would spend several days. He'd come back to a conversation, and find a way to dislodge what might be lying below the surface. I don't know if you can bottle that method.

Diane La Voy: Bob Gersony is an individual with considerable ability at pulling off, alone or as a two-person team, something that we usually associate with a very rigorous methodology, rapid or participatory rapid appraisal. Among the people who've written in a very straightforward manner about this type of appraisal is James Beebe, who used to be in the South Africa mission. (His article and the summary of a July 1995 workshop on rapid participatory appraisal, in which he was a presenter, are available from PPC.) He states that a rapid appraisal is by definition an intense and iterative process, as opposed to a survey. Questions are not decided upon ahead of time, so one of the sources of bias is immediately removed. The appraisal is usually conducted by a team, and team members work to keep each other honest. They ensure that the professional biases that one person brings are neutralized by a rigorous process of discussing each point among themselves after an interview. That is nearly what we have in the "Gersony method." Of course, with that kind of appraisal, the sample is not statistically valid, but rapid appraisal does offer a scientifically valid method of overcoming many of the pitfalls that are associated with surveying of any sort.

Sher Plunkett: Rapid appraisal is an exploratory method. It's useful for making quick decisions and a lot better than having no information or than simply applying a priori a cultural model. But it is the sort of thing that needs to be kept in place and done again and again until a foundation of knowledge is built up. Also, information from a rapid appraisal can be used to formulate a survey to formally test a hypothesis. So the main thing is not to rely on a one-shot effort but to follow up.

Barbara Turner: I do think we've been following up. We got folks out to do some in-depth interviews and meetings on people's views on the upcoming municipal elections. Debriefs on those were more informative to me about a whole lot of other things beyond how they were going to vote.

Charles Santangelo: Jerry, did you use the USIA polls to guide your efforts, and did you do your own polling?

Jerry Hyman: It was the USIA polls, which were excellent, that had led us to believe that the "nationalist" parties would do less well than they did and that the opposition parties would do better than they did. It was precisely the USIA polls that led us to ask people what had happened, why had the opposition done so poorly.

Paul Randolph: OTI learned that subregions across Bosnia had their own unique characteristics. It was not possible to design a sweeping program that would cover the entire country. As 1995 wound down and 1996 began, we began to establish regional USAID offices staffed with U.S. personal service contractors and local hired staff. That gave us feedback on a regular basis and allowed the USAID mission staff from Sarajevo to get out into the field easily.

So that's an ongoing way that we want to keep our finger on the pulse of individuals in the various regions across the country and report back so that programs can be modified if necessary.

Experiences in Other Countries

Eric Chetwynd: In Poland, I was recently helping a mission design a local government program. I had the opportunity to meet with a local mayor and ask him how he was doing with participation. He said, "Participation is very difficult. First of all, the city council doesn't know how to do it, and they feel that once they're elected, that's the end of their discourse with their constituents." Obviously, there's room for a special kind of consciousness-raising for elected politicians on how to carry the participation process beyond the election. The mayor also said that it was difficult to get the citizens interested in participating. As much as he wanted to engage them in dialogue, they didn't have the interest.

John Sheidler: I'm with Future Past, Inc., and this experience in Bosnia reminds me of some of our organization's experience in Ukraine. Listening to the customers, working with them, and trying to achieve what is possible, as opposed to what has been set out as the final policy objective, does feed back into the reformulation of policy.

Communications from the E-mail Bag

Dangers Inherent in a Policy Focus on NGOs

David Fishman (Georgetown University): "In some countries, like Bosnia, the consequences of war or totalitarian atomization or primitive levels of economic development or literacy rates may limit alternatives to working with the existing Government or building civil society from scratch at the grass roots. In other countries, however, a wealth of intermediate institutions, such as courts, parliaments, trade unions, research institutes, and the like, may be an important part of the developmental environment and must not be overlooked.

"Some of these institutions may be formally participatory in only a limited sense, e.g., courts, whose responsibility is to uphold the law regardless of the political will of the Government, or for that matter of NGOs that may be criticizing it. More often these institutions are partially or fully participatory, whether elected parliaments or organized trade unions, and potentially a much more powerfully organized expression of the popular will than externally funded NGOs. While their political perspectives may or may not be in tune with any given U.S. policy reform agenda, in the long run their flourishing is fundamentally supportive of broader U.S. policy goals of free and open societies. At the same time, if American assistance policy either ignores the potential of these intermediate institutions or, by overemphasizing the relationship with the executive branch, excludes them from consideration, it runs a substantial risk of doing serious damage to U.S. long-term policy goals and interests."

Continuing the Dialogue

Robert Herman: "I was hoping there would have been a little more discussion of the challenges and different techniques/methodologies required to do an appraisal in strife-torn, highly politicized environments where community (read ethnic) leaders do not necessarily speak for their "constituents." I was certainly pleased to learn more about Bob and Cindy Gersony's work. However, I think it would be helpful to offer more systematic/generalizable insights about listening to and eliciting information from a reasonably representative cross-section (no, it doesn't have to be a scientific random sample) in war-ravaged and political and socially divided societies. "I thought your observation about watching what people do to get a sense of their priorities is generally sound, although there is the potential danger of erroneously inferring attitudes from behavior."

"Lastly, Barbara Turner's point about iterative listening needs to be fleshed out further with respect to creating some mechanisms or processes to ensure ongoing monitoring of stakeholder views, particularly in volatile environments like Bosnia. It was not clear to me what steps were taken to ensure incorporation of stakeholders' views after the initial assessment and, perhaps, design phase."

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development

Participation Forum (No. 21):

Aligning the Purposes of Multiple Donors and Partners

Madagascar's Second Environmental Plan

February 27, 1997

In the twenty-first Participation Forum, two key players in the development of Madagascar's second environmental plan spoke in the first person about the lessons learned in what was a very broad participatory process. The two were Lisa Gaylord of the Madagascar mission and Michel Simeon of the World Bank's Africa regional office. Also participating was Phyllis Forbes, Deputy Assistant Administrator for PPC, who was involved in the earlier stages of the processes of donor collaboration and listening to customers as mission director in Madagascar six years ago.

Participants were asked to consider how the Madagascar experience spoke to such fundamental questions as: Does a collaborative participatory process result in better planning and decision making; and can collaboration among international and national institutions help empower the people of the country?

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

What Participation Really Looks Like

Phyllis Forbes

Madagascar always has held a place in the hearts of people who care about our environment because it has such unique flora and fauna, and people are so concerned about preserving it. When I went out as mission director, the World Bank was beginning what would become the precursor to an Africa-wide effort: to prepare a joint donor-government environmental action plan. The Africa Bureau was supportive of this experimental effort. In the beginning, we didn't know what a participatory environmental program would look like. When I arrived in Madagascar, the government had just refused outright the Duke grant. This was a big problem because USAID/Washington expected us to obligate the money in the next few months. So I went to see the government official who had refused to approve the grant. I thought he was going to be terrible, but he said to me, "Well, madam, this is the first I have seen of this grant, and if we're supposed to be working together, I want a chance to take a look at it." That seemed to make a lot of sense. Ultimately, the grant was strengthened.

I tell that story because at the time, everybody thought we *were* engaged in a participatory process. But now that we *are actually* engaged in it, we have discovered what participation really means. For example, in a mid-course meeting of the SAVEM Project (Sustainable Approaches to Viable Environmental Management), which has been one of USAID/Madagascar's flagship environmental projects, all of the Malagasies who were interested in the environment practically shouted us out of the room. That gave us an inkling that things were not on a good track. We went back and asked them, "What is this? What would you like to see?" These questions invited deeper involvement than just asking, "What trees do you want planted?" or "What way do you want to save the lemurs?" Participation is involving people intimately in the development of a program or action plan.

Planning for EP2: A Participatory Process

Lisa Gaylord

I have been working with the National Environmental Action Plan for going on seven years. The participatory process of developing the plan was not just a one-shot effort, but a process that went on for two years.

The Problem and the Response

Madagascar is an economy largely based on renewable natural resources. A high level of environmental degradation due to soil erosion and deforestation is threatening the country's rich biodiversity. There are three primary causes: population increase, poverty, and the low level of agricultural technology, which results in extensive use of slash and burn methods—probably one of the primary pressures being put on the country's natural resource base.

In 1987, the Madagascar government prepared the first National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), which resulted in the promulgation of an environmental charter in December of 1990. Since this was the first environmental action plan in Africa, it put Madagascar at the forefront. In 1991 the NEAP was launched.

The NEAP is divided into three five-year phases. EP1, which was just completed at the end of 1996, was the first five-year phase. The next five-year phase, EP2, will go to the year 2001. During this phase the experiences and lessons learned in EP1 will be consolidated and deepened. EP3 will mainstream environmental activities.

Features of the Participatory Process

In developing EP2, the government has been in the driver's seat, pushing the program forward. There were intensive national preparation efforts. In contrast, the SAVEM Project was designed by a USAID design team.

The key design feature of EP2 was that it moved from a project to a program approach. EP1 consisted of a conglomeration of projects, sponsored not only by USAID but also by other donors. In EP2 we were looking for coherence and synergy in an overall program. The program approach was characterized by a common vision and consensus on priorities, a strong annual programming process, consolidated monitoring, and joint pre-appraisals and appraisals. However, there has been no attempt to consolidate disbursement and procurement.

EP2 was designed in an intensive, highly participatory national process, starting with a national workshop in the fall of 1994, and followed by a steering committee meeting of donors and all Malagasy counterparts to validate major options, and a beneficiary assessment to find out whether or not beneficiaries from all levels—farmers up through government agencies—felt that EP1 had met its overall objectives.

In April of 1995, an international scientific workshop, attended by over 120 scientists, both Malagasy and international, identified the conservation and research priorities. That was followed by a six-month PPDOP (participatory process for the definition of options and priorities) for biodiversity conservation. The PPDOP identified the problems and options for conserving biodiversity. Regional priority-setting workshops were also held.

Effect of USAID Re-engineering Process

While the PPDOP process was going on, USAID was in a reengineering mode. In Madagascar, planning for EP2 and reengineering came together and fit like a glove. The participatory process in Madagascar was fully in line with the USAID reengineering principles: customer focus, teamwork, participation. The mission was able to bring the two together; they were not separate

processes. While we were participating in bringing together the Malagasy agencies, international and national NGOs, and partners in planning EP2, we were at the same time pushing forward the reengineering process.

Beneficiary Assessments

One of the key activities of the participatory process was the beneficiary assessment. It was a four-month qualitative study carried out by five different local research firms. There were over 50 evaluators and close to 2,000 in-depth interviews. These took place both at the field level and at the institutional level, because EP1 had looked at institution building.

As in any type of participatory process, there were problems of coordination and communication in the beneficiary assessment and lack of understanding of what the evaluators were looking for. It was difficult to get across the idea that the study was a constructive assessment, not an evaluation. The assessment team did not want to be critical of what had been done, but wanted to move forward. People were not always willing to give the information required because they thought that if they hadn't done something well, it would be a mark against them. Another problem was that some operators working in the field were somewhat possessive of their protected area, so when the evaluators tried to talk to them, they were not always received with open arms.

On the other hand, one of the benefits of the beneficiary assessment was that, for the first time, managers knew how the beneficiaries perceived the project. Sometimes these perceptions weren't very positive. Some key Malagasy institutions felt defensive when a beneficiary would say that what ANGAP, the national park service, had done was not really what they wanted.

The draft beneficiary assessment reports were a mechanism for clarifying certain misunderstandings. They were used as planning tools as we moved into finalizing the EP2 design, which was finished just as we were going into a final multi-donor appraisal mission.

Decentralization and Local Participation

The government's decentralization plans were taken into account in the development of EP2. Over the two-year time period, various conventions took place to look at the issues of local participation: the National Convention on Local Governance, the Convention on Human Settlements in Protected Areas, and the National Convention on Local Community Management of Renewable Resources. As a result of this process, local community management of natural resources became an integral underpinning of EP2. Local communities were empowered to take responsibility for the management of natural resources.

Defining Options and Priorities

Over a period of five to six months, a participatory process was carried out to define options and priorities. The international scientific workshop on biodiversity defined the conservation priorities, but several questions remained: What were the other key priorities? On what activities should EP2 focus? Answers to these questions were sought at different levels: the local level, the multi-local level, and the national level. A series of workshops were held in which local leaders discussed the problems they were having in the utilization of natural resources and set priorities for EP2.

The objectives of the priority-setting workshops were to inform the regions on the nature of the EP2 proposal, to foster debate with regional representatives, and to inform donors what the priorities were in the different regions.

At the national level, workshops were held to take the information coming out of the regional workshops and decide on overall priorities.

Lessons from the Priority-Setting Workshops

The priority-setting workshops revealed that NEAP was not widely known. Particularly at the local level, communication was needed. The participatory process in and by itself was a mechanism for making NEAP better known. It also enabled us to employ a program rather than a project

approach. It made clear that we were moving forward as a national program. Also, it fostered a team spirit and active participation.

As a point of clarification, when I have used the word "we," I don't mean "we" as USAID or "we" as donors. I mean "we" collectively: all the partners working together in Madagascar.

Outcomes of the Process

Michel Simeon

EP2 Program Structure

EP2 includes a large number of activities. The bulk of the resources have intentionally been allocated for field operations. We tried to minimize the amount of resources not going to concrete actions in the field.

The operations themselves can be divided into two groups. One is the group of subsector components: forest management, protected areas, soil and water conservation, coastal zone management, urban management. This group is the normal continuation of EP1 and is a direct reflection of what the national agencies have prepared. However, during the preparation and appraisal process, the idea developed that something was missing. That something became the so-called regional programming and local management component, which cuts across all the activities. This component provides support to regional programming and decentralization through a regional development fund.

In addition to operations, there are strategic and support activities. Strategic activities continue efforts started in EP1 to formulate strategies, policies, norms, and regulations and to put mechanisms in place for carrying out environmental impact assessments. Support activities include research, information systems, monitoring and evaluation, and program coordination. We tried to keep these activities as limited as we could, but it was hard.

From Projects to a Program

The main result of the participatory appraisal process was to transform a number of fairly independent pieces into a coherent whole. Each agency had prepared its proposal for EP2. Sixteen proposals were the starting point of the joint appraisal process, plus what came out of the PPDOP.

The process proved to be an effective tool to improve program design through a better understanding of participants and their perceptions. It was a level partnership based on mutually defined goals, activities, and ways of interacting with one another.

Regional Programming and Local Management

One key design feature resulting from all these participatory activities is the component on regional programming and local management. New legislation supporting this component will make it possible for the government to give back the management of natural resources—like a piece of forest or a piece of coastal zone—to local communities within a framework of some formal agreement, including a management plan. The communities will be responsible for the resource but they will also reap the benefits from it. The hope is, of course, that they will do a better job in managing these resources for the long term.

Local management of natural resources will be implemented together with a new way of looking at land tenure and land-use security, beginning with making inventories of traditional rights and formalizing the limits of the village area. The land tenure administration will come forward and propose a new methodology. Because land tenure officials know it's not the full answer to the problem, under EP2 there will be a large-scale participatory process again, to redefine land-tenure policies in the country.

In Madagascar, as in many other places, 80 or 90 percent of the land officially belongs to the government, but government management is certainly not the long-term solution. Nor is it how most people in the villages think the land should be managed. This has to change. And it's a highly political, sensitive subject. Change can take place only through building a new consensus at all levels.

Disseminating Information under EP2

Communication hopefully will receive more importance in EP2 than in EP1, where, for some financial reasons, not enough was done. A fair amount of work has been done in formulating a comprehensive communication strategy which will directly support participation at various levels.

Today most people are aware of environment problems. That was not necessarily the case five or eight years ago. The environment has also become a very visible political issue, and, judging by the way various ministries have been fighting over which will be responsible for the environment, it has become part of the system. That has some negative implications, but it's also positive compared with 10 years ago, when there was no constituency and no responsible institution for environmental programs.

Implementation Arrangements

EP1 was implemented as a conglomeration of projects. Now, as EP2 begins, we will try to make it more of a program. This will be difficult because it goes against both the Malagasy and the donors' established way of doing things.

The key feature of the program approach is the consolidation of the annual programming process and the monitoring system. This means that every donor that is funding an EP2 activity has an obligation to participate in the annual programming process as well as to make sure that the monitoring information will flow into a consolidated system. This is not a trivial requirement, but it can be met if all donors work together at all stages. In December 1995, a joint multi-donor appraisal mission of EP2, with 70 people representing over ten donors, worked closely with over 50 Malagasy counterparts interviewing and refining the EP2 program document. The donors then participated in the EP2 negotiations held in September 1996 in Paris, where all the conditionalities and key features were agreed with all the donors together. It was not the World Bank and Madagascar or USAID and Madagascar, but it was all the donors.

There will be no attempt to consolidate what is cast in iron in terms of disbursement and procurement procedures, which are the most difficult to change. But we can go a long way with consolidation without having to change them.

The key implementation arrangement is the multi-donor secretariat. Experience has shown that it's very important for NEAP to have an entity that can manage public relations and problem solving on a permanent basis. During EP1 a person from the World Bank functioned as the full time secretariat, and everybody agreed that it had been useful and that in EP2 the secretariat should not be just a World Bank activity, but everybody's activity. Five different donors have joined their resources to finance a team of two that we call the multi-donor secretariat.

Work Plans and Budgets

Workplans and budgets are also key to EP2 implementation. Each donor will continue to have its own financing agreement with the government. All the agreements will then be formalized as framework agreements at the level of all the agencies, with the annual work plan and budget as key elements. This means that every year there will be a work plan and a budget centered on every component or activity in the program, instead of on every donor in the program. This is not a compulsory process. It will work only as long as everybody plays the game.

We are trying to develop the first annual work plan and budget. The first draft in November 1996 was far from perfect. A lot of problems arose because some donors had not fully defined what they wanted to contribute. Some donors have more flexibility than others. We tried to bring out

into in the open in joint discussions all the issues that typically create problems, such as how much technical assistance would be provided. Obviously, the national agencies and the donors have different opinions on that. We tell the donors that the claims of the national agencies are legitimate and the national agencies that the claims of the donors to promote their own expertise are also legitimate. Only the future will tell us how well the work plan and budgeting process will work.

Discussion Session

Communications, Lessons, and Trust

Andrew Watson (Development Alternatives): For close to three years during EP1, I was with the KEPEM Project (Knowledge and Effective Policies for Environmental Management), the other USAID/Madagascar flagship environmental project. I'd be curious to know how you think the lessons learned in Madagascar can be extended to other countries. As Lisa pointed out, Madagascar's Environmental Action Plan was probably the first in Africa. Certain countries, Uzbekistan, for example, have jumped right into drawing up local environmental action plans and are at the same stage as Madagascar. Other countries, Cambodia, for example, are still at the stage Madagascar was about eight years ago. Cambodia's national environmental action plan is mostly boilerplate. Is there any way for lessons pertaining to the basic participatory approach to be extended to other countries?

Lisa Gaylord: Even within Madagascar, various integrated conservation development projects could learn lessons from one another. How do we know if they are pulling out the lessons learned from different experiences and ensuring that the same mistakes will not be made again?

Within USAID we don't communicate enough, to exchange lessons learned. For example, the parallels between the Madagascar and Uganda programs are tremendous, yet there has been little dialogue between the two missions. That's just one donor. Beyond that, we must exchange lessons among all donors. USAID has to make more of an effort to increase communication among countries in the process of developing national environmental action plans.

Michel Simeon: To me the most important and the most difficult lesson from a donor's point of view is that we have to refrain from taking the lead too much, so that the countries can run their own programs. The more people are involved, the more likely it is that important things will not get forgotten or overlooked.

Lisa Gaylord: Two things to be learned from Madagascar are important. One is the personal relationships that were established among people working in the environment. It's a lot easier to communicate when you have good personal relationships. Some of the lessons learned in Madagascar would not be applicable in places where a high level of trust has not been developed. Because a level of trust between the Malagasy institutions and the donors has been established over the last five years, we have been able to apply a participatory process to develop a coherent program.

The second lesson is that we fool ourselves if we believe that we can coordinate without the strong involvement of the government that we're working with. If we don't have the cooperation and full participation of the government from the beginning, if they don't believe that NEAP it is theirs—as it rightfully should be—then NEAP won't go anywhere.

Diane La Voy: Each donor agency has different ways of learning internally. This forum is one way that USAID has. We tell each other about experiences within a technical area, such as the environment, that has particular needs and lessons. Obviously the Environmental Center in the Global Bureau also has a role to play in promoting learning.

Lindsey Orkand: Are you saying that in an agency as sophisticated as you say USAID is, there is no central place where a person going out to Madagascar could read about all the different

programs everywhere else?

Lisa Gaylord: It does seem like a very obvious thing. But in most cases, people get briefed before they go out. They know generally what's going on, but we are internally organized and don't look at what other donors are doing as part of what we're doing. In the new reengineered programming system, we try to recognize these things in the results framework. (In the old "log-frame," what other donors are doing were among the "externalities.")

John Lewis: We still have a dichotomy between USAID missions and other donors. Most donors do not empower their missions as USAID does. Missions need to add Washington people to their virtual teams and hold them accountable for bringing in the decision-making levels of the other donors who are not in the field (we need to stop pretending that they are) but are back in headquarters, where they will remain.

Cathryn Thorup: Many of us that feel that sharing information within the agency is one of our most critical challenges. Because of reduction in funds, USAID is able to put much less money into training than is necessary to keep pace with developments going on in the wider development community. For example, the USAID Development Studies Program was a very effective tool for sharing information and building the training and expertise of our professionals. We should take another look at that. Second, we need to look at some new techniques, for example, a twinning process in which specific types of contact between the Madagascar and Uganda missions would be encouraged. Several sets of missions could be identified. A third way would be to institute a program of peer assists with incentives for initiating or responding to requests for assistance from one mission to another. It would be part of people's work plans and something that they would be evaluated on.

Also, we should encourage much more travel from mission to mission such as that connected with the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI). We are putting the NPI Resource Guide on the agency's web site. It will be available not only to USAID but also to USAID partners.

John McMahon: The budget crisis in USAID goes beyond just not being able to participate in technical meetings. Because the OE crisis is so critical, we increasingly are being driven to sharing our expertise and experiences via the Internet, as opposed to on-the-ground verification of what's going on. This seriously undermines the cutting edge of the technical capability of this agency.

Michel Simeon: All the implementing agencies of the Madagascar program are on the Internet. They're in the process of building a shared environmental information system on the Web.

Carrot and Stick

John Lewis: In other parts of Africa, the principal lesson learned was not only the importance of a positive-reinforcement process, which is well packaged by the NEAP methodology. But I didn't see anything about the negative reinforcement—the stick, not the carrot. The lesson learned from West Africa is that for environmental management to kick in, the right land-tenure policies and the right agroforestry technical packages must be in place. We must be transparent about the criteria on which local environmental management programs will be measured. Then if they don't perform, they get only half as much money the next time around. As long as every donor sticks with that deal, the message will be loud and clear. But there are a million ways around that and donors that don't like to be held to such conditions. But that is the bottom line on making the process work: the minute a locality that's performing gets a little bit more money and a locality that isn't performing gets less money from every donor, then environmental management programs will begin to work.

Relationships Among Donors

Michel Simeon: In Madagascar, there are about 10 different donors, including large NGOs like the World Wildlife Fund. The relationship among donors will work only if it's voluntary and if the donors feel that they have ownership in the joint product. Coordination means making sure that everybody has a stake and a say. It's not that one tells the others what to do. That never works.

In Madagascar, once the agencies had produced the 16 reports, we came in for the appraisal.

Seventy-five people participated. They were divided into groups. Each group was headed by somebody from a different donor. When people in the World Bank office here in Washington ask me about the design of the forestry component of NEAP, I have to say that I don't know because I wasn't in that group. The appraisal process for the forestry part was led by the Germans; the appraisal process for the protected areas part was led by the U.S.A.; the appraisal process for the soil conservation part was led by the Swiss. Everybody had a stake in the ownership of the end product. Because trust developed, it could work that way. I don't know whether it would work the same way in another country with a different set of people.

John McMahon: I've been involved in a lot of different donor coordination activities, everything from ag research, to environment, to ag sector. My general reaction is that donor coordination is never as effective as one would like you to believe. However, it's absolutely critical.

The Madagascar experience has been positive. You're at the second phase of NEAP. You've weathered changes in government and different variations of the NEAP process: government-led versus donor-pushed. You've been able to get broad participation on the part of the country at all levels in the NEAP and perhaps, more important, to mobilize tremendous amounts of donor resources to deal with environmental management. In the end, that's what it's all about. It's not just how many people have been involved along the way or what NEAP looks like, but whether or not money is flowing and an impact is being felt. I would strongly encourage you to document everything from participation to the importance of a sustained commitment on the part of the donors.

Impact of Political Change on the Participatory Process

Aseef Shaikh (International Resources Group): Madagascar went through a number of changes politically during EP1. How important are the domestic political process and domestic governance to the participatory process in NEAP?

Lisa Gaylord: The way NEAP was set up did not protect it from political changes in Madagascar. A certain level of autonomy within the executing agencies allowed them to move forward with their activities and to develop a level of trust with many different donors. Despite the fact that we went through five different ministries of Environment, Water, and Forest, a fabric of trust held together the executing agencies. While the overall coordinating body probably was the most jolted by political changes, they came through very much in the driver's seat. Mutual support among donors, NGOs, and other partners allowed NEAP to move forward and the participatory process to happen.

Certainly there will continue to be difficulties because of the lack of an overall national body responsible for putting in place the necessary policies, laws, and regulations to empower the communities. We don't yet have that at that national level, but it is still what we need. Hopefully during EP2 the political setting in Madagascar will be more stable.

Indicators for Participation

Jim Edgerton (World Bank): Those of us that have been working in the trenches in the Social Policy Unit of the World Bank (the participation unit) for the last five or six years, trying to introduce a participatory approach, have frequently looked to environmental champions as a model of how external pressure can be effectively applied to a big agency like the Bank to bring about change. As we at the Bank move beyond the rhetoric and the anecdotal stage to try to consolidate our gains, we realize that we need to assemble empirical evidence on the effectiveness and the ultimate impact of participatory approaches.

Michel Simeon said that the agencies involved in NEAP in Madagascar need to buy into not only the annual planning but also the monitoring process. I'm sure that the monitoring framework you've established includes financial and technical monitoring parameters to measure environmental impact. Have you managed to invent monitoring indicators that also measure the breadth and the intensity of participation so that over time we can assemble empirical evidence about the impact of the participatory approach against some sort of real or hypothetical baseline?

Diane La Voy: Before you answer may I ask you go into a little more depth on a couple of things you already said that might deal with this. Lisa, you mentioned that it was very timely that USAID

was on the forefront of reengineering when NEAP was being developed. Also, Madagascar was a leading-edge mission with the NPI. Both of these efforts strike me as relevant to the issue of results and indicators. Was reengineering's explicit focus on results the ingredient that made it so relevant to the participatory development of NEAP?

Concerning the NPI, I know that Madagascar provided an excellent report, and the learning process of the NPI generated a number of indicators of partnership or of an increasing capacity to work together. Does this partly address Jim's question?

Michel Simeon: As I mentioned earlier, consolidating the monitoring and evaluation system is a key feature of the program approach, as distinct from the project approach. A lot of effort has already gone into the design of the monitoring system. The first attempt in EP1 ended up with a monitoring system with 1,500 indicators—it was never operational, as you can imagine. So there was a lot of thinking to try to bring the list of indicators down to a reasonable level.

This process is still ongoing. There is now a reasonably short and convincing list of indicators that was discussed in the joint negotiations in September 1996 in Paris. But the work on the indicators is not finished because it's not clear how some of them will be measured and how the data will be produced. Establishing indicators involves not only producing information but also aiming at some quantitative target. Eventually all the agencies will be evaluated on how they have met their targets. At the time of the mid-term review in two or three years, financial resource reallocations will depend in part on how well the monitoring system worked and how well the agencies met their targets.

Lisa Gaylord: The indicators are much more quantitatively than qualitatively oriented. More thought has to be given on how to look at the impact of participation in terms of our objectives. For example, one of the things that we want to measure is the creation of participatory community management plans. Also we're still trying to see how the work of key partners in NPI can be qualitatively measured in terms of building up the capacity of those associations.

Michel Simeon: Part of the answer will come from the beneficiary assessment that is planned within the next five years. That's another instrument to give us something back on this dimension of the proposal.

Karen Poe: From my perspective as Deputy Mission Director in Madagascar, the aspect of the Agency's reengineering that had an impact on the NEAP process was more than just the focus on results. All of the core values were the lens through which we looked at all of the activities in the second phase of NEAP. If an activity didn't fit within the core values, particularly empowerment and client focus, we knew we were off the track. We put ourselves through an intensive process of sharing our planning and our strategic frameworks with our implementing partners, our government partners, and our donor partners. This process set us back a year from being able to reach agreement on a strategic objective agreement for this, our flagship environmental program. But the result is much better. We have true ownership and empowerment of the Malagasy at all levels. We have a common vision. It's not an USAID program; it's a shared vision from the Malagasy implementing organizations, the government, and the donors. And that wouldn't have happened if we had focused exclusively on results.

The Participatory Process and USAID Procurement Policies

Helen Gunther: Now that we in the USAID mission in Madagascar are getting ready for implementation of NEAP, we have to deal with the fact that the USAID procurement system has not kept up with our participatory process. Trying to deal with this issue is a real struggle for us as a mission. For example, we are being told by the procurement office that we have been getting too many noncompetitive bids. One of the reasons for this is that we are getting an incredible number of unsolicited proposals from our NGO partners who have been working with us for the last five years in developing the new strategy. This is not surprising. They know what the NEAP is. They have come up with excellent proposals. Somehow, the two have got to meet. Until we fix the procurement part of the system, we, as an implementation and contracting agency, will have tremendous difficulties.

Diane La Voy: Helen's question about procurement is one that we've had and we will continue to have very much in our sights. About a year and a half ago, the Office of Procurement and the

General Counsel pulled together interim guidance on consultation to get at the underlying problem that Helen has identified. As we engage partners up front as part of our strategic objective teams and as we are working with partners all along, we then have to make sure that we are, on the one hand, staying legal and not favoring one provider over another in some way, but, at the same time, recognizing that we don't want to fence people out of partnership with us in planning, thinking, and identifying approaches simply because they are then going to be implemented. USAID is struggling with this.

Michel Simeon: We have the same kind of situation in the World Bank. I can guarantee Helen that I have my fair share of problems with the system. We talk program and the system talks project; we talk partnership and they talk procurement. But one can argue for exceptions in a program like NEAP, and eventually the exceptions will become a precedent and they will contribute to changes in the system.

Participation Then and Now

Phyllis Forbes: When I think back to what I thought participation was in 1991 and what I think it is today, I'd have to pass the Grand Canyon, practically, to get from one side to the other. Six years ago, I thought participation was talking to somebody from the host country. Today, I'm wondering, why aren't we using the media to advertise things? Why aren't we having talk shows on local television about the issues of the environment? Why aren't we having national conventions?

In 1991, when I was working in Madagascar, speaking to each other openly could be quite dangerous because we were not in a democratic society. Democracy may not be well-rooted in a lot of countries we work in, but at least the press is freer, people can speak more openly, and they can have more opinions. If we hold back information, it is impossible for donor coordination to work. When we share information openly, donor coordination works.

We should be thinking differently about how we do development now that we have both the political and technological capacity to share information much more freely. We don't have to tiptoe around and suggest that maybe we could discuss ideas openly. We can in fact foster open debate. That's revolutionary for us and it is going to be revolutionary for a lot of the other donors we deal with. I'm sure the World Bank is used, as we are, to sitting down with the minister of X, and having a conversation about what program Y ought to be. However, a national convention on X could hold up, slow down, or in some way interrupt our appraisal missions, our timing, our rate of obligations, and all these other things that people get caught up in in their own organizations.

I leave here thinking that we've made tremendous advances, but we have a mind-set advance to get through next, which is that web sites on the Internet allow us to share information as rapidly between Amber Mountain and Antananarivo as it does now between Washington, D.C., and New York City. It's an amazing revolution.

Now we have elections in Madagascar, and soon politicians are going to care about what the populace thinks, because the populace will be electing them. And as people get more and more familiar with democracy and as political parties become more savvy, perhaps we, as developmental people, can actually put development issues on the political agenda so politicians would have to reveal where they stand on the environment.

There is also a move toward decentralization in Madagascar that we should strongly support. The people who are going to do the best job of preserving a protected area in Madagascar will be the people who live near that area.

Lisa Gaylord: While we have talked a lot today about working with people at the local level and trying to identify what their needs are, a lot of the participatory processes for designing the program still took place at the national level. Our big challenge in EP2 is how is participation going to happen effectively at the regional, the multi-local, and local level. And as we move toward multi-actors, how do we ensure that they talk to one another; how do we get the local government involved? That's the big challenge as we move this participatory process into EP2.

Eliene Augenbraun: Phyllis Forbes's comment that we can and should use mass media as part of our development program is right on. Participation with host country partners is critical. It takes longer and may cost more up front but I believe it is the only way to go. There are models for how to work in a participatory manner with host country media—community radios, USIA journalism programs are two examples. Even where development of media outlets is not the development goal per se, host country students, journalists, activists, and news directors are the best and most sustainable partners for developing messages that will be interpreted appropriately by our customers. Host country advertising firms may be very effective at reaching elites, but there is no reason to believe that they can develop messages targeted at the poor. In other words, choose your partners carefully and work with them over time, just like any other activity.

Concerning the use of the internet for working with out partners, I advocate including environmental web pages on USAID and other donor servers and REGISTERING THEM WITH SEARCH ENGINES. We should be careful not to lose opportunities to use available and simple technologies to disseminate information broadly.

Several patterns exist for using the internet in participatory ways. One is to meet someone in person and then maintain a personal relationship by email. A second way is to meet a group of people and then keep in contact with them by means of a listserve or newsgroup. Both of these methods can now be used by the elites in any country on earth. More high-tech but certain to be widely available throughout the world within the next five years is the World Wide Web. Several excellent environment web sites are available, including a commercial environmental news service (ENN), to get the word out efficiently to interested people. We need to understand what news is and how to package and disseminate it. At USAID we can work with LPA to use these new internet resources to get information where it needs to go.

Jim Tarrant: One of the "lessons" that have emerged from the ENI Bureau environment program applies to countries where public participation (either direct or through NGO proxies) is not exactly a tradition. In such places, designers of activities (i.e., "projects" in oldspak) need to create structures in the design and implementation of the activity that require public inputs, rather than hoping they will happen. These can range from public participation in the scoping stage of environmental impact assessments, to land-use planning exercises, to the use of broad-based project coordinating or implementing committees, to the regular incorporation of public awareness and environmental education components as an integral part of an activity. Creating such structures requires imagination and getting out of the bureaucratic straitjacket.

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

Participation Forum (No. 22):

Citizen Monitoring and Evaluation: A View from Rural America

April 14, 1997

The twenty-second session of the Participation Forum drew participants out of their normal work arenas overseas and right back into the United States with presentations on the Empowerment Zone experience in Jackson County, Kentucky. Vicky Creed, Associate Director of the National Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community (EZ/EC) Learning Initiative, reviewed the participatory process used to evaluate the EZ/EC program. With her were two members of the Learning Team from Jackson County, one of three counties that make up the Kentucky Highlands Empowerment Zone: Cathy Howell and Brian Thomas—citizen volunteers monitoring and evaluating how the empowerment zone is working in their county. Although the Kentucky Highlands Empowerment Zone was itself initiated and run by local boards representing the intended "customers," the Learning Initiative added a critical ingredient needed for effective participation: knowledge. By informing interested citizens about the resources and decision-making processes of the EZ and training them in evaluation techniques, it enabled them to make the EZ program more transparent and accountable to its customers. The challenge faced by the Jackson County Learning Team was how to structure the monitoring process so as to avoid both chaos and co-optation. Kelly Kammerer, AA for Policy and Program Coordination, led off the session.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Sharing Development Experiences

Kelly Kammerer

The materials on the empowerment-zone concept made me reflect back on my first job, with the Peace Corps in rural community development in Colombia. With people we worked with, we used the example of the New England town-meeting concept of democracy as a model: people would get together in their villages once a year and decide what issues they wanted to confront. Other than that, we didn't look much to the United States for examples of community development or participation.

Twenty-five years later, when I was mission director in Nepal, for our integrated rural development work we tended to look mostly at literature that had been generated by USAID in our international experience over the years. Again, we did not look to U.S. models.

This is a good opportunity to share views in a way that we've been trying to foster in the Agency over the last four years: exchanging lessons that we've learned overseas with people working for similar goals in the United States.

Background on the EZ/EC Program

Vicky Creed

The Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community (EZ/EC) Program was started in 1993. At that time, \$2.5 billion was set aside for tax incentives and \$1 billion in Title 20 block grants to focus on the poorest communities in the United States. One hundred and four urban and rural communities were selected for the program through a competitive process. Communities had to meet certain criteria in terms of geography, population, poverty, demographics, and so on. Over 500 communities applied for this money.

Like most anti-poverty programs, the EZ/EC Program includes a focus on economic opportunity and development, but it also incorporates a principle of sustainable community development which sets it apart. All communities in the program have to go through a process of forming new partnerships and coming up with a strategic vision that is the vision of the whole community and not just of the development team or the people who typically ran things in the communities. The vision has to be developed before proposals and plans can be set forth.

The Learning Initiative Pilot Project

When it was time to evaluate the EZ/EC Program, it was decided that one way—not the only way, but one way—that an evaluation could be conducted would be to follow the participatory principles of the program. Such an evaluation would involve people in the local community, as diverse a group as we could make it. They would look at the vision, how the program had been established, and implementation. They would identify what they thought were the key objectives and would learn how to do monitoring and measuring in the local communities.

Last March, just a little over a year ago, community evaluation teams were set up in ten pilot communities selected from across the country based on the extent of formal organizing and how well people were already working together. The three Enterprise Zones—Rio Grande Valley (Texas), Mid-Delta (Mississippi), and Kentucky Highlands—were automatically included in the pilot program.

Development of the participatory evaluation model was also a participatory process supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Ford Foundation, with the University of Tennessee as primary coordinator and contractor. Regional universities particularly interested in participatory research and community development provided facilitators and technical assistance. The project that evolved was called the National Learning Initiative.

Out of Chaos Comes Growth

We just came out of a meeting in which Diane La Voy referred to us as experts, and I said, "We are not experts at all." We are just out there fumbling around, trying to figure out how to do this. We certainly haven't learned how to manage chaos. We've got chaos everywhere. What we are trying to do is take a positive spin on it and say, well, out of chaos comes growth. How are we going to form these new partnerships in communities without a little chaos? Do we think we're going to go into communities that have historical differences, as most communities do, and that instantly those differences are going to go away? No, they're not.

The National Learning Initiative goes into an Empowerment Zone or Enterprise Community and sets up a learning team that's supposed to have stakeholders on it from all around the table and from elements in the community that have never ever been at the table before. And guess what? There's lots of chaos. The initiative is one year old, and we are still very much in the learning phase.

Ten-Step Learning Process

The initiative used a ten-step learning process originated by the University of Tennessee with some folks from across the country that had experience with community development and popular

education.

1. Form a Citizens' Learning Team
2. Revisit EZ/EC Goals (Session 1)
3. Choose Priorities for Monitoring and Measuring (Session 2)
4. Identify Indicators of Success (Session 3)
5. Determine Ways of Collecting Information (Session 4)
6. Refine Methods Through Field Tests (Sessions 3-5)
7. Collect Information (Sessions 5-7)
8. Analyze and Assess (Session 8)
9. Develop Strategies for Sharing Findings (Session 9)
10. Take Action (Session 10)

Some teams chose to go through the process literally, with one monthly meeting per work session. Other teams take a more flexible approach. We're gathering information right now on best practices and what's worked.

We asked the teams to focus on one single objective, on one single identifier of success, and to figure out measures and monitors. That was really hard, because they wanted to try to measure everything. Team members were mainly people who had never measured anything, not professional researchers. We kept saying, "Keep it simple. You cannot measure everything that is going on." We've been muzzling them. However, the Kentucky Highlands team still picked out three objectives even though we told them to pick only one.

The University of Tennessee advisors developed a manual for the teams. We were so proud. We thought it was the best thing since sliced bread. We sent it out into the communities, but we've learned it's been sitting on a shelf. Now we're getting feedback to find out what we need to do to revise the manual so that people really use it. We want it to be coffee stained and dog-eared.

Also the University of Tennessee has conducted workshops to teach teams how to do their work. We've stayed in touch with teams by telephone. The regional researchers have attended and facilitated meetings. In all of the pilot communities, the Learning Teams have made specific contributions.

Two Members of the Learning Team

Today we have two members of one of our Learning Teams here with us. Cathy Howell is the Learning Team coordinator for Jackson County. A mother of four, a grandmother of ten, Cathy is a homemaker who has become a professional volunteer. We've used up every single bit of her time, about burned her out. Her husband probably hates us. Brian Thomas is a home-grown boy. He was raised in Kentucky and now teaches high school there, physics and chemistry. He is also a captain on the volunteer fire department. These folks will give you the story of the Jackson County Learning Team.

Jackson County is one of three counties in the Kentucky Highlands Empowerment Zone. Each of the counties has its own EZ board. In our pilot project, we are focused on only one of the three counties.

A Snapshot of Jackson County

Brian Thomas: Jackson County is in southeastern Kentucky in a region of rolling hills and pastures. The population of the entire county is just under 12,000 people living in small, tight-knit communities of less than a thousand each.

There's some positive and negative things about our county. On the negative side, 40 percent of the population are at or below the poverty level; about 60 percent do not have high school diplomas; 85 percent have jobs that pay minimum wage or slightly above. We do not have any homeless people, but the structures that some people call home are mainly just shacks with some form of heat. We have few conveniences. If you need anything besides just the basic necessities of life, you'll have to drive to an adjoining county. There are some small stores in our county, but many of these are still little country stores that will make you feel as if you had stepped back 40

years in time. The roads are very poor.

But this underdevelopment lends a kind of beauty. The county lies in the Daniel Boone National Forest, so there's a tremendous amount of undeveloped forest land. There are many stories of people who've passed through Jackson County and have liked it so well that they've settled there. There's lots of outdoor recreation: hiking, fishing, hunting, spelunking, rock climbing, canoeing.

There certainly is crime, but crimes that we usually associate with large cities, such as armed robberies, murders, muggings, and rapes, are almost unheard of in our county. And there are many stories of good people in the county, of people whose car has broken down and they've been surprised that people have not just driven on by but have stopped to help them.

Involvement with the Learning Initiative

Cathy Howell: I am one of those people who was passing through Jackson County and decided, "This is where we're going to live," and that's what we did. It's one of the most beautiful places you ever saw in your life.

After we'd been there for about four years, I wanted to get involved with the community. One thing I had never done was to get my GED, and so I was a 50-year-old grandma trying to get a GED. One of my teachers said, "You know, I'm going to remember you, and someday I'm going to find you a job." Two years later, one of the researchers from the University of Kentucky came to the Empowerment Zone board and asked for names of people to be on the Learning Team. That lady remembered me and gave them my name. That's where it all started for me. As coordinator, I asked for more names from the board to put together the team. But about 80 percent of the people whose names they gave us didn't want to participate. One of the EZ board members gave us Brian's name and so that's how it started with Brian.

When the team was finally put together, we ended up with teachers and housewives and Vista workers—people from all over the community, from every walk of life: people that have to draw welfare or everyday people who just go to work and want to know more about the Empowerment Zone. Brian was one of those people.

Brian Thomas: I thought that the Empowerment Zone could be a positive force in our community, and I was interested in getting involved with it. With my job teaching and being a new father, I stayed very busy. But I do try to do as much as I can in the community and try to center it on things that I think will have a positive effect. The Empowerment Zone embodies that.

I had made an attempt to get involved with one of the Empowerment Zone projects that I felt I could give some input to. I didn't push really hard to get involved, but I did talk to some people about it, and they didn't seem particularly interested in my becoming involved, for one reason or another. I was really happy to receive the call about the Learning Team. It was something that was very easy to get involved with. They came to me. I didn't even have to go to them.

Public Relations Activities

Cathy Howell: The Learning Team started with 12 members. We tried to get as many members as possible, because when you work with volunteers, it's hard to get them to stay unless they really are interested in what's happening. We started with 12. One person who was too busy dropped out. One lady who had her own agenda and thought she could fight her vendettas in our group dropped out after we quietly said, "No, that's not going to happen." Another lady on our team went all the way through to the writing. Her boss said to her, "I do not want your name on that report," and she quit the Learning Team. She said, "I would love to have my name on the report, but if it comes to my livelihood, I can't do it." We ended up with nine people that went through the whole process.

Actually, what we became was a public relations group. We went out and talked to the community about the Empowerment Zone. We found that people knew we were an Empowerment Zone, and they knew they were elated on December 24th or whenever it was when they got the news that they were going to be an Empowerment Zone, but they really didn't know what it was all about. Citizens' participation and grassroots work is what the Empowerment Zone is supposed to be.

People were supposed to be involved, but they didn't know how to go about it.

The Learning Team started giving out information as we learned it, and people started getting really involved. There were meetings of the Empowerment Zone board that people had never showed up for. We were trying to build a community center, and we didn't have any participation there. People started coming to the meetings and saying, "Yeah, we really need this community center." We had become a public relations-type team. People would call us up and ask when the EZ board meetings were to be held.

Brian Thomas: As some evidence that the Learning Team did become a public relations vehicle, I can say, for one thing, I learned a lot. I keep my ears and eyes open, read the paper, and try to know what's going on in my community, but I found out that I didn't know much about the EZ until I joined the Learning Team.

As I was conducting some interviews during our research, I found that many people did not know much about the Empowerment Zone, and these were people that should have. One person's answers to most of the questions consisted of, "I don't have anything to say about that," or "I don't know," or "I'm not familiar with that." Another person told me that he didn't think he would have anything constructive to say. He was very evasive, and I never interviewed him. These were people that should have known a lot. Maybe we've changed some of that.

As a schoolteacher, I wanted to stop my physics class sometime and say, "Let's talk about the Empowerment Zone, because I bet you guys don't know very much about it." Of course, teenagers are notorious for being uninformed on current events. But, still, in their community, you would think they would know about it, and most didn't. So I found myself speaking with lots of people about the Empowerment Zone.

The Impact of the Learning Team's Report

Cathy Howell: Our researcher from the University of Kentucky went to the EZ board and asked the board to sanction us, and they agreed for the Learning Team to take place there in the community. They said, "It's really good to be looked over by outsiders." Well, actually, we're not outsiders. We're what it was all supposed to be about, we hoped. And so they turned us over to the director of the Empowerment Zone and said, "You take care of them. Whatever they do is fine."

So what we did was to go to every meeting. We went to every meeting there ever was in that whole community—not only Empowerment Zone meetings, but city council meetings, development meetings, any kind of meeting in the community, because to understand the Empowerment Zone, you had to understand the community. One way to do that was to monitor community meetings. I personally attended 452 meetings.

The board didn't pay too much attention to us unless we had been to other Empowerment Zones, and then they wanted to know how they compared.

Then all of a sudden, our report came out, and there were a few people on the board who didn't care much for our report. But there were also a lot of people who said, "Yes, these are things that needed to be brought to the surface." The board had a meeting with us and responded to our concerns. We told them that people need to know what's happening in the Empowerment Zone. Board members need to give out more information in different ways so that people know what's happening. And they have agreed to that. They agreed to most of the recommendations. And we were really glad about that.

But there were a few people who took offense at what we had done and what our report said. They may not let us continue as a Learning Team. But for the most part, we feel that we have accomplished what we set out to do—to increase citizen participation. Now the citizens are participating, and they know what's going on.

Personal Impacts

Cathy Howell: Brian and I probably would never have met in a thousand years, except for the

Learning Team. I personally have met people all over our community, and formed really good relationships with them. And even some of the different groups in our community have come together, and that probably wouldn't have happened had it not been for the Learning Team.

Brian Thomas: The Learning Team has done some very positive things for me personally. Working in the school system, I see a lot of my colleagues working on their master's degrees and taking classes about research methods. It was gratifying for me to think that I was actually doing those things, not just learning about them in a classroom.

Also, although I've lived in our county for almost 27 years, it's a very complicated situation there politically. I now have a lot more insights into how the system works, although I've still only scratched the surface.

I had to ask myself if what I was doing would have any negative impacts on my family. "Is my wife's job safe? Is the job of other family members safe? If someone wants to get back at me, could they threaten me or my family with loss of our jobs?" I had to ask myself very carefully, "Does my name need to be on the front of that report?"

Figuring Out How to Make the Learning Team Work

Brian Thomas: We have learned several things as we have fumbled around and attempted to do this evaluation. First of all, those who pick members of the Learning Team have to make sure that those they pick have pure agendas and are not trying to get back at someone or serve personal interests. I approached one person about being on the Learning Team, and he said, "Yes, I would like to get on that. I'm very disgusted with one of the decisions that was made in one of the projects. I'd love to get on your team." And I said, "You're still welcome, but you're going to have to realize that you can't use the Learning Team to get back at that project. We may center your research on other activities so that you're not tempted to do that."

The Learning Team must have sufficient membership, because most of the people are going to be volunteers, and they will have a limited amount of time. Also the membership must be diverse. To conduct interviews of the biggest cross-section possible, the team needs people of all socioeconomic statuses, both genders, a wide age range, and so on.

One of our issues that we're still struggling with is the openness of our meetings. Of course, we have to comply with state laws about openness of meetings, but it is difficult to say to a committee or a group, "We're going to look at what you're doing and give you some positive feedback on some things you can do differently, and a pat on the back for the things that you did well," and have them sitting in on your planning meetings. That's a little difficult, because they can push your agenda toward the things that they want you to look at and away from the things that they don't want you to look at.

As we start this process again we're going to make sure that we have a research plan down to begin with and don't just meet every couple of weeks and say, "Okay, now let's do this research." We want a dynamic plan to begin with that we can change as we go, but that sets our direction. Also, it's very important to make sure to meet regularly and share information as it is being collected because that affects the dynamic plan.

Technical support from universities has already been mentioned. That's very important, because, as nonprofessional researchers, we do not have research skills, and we need assistance.

Vicky Creed: Cathy and Brian mentioned the importance of sharing information periodically during the assessment process. We have learned that same lesson at the coordinating office. As interviews are conducted and as lessons are learned, figure out with whom they need to get shared as soon as possible. Looking at it from the national level, the feedback loop was a real critical piece. We found that we needed to hold monthly or quarterly feedback sessions with different stakeholder groups. Otherwise they get real nervous. They're not sure what you're doing and think you're out to get them, when in fact that's not what's happening. We are trying to improve these communities, not to destroy their programs. It is a process for continuous improvement.

Learning Team Victories

Vicky Creed: The Learning Teams in all of our sites were primarily focused on process, because it's too early in the implementation of the Empowerment Zone program to be looking at outcomes. So they were looking closely at citizen participation and gave feedback that was as concrete as how the room got set up. Now, when the EZ board meets, the room is set up completely differently. It's now set up so that everybody can see each other and can talk to each other. Also, they've started having meetings at different times than they did before, so that more people can come, so that working people can come. The board has invited different people to serve on the committee that's planning the community center. They've invited the school system to provide a member to the board in order to develop relationships with the local schools.

In other words, real positive progress has already come about as a result of the feedback that this Learning Team has given their local EZ board.

EZ Board-Learning Team Relationships

Vicky Creed: The Kentucky Learning Team is different from the other Learning Teams, as each of them is different from each other. There is no blueprint for this. Every site is different, but in every site the people who are actually delivering the services are at the table with the Learning Team. It really is a form of self-evaluation driven by what's going on in the local communities.

The changes in the relationship between this Learning Team and their EZ board is similar to other sites. In some cases, the board has gone through the distrust-mistrust conflict of deliberating whether or not to endorse the Learning Team for another year and are now on the other side. For example, McDow County has just voted to go forward. After going through a period of mistrust, trust was reestablished, and the board and the Learning Team agreed that they wouldn't agree on everything. It wasn't co-optation. It wasn't "group think," where you get more people around the table that are going to agree with you. It also didn't turn into a polarized situation where the Learning Team is seen as a group of outsiders and must fight just to get on the agenda.

Discussion Session

Economic Opportunities

Babette Prevot: One of your broad goals is economic opportunity. Has your team been able to determine whether the Enterprise Zone is attracting new businesses to your community so the kids don't have to leave?

Cathy Howell: We're working on it. We looked at three goals. The first was the recreation center. The second was a lake for water and for recreation. Between 70 and 80 percent of our community has good drinking water. The rest of them don't. So we need a lake to make sure that everybody has water. Also, to be able to bring new businesses to our community, we have to be able to offer them water and gas and good roads. From a recreation point of view, we could establish small businesses around that lake if we got it.

The third goal was to build a building to bring a new business to our community. This building has been finished. As of the first of April, a new business did move in. Now they're starting to build another building. In other words, two of our goals are working on job creation.

Brian Thomas: One of the good ideas that we got this morning at a meeting here at USAID was the concept of using a building as a place for several businesses to set up temporary offices where they can start up. That's an idea we can carry home.

Joan Harrigan-Farrelly (WorldWID Fellow): Are young folks leaving the county because agriculture

is not perceived as a glamorous business career anymore? Is there a way to begin to steer young people into agriculture-related jobs—computerization of agricultural farming systems for example—so they can remain part of the community?

Cathy Howell: Our lead entity, which is Kentucky Highlands, has set up an alternative crop loan fund so that people who have been growing tobacco all these years can now start growing cabbage or pumpkins. If the alternative crop fails, they don't have to pay those loans back.

Brian Thomas: At our high school, we have a very active Future Farmers of America, which does very well in competitions nationwide. That would probably be the best vehicle for steering young people into agriculture.

Cathy Howell: Farming is not something that kids nowadays really want to get into. It's kind of a dying art.

Strengthening Grassroots Support

Diane La Voy: I'd like to hear your comments on this e-mail from Lawrence Dolan in Manila, Philippines: "In my experience in the U.S., efforts to encourage participation typically brought out the socioeconomic extremes of a community, the people near the bottom of the ladder—single mothers and so on—trying desperately to hang on, and the people at the top, who could leave but, for a variety of reasons, have decided to stay. The factors associated with participation overseas varies from country to country, but there seems to be a similar gap involving a lack of participation by people in the middle rungs relative to that particular community. I'd be curious to find out whether the people of Kentucky have tried to reach out to this silent majority, and, if so what approach they have taken and what level of success they have had with it." But let's get some other comments and questions.

Ginny Seitz (Director, WorldWID Fellows Program): I was intrigued with the similarities between the communities that I did research on in southwest Virginia and what happened in your community. Very often when a community receives a lot of attention and outside funding and successfully organizes itself, those with more power attempt to hijack the agenda and push the organization in one way or another. In such instances, it's important to have strong grassroots support. It sounds to me as if what you were doing in your monitoring and evaluation was strengthening grassroots support for the Empowerment Zone activities themselves. How do you see your role as maintaining that kind of full participation within the Empowerment Zone organization?

Brian Thomas: As part of our evaluation, we have tried to verify that meetings are open in the sense of not only who can attend, but also who can participate. We've tried to make sure that the input from people in the community has been used. In one of our projects, we think that's already the case. And in another project, we think that that is now becoming the case. We hope we are having a lasting impact by making people realize that if their views aren't being taken into account, they can be if they will just speak loud enough.

Cathy Howell: The community center has been a very big project with us. The reasoning behind it was to reduce juvenile crime. We need some place for our youth and our families to go. We have nothing in our community. Our children stand on the street corners and gather in parking lots. So a community center is really needed. However, the person who is running that project group has her own agenda. She'd like to see a 300-seat theater. We've decided that that's not what we need, and we can't sustain that. It has been a real hard fight, and it's not over yet. We're still in there pumping. But it's been real hard to show them that this is not what we want and not what we need.

Since the Learning Team report has come out, people have started to come to the meetings of the community center project. When the community center committee first started meeting, there was a lot of participation, but then people got turned off because they weren't being heard. So the leader of the committee and I and just one other person sat through three or four meetings. Now, since our report has come out, 40 or 50 people attend these meetings. They're saying, "Okay, you are going to listen to us. This is what we want." We have tried to give the middle-class people that kind of courage and support.

I interviewed the man who runs our newspaper, and I asked him, "Why don't people get involved?"

And he answered, "Because everything is so political. Everything in this community is political, and people tend to stay away from politics unless they are political players themselves." And that's true. People say, "I'm not getting involved. The politics up there are horrendous." But now eventually they are coming around and people are getting involved in spite of the politics. Hopefully they will stay involved.

Brian Thomas: Once the community center is built years down the road, it would be really sad to do a survey and find out that it was not the community center people were hoping for. We want the survey to show that it was exactly what they were hoping for.

So far the Learning Team has said to the people, "Hey, you'd better be careful. There are a few politically powerful people that are aiming this community center in the direction that they want. You'd better get some input." I hope when our next report comes out, we can say, "It looks like the community center that we're aiming for at this point is what the people want." And if that's not the case, I'm going to say, "Hey, look, you'd better get in there and make your voice heard."

Gender Issues

Gretchen Bloom: How can women's community leadership be used on learning teams and their leadership skills further developed without setting up serious opposition from men? If both women and men are involved, does this make for better programming, better impact, and so forth?

Brian Thomas: When Cathy started putting her team together, the list of names that she obtained from the Empowerment Zone board had both men and women on it. However, only about 20 percent of the people she talked to agreed to be on the team, and they were all women. So she called one of the board members and said, "We need better proportions than this. We need representation from both genders." That shows that there was no idea in our community that women could not sit on the Learning Team.

Why the first group was all women, we don't know. We discussed that. It was not that they were housewives and had the time. That was certainly not the case. Most of them worked outside the home and were very busy. Eventually, the Learning Team was about 60 percent women and 40 percent men. There are gender problems in the county, but they didn't influence our team very much.

Do you need both genders? Yes, you certainly do. And this goes back to a previous comment I made about the need for a wide range of people, if for no other reason, at least for conducting interviews. It's easier to interview a person that you can relate to.

Power Struggle

Jim Fremming: How powerful do you think you should be as a learning team?

Ayanna Toure: From some of the comments you made, I got the idea that some people saw the program as a social or a political liability.

Cathy Howell: It is true that some considered us a liability. The EZ board is made up mostly of the hierarchy of our community. Our judge magistrate, who kind of runs our community, and people who sit on other boards also sit on our Empowerment Zone board. They give their time very freely, to make sure that the Empowerment Zone works.

But they are people who have never been questioned. Nobody had ever said, "Why are you doing this? Why are you doing it like this?" The Learning Team came along and made them stop and think that there were people out there who might question what they were doing. They had had free rein to do whatever they wanted until we came in and we started questioning them. And when our report came out, we said to them, "We understand that you have given of your time and have done all these things for us. Sometimes it's hard to look at things and not realize that there are things that need to be changed. We're giving you these recommendations because there are things that we feel need to be changed. You don't have to change them, but your work would be better if you did."

Then the power struggle began. They said, "Who are you people to tell us that we've done this wrong?" Well, we didn't tell them they did everything wrong. We just gave them a few recommendations to make things better. We said, "Yes, things are going right, and they are good. But here are a few suggestions that we'd like to give you because we are stakeholders in this. This is our community, and we would like to have a voice. We don't want to become a power. We just want to be able to say that we live here. What you do is going to change our lives and the lives of our children, and we want to have a say in that. That's the only power that we want to have."

The Empowerment Zone is supposed to be community participation. It's supposed to be reinventing government. Excuse me, but when you put the same people in there who have done it all these years, that is not reinventing government. When we were made an Empowerment Zone, it was to empower people. But if the same people sit on that board that have always sat on that board, how are you going to empower the people?

Fear on the Learning Team

Jorge Landivar (InterAmerican Development Bank): I'm intrigued by the two people that thought that they would lose their jobs by being associated with the Learning Group. Is there polarization between the businesses and the Empowerment Zone? Why would people think that their jobs were at stake?

Brian Thomas: I don't think anyone fully understands the political relations of a small community like ours. I'm sure it could be the subject of many doctoral dissertations. Here's the way I envision how someone could end up losing their job because their name was on the Learning Team report. It's not that a person would say to themselves, "I'm an employer over this person, and they put their name on that report, and that report was negative about me, and I'm going to find a reason to fire them." It would be even more below ground than that. A person would say to themselves, "I want to get back at that person whose name was on the report that was negative about me. I'm not the person's employer myself, but a family member who owes me a favor is." It sounds unbelievable, but it certainly happens. It's wrong and it's all below the table and it's very, very complicated. I've had people say, "Document that and get some legal action going." It would be nearly impossible to document such mechanisms.

This manifests itself not so much in losing a job, as in not gaining one. You can look at people that obtained certain jobs and construct in your mind how they ended up getting those jobs. It has been a favor for this person, a favor for that person. Meanwhile, there may be a huge number of people that are clearly more qualified. Once again, it's nothing you can prove.

Finding Out What People Want in a Community Center

Marion Pratt: What process did you use to help communities prioritize their interests?

Joan Harrigan-Farrelly: Has there been a survey of young people within the school system to find out what they're looking for in a community center—and also within the broader community?

Cathy Howell: A survey about the community center was put out to the schools, but the schools also have their own agenda. It happened that some of the teachers put up on the bulletin board what they thought the community center should be like. Those surveys came back, and the fourth grade's surveys all were the same and the fifth grade's all were the same.

Brian Thomas: The Learning Team has discussed doing our own surveying of school systems and people out in the community. We would try to get as large a sample as possible and a large cross-section and to be careful not to survey people to death, because they have been surveyed a lot with the Empowerment Zone.

Joan Harrigan-Farrelly: I guess perhaps I should not have used the word survey. What I meant was doing town meetings with the kids themselves, having a free-flowing discussion with children as well as with the adults.

Cathy Howell: We have done that, and they have devised a wish list for the community center with about 900 items on it. We've condensed it to about 50 items. But that's not the wish list of the lady who's running that project group. It's not her agenda. We kind of forced her into having three simultaneous public meetings so that people could speak out. But she's bucking us all the way. She's saying, "I'll do it when I'm ready."

Brian Thomas: These meetings follow the town-meeting concept, because they're simultaneous and they're in radically different geographical areas of the county.

Relationship Between "Insiders" and "Outsiders"

Sher Plunkett: Would you say a little bit about the relationship between the insiders and the outsiders, the people from the community and the support from the University of Tennessee?

Vicky Creed: We worked really closely from the front end in terms of defining the roles that people would play. We made it very clear that the outcome we wanted would be the development of local capacity. We would know we were successful if we saw people who were able to function in other capacities in their communities outside the Learning Team, either in other jobs or on other committees. We wanted to change the way business is done at the local level.

We trained the regional researchers on the participatory method. The University of Tennessee pulled together training. The regional researchers were not to go in with their graduate students and do the work. They were to help facilitate the process. We worked with them on process skills so that they could go back, work with each Learning Team to revisit the original plan, list problems, and then come up with prioritizing activities. So the role of the researcher, once the Learning Team was in place, was facilitation. Earlier, during the collection of baseline information to choose the communities to pilot the Learning Initiative, the researchers acted like researchers. They went into all 33 of the rural communities and "baselined" them.

At the other end, we brought our researchers together for a three-day workshop. We asked them to bring in their own findings. We had them make an oral presentation of their case study. It took a whole day. Others, as they heard a finding or a learning or a recommendation, put those on 5x7 index cards. Those cards were then literally spread out on the floor and grouped by theme. What did we see? What have we learned? Those of us at the University of Tennessee also contributed our own findings and learnings. Over the three days, we synthesized the researchers' findings and recommendations as they related to the Empowerment Zones, the Learning Team process, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the University of Tennessee.

We then went through the same process with the Learning Team coordinators and team members. We brought them all together for five days. The researchers, who also attended, presented their list of findings and learnings to the Learning Teams after the Learning Teams had come up with theirs. Then we synthesized those. It was messy.

The Participatory Approach Takes Time

Cathryn Thorup: One of the comments about a more participatory approach is that it is too time-consuming. I would imagine that the board probably felt they could get things done more quickly and more efficiently in the past when they weren't questioned.

Vicky Creed: Somebody asked how we deal with the criticism that this is taking a long time. We're getting criticized about that big-time. And we're asking for help. We're asking for some endorsement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, from our patron. We want USDA to tell people at the local level that they are not just counting jobs. Citizen participation really is also countable. They don't seem to get that.

Coup d'Etat

Dennis Daniel: I work as a (USDA) desk officer with about 11 enterprise communities—Oklahoma, Arizona, North Dakota, South Dakota, California, Washington, Oregon. Congratulations for what

you're doing because it's clearly needed. My only question is: Have you thought about a coup in terms of the board?

Cathy Howell: We have used that exact word, but we're divided. The newer generation of political people say, "Yes, a coup is exactly what we need." The people who have been in power forever are saying, "You don't understand the whole picture. This is the way we have always done it, and this is the way we're going to continue to do it." The twelve-member board is split six and six. Whether we stay a Learning Team is really up to them. I don't know whether we're going to be here next year or not. But we gave it our best shot. That's all we could do.

Brian Thomas: I guess we're trying to have a positive effect without maybe going to the extreme of a coup.

Vicky Creed: The ideal is collaboration.

Diane La Voy: When Vicky and I were talking about organizing this Forum, she drew out for me the very different situations that the various Learning Teams are engaged in. Some of them are apparently in quite a dramatic situation of sorting out relationships and conflicts with their boards; others having worked out very nice arrangements at present, but having perhaps had hard times in the past; others where perhaps one might even fret that the board and the Learning Team were a little bit too cozy, too friendly.

Not too many forums end on quite the "perils of Pauline" note that you've struck for us, so maybe that'll be a draw for having another session a year from now.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

Structuring Participation to Avoid Chaos

Diane La Voy quoted from this e-mail in her welcoming remarks for this Participation Forum session. It was posted to GP-Net, the USAID-hosted electronic conversation group on participation, by **Richard Ford** of Clark University: "Unstructured participation is chaos—and we have enough of that already. Over the last ten years we have worked out a series of clear structured steps that may vary from setting to setting but that have in common the need to systematize the process of including larger numbers of constituencies than are normally considered part of the decision-making process. The steps include:

"Data Collection. There are many ways to include substantially more perspectives than are often included in the process of data collection. One must distinguish between 'giving data,' and collecting data. The latter would include a role in designing what needs to be collected, who will collect it, and how it will be collected.

"Data Analysis. Who will analyze the collected information, how will it be carried out, and in what form will it be presented? Many constituents may lack formal skills of literacy but still may be highly interested in considering causes of problems and previous responses to particular issues.

"Ranking. Setting priorities (goals) is the next step. Many approaches include ways for large numbers of people to set goals in an orderly and systematic format. These approaches do not necessarily include voting—in which the minority will always lose.

"Planning Action. Setting goals and ranking responses, taking into account the spatial, temporal, socio-economic-institutional, and technical information, can also be an open, participatory process. The main point here is to use the rankings as the basis upon which action is considered.

"The action plan also needs to consider what each constituency will contribute. If participation is simply to get the government or the donor or the private sector to pay for something, it is not

participation. Rather it is political pressure. Participation implies that each constituency has both needs as well as something to contribute. That is where the concept of partnerships develops.

"*Indicators*. Finally, there is a need to find out what different constituencies consider to be the important indicators to monitor and how/who will monitor them. Experience suggests that if all constituents have access to the baseline data as well as to the progress/change in the indicators they have selected to measure, then the participation will not be a one-time fix. Instead, it will be a long-term and, ideally, a productive partnership.

"We have a publications list if that is of interest."

*The following overview of popular participation in Bolivia was sent by **Walter Guevara** of USAID/La Paz. The overview was prepared for Brian Atwood's visit last year: "The groundbreaking 1994 Popular Participation Law is bringing about radical changes in Bolivia by:*

- **Mandating** that one-fifth of national tax revenues be distributed on a per capita basis to wholly new municipalities solely on the presentation of a yearly action plan and budget
- **Empowering** citizen oversight committees to channel community priorities towards municipal government and to ensure greater accountability of municipal officials
- **Establishing** accessible procedures for over 20,000 community organizations to become legally recognized actors in the eyes of the municipal and national government
- **Dividing** Bolivia into 310 new municipalities largely coincident with existing sections of provinces and reducing former regional planning mechanisms to a bare minimum
- **Extending** municipal jurisdictions to the countryside, thus entitling marginalized indigenous communities to become determining actors in municipal government
- **Broadening** the social base of democracy by turning municipalities into schools for effective citizenship, where ordinary citizens participate in decisions affecting them

One of the main challenges Bolivia must face to successfully implement the Popular Participation Law is to prevent gridlock. Municipal governance can sink in a Bermuda Triangle of lively watchdog committees, vibrant community organizations supported by a whole host of well-financed and well-meaning NGOs, and inexperienced municipal officials.

"The borderline between official authority and legitimate participation could start to blur. Certain local political traditions foster drowning with one's adversaries if that's the only way to block their path. Popular Participation could degenerate into the petty rule of local tyrants.

"To prevent the extremes of chaos and abuse of power, a new political culture must evolve, one in which consensus, compromise, coalition-building, respect for opponents, and a constructive opposition are valued. For a country characterized for most of its history by the manipulative politics of narrow self-interest, this undertaking has revolutionary implications."

Apathy: The Opposite of Participation as Chaos

Andrea K. Freeman: "Like the GP-NET subscriber from Manila (whose e-mail contribution was read at yesterday's session), my own thinking jumped to those who remain silent and how to elicit participation from them.

"I had the opportunity to do some work with a small Indian tribe in an isolated, rural corner of Montana. My project focused on the tribe's potential use of a multi-million dollar award settlement with the U.S. government for economic development. The tribal representatives with whom I worked went all out to try to get input from the community as to how these funds should be allocated and used. Clearly, the more people involved in the process, the greater the legitimacy of the outcome. Also, there are some pretty good ideas floating around out there! The small group of tribal representatives went door-to-door and called district meetings to record public opinion.

Despite these efforts, participation was minimal.

"It is necessary to look at the reactions for this inaction/disinterest: disillusionment with and alienation from the political process (even in a small community), institutional memory of past developmental failures on the reservation, isolation, etc. These are hardly easily fixable. Given the infamous historical relationships and legacies that Indian tribes have with the U.S. government, disinterest is hardly surprising—even when it is members of that same community who are trying to promote positive change. Then, throw in political (structure of the Tribal Council, the legal system, etc.), economic (extremely high unemployment, isolation), social (tensions between progressives and traditionalists, school drop-out rates, alcoholism, etc.), and cultural dynamics unique to that tribe (role of elders, etc.), and where do you start? (Or, a reason for the 'silence' could simply be lack of channels to disseminate information other than word of mouth—no Reservation publications or newspapers).

"In many cases, the root of these problems is structural. Forms of government and constitutions were imposed by the U.S. government or Indian tribes without particular regard to their social or cultural norms. As a result, the legitimacy of the entire political process as it exists is thrown into question.

"However, despite the low turnout for district meetings, much heed was given to the concerns expressed. The gatherings not only collected ideas for "development projects," but also served as windows into the frustrations and sentiments of the community. And most importantly, these sessions opened the eyes of the community to the efforts of a small, yet well-intentioned, constituency that is openly looking for community input so that the development process will not be hijacked by a powerful few.

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to [Diane La Voy](#). Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

Participation Forum (No. 23):

Participation in a Non-Participatory World: Lessons from USAID/Senegal's Outreach to Customers and Stakeholders

May 21, 1997

The joint appearance in the 23rd session of the Participation Forum of Administrator Brian Atwood and representatives of the Senegal mission coincided with a watershed moment for USAID and its reform processes. Much of the agency had made the transition to planning, implementation, and reporting based on results—a remarkable achievement—but the practice of USAID's other core values—customer focus, teamwork/participation, and empowerment/accountability—was lagging. Nowhere did these seem more distant than in Washington, where for a couple of years management attention had been absorbed by external crises, including the consolidation of the foreign affairs agencies. With these battles behind USAID, Mr. Atwood assured Forum participants in his introductory remarks that USAID/W would move the reforms forward: "I want to repair the (USAID field) mission-Washington disconnect....We need to be prepared to listen to our field missions and, in particular, to the strategic objective teams."

In doing so, the agency will be guided by a growing body of experience from field programs, like the one described in this forum. Senegal Mission Director, Anne Williams, and a group of colleagues reviewed their experience in reaching out to customers and laid out the issues and choices that arise when a mission actively implements new agency policy on participation. Their presentation began with a "Masterpiece Theater" in six short acts and ended with a lively discussion.

Diane La Voy,
Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

The Importance of Listening

Brian Atwood

Advice from Bill Cosby

The essence of today's forum is listening. I was struck by a statement that Bill Cosby recently made in a commencement speech. He said, "You know, you're all very fortunate to have received such a wonderful education. But don't leave here believing that the person who sweeps the floor is not as smart as you."

Think about it. Many of the people that we work with in the developing world haven't received even a basic education. Does that mean that they don't understand the way they want their village or even their country to run? Does that mean that they don't have the ingenuity to survive in very poor circumstances? Does that mean that they don't have a culture that has been passed on from one generation to another? Of course it doesn't. But, nevertheless, it may well be that we in USAID fail to be sensitive enough to listen to people in the countries where we work. If we do, we miss an awful lot. We may send people who have Ph.D. degrees in a particular specialty out to a village and feel that from them we can find out everything there is to know, never even stopping to

think that the people we're talking to in the village may well be as smart as we are. The whole concept of grassroots listening is something that every one of us needs to think about a great deal.

I certainly haven't undertaken the job of USAID Administrator with the impression that I'm smarter than the people who work in this agency. I've tried to reach out, especially during some of the worst times that we've been through, to bring in small groups of people and to get their perspective on what's happening. A lot of the changes of direction that we've taken have been the result of really good feedback from people who are experiencing the reforms of USAID and have their own perspective on them.

One of my concerns about our reforms is that we have a rational system, but that doesn't mean that irrational things can't happen in that process. That doesn't mean that bureaucratic behavior, or simply dysfunctional behavior, can't throw us off the tracks.

There is a lot of literature on bureaucratic behavior. It's characterized by caution and risk-aversion—tendencies we've tried to overcome. When I first joined USAID, risk aversion was widespread. People thought that a very aggressive Inspector General would get us all into trouble if we weren't careful. But I have been encouraging people to take risks. We are trying to create a hospitable environment for risk-taking in USAID.

Washington-Field Disconnect

The other aspect of bureaucratic behavior that could pervert the reforms is the disconnect between Washington and the field in the process for building budgets. It's extremely important that when mission personnel come to Washington for reviews of their strategy that they be encouraged by Washington. In this regard, we have a long way to go. Now that the battle over consolidation is behind us, I want to try to repair the mission-Washington disconnect. We need to break down, to the extent we can, the bureaucratic sort of barriers here. We need to be prepared to listen to our own field missions and, in particular, to the strategic objective teams. They have listened and made certain judgments about the way they can achieve results. If we, for whatever reason, thwart their desire to move in a certain direction after they have listened to the people of the country, the people who are their partners in getting the job done, then Washington isn't performing its role.

Despite the crisis that we've been through in this agency and the need to centralize things for a while to get through the 1996 fiscal year, we believe very strongly in decentralization and in giving as much support to the field as possible. We believe that it is the most effective way to get the job done.

Developing a New Paradigm in Senegal

One of USAID's real innovators, Anne Williams, is going to show the way. The Senegal Mission produced a video to show its CEL (country experimental lab) in operation, in partnership with American NGOs and, more important, with the Senegalese people. I was never so impressed in my life. I'd been to Senegal many times, starting from the time I served in Africa in the 1960s. In 1985, I got to know President Diouf and his ministers at a big conference there on democracy. Some of the older-generation Senegalese are more French than the French in terms of their language and education. Many were educated in France. But when President Diouf spoke to me in French and used the word "reengineering," then I knew that we had crossed a certain line. My good friend, the minister of health, Ousmane N'Gom, was delighted that we had actually asked him and his ministry how we should proceed, how we could be partners, and what they thought about the results package.

Our actions have prompted other donors to look at the way they do business. It's often top-down; it's often "we know best what's right for you." The change we have brought about in this mission and in many more around the world is an important contribution to development. We are leading the way toward a new approach altogether.

MASTERPIECE THEATER

Participation and Partnership in Senegal: A New Paradigm

Cast of characters: Anne Williams, Mission Director; Woody Navin, Coach of the Program Core; Fatimata Sy Diallo, Coach of SO Team 1; Sadou Cisse, Coach of the Cross-Cutting Team, in the role of government official; Molly Melching, Director of the NGO TOSTAN; and Steve Wisecarver, USAID/Washington Desk Officer.

Setting: The year is 1996. The Senegal mission has started to work on a strategy that will cover the next eight years. They've already held three workshops to gauge the views of the U.S. and Senegalese governments and Senegalese NGOs and associations and the private sector. And they've assembled a dream team of Senegalese advisors. As Act I opens, the mission director wants to go even farther...

ACT I: THE MISSION DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Fatimata: Hi, Anne. How are you doing?

Anne: I'm fine. Please, sit down. What can I do for you today?

Fatimata: I'm here to tell you where we are in developing our new strategy for the next eight years. These last two months the staff has worked very well. We've come up with some great ideas, and now we are ready to write our paper. We contacted Washington, and they may send out someone to help us. Also we may organize some meetings with our Senegalese partners just to present our ideas to them. What do you think?

Anne: Well, Fatimata, I'm a little bit surprised that you haven't taken more into account the "P" words. You know what I mean by "P" words?

Fatimata: Participation?

Anne: Yes, I'm a little surprised that we haven't thought about fostering **participation** ahead of time and changing our **paradigm**. What you've described to me is sort of the old way we did business. If you recall, we used to call in the consultants, write our strategy, and present it to government people, basically saying, "Take it or leave it." That's not quite what I mean by **partnership** and **participation**.

We've got to go out and listen to our customers and to our partners, not just the government. I know it's difficult, I know it takes more time, and I know we don't have that time, but I think we really have to do it.

I'd like to remind you of a Senegalese proverb that you once told me that says that it's useless to prepare a meal with sauce and couscous if no one likes couscous. Maybe we've got to find out whether the people want couscous or something else. Why don't you talk with your other colleagues. I've got to go talk to the Prime Minister about our new strategy now. Let's see where we can go.

Fatimata: Okay. I will think about it.

ACT II: THE CORRIDORS OF THE MISSION

Woody: Hello, Fati.

Fatimata: Hi, Woody.

Woody: You look concerned.

Fatimata: I am. I don't know what's going on with our new director. You remember her ideas about partnership? I think she's going too far. You know what she wants us to do? To go around the country and to talk to all sectors of Senegalese people. What do you think?

Woody: You know, Fati, being just down the hall from Anne, I've learned to agree that these are very good ideas. Unfortunately, I've not stopped using on occasion the three-letter word "but." So, between you and me, it's our job to figure out how get them implemented.

The fact is that we are working on the congressional presentation, but we'll get beyond that. We're not quite sure how we're going to fund the effort because the NMS is only on version .13 and the money doesn't come in until .27, but we'll get beyond that. Our Administrative Office must provide logistics support, but their motto is "Just say no." We'll get beyond this too. And how many regions do we have to go into? All ten?

Fatimata: Ten regions.

Woody: Ten regions.

Fatimata: Ten regions.

Woody: And probably in each region, we will want to do more than just go in and come out. Okay, so, all right. All ten regions. Well, do we even know our methodology?

Fatimata: She hasn't talked about methodology yet. Let's talk to our government people and see what they think.

ACT III: THE OFFICE OF A SENEGALESE GOVERNMENT MINISTER

Mr. Minister: I have something to tell you. I understand you're trying to do something called a customer survey.

Fatimata: Exactly.

Mr. Minister: Let me tell you what I think. Listen, this whole idea is really silly. You don't have to go beating about in the bush. We in the government can tell you everything you need to know. We know what the people's needs are and have been exploiting groups . . . I mean, exploring them for years. You do not need to waste any resources on this, I guarantee you. Anyway, let me know if there is anything I can do.

Fatimata: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll report that to Madame la Directrice.

ACT IV: THE MISSION DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Scene: A few days later.

Anne: I understand what you're saying, Fati. I understand that there are logistics problems, and I understand that the survey will fall during Ramadan. You know, I've been out in the bush during Ramadan. People still talk to you.

We really need to change our paradigm. We need to get out. We need to listen to our customers.

I will tell you that I strongly believe that if we don't go out and listen, we really won't understand. In other words, we **have** to do this.

Let me check with Washington to find out whether or not we're going to get the money, but I'm hoping we can do it outside the NMS. That's what we've asked for.>

She picks up the phone.

Anne: Hello, Steve?

Steve: Yes, this is Steve. Anne, listen. I just got this e-mail from you on additional PD&S funding for this crazy customer survey you want to do. We just don't have that kind of money for this, you know. And you want to talk to the Senegalese before you set your strategic objectives? Listen, listen, listen. No, no. Stop. Don't talk to them, please. It's the best advice I can give you. Let me check with DP. I've got to see what our sector controls are, what our earmark information is. You just can't go out and set your strategic objectives. We've got some priorities back here you've got to take into account first. Okay?

He hangs up. [Aside: That Senegalese sun must be really baking her brain. She's talking about real participation out there.]

ACT V: MOLLY'S OFFICE

October 1996

Molly: Sure, we can do it. I'm convinced we can do it. We did this type of exercise with the PADLOS (Project to Support Local Development in the Sahel) Education Project with the Club de Sahel. We went out to many villages and just listened to what people thought about their past and their vision of the future.

But I think it's a two-step process. For the customer survey, first we need to prepare the 120 surveyors who will go out, that is, the USAID people, the government of Senegal partners, and the other partners like the NGOs. We could have a two-day seminar and get a consensus on the questionnaire so that people feel like it's their questionnaire and that these are important questions to be asking. And then, some people need listening techniques and some cross-cultural skills, because they're not quite sure how to approach villagers. Some have never even been to the field.

The second step would be pre-customer survey discussions with the customers. They may have never really thought about the issues we'll want to raise in quite this way. The pre-survey discussions would allow them to reflect upon the issues before the national teams came in and asked them questions. So in order to do that, we could hold a two-day workshop for the facilitators, who would go out to the villages first, so that they would know what questions to ask, followed by two-day discussions with the facilitators and the village groups in preparation for the national teams. What do you think, Anne?

Anne: I'll tell you, Molly, it sounds good to me. What do you think, Fatî? Can we do it?

Fatimata: So, let's do it!

Molly: Let's do it! We can do it!

ACT VI: THE MISSION DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

A few weeks later.

Anne: What do you think, guys? How did it go? What did you see and what did you learn?

Fatimata: It went very, very well. Most of the people in the mission really appreciated the chance to be involved in the survey, especially people from the Office of Finance and the Executive Office and many of the support staff. They had the opportunity to talk to people, and now they realize how the work they are doing affects customers.

Woody: I'll comment on the other donors and how they all interacted, and perhaps a bit on the ministries. The other donors really think that USAID has something. They're worried that they might have to do the same thing, but they realize that this is important stuff. And on the ministry side, they found out all kinds of things.

Mr. Minister: Well, you know, maybe soon we will be considering changing a little bit the way we do business. We were amazed at the things we heard. This time we did not go out on our own. We went out with the donor. The people really know what they want. This is not what they tell us when we come alone. But I was surprised to hear that they were very unhappy with the government. They never told us that before.

Anne: Molly, what do you think the villagers felt about this experience?

Molly: We got lots of feedback from the villagers on this. The first thing that surprised them was that people were coming just to ask their opinion, and they really appreciated that. They said that was one of the first times that people had come just to get their thoughts on, for example, strategic objectives for the next ten years.

According to our facilitators, the villagers first assumed that the survey was for a project or to get money from some agency. They wanted to know what they should say. And the facilitators said, "No, no, no. You don't have to say anything. To the contrary. We want to know what you really think about what's been going on in your country, in your region, and what you see as a better way of doing things in the years to come." That really astonished them. And they said, "You mean, we can be honest?"

That preparation helped the villagers to get thinking. And when the national survey teams came, they got some well-thought-out answers from the people.

CURTAIN

What Happened After the Survey

Anne Williams

The Strategic Objectives Workshop

After the survey we took all the questionnaires and responses, translated them into French (in each region, we had had facilitators who spoke the local language), correlated the information, and called in a sociologist to help us interpret it.

Next, I wanted to bring together representatives of all our partners and customers to help us set the outlines of our strategic objectives. I proposed that we do this in a three-day workshop, or "*atelier*," with about 200 people. We decided we couldn't handle more than 200 because we wanted ten groups of 20 each—eight to work on strategic objectives and two to work on the subject of "whither goest USAID/Senegal."

There was an enormous amount of work and not a lot of time to do it, because this was during the period of R4 preparation and Hillary Clinton's visit. It also came at a time when we were

completing annual evaluations. So we were a rather busy mission.

We selected 200 people in their own capacity. For example, we invited members of the press, not as press, but as people who were journalists who knew the country.

We carefully structured the *atelier* so that there was a strict agenda. The small groups had to come out with a product: one strategic objective. We forced people into a paradigm change so that they couldn't come out with everything but the kitchen sink. They actually had to prioritize and choose one objective. We structured the *atelier* so that on the third day, if we ended up with eight totally different strategic objectives, we would have had to vote.

We made the decision that we would do this totally in-house in terms of Senegal; we would not bring in outside consultants. We had the capacity within Senegal to run an *atelier* like this. We hired a firm to organize and facilitate the *atelier* just a week before it was to start. They did a fabulous job—everything from hotel arrangements to facilitating discussions: we had facilitators in every group and a main facilitator.

The *atelier* took place the last week of April. About 240 people attended the opening sessions; about 150 participated actively during all three days. The meeting ended with an amazing consensus and two strategic objectives, which we have been back here this week discussing.

It was a complete paradigm change. It took a lot of time and effort. And one of the questions that we will raise as we go on is, is it worth it?

DISCUSSION SESSION

The Customer Survey Team

Diane La Voy: Woody, could you lay out who actually went out and did the survey? I know some donors and people from different ministries were involved. Maybe you could discuss the issues associated with selecting surveyors.

Woody Navin: The participants in the customer survey included about 45 USAID staff. As mentioned, it was a real occasion for some people on our staff who had never stepped off the peninsula of Dakar to enter Senegal. There's a big difference. So it was an eye-opener for financial management staff, for our librarians, and for others.

A number of NGOs participated, as well as ministry people. We didn't get all six ministries, but many from health, education, and women's affairs were involved. We also had representatives from Peace Corps, UNDP, and the Canadian International Development Agency, but not from the World Bank.

Diane La Voy: I know that there are some folks in Senegal, including even the sociologist who analyzed the survey findings, who had problems with the lack of scientific sampling methods. There wasn't, for instance, a random choice of villages. What was involved in selecting the villages for the survey?

Anne Williams: I never looked on this as a scientific survey. For me, what was important was the process of going out and listening in all of the different regions. We went to urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. I knew we would get a lot of feedback, because I myself go out once a quarter, sometimes for a week, sometimes for two weeks if I can. I know that the findings wouldn't be scientifically precise. But I also knew there would be a lot of coherence in what people would be saying and that the experience of going out and listening would change our paradigm and get us into a new habit. We would be able to use the information we obtained even though we couldn't claim that it had scientific validity. Sometimes we get so tied up in being scientific about surveys that we end up not doing anything. We say, "We can't do it ourselves. It's too difficult." And we hire a consultant who conducts the survey. It may be more scientific, but there's a benefit to

listening to people directly.

Molly Melching: We selected the sites with the help of many people throughout the country. We had only about two weeks to select all 90 sites and do some training in each of them. But we were determined to get the job done.

Preparation of the Surveyors

Diane La Voy: Molly, your NGO specializes in training: literacy training and other forms of capacity-building for villagers. How did you prepare the surveyors to go out? What did you put them through that helped transform them from program administrators to listeners?

Molly Melching: One of the main things we did during the two days of preparation was to elicit their participation in writing up the questionnaire, so that they felt like the questions were their questions.

We also talked about cross-cultural sensitivity. For example, we took some participants aside before one of the sessions and asked them to pretend they were villagers who had just met with a terrible national survey team. They were to imagine the worst scenario possible. What would they say to each other after the team left? At first they hesitated, saying they couldn't do skits, but they were extraordinary. They came up with just the type of things a surveyor shouldn't do in a village.

Playing the part of villagers, they said, "Did you see those people come in? My gosh! All they cared about were per diems. They didn't care about what we think. Did you see? One person was even reading his newspaper. They didn't even bother to greet us. And all they wanted to talk about was this questionnaire they had, and they didn't even ask how our families were."

In this way the survey teams identified pitfalls of cross-cultural understanding. Eventually, they wrote down how to approach villagers in the right way so that they would enjoy the exchange and be able to say what they really thought.

Survey Questions

Sharon Pauling: How consistent were the customer surveys from village to village?

Molly Melching: The questions to be used by facilitators were prepared in advance with the participation of the national survey teams. The questions were very open and general. For each of six areas—the environment, politics, social services, demography, culture and values, and the economy—two sets of questions were asked. The first set was about the past and present: describe the situation existing in 1960 at Independence and the evolution between 1960 and 1996—major problems, efforts to resolve problems, and tendencies noted. The second set was about the future: describe the society in which you would like to live in 2006; what actions are necessary in each area to achieve this society?

We couldn't get to all communities in advance to train facilitators to prepare the villagers. But we did the best we could. Facilitators were selected from NGO personnel familiar with the villages and conversant in the local languages. The process didn't always happen as anticipated because there was not always enough time to prepare the villagers.

Woody Navin: One of the interesting/surprising things learned from the customer surveys was that most Senegalese people don't like or trust their government. For example, only 25% of the people voted in the last election. Villagers would like to have the money sent to them directly without the "middlemen costs" associated with going through the government or even NGOs. People know they are getting the short end of the stick. USAID realizes that it is not practical to do this and that the current government will probably be in power for the next ten years. It was very useful for USAID to get feedback directly from local people and not filtered through government officials.

Setting Parameters for the Consultation

Brian Atwood: How did you establish parameters for the consultation? We have five agency goals.

We also have, as Anne knows all too well, certain earmarks, like the one for child survival. How did you establish the parameters so that you didn't get feedback from villagers who said, "We need you to build a bridge," when USAID is not in that business any more?

Anne Williams: First, the customer survey was mainly to get people's feeling for where they are and where they want to go. It wasn't even in the context of the USAID program. The villagers' vision for what they want for their country was one of the pieces of information we used in the three-day *atelier*.

Brian Atwood: After you had the survey results, you talked about creating two new strategic objectives. Very few of our missions are starting up from scratch. We have what we call "mortgages," ongoing programs in areas that won't be recommended by the consultation. I suppose that's what you're struggling with now in Washington as you try to defend the two new SOs.

Anne Williams: At the *atelier*, we tried to give everybody there the same information. We presented what our studies had shown. We gave the "RAPID" presentation on the health/population situation. We made a PowerPoint presentation on the environment. The government presented its Ninth Development Plan. As mission director, I outlined the constraints USAID has to work within. I emphasized that all partnerships have their limits. USAID's money comes from the American people, through Congress, and we have a number of constraints. Anything we do has to be within all of the constraints.

In other words, there were three overlapping templates: What our customers were saying; what the government of Senegal was saying; and the USAID constraints.

We wrestled with a dilemma: Should the mission talk to Washington first and then go talk to its partners or should the partners be consulted first? I maintain both should be done together.

We have two new strategic objectives but we also recognize that we can still continue ongoing programs. We're taking what we believe is the next step in the dynamic process of development. It's not USAID's strategy for Senegal, but the U.S.-Senegal strategy. Both sides have to agree to buy into the process.

Brian Atwood: What worries me is that our emphasis on results packages and strategic objectives will keep us too narrowly focused and that we will become too focused on the numbers, on numerical results, and we will miss some broader results.

Woody Navin: We are fully aware of earmarks and trying to work within constraints. We are juggling the need to report on results on an annual basis; yet, as development professionals, we know that many of the problems that we are tackling take a long time to solve and involve changing policies and institutions and deeply ingrained habits.

The New Strategic Objectives

Pirie Gall: You have been talking for about 45 minutes, and it has all been on process. What was the outcome?

Anne Williams: The two strategic objectives that we came up with were, first, an SO on job creation. People felt it was very important to reduce the 45% under-employment rate, especially for young people and women. There is a great need for income generation. Five of the eight groups had this as their most important SO. The second SO was on decentralization. In Senegal, decentralization laws are on the books, but actual decentralization is being implemented slowly. This SO is causing us some trouble in Washington because it is unclear how it relates to various agency SOs using earmarked funds. For example, does it fall under democratization or health? While Washington gave us the signal to go ahead with considerable Washington input, there remains lots of reservations about the decentralization strategic objective.

Group Process in the *Atelier*

Elise Storck: Could you discuss the process used in the eight groups during the *atelier*?

Anne Williams: Participants were given the same background material, but they did not select their own groups. Membership in the various working groups of the *atelier* was assigned so that people would not band together in subject matter groups. The idea was to get a good mix. Senegalese facilitators were used. They kept people in bounds and limited the discussion to one strategic objective.

Diane La Voy: I was a "voyeur" during the *atelier*. It was a struggle for many groups, especially at the beginning. The process was very democratic with people from various socioeconomic groups and different social classes, sitting down together and contributing on an equal basis. I saw some nice interactions develop. It took people a time to realize that there wasn't a "right" answer, that they weren't supposed to "discover" what USAID wanted to do. It took time for it to sink in that they were to do the planning.

Response of Other Donors

Alex Ross: USAID is definitely a leader in the area of customer participation. How did other NGOs and donors view the process? Do you think they will try to emulate USAID?

Anne Williams: I went to a cocktail party shortly after the *atelier* and my French counterpart and others mentioned the process to me. It was clear that people had been discussing it. I also found out that the process was mentioned at a World Bank meeting and held up as a model to be emulated, as heads nodded around the table.

The Role of Washington

Cathryn Thorup: What can we in Washington do to help processes like this to go on?

Anne Williams: Listen. Be better partners. Participate more fully. We had money for people to come out for the *atelier* and only Diane La Voy and Phil Jones (AFR/SD) came out. Be more flexible. The reporting system fosters rigidity.

More on the Customer Survey

Larry Salmen, World Bank: Listening isn't new. We began at the Bank in 1981, but the participatory processes haven't really caught on in institutional terms. Now there is reason to think that it will. Did you find that use of a questionnaire, rather than open-ended questions and focus groups and observations, restricted the information you were able to obtain?

Molly Melching: Actually it wasn't a questionnaire. The questions were open-ended and elicited a lot of give and take. For example, one of the domains was demography. In one village we were talking about how the village had increased 30% in population over the last ten years. When asked if they thought this process would continue, they agreed it would. When asked what they thought of that, they at first said it would be wonderful. When reminded that they had talked about the lack of jobs and land, they at first were stunned and then began talking about family planning. The women said that they had been talking about the need for family planning for a long time. One man said that now he knew why. I mention this, not because we planned to get into the area of family planning, but to show how open-ended the questions were and how they elicited discussion. The small group process enabled local people to come up with their own solutions. For example, family planning and monogamy ended up being suggested by one man as solutions for problems caused by over-population.

Margaret Guell: I understand that during Ramaden there are certain things one wouldn't do. How did you deal with that?

Woody Navin: With the advice of my Senegalese colleagues, I made the decision that we could do the survey then. Ramaden, Islam, does not prohibit it. It's just rarely done. Actually, it turned out to be very good because the villagers don't have to prepare lunch.

Next Steps

Noreen O'Meara: Do you plan to go back to the customer as the process continues?

Anne Williams: Here is how I see the process evolving. We moved from the survey to the workshop. Now we are back in Washington for consultation. When we return to Senegal we will discuss what we learned from Washington and find out what the government thinks and get suggestions about how we should implement the new objectives. We will then form multidimensional focus groups to discuss the evolving plans. At the end of October, the process will culminate in another workshop, about the same size as the first one, in which we will present our results framework. We're hoping to get a lot of Washington people out in Senegal working with us and our partners and customers.

The problem is that this is a very resource-intensive process, and our resources—both time and money—are limited. I could go on and on about how many conflicting priorities there were, but I don't need to. Everybody says we don't have enough time. It would be nice if this was all we were doing, but we are implementing our current program, we are implementing reengineering, and we are trying to develop a new strategy all at the same time.

Is it worth it? Yes, because it's about time we started looking at sustainability. If we don't, we're spending a lot of money for nothing. I believe that sustainability comes from ownership and that what we're trying to do. By broadening and deepening ownership for what we're doing, we are laying a foundation for better implementation and sustainable results.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

"Fantastic" Experience in Senegal

Sophie Ndiaye: "I am unable to attend the forum because I am presently in Senegal, but I am interested in all the issues that will be raised. I hope the forum will allow Washington to share the invaluable experience we had here in Senegal during the nation-wide survey during which we exchanged a lot of information with our partners and customers. The most fantastic aspect of the experience was that our partners took part in the 'game.' They really were able to bring their wide experience to the process."

Creating Freedom Spaces

Joel M. Jutkowitz: "When we undertook the civil society study for CDIE that culminated in Gary Hansen's paper on civil advocacy, one case that was examined was that of Chile. In Chile, donors played a significant role in creating the freedom spaces that helped to preserve the capacity of opposition groups to eventually work to move the country to re-establishing democracy. These freedom spaces incorporated new political actors, such as women, as well as providing an umbrella for more traditional political groups.

"USAID can work to create similar freedom spaces through a participatory approach in 'non-participatory societies' which may then become the building-blocks for a future democratic order. Is that the case in Senegal?"

Reaching Hearts and Minds

Lawrence Salmen: "Finally reading your "Participation Forum" of January 23, 1997 on listening in Bosnia, I am impressed by Jerry Hyman's allusion to listening as a way to touch base with emotions rather than just intellect. After listening to development initiatives throughout what is becoming a long career in all sectors and regions, I am convinced that perhaps the major gap in developmental assistance is our inability to reach what we once called 'the hearts'—as well as the

minds—of those we are seeking to assist. In-depth listening, with its intrinsic respect for the reality of the other, is an essential means to reaching the emotional, or affective, part of human life: 'what makes Johnny run.' I do believe we can listen in-depth in a systematic manner which will influence project management and policy formulation. At the World Bank we have done this in over 150 projects and roughly 50 policy-oriented research activities. But we can and must do much more, throughout the development community.

"I heartily commend you for your increasing attention to listening as an entry point to what is the heart of development."

Participation in USAID/Bangladesh

Dick Brown (Mission Director, USAID/Bangladesh): "Since beginning its CEL experience two years ago, USAID/Bangladesh has continued to explore and expand its participation activities on a number of fronts:

(1) *Customers.* In all three of the mission's strategic sectors (population/health, food security, and responsive government), we have undertaken rapid appraisals with poor people throughout the country to

- gain a preliminary sense of how our customers perceive their problems and needs,
- validate planned activities and/or measure progress against targeted results, and
- find out from our customers how they themselves define and perceive poverty so that we can better identify synergies among our strategic objectives and better target our efforts toward our mission goal of poverty reduction.

(2) *Design and Implementation.* We now routinely design our new activities in full and active cooperation with our partners. We have sat side-by-side with our partners and jointly determined what a design should look like and how it should be implemented. Increasingly, USAID is working more actively and collaboratively with our partners in implementation (rather than our just signing a contract and waiting for results).

(3) *Internal Mission.* All strategic implementation is now done through multifunctional teams. Given our customer focus and our use of rapid appraisal methodology, we have involved secretaries, agricultural officers, health experts, executive officers, etc. as field interviewers, asking our customers open-ended questions across all sectors, then discussing and reaching consensus on the responses with their colleagues from throughout the mission. Now most 'support' staff in the mission (financial, legal, contracting, program, PDO, economics) serve directly on strategic objectives teams, participating actively and fully in decisions affecting design and implementation at a much earlier stage than under pre-reengineered circumstances.

(4) *Stakeholders.* Other donors and GOB entities that affect and may be affected by our strategy and program but which do not participate directly in our designs and implementation are now consulted and kept more actively informed at a much earlier date on our plans and activities than in the past.

JICA's Participatory Development Approach

David Breg: "One of the goals of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) program since its creation in 1954 has been the spread of development successes to local communities and people living in poverty. This goal was formalized when Japan's ODA Charter came into effect in 1992. According to the charter, Japan's ODA must seek to improve the economic and social capacities of people as agents of development. The broad-based participation of citizens in aid implementation would be the means for accomplishing this goal.

"In the Japanese ODA paradigm, participatory development is linked with good governance, which provides the legal and functional basis needed to promote participation and create the environment in which participatory processes take place. Participatory development introduces a bottom-up approach to remedy any shortcomings of the government-led approach.

"Some of the benefits of long-term participatory development envisioned by Japanese aid officials include raising the awareness of citizens at the local level, forming community groups, upgrading resource management abilities and improving capabilities for external negotiations. To accomplish these goals, officials from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA—the government agency responsible for implementing the technical assistance portion of Japan's ODA) are aware that the following activities are needed and should be considered when formulating their development projects:

1. Strengthening grassroots community organizations involved in participation at the most basic level.
2. Upgrading the self-reliant capabilities of the socially disadvantaged through improved access to basic education.
3. Promoting the participatory development capabilities of governments from the central to the local levels.

"When JICA officials formulate new projects—especially comprehensive, large-scale technical cooperation projects—they try to introduce participatory planning concepts to the project's logical framework. When a JICA survey team designs a project activity, they will often organize a participatory workshop. Representatives from central and local governments and NGOs, and citizens from rural communities who will be affected by the planned project will be invited to the workshop to meet with members of the survey team. During the workshop, the following analyses are conducted.

1. Participation Analysis: identify different groups in the project area, understand their current status, and select a target beneficiary group.
2. Problem Analysis: develop a problem tree of issues to be addressed.
3. Objectives Analysis: develop an objective tree of goals to accomplish.
4. Alternative Analysis: prioritize goals within the objective tree.
5. Project Design Matrix: use the findings of the meeting to develop the logical framework.

"JICA is also implementing activities that have a direct impact on rural communities, such as basic education, primary health care, and social forestry. The participation of the targeted beneficiaries in these projects is essential from project planning to implementation.

"Questions about this brief overview of Japan's concept of participatory development are welcome. David Breg, Program Officer, jica06@jicausa.com."

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to Diane La Voy. Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.
