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The Participation Forum*

April 20, 1995

From Clientelism to a “Customer-Service” Orientation: Features of Good Public Sector Programs

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 Ceará 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.

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, using either the USAID directory or INTERNET, as DLAVOY@USAID.GOV. Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development.

Four Success Stories from Ceará. Ceará 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, Ceará'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 Ceará 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 Ceará. 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.

Overturning 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 Sinnett: 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 Ceará 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 Ceará program except that the agents were not women. I had thought that one of the reasons the Ceará program worked was the use of women agents.

Sarah Freedheim: In Ceará, 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 Ceará, 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 Tandler: 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 Tandler'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

- ▶ “participation throughout the project cycle (implementation and assessment, not just design);
- ▶ “participation in policy dialogue and policy determination;
- ▶ “blending local knowledge with external technical knowledge;
- ▶ “the role of NGOs and community organizations as intermediaries;
- ▶ “the importance of the culture of organizations and agencies employing staff who have interaction with beneficiaries;
- ▶ “empowering people; and
- ▶ “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.