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**AFRICA BUREAU EXPERIENCE IN NON-PROJECT ASSISTANCE  
FROM PARTICIPATION TO OWNERSHIP**

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# **Africa Bureau Experience in Non-Project Assistance From Participation to Ownership**

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# Executive Summary

## INTRODUCTION

In July 1988, the Africa Bureau issued preliminary guidance on non-project assistance under the Development Fund for Africa (DFA). The DFA was enacted into law in 1987 and specifically called for local participation by and consultation with Africans in achieving broad-based sustainable development. This report emerges out of earlier work undertaken by the Africa Bureau in 1992 to document USAID experience in carrying out the objectives of the Development Fund for Africa to fulfill the above-cited DFA mandate on participatory development. A summary of the 1992 findings and follow-up documentation in this report examines the participatory dimension of combined project and non-project assistance support activities. Non-project assistance (NPA) is defined as "the provision of 'generalized' financial resources to assist with the implementation of agreed upon sectoral goals and objectives. Sector program assistance focuses on sectoral constraints and reforms to alleviate those constraints, the disbursement of funds is linked to appropriate sector-level reforms and host country actions, not to specific uses of funds."

The findings from 1992 call for a more systematic assessment of Agency experience with local consultation and participation in the development of NPA programs. This report addresses the status of such participation by synthesizing Africa Bureau documentation on the subject and drawing from field case studies undertaken at USAID missions in Senegal, Madagascar, and Niger. Lessons learned and effective approaches to the participatory design and implementation of NPA programs are drawn from the literature review and case studies. The summary of lessons and best practices in this report is intended to guide Africa Bureau missions in how to better design and carry out participatory sector grant programs in the future.

## Contents

Africa Bureau experience to date in promoting participatory dialogue in the formulation and implementation of sectoral policy reform is documented in three critical phases of the program cycle -- design, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation. Case study examples are used to illustrate and synthesize effective approaches to consultation and participatory involvement of host country and foreign donor institutions including public and private sector stakeholders within African governments, non-government organizations (PVO/NGOs), bi- and multilateral donors, and local community structures. Documentation and case study analysis is cross-sectoral, drawing lessons and best practice from NPA programs as diverse as natural resource management/environment, agriculture, trade and investment, health, education, and finance. The report conclusion summarizes best practice and lessons from the field with a follow-up section on policy recommendations for targeted areas of programmatic activity requiring further Bureau attention and investment of human and financial resources. Detailed findings of three NPA case studies undertaken in

Madagascar, Senegal, and Niger are appended as field reports for those readers wishing to explore further the participatory dimensions of NPA in a specific Mission context

## **Summary of Findings**

The overarching theme and hypothesis drawn from the findings of a broad range of Africa Bureau NPA programs in this report is that *host country ownership is the critical variable* ultimately influencing the final outcome of the reform process. The challenge ahead is for the Agency to move beyond a nascent phase of experimentation with participatory policy dialogue and to concretely transfer 'ownership' or responsibility for the multifaceted phases of reform (assessment, design, sequencing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) to host country institutions. In order to move a step further in the evolution of the policy experiment with participation, several key issues will require heightened attention and fine tuning in the process of policy dialogue and formulation.

\* The need for better political, macroeconomic, and institutional analysis early on during pre-design assessment that incorporates a thorough analysis of all aspects of national capacity to own and sustain policy reform - social, political, economic, environmental, and institutional. In order for this exercise to be effective and accurate in gauging local capacity, host country participation should involve a balanced mix of public, private, and non-profit institutional stakeholders,

\* Institutional capacity building must begin at the very earliest stages of program design and pre-design assessment and be consistently reinforced throughout the life of program and beyond. This requires that donors fully engage African institutions in policy dialogue, acting however as facilitator and catalyst for internal national debate rather than as arbiter and enforcer of an externally prescribed reform regimen,

\* The broader macroeconomic and political environment of the host country is critical to the successful outcome of sectoral reform. A serious deterioration in macroeconomic or political conditions during program implementation can derail the momentum of policy reform and erode whatever substantive gains have been made. Thus, the likelihood of medium-to-long term stability of political and economic structures must be given careful consideration early on in the gestation of program planning and design.

## **Participatory Strategies of Design**

\* The technical phase of program design is often an inherently exclusive, nonparticipatory process, involving a small team of AID staff, outside consultants, and host government technocrats. This tendency to limit participation in the early stage of design is generally due to the highly technical nature of the reform issues to be addressed. Nevertheless, the technical design phase can broaden participation for a particular initiative by soliciting public opinion through polls, surveys, or other representative sampling instruments, and employing local technical assistance in the process.

\* Host country ownership of the reform process can be facilitated at this critical juncture by supporting the participation of Mission foreign service national staff along with local specialists in conducting studies, surveys, etc, that feed into program design early on. Joint participation of native and foreign expertise allows for a balanced combination of technical skills and a more accurate appraisal of both indigenous and foreign perspectives.

\* A cross-sectoral program review suggests that NPA is most effective when combined with project assistance. Strong institutional and human resource capacity is a necessary precondition for the long term viability of any reform initiative. Project support in the form of technical assistance and training that fosters capacity development at both individual and institutional levels was an integral component of all the programs reviewed.

\* A key aspect of success or failure in program design is the degree of harmonization among international donors and host country officials in setting clear and consistent sectoral objectives. Multiple donor agendas and bilateral country interests are often counterproductive in the absence of effective donor program coordination.

### **Participatory Strategies of Implementation**

Successful program implementation assumes an ongoing process of policy dialogue that characterizes the entire developmental cycle of issues identification, agenda setting, decision-making, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Identification of those stakeholders with whom one should consult and the institutional capacity of their constituent organizations is key to the reform outcome. Ideally, this process should feed back into proceeding rounds of program design and implementation. Effective dialogue has no discrete phase of startup and completion but rather should be viewed as a non-linear phenomenon involving a succession of dialogue inputs and outputs that continually feed into one another in an iterative fashion.

Several observations are drawn with regards to Mission experience in promoting participation during the implementing phase of sectoral programs.

\* Experience with a range of sectoral programs indicates that management burdens have been underestimated when implementing comprehensive reforms that involve multiple stakeholders. A compromise must be sought between the desire to effect deep rooted, broad-based reform and the need to assure interim as well as final results. Program review suggests a lack of institutional capability on the part of host country ministries to address the managerial and technical requirements of NPA programs. Local capacity to closely monitor progress in fulfilling specific reform benchmarks must be carefully evaluated by missions in the future design and delivery of programs. In many instances, it is not apparent that clear roles for missions, technical assistance teams, and government ministries have been delineated in the arena of implementation toward benchmarks and monitoring.

\* Maximum stakeholder participation does not automatically guarantee optimum

results One Mission program in particular provides a telling example of the importance of assessing stakeholder ambitions and motivations prior to initiating contact with all potential partners The lesson to impart is that a bottom-up strategy of stakeholder consultation must be undertaken with caution and only after a thorough identification and assessment of constituent agendas

\* Ambiguities persist in identifying the participatory role of civic institutions and the state An interesting lesson to emerge from the review of NPA programs is the need to increase dialogue between civic institutions and the state in establishing roles that are complementary in the delivery of NPA companion project activities As NGOs begin to assert their authority in the competition for donor resources, technical extension services of the state feel directly threatened by the loss of previously controlled donor funds NGOs currently seeking to work closely with government extension agents on community-based programs have encountered attempts on the part of agents to hinder their efforts within recipient communities

### **Participatory Strategies of Monitoring and Evaluation**

A wide range of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods in the form of surveys, censuses, policy matrices (PAM), famine early warning systems (FEWS), etc, are being used by missions to measure and track 'people-level impact' resulting from specific policy interventions Many African institutions do not possess highly developed information systems capable of tracking verifiable indicators or measures of impact Thus, the intent of many sectoral reforms is to introduce or upgrade data monitoring systems capable of providing the information necessary to demonstrate quantifiable relationships between targeted interventions and outcomes

A review of Mission experience in strengthening local institutional capacity to carry out effective, ongoing monitoring and review of program impact is summarized here

\* The state of severe indebtedness of many African economies is clearly one major factor that complicates the process of attribution in correlating program impact with input variables In one financial market development program, reform efforts to measure program impact on womens' savings capacities were confounded in a macroeconomic environment of spiralling inflation and budgetary decline

\* Policy dialogue in Africa has expanded in recent years, extending beyond the dyadic boundary of donors and host government officials Access to empirical data has become a new instrument for policy advocacy among groups such as the free press, civil society organizations, and nascent institutions challenging the dominant political and economic paradigms of the state Use of such information for policy debate has emboldened nongovernmental institutions and is creating a new political space that allows such groups to leverage for effective change in government policy and legislation that affects local communities Increased access to information technology, particularly a burgeoning

commercial sector radio media is rapidly becoming a powerful tool in facilitating national dialogue among a broad range of stakeholders. Alternative radio and print media sources are gaining public support in challenging state channels of communication and diffusion of political and economic information. Such programming could catalyze increased public participation in policy reform issues and serve as a unique public policy instrument in gauging local response to reform initiatives promoted by the state.

\* Weak institutional capabilities exist on the part of many African countries to effectively implement national monitoring systems that accurately track socioeconomic indicators relating to poverty, food security, health and nutritional status, etc. Even when such systems are in place, the capacity to fully exploit or analyze these data for policy purposes is often lacking. Institutional strengthening of monitoring and review systems should place a high priority on developing analytical capacities among host country counterparts.

\* New monitoring and reporting systems are being thrust upon host country institutions at a time when macroeconomic measures have forced a reduction in numbers of public sector personnel. It is somewhat paradoxical that African governments are being called upon to increase human resource capacities at a time when budgets are shrinking and staff sizes are declining. Sensitivity is in order in fully assessing current data collection, retrieval, and analysis capabilities prior to designing or installing new information systems that may require significant amounts of time to learn, operate, and maintain. A ministry unit can be easily overwhelmed by new reporting requirements imposed from the outside, particularly when donor efforts are poorly coordinated and result in an overlay of multiple information systems.

## CONCLUSIONS

A recurrent theme throughout this report has been the primacy of the political and macroeconomic environment as variables critical to the success and longevity of the reform process. Donors have optimistically assumed a level of host country institutional capacity to own and sustain the reform process that has been profoundly absent in many African countries. International resources will need to concentrate more heavily on capacity development that is carried out as a medium to long-term investment strategy. This must occur in tandem with continued financial support and commitment to the sectoral reform agenda. True domestic ownership of the reform process will not manifest itself in the short term, but rather will require a slow, sequential structural transformation of host country institutions and decision-making processes. Thus, donor insistence on African commitment to the reform canon will require a sustained commitment of development resources on the part of the international aid community as well. Sectoral grant support -- combining program and projectized assistance -- that enhances host institutional capacities and extends beyond the normal 5-10 year NPA funding cycle will serve as the primary instrument in guiding this process.

Several key observations may be drawn from a review of Africa Bureau experience with participatory dimensions of the sectoral policy reform cycle

- \* Africans must become more proactive in defining and implementing participatory approaches to reform. A donor prescribed or imposed agenda of participation should not be the motivating force driving fund disbursement.

- \* Compliance with conditionalities should reflect not only the 'letter' but the 'spirit of the law'. A qualitative assessment of compliance is often lacking. Political and macroeconomic factors often hinder the successful attainment of reform benchmarks and mask positive efforts toward genuine reform on the part of individual host country institutions.

- \* Conditionality must become a more reciprocal process of dialogue and negotiation between the host country government and foreign donor. While USAID has worked hard to foster a participatory approach with African stakeholders in identifying conditions precedent, much work remains to be done early on during pre-design assessment to elicit a more candid appraisal by national officials regarding realistic timeframes, attainable program objectives, political and macroeconomic constraints, and institutional capacities to genuinely assume ownership of the reform process. This will require greater input and participation by technical level staff alongside or parallel to dialogue with higher level political officials if a truly realistic assessment of proprietorship of reform outcomes is to be determined.

- \* Greater host country involvement in the conceptualization, design, implementation, and monitoring of program objectives will most likely require an increased period of gestation for program implementation due to weak institutional structures and the need for capacity strengthening. In the meantime, more innovative strategies that meet balance of payments deficits and expenditure gaps will be required<sup>1</sup>.

## Policy Recommendations

A number of specific recommendations for increasing stakeholder participation in sectoral reform programs include

### 1 Sequencing of Stakeholder Participation

The phasing in of key stakeholders at critical junctures of the program cycle is key to

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<sup>1</sup> This is one of the most important conclusions of a recent SPA working group report on economic reform in the context of political liberalization held in Washington DC in early 1995. See report entitled *SPA Working Group Meeting on Economic Reform in the Context of Political Liberalization*, Washington, DC, January/May 1995. Report to the SPA Plenary, May 6, 1995.

the achievement of reform objectives. Policy reform, engaging a range of public interest groups, is an inherently political process that impacts differentially upon various segments of the population. Invariably, there will be winners and losers. Thus, participation as an all-inclusive process is not necessarily appropriate. As one study notes, "Participation is not cost-free, and more participation should not be the automatic solution for successful policy reforms."<sup>2</sup> Rather, the lesson from previous reform experience suggests that stakeholder interests, motivations, and political agendas should be thoroughly taken into consideration when devising participatory strategies of engagement. Some groups seriously risk sabotaging or derailing program outcomes depending on the timing of their inclusion or exclusion in policy dialogue.

## **2 Local Ownership of Conditionality**

Case study evidence reveals that external donor support of economic and political liberalization through excessive use of conditionality distracts host governments from internalizing reform objectives and assuming control of and responsibility for the reform process. Energies become focused on compliance and satisfaction of conditions rather than on underlying processes of participatory dialogue and consensual decision-making. Conditions that are overly-prescriptive and involve a minimum of participants in their definition will almost invariably fail.

It is also paramount that conditions not be writ in stone for the life of a program. The initial setting of major reform objectives based on sound dialogue with a range of key actors is critical. However, conditionality must be tailored and flexible enough to reflect the pace and nature of reform. An ongoing (ie, annual) rather than periodic process of review and formulation of conditionality with host country participants must be built into systems of monitoring and assessment.

## **3. The Disaggregation of People-Level Impact**

The heterogeneous composition of communities that are stratified socially and economically by gender, age, ethnicity, or other distinguishing characteristics should be a central feature reflected in the analysis, design, implementation, and impact monitoring methodology of sectoral programs. Otherwise, reform objectives of poverty alleviation, income generation, and resource equity will neglect the needs of the most disenfranchised segments of society.

Measures of people-level impact that differentiate gendered access to and control over critical resources is emphasized in the DFA legislation. A caveat is in order in understanding that poor performance of national economies may severely hamper attempts to objectively assess gender or other critical socioeconomic variables in the design and implementation of

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<sup>2</sup> Brinkerhoff and Kubitaba (1994)

policy reform. As a result, such variables may not always be the most appropriate unit of analysis in assessing the economic efficiency, gains or losses in a reform.

#### **4 Participation in Economic Reform as a Catalyst for Political Change**

Effective economic policy change may be encouraged even under closed or autocratic political systems when skillful sectoral planning and analysis is undertaken to address institutional constraints. In one case study, effective donor coordination by USAID and the World Bank was able to successfully engage an authoritarian government initially reticent to change, in a campaign of market liberalization. Economic reform was instrumental in accelerating political reform and a broader process of transparency throughout the government.

#### **5 Enhanced Partnering of Public-Private Sector Interests**

Public-private sector partnerships, when well conceived and designed, have the capacity to bring communities and the government closer together and to bridge a vast divide that has existed between the state and the poor majority of the population. Examples of effective partnering of state and community efforts include educational, agricultural, and trade and investment sector programs.

#### **6 Generating Policy Dialogue Through Data Collection and Analysis**

In cases where direct consultation on a broad scale is not possible due to constraints of time, cost, logistics, host country politics, or related reasons, public views on policy may be ascertained indirectly by systematizing the use of impact surveys, opinion polls, focus groups or similar polling procedures. Local research institutions such as national universities have been engaged many sectoral programs to collect data, monitor, and evaluate the outcome of reform objectives as they are being implemented. This increases the sustainability of the policy formulation process. Management information systems that can track data on verifiable program indicators such as market price fluctuations, student-teacher ratios, curriculum user fees, mortality and fertility rates, intrahousehold revenues and expenditures, etc, serve as a power tool in gauging public response to specific reform measures. Data from efficient, well-designed information systems have the capacity to then feed back into policy dialogue stimulating further refinement or correction of targeted interventions as they are implemented.

#### **7 Increased Local-Foreign Collaboration in Policy Analysis**

Better political and institutional analysis is needed in order to inform upon more appropriate design measures that anticipate policy obstacles that may occur along the way. This is the conclusion of a 1991 USAID summary evaluation of six economic reform programs in Africa (Lieberson 1991). Such analyses, frequently conducted by Mission staff or foreign consultants, could be more insightful in predicting policy outcomes by engaging

African policy experts more directly in this analytic exercise. Local perspectives on political and institutional change serve as an effective cross-reference to outside views that may not necessarily capture the nuanced features of social, cultural, and political reality within a given country. Such a collaborative approach, however, requires transparent political institutions and a liberal government regime to be in place.

## **8. Synchronization of Program Objectives Among Multiple Stakeholders**

As stakeholder participation increases, the coordination required among diverse groups may overwhelm the spirit and momentum of the reform process. The implementation of NPA programs that are ambitious and broad in scope must pay careful attention to the number of stakeholders that can realistically be engaged in policy dialogue and establish appropriate management mechanisms (eg, National Coordinator) to assure direct channels of communication among stakeholder groups.

## **9. Promoting Dialogue Between Civil Society and the State**

There is a strong tendency to dichotomize civil and state institutions and to view their functions in oppositional rather than complementary terms. The disengagement of the state from direct control over donor resources for community development programs implies a redefinition of the government's role. USAID missions can facilitate this transition by opening the dialogue between state agents and community NGOs through roundtables, workshops, and other fora that address the changing role of the state vis-a-vis civil society institutions. New roles for each stakeholder must build upon complementary rather than competing capacities within each institution. This transformation in state-civil society relations must be buttressed by changes in the legal regulatory environment and a major shift in cultural thinking among a broad set of actors both within and outside the state.

## **10. Contextualized Participatory Review in Meeting Conditions**

Significant delay in the disbursement of tranching funds is sometimes due to a large number of conditions to be reviewed and an emphasis on legalistic procedures to measure desired outcomes. An absence of dialogue (besides paper documentation) with those stakeholders most directly involved at the technical level on a daily basis with implementation of the reform misses the critical context in which to evaluate compliance or noncompliance with target objectives. Satisfaction of conditions precedent should not be viewed exclusively as a legal exercise, despite the need for an objective process of review. Dialogue should be fostered between the USAID mission, the Agency legal counsel, the purported 'customers' of the reform agenda, and other implementing bodies that are closely associated with the monitoring and review process.

## **11. Independent Mechanism for Monitoring of Program Implementation**

The linkage of program and project assistance poses an inherent problem when

technical contracting is called upon to engage in the 'objective' review and monitoring of program objectives (*ie*, conditionalities) where the direct interests of the technical agent are at stake. A more independent modality for tracking and review of conditionalities should be given consideration by missions so that concerns about conflict of interest are avoided by the technical implementing agent. This would also free up such assistance to engage in the more substantive process of delivering the field services needed to assure that institutional capacity building measures are being put into place.

## **12 Pre-Design and Ongoing Assessment of Macroeconomic and Political Processes**

Participants in the design, implementation, and monitoring of reform programs should pay closer attention to the broader political economic arena and those external forces that threaten to undermine the reform process. Design strategies should be informed by sound social, political, and institutional analyses that build flexibility into program components that can more easily respond to political or macroeconomic change. Conditions precedent, for example, should be subjected to ongoing review and modification in order to keep pace with changes in the larger political economy.

## **13. Delineating the Role of Foreign Technical Assistance**

Technical assistance provided by US-based firms to carry out studies, training, evaluation, and general technical support must be supplemented by an active oversight role on the part of missions. This requires frequent communication and interaction between mission staff and the technical assistance team. It is easy for a mission to rely heavily on an outside contractor to administer project assistance due to heavy work loads and short staffing within the mission.

The lack of human resources or time on the part of a mission to closely monitor project performance, however, may ultimately result in divergent views of project performance such as satisfaction of conditionalities. Therefore, it is important that missions realistically assess human resource capacities and the time required to closely track project objectives. NPA grant programs in general are personnel or labor-intensive to administer.

## I INTRODUCTION

In July 1988, the Africa Bureau issued preliminary guidance on non-project assistance under the Development Fund for Africa (DFA). The DFA was enacted into law in 1987 and specifically called for local participation by and consultation with Africans in achieving broad-based sustainable development. In 1990, Congress further stipulated that "[T]he 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 under this section."<sup>3</sup>

### A. Background to the Study

This report emerges out of earlier work undertaken by the Africa Bureau in 1992 to document USAID experience in carrying out the objectives of the Development Fund for Africa to fulfill the above-cited DFA mandate on participatory development. A field visit to four USAID missions (Mali, Niger, Ghana, Uganda) was conducted in May-June 1992 to document selected examples of local consultation and participation in six Africa Bureau programs.<sup>4</sup> These involved combined project and non-project assistance support activities. Non-project assistance is defined as "the provision of 'generalized' financial resources to assist with the implementation of agreed upon sectoral goals and objectives. Sector program assistance focuses on sectoral constraints and reforms to alleviate those constraints, the disbursement of funds is linked to appropriate sector-level reforms and host country actions, not to specific uses of funds."<sup>5</sup>

Preliminary conclusions drawn from the 1992 report suggest that "the full potential of genuinely participatory actions remains unfulfilled." It particularly notes the need for a broadening of civil society participation and the indigenization of policy reform. "the Africa Bureau must think systematically and develop a more coherent approach to the indigenous NGO sector in sub-Saharan Africa."

The initial field study resulted in a follow-up cable questionnaire sent out to 31 USAID missions. Questions focused primarily on local participation by PVO/NGOs in the

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<sup>3</sup>see Atherton, Joan S., Daniel Devine, Curt Grimm, Jill Harmsworth, and Paul Nelson 1992. *Local Participation in the Design and Implementation of DFA Programs: Some Lessons From the Field*. p. 1. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Africa, November.

<sup>4</sup> The findings of this study are documented in the Atherton *et al.* report on local participation.

<sup>5</sup> Bureau for Africa, Agency for International Development, "Headquarters Management Notice No. 88-44," (June 12, 1988), p. 2.

design, implementation, and monitoring of project and program activities<sup>6</sup> Only seven missions (25 percent) reported that they had engaged local people and organizations in the design of NPA activities Furthermore, three missions (11 percent) noted that they had undertaken no local consultation in the design of NPA policy conditionality The survey report concludes that "criticism from outside USAID is frequently focused on the seeming lack of local participation in the design of sectoral reform programs there are too few examples to ensure that USAID is meeting its DFA mandate to take into account the views of the rural and urban poor in NPA design "

The findings above call for a more systematic assessment of Agency experience with local consultation and participation in the development of NPA programs This report addresses the status of such participation by synthesizing Africa Bureau documentation on the subject and drawing from field case studies undertaken at USAID missions in Senegal, Madagascar, and Niger Lessons learned and effective approaches to the participatory design and implementation of NPA programs are drawn from the literature review and case studies The summary of lessons and best practices in this report is intended to guide Africa Bureau missions in how to better design and carry out participatory sector grant programs in the future

## **B The Genesis of Sectoral Policy Reform Under the DFA**

Preliminary supplemental guidance on NPA under the DFA for the Africa Bureau was issued in July 1988 (Table 1) Since then, modifications in guidance have been required to keep pace with changes in legislation, experience gained in program implementation, and increasing appropriations in the DFA budget Guidance was updated in 1992, supplementing Agency Handbook 4 and parts of Handbook 1, and the 1988 framework

In establishing policy objectives, initial guidance from 1988 required that missions provide analyses that i) define the sector, ii) describe sectoral problems, iii) identify specific reforms and benchmarks, and iv) assess feasibility and impact concerns The 1991 draft guidance called for further analysis on economic factors, social impact, and institutional feasibility

NPA guidance from 1992 required a redefinition of policy objectives that focus on people-level impacts Specifically, program objectives were to demonstrate i) an increase in income or ii) an increase in the provision of social services "to those households in the recipient country which comprise the poor majority " This guidance further expands economic and feasibility analyses as well as monitoring and evaluation requirements

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<sup>6</sup> This report is entitled *Achieving Participation A Collection of the Africa Bureau's "Best Practices,"* and synthesizes the findings of an earlier detailed report, *USAID Mission Responses to a Questionnaire on Local Participation and PVO/NGO Collaborations Summary*

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**Table 1 Guidance Documents for Non-Project Assistance under the DFA**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Issuing Bureau</u>
Oct 1987	ESF Cash Transfer Guidance - Amplified Policy Guidance	Program and Policy Coordination
Jul 1988	Preliminary Africa Bureau Guidance Non-Project Assistance under the Development Fund for Africa	Africa
Feb 1990	Preliminary Africa Bureau Guidance on Separate Accounts and Dollar Tracking for DA and DFA-Financed Non-Project Sector Assistance Programs	Africa
Jun 1990	Financial Management Guidance on Dollar Separate Accounts for ESF Cash Transfers and ESF-, DA- and DFA-Funded Non-Project Sector Assistance Cash Disbursements	Office of Financial Management
Aug 1990	Revised Africa Bureau NPA Guidance	Circulated in draft only
Jun 1991	Supplemental Guidance on Programming and Managing Host Country-Owned Local Currency	Office of Financial Management
Jul 1991	AID Policy Determination No 18 on Local Currency	Program and Policy Coordination
Nov 1991	Revised NPA Guidance	Circulated in draft only
Feb 1992	New Cash Transfer Documentation Requirements	Africa
Oct 1992	Africa Bureau Non-Project Sector Assistance Guidance	Africa
Aug 1993	Africa Bureau Guidance on Documentation under NPA Cash Grant Programs - Reducing Requirements	Africa
Feb 1996	Program Assistance	Program and Policy Coordination

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NPA guidance has most recently been revised in February 1996 under the Agency's new re-engineering initiative. Entitled *Program Assistance*, Non-Project Assistance (NPA) is now termed Sector Program Assistance (SPA)<sup>7</sup>. The overall objectives of such assistance remain concordant with the earlier NPA framework, however. The new policy guidance states that NPA is specifically intended to promote "medium- to long-term increases in production or efficiency in a specific economic sector or sectors. Such assistance is directly linked to specific policy, institutional, or other host country actions necessary to further agreed-upon development objectives at the sectoral level." Sectoral program assistance, like NPA, is linked to the fulfillment of conditions agreed upon by USAID and the host government. It may be funded through a range of legislated mechanisms including DA, DFA, ESF, SEED ACT, FREEDOM Support Act, and PL 480. Unlike specific projectized expenditures, the guidance states that NPA is to be "linked to specific policy, institutional, or other host country actions that comprehensive analysis has demonstrated are among the key constraints to long term development." It is intended to target sectoral rather than macroeconomic level changes in policy. The typologies of intervention targeted by NPA may be categorized under three areas of program activity:

- i) programs that improve efficiency in the private economy (eg, elimination of marketing boards, subsidies, or price controls),
- ii) programs that improve efficiency and equity in delivery of social services (eg, state decentralization and increased community-based management of health care facilities and schools), and,
- iii) programs that improve the environment for private sector activity and engender greater investment.

### **C Summary of Previous Report Findings on Participation**

Summary findings on participation, as a central theme in policy formulation and actualization of sectoral programs, have been elaborated in the 1992 Agency preliminary assessment on NPA. Those findings, highlighted here, draw from a total of six case studies in four African countries conducted in 1992. These findings are supplemented by another policy study begun in 1990 that touches upon issues of participation, the Implementing Policy Change (IPC) project.

The most important preliminary findings generated from the 1992 study are summarized as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> For purposes of clarity and familiarity with the term, NPA is coterminous with SPA and will be used throughout this report in referring to all programmatic guidance on non-project (NPA) or sector program assistance (SPA).

- \* Considerable variability was found in the degree of participation in program design. Longer design periods resulted in broader stakeholder consultation. In other instances, consultation in follow-on activities resulted in much more narrow participation,
- \* No strong relationship was noted between the amount of consultation in design and the degree of participation in implementation,
- \* The ease or difficulty of engendering participation varies by development sector. The scope of reform also determines the degree of difficulty in fostering participation,
- \* Participation by non-governmental organizations does not necessarily represent or benefit their supposed constituency, the African poor majority,
- \* Effective local participation depends on the historical and sociopolitical evolution of civil society institutions within each country,
- \* Engendering participation is time consuming and labor intensive on the part of USAID mission personnel,
- \* The pairing of project with nonproject assistance is seen to augment opportunities for participation.

These findings are largely corroborated by the three additional case studies and review of other sectoral programs taken up in this report.

A comprehensive examination of participatory issues in policy reform has been supported through the Implementing Policy Change (IPC) project, funded in 1990 and now in its second phase<sup>8</sup>. One of the main IPC activities has been a capacity building project that assists host country officials within public and private agencies to use the concepts and tools of strategic management to carry out policy reform in a more effective and efficient manner. IPC has used teams of US technical assistance experts to develop a strategic management framework that relies primarily on training workshops as a mechanism for imparting capacity-building skills in a 9 step cycle. The steps used in IPC emphasize participatory, multidisciplinary teams engaged in the following:

- \* agreement on a strategic process for developing a policy implementation strategy,
- \* identification and clarification of agency mission, policy content and objectives, and current operating strategies,

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<sup>8</sup> IPC is implemented by a consortium of three consulting and policy research firms: Management Systems International (lead contractor), Abt Associates Inc., and Development Alternatives Inc.

- \* identification of agency internal strengths and weaknesses,
- \* mapping the external policy setting, including analysis of political and operating environments,
- \* identification of key stakeholders and their expectations,
- \* identifying key strategic issues,
- \* designing an implementation strategy,
- \* implementation of the strategy,
- \* designing and applying a process to monitor progress and make ongoing adjustments

This framework essentially encompasses the standard program cycle of design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation with some additional elaboration of these discrete phases. The IPC framework utilizes a range of analytic and management tools to include stakeholder analysis, forcefield analysis, political and institutional mapping, SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), priority setting, mission clarification, advocacy/lobbying, constituency mobilization, and values clarification.

IPC capacity-building interventions have focused on public and private agencies involved in policy implementation in the areas of trade and export, agriculture, and the environment within the countries of Madagascar (National Environmental Action Plan), Lesotho (Agricultural Policy Support Program), the Gambia (macroeconomic policy management), and Guinea-Bissau (trade and investment promotion). IPC intervention in regional policy initiatives includes assistance to the West African Enterprise Network, a USAID supported reform promoting cross-border trade and investment among private sector entrepreneurs, and the Sahel Regional Livestock Trade Reform, aimed at the promotion of inter-state livestock trade and the removal of tariff barriers within the Sahel.

The findings of the IPC project have arrived at a number of conclusions, some of which have already been touched upon above. Among the findings, several are pertinent to the theme of participation and set the stage for discussion in the following sections on the findings of this report. The IPC assessment concluded:

- \* the need for better political and institutional analysis, two techniques that have been useful in promoting participation toward this end have been stakeholder analysis and 'political mapping,'
- \* the extensive use of workshops and fora in which USAID serves as the facilitator of dialogue among divergent stakeholder interests,
- \* encourage government creation of formal or semi-formal mechanisms for consultation and coordination such as policy implementation units

The lessons learned from IPC to date are obvious but nonetheless should be underscored here:

- \* imposed policy change is unlikely to succeed,
- \* policy change may threaten public-sector actors, USAID should seek to allay those fears that appear threatening to government officials,
- \* meaningful participation is demand-driven from civil society and supply-led from the government, a supply-demand equilibrium must be sought if policy consensus and momentum is to be sustained,
- \* there is no template or blueprint of participation in policy reform, each program prescription must be tailored to the political and economic circumstances of respective countries

With the findings of the 1992 Africa Bureau preliminary study and the IPC project in mind, discussion will turn now to a review of those participatory features of design, implementation, and impact monitoring documented in three recent field case studies and distilled from a cross-sectoral reading of PAADS, and mid-term and final evaluation reports

## **II PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO PROGRAM DESIGN**

Prior to actual design of an NPA initiative, USAID missions are advised to carry out a thorough phase of strategic planning and assessment of resource allocation capability. Under the new policy guidance this requires that three important factors be taken into consideration: i) the relationship of the targeted sector to the overall country development strategy, ii) constraints to sectoral growth (political, institutional, social, environmental, etc.), and iii) ownership of sectoral reform by the host country.

Among these factors, a range of questions must be raised in determining the appropriateness of a particular sectoral intervention. Most important among these are:

- i) Is there sufficient macroeconomic and political stability within the country to undertake long-term sectoral policy reform measures?
- ii) Is the host country genuinely committed and does it have the adequate human resource capacity to carry out a successful reform agenda?
- iii) Is there sufficient management capacity, both within USAID and host country institutions, to successfully administer a sectoral reform program?
- iv) What are other donors doing in the target sector of activity and what is the general environment for donor coordination in the country?

Mission experience with NPA thus far has shown that, in numerous instances, the importance of these basic issues has been often overlooked in the enthusiasm to embark on a new course of action. The end result has frequently been the overestimation of host country governments to truly 'own' the policy reform process or to have the professional staffing to carefully administer and monitor program activities. USAID missions as well, have learned that sectoral programs may be extremely management intensive, particularly as the number of host country stakeholder institutions increases. This requires a serious in-house assessment of staff size, workloads, and medium-to-long term vision of mission OE budget support that will be needed to effectively manage more ambitious program portfolios.

The broader macroeconomic and political environment of the host country is particularly critical to the successful outcome of sectoral reform. Heavily indebted, cash-starved governments are prone, in their haste, to adopt policy measures that may not be realistically attainable due to the severe financial (and often political) instability of the country. Sectoral initiatives, in order to have any positive structural impact on the economy, take time and generally require a minimum of 5-10 years before reform efforts begin to show evidence of fruition. A serious deterioration in macroeconomic or political conditions during this period can derail the momentum of policy reform and erode whatever substantive gains have been made at the sectoral level. Thus, the likelihood of medium-to-long term stability of political and economic structures should be given careful consideration early on in the gestation of program planning and design.

Guidance on program design requires that six types of analysis be incorporated into the planning process in addressing issues of benefit/cost, feasibility, and sustainability: social, institutional, political, legal, financial, and economic. In carrying out these analyses, the new NPA guidance states that "planners shall, where practicable, identify ultimate beneficiaries and consult them through survey or other instruments in order to properly assess beneficiary needs and attitudes regarding the contemplated assistance."

Prior to the recent revision of NPA guidance, program design has involved two phases, preparation of a PAIP (Program Assistance Initial Proposal), and a PAAD (Program Assistance Authorization Document). The basic analytical requirements for social, political, economic, financial institutions, etc, were to be specified in the PAIP for completion as part of the PAAD design. This document was also to provide a design strategy indicating how local perspectives on participation were to be included in final program design.

An example of sound participatory social analysis undertaken in the preparatory PAAD phase is the Kenya Market Development Program (MDP). A series of interviews and surveys were undertaken in three Kenyan districts in 1988 with village cooperatives, and groups of traders, transporters, and farmers. The surveys employed local Kenyans and targeted many traders who were women, as well as male transporters. This information was vital in assessing the rural-urban interface and nature of market linkages between commercial centers and hinterland areas.

A review of Mission programs in NPA reveals that the technical phase of program design is often an inherently exclusive, nonparticipatory process, involving a small team of AID staff, outside consultants, and host government technocrats. This tendency to limit participation in the nascent stage of design is generally due to the highly technical nature of the reform issues to be addressed. Nevertheless, the technical design phase, as in the case of Kenya's MDP, can broaden participation for a particular initiative by soliciting public opinion through polls, surveys, or other representative sampling instruments, and employing local technical assistance in the process. The MDP also employed expatriate consultants with longitudinal experience and extensive sectoral knowledge of Kenya's market infrastructure. These technical experts were able to effectively engage local participation and community opinion in the use of the various sampling methods. A number of the methods are described below.

### **A Participatory Design Strategies**

A mix of approaches to participatory design, ranging from formal, structured methods to more informal, less systematic strategies, have been adopted by various missions. Methodological approaches include

- \* structured committees
- \* conferences/workshops
- \* studies/surveys/questionnaires
- \* field trips/interviews
- \* focus groups
- \* informal social gatherings

In most instances, program planning has entailed a melange of methods, frequently moving from the formal to the less formal over time. The range of actors consulted will often be determined by the particular nature of sectoral intervention. For-profit private sector interests were the primary beneficiary audience consulted in the Ghana Trade and Investment Program (TIP), whereas commercial agents were largely absent from planning in Niger's Agricultural Sector Development Grant (ASDG) program.

Host country ownership of the reform process can be facilitated at this critical juncture by supporting the participation of Mission foreign service national staff along with local specialists in conducting studies, surveys, etc, that feed into program design early on. There is a propensity to seek foreign technical assistance at this stage, often at the exclusion of local capacity. Joint participation of native and foreign expertise allows for a balanced combination of technical skills and a more accurate appraisal of both indigenous and foreign perspectives. Below are examples of various Mission approaches to the use of design modalities in enhancing participation in NPA.

## **B Participatory Examples Committees, Conferences, Studies, Surveys**

It is assumed that policy reform measures can only be successful if an internal dialogue on a particular issue has been generated within a host country. This is the ideal precondition for Agency policy dialogue with government officials. The reform objectives of a host government are often imbedded in a national five year economic plan document. This often serves as the catalyst for consultation between Mission staff and officials within various ministry offices. A common strategy is for a government committee to convene involving those ministries implicated in a particular sectoral issue.

Design committees are a common feature at the early stages of program definition. Two interministerial committees were convened in the ASDG II program in Niger to elaborate a national sectoral reform strategy to decentralize institutional control over natural resources. This formalized approach to program design involved a lengthy consultative process, lasting more than one year, and fostered extensive dialogue within three ministries. This initial top-down structure was broadened by incorporating a wider range of stakeholders (NGO/PVO, donors) in dialogue through a national conference of NGOs. These two strategies were supplemented by detailed commissioned studies needed for further sectoral planning.

In contrast, a centralized sectoral planning approach to restructuring of primary education in Benin through the Children's Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF) program did not successfully transfer the initial impetus for reform to a broader base of participants. The momentum of national debate on educational reform was stalled early on during the design stage of CLEF when a small core committee of USAID/CLEF personnel and Beninese government counterparts in education neglected to devise a strategy for expanding participation beyond the central core group. Three years after national dialogue had begun, early supporters of reform had become alienated and embittered by the perceived lack of transparency and participation in CLEF<sup>9</sup>.

National and regional level conferences, workshops, and seminars are common fora used to engage public opinion in the reform process. Ideally, debate on a particular policy issue should be internally generated prior to USAID sectoral involvement or at the pre-design stage of a program intervention. Such was the case in policy dialogue on educational sector reform in Benin and Namibia. In Namibia, political transition in the post-apartheid era was followed by a national conference to assess the role of education in the nation's new development strategy. This pre-design phase of consensus-building emphasized equity and engaged a wide range of participants in national debate. This internal dialogue was instrumental in catalyzing support for USAID/Namibia's Basic Education Reform Program.

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<sup>9</sup> see Grimm, C

1995 *Participation in Policy Reform: A Case Study of USAID/Benin's Children's Learning and Equity Foundations Program (CLEF)* p. 7

(BERP) In Benin, public debate on educational reform took place in a national conference in 1990. Representatives from all segments of society, including ex-presidents, teachers' union leaders and parents of student representatives, participated in debate on the role of primary education as a national development priority. This led to USAID grant support of the education sector in 1991 with creation of the Children's Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF) program.

Mission decisions to engage in a particular programmatic intervention are generally informed early on by an initial phase of sectoral analysis prior to the actual process of design. This usually involves the commissioning of empirical studies, field surveys, structured questionnaires and interviews, etc, to obtain the necessary information for accurate problem identification and needs assessment. This pre-design analysis also often overlaps with broader sectoral analyses or overarching reform initiatives already underway by the World Bank. In one example, the USAID/Malawi Agricultural Sector Assistance Program (ASAP), detailed microanalytical studies conducted at the community level on smallholder participation in burley tobacco production were able to generate information and hypotheses that directly challenged previously held assumptions by the Bank and the donor community in general on the nature of estate land holdings and smallholder interest in the burley tobacco sub-sector.

The value of this approach was that it provoked critical dialogue on key policy issues within Malawi's agricultural sector. A series of meetings and debriefings were arranged by USAID/Malawi bringing together representatives of the Malawian government, tobacco trade association, estate holders, and donors for the first time.

Technical analyses such as these are carried out by both foreign and local consultants with specific topical and/or geographical expertise in the country or region where the program is to be implemented. These studies can serve as an effective proxy by which to gauge public opinion and support for government policy measures, and ultimately, to stimulate dialogue between smallholder farmers and the state who often hold discordant views on the structural incentives and constraints that influence agricultural productivity. Thus, consultants (both foreign and local) have an opportunity to structure needs assessment and pre-design methodologies in a representative fashion that captures the voice of a broad set of local actors and articulates such public sentiment before a select audience of government planners and policy makers. Community participation in policy dialogue, in its broadest sense, may be elicited indirectly at this crucial early stage of program design.

In some instances program design may be truncated, as in the case of the Ghana Primary Education Program (PREP), due to administrative reporting requirements in Washington DC or Congressional funding mandates beyond mission or host country control. In such cases participation may be required to take the form of more narrowly defined baseline surveys, community and household questionnaires, or similar structured instruments. This occurred with the PREP program in which Education Ministry officials were required to quickly assess data from a survey on parents' attitudes toward the nation's educational

system<sup>10</sup>

A number of structured approaches to participatory program design have been summarized in this section. These methods are often supplemented by semi- or informal strategies including focal groups, social gatherings, site visits, and field interviews that provide additional information critical to the input phase of design. Programs such as the Niger ASDG I and II reform have integrated field-based information from site visit interviews and questionnaires into the initial stages of program design.

### **C. Constraints in Participatory Design**

#### **Conditionality, Ownership and Capacity Development**

A critical feature in the design phase of reform is the drafting of policy conditions and the attendant institutional, technological, and human resources required to monitor compliance with condition benchmarks. Conditionality is the centerpiece of policy reform that must be carefully negotiated between donor and host country recipient. The use of policy conditionality has met with mixed success as a policy instrument in guiding market reform.

This case study review of sectoral programs suggests that compliance varies according to the scale and complexity of the reform being promoted. Compliance is much greater in programs administered by a small number of government officials or offices and aimed at limited measures, such as price deregulation or exchange rate revision. Conversely, compliance may drop when more complex institutional reform is sought. A high number of conditions precedent may become unwieldy administratively and politically. As the number of government ministries or agencies needed to coordinate and communicate across bureaus increases, the chances of compliance may decline. Thus, the excessive use of conditionality has become a common practice when attempting to deepen the impact of the reform process.

This example is well illustrated in the Niger Agricultural Sector Development Grant (ASDG II). Three categories of conditionality were designed resulting in a total of 61 conditions in 48 conditions precedent. Seven government administrative units operating under several interministerial committees within three different ministries were directly involved in the reform. The multiplicity of institutional actors and the degree of coordination required led to significant delays in the release of grant funds and major difficulties in the delivery of the overall reform package.

This is just one of numerous case studies that raises the critical issue of resource capacity development and the ability of African governments to 'own' and effectively administer reform efforts. An evaluation of the economic reform process by the European Commission suggests that an over-reliance on conditionalities has undermined the more

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<sup>10</sup>see Atherton *et al* , 1990-91

important underlying objective of reform adoption and ownership by African governments  
The Commission concludes

" asking a government to take measures against the threat of the withholding of financial assistance, does not appear as an appropriate instrument to promote 'home-grown' reforms. In particular, the coercive character of conditionality seems to be inappropriate as an instrument to achieve 'home-grown' institutional and sustained policy reform and thus undermines 'ownership' and 'empowerment'. This is particularly problematic for countries undergoing political liberalisation"<sup>11</sup> "

The capacity of host governments to indigenize the policy reform process is also undermined by contradictory foreign donor policy that all too often rewards host country non-compliance by releasing program tranche funds. Growing national balance of payment deficits frequently compels the donor to act inconsistently and disburse funds despite the mixed message that it sends. The end result is the reinforcement of poor performance and a further erosion of the capacity of African states to truly embrace and own the reform process.

Greater institutional and human resource capacity development is consistently cited in the literature on policy reform and in Agency documentation as a key area in need of substantial donor support. A recurrent theme throughout the sectoral programs reviewed and in the case studies conducted in Senegal, Madagascar, and Niger, is the absence of a strong technological and institutional base from which to carry out the gamut of analytical and operational exercises requisite for sustainable policy reform. Computerized information systems, professional levels of technical, administrative, and financial training, and analytical capacities to undertake thorough social, economic, political, and institutional pre-design assessments are among the host of factors that presently constrain African governments as they strive to carry out policy reform agendas. Capacity development -- whether at a technological, institutional, or individual level -- is a long-term investment strategy. Agency reform initiatives commonly have only a 5 to 10 year life of program. While an ample infusion of program funds may be sufficient to lay the ground for sustainable institutional and economic change, the capacity building measures required to achieve enduring structural transformation invariably exceed the life of a given program cycle. Thus, a more long-term optic of strategic donor investment in institutional, technological, and human resources will be needed if policy outcomes are to truly be long lasting.

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<sup>11</sup> European Commission

1994 *The Design of Economic Reform in the Context of Political Liberalisation: Findings and Conclusions from Case Studies*. Paper prepared for the Meeting of the Special Programme for Africa - Working Group on Economic Reform in the Context of Political Liberalisation, January 18-19, 1995, Washington, DC

## **D Field Experience in Participatory Design**

Examples from a range of Mission sectoral programs of experience gained in participatory design are summarized below. Sectors include natural resource management/environment, finance, health, and education. Many of these examples illustrate effective participatory design and lessons learned that apply across sectors.

### **1 Mission experience with project assistance as a precursor for sound program design**

NPA support of natural resource activities requires a long term optic in order to effect lasting institutional change in sustainable approaches to the environment. Indicators of positive environmental change resulting from specific policy interventions are difficult to quantify and often are not discernable over a 5-10 year period, the standard timeframe for most NPA initiatives. The most effective Mission NRM strategies have emerged out of years of institutional experience and project experimentation. NPA examples from Niger, Uganda, and Madagascar are built upon extensive experience with project-level NRM interventions.

A two phase approach to program design, based on years of mission experience and knowledge of natural resource practice, was undertaken by USAID/Niger in developing its Agricultural Sector Development Grant program (ASDG II). First, the Mission has gained invaluable experience over almost 17 years working on natural forest management issues in understanding the political, financial, and institutional factors that influence sound NRM practice. This has been verified over the years through multiple site visits to document smallholder behavior and incentives necessary to adopt good conservation practices. A multi-year pilot project in local level natural forest management at the 5,000 ha Guessebodé state forest demonstrated that village communities, when given usufruct and management rights to natural forests under state domain, engage in sound agroforestry practices.

This particular USAID-funded project intervention was unsustainable over the long term, however, as a result of fundamental constraints imposed by an unsound policy environment. Thus project experience prompted the launching of the ASDG reform and provides a good illustration of how mission limitations with project assistance can ultimately generate a deeper process of policy dialogue. Once the empirical impediments of sustainable natural resource management were understood in Niger, the Mission was able to initiate a prolonged dialogue with GON officials and nongovernmental groups to achieve consensus in establishing mutually agreed upon program objectives.

NRM initiatives are commonly subsumed under broader national environmental action plans (NEAPs) required by the World Bank as a precondition for its own adjustment lending. NEAPs usually foster joint participation and coordination among donors, and may vary in their level of consultation among internal host country institutions. A good example of participatory planning and dialogue among a broad range of actors is the NEAP framework established for Uganda beginning with a thorough diagnostic phase in 1991 and implementation of an institutional strategy in 1995. A diverse cast of stakeholders served on

committees and task forces that undertook an extensive phase of public consultation to prepare the NEAP. An advisory committee of 31 members (including 6-10 women depending on the period of assessment) drawn from government, the donor community, PVO/NGOs, the private sector, trade associations, and academia contributed to the drafting of the national environmental plan. This plan was vetted regionally in workshops among a wide range of groups including farmers, fishers, and brick makers, and then circulated for final discussion among a similar group of participants in a national workshop. The broad level of consensus and dialogue established early on in the NEAP has been instrumental in setting the stage for bilateral initiatives such as USAID's Action Program for the Environment (APE) in Uganda.

## **2. Complementarities of project and program design**

A review of five health sector programs (Niger NHSSG, Nigeria NPHCS, Kenya KHCF, Togo HAPSS, Cameroon PHCSR) corroborates mission experience from other sectoral reviews suggesting that NPA is most effective when combined with project assistance. Strong institutional and human resource capacity is a necessary precondition for the long term viability of any reform initiative. Project support in the form of technical assistance and training that fosters capacity development at both individual and institutional levels was an integral component of all the programs reviewed.

Similar to the NRM programs noted above, experience in the health sector suggests that short-term time frames of three to five years are inadequate in achieving the policy reform benchmarks articulated in program design. The time necessary for analytical work and building consensus and ownership early on was underestimated in USAID's health programs.

## **3 Donor coordination in program design**

A key aspect of success or failure in the policy reform arena is the degree of harmonization among international donors and host country officials in setting clear and consistent sectoral objectives. Multiple donor agendas and bilateral country interests are often counterproductive in the absence of effective donor program coordination. Efforts to bring donors together are complicated by the fact that underlying geopolitical, economic, or cultural/historical ties or interests may serve to undermine attempts at constructive inter-donor dialogue. Common economic objectives that serve the interests of all parties involved are often a strong incentive to bring everyone to the policy table.

A good case study of effective donor policy coordination is the African Economic Policy Reform Program (AEPRP II) carried out in Senegal from 1989-1991. Two years of donor consultation among World Bank, French Caisse Francaise de Developpement (CFD), USAID, and GOS officials resulted in design of the AEPRP program and mutually agreed upon objectives to bring about reform of a national banking system on the verge of financial collapse. Successful dialogue was the result of common financial interests among donors to assure the health and solvency of the Senegalese banking system for their own investment.

purposes. As a result, fund disbursements among all three have been well synchronized and consistent in their overarching strategies to bring about financial sector reform. Furthermore, they were cognizant in identifying sectoral complementarities in terms of targeted areas of policy intervention.

Another key attribute of the AEPRP has been the strong combination of direct hire and foreign service national expertise in the preparatory stages of design. Skill complementarities and thorough knowledge of the Senegalese banking system enabled USAID staff to carry out much their own program analysis with minimal technical assistance from outside foreign consultants. Reliance on contracting services prolongs the planning process and can result in administrative delays. A good mix of American and host country staff with extensive sectoral expertise can go a long way in expediting the planning process and shortening the time lag between design and implementation.

#### **4 Collaborative host country-donor sectoral analysis in program design**

A comprehensive review of USAID's Education Sector Support (ESS) program in Africa underscores the importance of preconditions necessary for reform to succeed: the commitment on the part of national governments to pursue a new course of action and the willingness to elicit broad public opinion in formulating a sectoral strategy of institutional change. The educational sector review emphasizes the importance of undertaking a thorough sector analysis that closely informs program design and is a collaborative exercise of donor and host country institutions.

Numerous examples are given of good cooperative approaches to educational planning in which national needs and priorities are identified by host governments with strong technical support from USAID. In Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, and Ethiopia, USAID missions have assisted education ministries in initiating thorough sectoral analyses with input from NGOs, local research groups, and other donors. Fora such as national conferences and workshops have been a common strategy for bringing together a diverse set of interest groups (teachers, student representatives, heads of teacher-parent associations, NGO leaders, ministry personnel) to identify and work toward mutually agreed upon objectives in education. In the Ethiopia Basic Education System Overhaul (BESO) program, an ongoing monitoring system involving studies and periodic surveys that build upon baseline data enables education authorities to continually assess program progress and to finetune various features as needs arise.

Experience from the Children's Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF) program in Benin demonstrates the importance of laying the groundwork early on during design to maintain the initial broad-base of support and enthusiasm for reform. Tendencies to limit dialogue early on in the conceptual phase of planning may make sense for reasons of technical complexity, limitations of cost, and narrow timeframes, but may backfire if adequate transparency and public consultation is not built into the design. Thus, it is imperative that Agency efforts to foster public support for reform initiatives capture the

initial enthusiasm and widespread desire for change and sustain such momentum through timely, well organized fora such as regional workshops, citizen's committees, focus groups, etc

### **III. PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM AND COMPANION PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

As noted in the discussion above on program design, certain sectors of development intervention are more conducive to extensive involvement by local institutions or individuals than others. Social sector programs in health and education are generally linked to local populations through community-based schools and health clinics, thus allowing for participatory innovation and development of local institutions such as parent-teacher or parent-student associations. These types of participatory structures have been promoted in the implementation of educational reforms in Ghana (PREP) and Mali (BEEP). These innovative programs have nonetheless had their limitations as participatory models of reform as much of the dialogue and decision-making on budgetary allocation has taken place at higher administrative levels with little community voice or involvement.

Financial sector programs, on the other hand, do not necessarily have a 'natural' constituency that can readily be tapped to carry out financial intermediation activities at the community level. This is due to the nature of financial sector institutions that have been, until recently, highly centralized, under state monopoly, and generally inaccessible to the vast majority of the rural poor.

Successful program implementation assumes an ongoing process of policy dialogue that characterizes the entire developmental cycle of issues identification, agenda setting, decision-making, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Identification of those stakeholders with whom one should consult and the institutional capacity of their constituent organizations is key to the reform outcome. Ideally, this process should feed back into proceeding rounds of program design and implementation. Effective dialogue has no discrete phase of startup and completion but rather should be viewed as a non-linear phenomenon involving a succession of dialogue inputs and outputs that continually feed into one another in an iterative fashion. This dynamic conceptualization of policy interaction serves as the analytical framework for the Education Sector Support (ESS) program. Policy dialogue, according to the ESS, should ensure that a series of critical steps or actions are achieved when carried out properly.

" consensus is reached on the definition of an issue, characteristics of the concerned policy are considered, arenas of conflict are identified, stakes are assessed, and potential reactions are foreseen. All of these steps are necessary to

facilitate the reform process and increase the likelihood of success<sup>12</sup> "

ESS has provided a number of examples of effective policy dialogue at the stage of implementation that are summarized in the section below

### **A. Participatory Strategies of Implementing NPA**

NPA commonly features program and project components that are integrally linked in design and implementation. Follow-on project activities concretize and test hypotheses that are defined at the program level. Both program and companion project goals of enhancing participation in policy reform employ a mix of strategies that incorporate key participants in the reform dialogue. These range from formal to informal methods and have been characterized by one source on policy participation as formal and informal 'voice' and 'exit' options<sup>13</sup>. Formal participatory voice options include

- \* policy/program review committees
- \* conferences/workshops/organized fora
- \* studies/surveys/questionnaires
- \* field trips/interviews
- \* focus groups
- \* media

Informal voice options may include social gatherings, individual one-on-one meetings, and spontaneous events such as rallies and protests favoring or opposing policy regimens<sup>14</sup>. In Mali, secondary and university students voiced their 'exit' option by protesting initial policy measures to shift a large proportion of educational resources from tertiary and secondary levels to primary schools. By bringing students directly into the policy dialogue

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<sup>12</sup> See DeStefano, Joseph, Ash Hartwell, and Karen Tietjen  
1995 *Basic Education in Africa: USAID's Approach to Sustainable Reform in the 1990s* pp 136-144. Technical Paper No 14, September, 1995. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development.

<sup>13</sup> Brinkerhoff, Derick and Nicolas Kulibaba  
1994 *Participation in Economic Policy Reform in Africa: A Review of the Literature*. Prepared for The Meeting of the Special Program for Africa (SPA) Working Group on Economic Reform in the Context of Political Liberalization, March 27-28, 1994, Brussels, Belgium. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Research and Development, Project #936-5451.

<sup>14</sup> Exit options may be 'voiceless' as well. In the case of agricultural market reforms, such as AID's grain market restructuring programs, the lack of supply response among consumers and/or producers to changing price signals may reflect a form of silent non-participation or opposition to market reform objectives.

process, the Basic Education Expansion Program (BEEP) was able to accommodate advanced level student needs while also devising an innovative system of community-funded primary schools

In another example of resistance to educational reform, secondary teachers in Guinea who were initially opposed to reassignment at the primary level were reluctantly convinced that such redeployment was in the greater interest of society after being brought into direct dialogue with affected communities

Educational reform in Botswana provides a good example of formalized policy dialogue undertaken by the Ministry of Education to assuage public concern over the junior secondary school policy. The Ministry organized a "Consultative Conference" involving several participatory meetings and the use of video to engage local communities in policy dialogue. This participatory strategy, drawing from traditional and modern forms of consultation in Botswana, was able to galvanize consensus among communities for support of educational reform at local, regional, and national levels

Finally, another illustration of sound policy dialogue in education among communities involves USAID support for parents' associations in Mali and Benin. These associations, working under close supervision of an international PVO, are becoming engaged in the managerial and administrative decisions of their local schools and developing the institutional capacities needed to consult with regional officials in the Ministry of Education

## **B. Stakeholders as Implementors of Participation**

Groups or individuals participating in a particular policy outcome have been categorized broadly as 'implementing agents' and 'reform target groups'<sup>15</sup> in order to distinguish between institutions of the state that are generally perceived to be the providers of reform package deliverables, and civil society organizations that are usually the targeted beneficiaries of program outcomes. In many ways, however, the bifurcation of state and civil society roles into that of implementor and recipient becomes a false dichotomy, as both entities participate in and derive the benefits of reform in varying degree. Thus the stakeholder groups identified below should be viewed not in oppositional terms, but rather as complementary institutions in a broad continuum that overlap in their roles as service provider and beneficiary

### **Host State Institutions**

Government ministries or other political structures of the state function as the nexus of policy dialogue, mediating interests and agendas among a wide range of actors operating both within and outside the state - government bureaus or departments, non-governmental

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

organizations, trade associations and private sector interest groups, professional unions, community-based institutions, and bi- and multilateral donors. The capacity of the state to act as interlocutor and manager of the special interests of a broad mix of players has been repeatedly called into question in much of the literature on policy reform in Africa.

An example is the case of the Lesotho Agricultural Policy Support Program (LAPSP) in which a change of political regime midway through the program led to revocation of the implementation of a key condition introducing grazing fees among Basotho livestock owners. The new government, beholden to special political interests and patronage ties among large, influential livestock holders, found itself caught in the middle of a highly charged, politically sensitive debate over liberalization of a livestock sub-sector that had benefitted from state input subsidies for some time. The new regime was unable to forge political consensus among a range of public and private interests.

The LAPSP provides a good illustration of how regime change during the course of reform can undermine the entire participation process of state actors who suddenly view previous reform agendas as a threat or erosion of the current regime's monopsonistic behaviors and institutions. A rapid deterioration of dialogue between USAID and the new Lesotho government led to cancellation of the LAPSP when ministry authorities did not inform the Mission of their decision to rescind the new policy on grazing fees.

### **Foreign State Donor Institutions**

Most elements of the program cycle (analysis, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) have been defined, until recently, by the international donor community. The terms of reference and the motivations for prompting reform - the process of 'leveraging' for structural change of national economies and politics in general - continues to emanate, to a large degree, from within foreign donor circles. Definition and control of the policy agenda by IMF and World Bank has been particularly acute, dating back to the initial structural adjustment framework of the early 1980s. While macroeconomic adjustment has been, and continues largely to be, shaped and defined by a small circle of policy decision-makers within the multilateral institutions, lower level sectoral initiatives have commonly engaged a broader arena of participants beyond the centralized donor and host country state institutions. Sectoral initiatives on participation within the Bank and USAID are increasingly placing more of the impetus for reform within the hands of African government and non-government institutions.

Conditionalities have frequently been viewed as a coercive instrument needed to assure accountability among host country governments in moving the reform agenda forward. The manner in which conditions are defined and negotiated is now at the heart of much donor discussion regarding its effectiveness as a tool for leveraging reform.

## Private Sector Institutions

The term 'private sector' has become a generic classification for commercial group interests that often appears amorphous in terms of definition. Private sector may be thought of more specifically as two constituent groups<sup>16</sup>: 1) formal sector, for-profit entrepreneurs and commercial operators, and 2) informal sector groups of small traders, producers, operators in both rural and urban settings, and constituting large numbers of women. It is this latter group that is often the least well organized and the most difficult to capture or engage in any representative fashion in the reform process.

Unions organized for credit access, labor and consumer-producer groups, and various cooperatives are common formal private sector institutions that have been targeted as beneficiaries of NPA support. Promotion of private sector trade and investment, particularly of non-traditional export crops such as fruits and vegetables, characterizes a fair number of Mission NPA portfolios. The Ghana Trade and Investment Program (TIP) and Uganda Agricultural Non-Traditional Export Promotion Program (ANEPP) work closely with private sector producers to expand agricultural export markets. Regional African initiatives promoting interstate commercial trade interests include the West African Enterprise Network (WAEN), and the Sahel Regional Livestock Trade Reform aimed at expanding livestock trade and the removal of tariff barriers across the Sahel.

Recent US foreign trade and investment policy promoting the expansion of commercial trade abroad in emerging markets such as South Africa implies an increased role on the part of USAID in stimulating development of private sector markets in Africa and elsewhere.

## Voluntary Sector Institutions

PVO/NGO linkages and participation of African representatives in sectoral policy dialogue depends greatly on the historical evolution and sociopolitical context of civil society relations with the state within each given country. In countries such as Senegal, Uganda, and South Africa, NGO capacity and presence in national policy debates is highly visible and critical to the decision-making process of key government planners. In other nations such as Niger, Benin, and Togo, NGOs have been legally banned or closely regulated by past state regimes and have only recently begun to emerge as a new voice with rapidly growing influence on the policy agendas of the host government and international donor community. Thus, the experience and degree of NGO participation in USAID-funded sectoral programs varies across the board and is difficult to summarize. Nonetheless, examples can be drawn of good participatory interchange with USAID missions and host government officials in the delivery of program and project assistance among local communities.

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<sup>16</sup> Brinkerhoff, Derek W. and Nicolas Kulibaba  
1994 *Ibid* p. 7

A common strategy of USAID-voluntary sector partnership has been the creation and financial support of Grant Management Units administered under a US PVO or private sector technical contractor. Under environmental sector programs such as Uganda's Action Plan for the Environment (APE) or Niger's Agricultural Sector Development Grant (ASDG II), local currency counterpart funds or a USAID trust fund are established to support NGO projects in sustainable resource management, environmental rehabilitation, and environmental impact assessment. The Grant Management Units, represented by a mix of AID, NGO/PVO, and host government officials, oversee the review and awarding of project activities. They also provide training, workshops, and seminars aimed at building NGO capacity in the design, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation of NRM projects. The objective of USAID support to these units is to provide initial seed funds that will spur the institutional capacity and maturation of fledgling NGO organizations such as those found in Niger.

Grassroots representation and the motivational factors behind NGO creation and operation are of growing concern in promoting civic institutions as vehicles for increased participation under the DFA mandate of USAID. Organizations that capture donor resources for the benefit of a few founding leaders at the expense of the broader interests of the community must be carefully monitored. The profit-making motives and income livelihoods of NGO leaders can often supplant the spirit of community development and the distribution of benefits to a broader base.

### **C. Best Practice, Lessons on Implementation**

A series of observations on lessons drawn from Mission experience in expanding participation in the implementation of sectoral programs are presented here.

#### **1. Experience with a range of sectoral programs indicates that host country management burdens have been underestimated when implementing comprehensive reforms that involve multiple stakeholders**

A compromise must be sought between the desire to effect deep rooted, broad-based reform and the need to assure interim as well as final results. Comprehensive programs generally imply dialogue with a wide range of government ministries and non-governmental actors, as in the case of the agricultural sector program in Niger (ASDG II). Coordination of efforts and the chances for effective dialogue may well be improved when limiting the stakeholder audience to a small number. This assumes, however, that those actors involved are highly motivated and have concordant views on the outcome of the reform process.

Similar difficulties were encountered in the Niger health sector NHSSG program in which a complicated institutional reform structure designed by USAID required the collaboration of several ministries in programming and tracking grant funds. Procedures for the allocation and tracking of funds consumed significant amounts of time and energy within the Mission. This was exacerbated by accounting procedures and monitoring capacities within government ministries that were inadequate.

The examples presented here reveal the lack of institutional capability on the part of host country ministries to address the managerial and technical requirements of the programs. Local capacity to closely monitor progress in fulfilling specific reform benchmarks must be carefully evaluated by missions in the future design and delivery of NPA programs. In many instances, it is not apparent that clear roles for missions, technical assistance teams, and government ministries have been delineated in the arena of implementation toward benchmarks and monitoring.

## **2 Maximum stakeholder participation does not automatically guarantee optimum results**

The Financial Market Development (FMD) program in Madagascar provides a telling example of the importance of assessing stakeholder ambitions and motivations prior to initiating contact with all potential partners. The lesson to impart is that a bottom-up strategy of stakeholder consultation must be undertaken with caution and only after a thorough identification and assessment of constituent agendas.

During various stages of program design and consultation, the timing and nature of contacts between USAID/Madagascar and various Malagasy stakeholders was extremely sensitive and essential in determining support by high level government officials. Individuals at lower levels within certain government administrations were not directly consulted early on in the reform process. Had they been, their insistence on additional program entitlements could have potentially undermined movement of the reform through the key government ministries. Thus support was obtained at the highest levels within certain ministries prior to informing those at the lower level of the decision-making chain.

## **3 Ambiguities persist in identifying the participatory role of civic institutions and the state**

An interesting lesson to emerge from the review of NPA programs is the need to increase dialogue between civic institutions and the state in establishing roles that are complementary in the delivery of NPA companion project activities. As NGOs begin to assert their authority in the competition for donor resources, technical extension services of the state feel directly threatened by the loss of previously controlled donor funds. NGOs currently seeking to work closely with government extension agents on community-based programs have encountered attempts on the part of agents to hinder their efforts within recipient communities.

## **4 The role of foreign contractor assistance versus local capacity in tracking reform progress is often not well delineated**

The degree of authority to be exercised by technical assistance contractors in carrying out policy reform requires close attention. An unambiguous role must be delineated for technical teams that clearly distinguishes between facilitative versus implementing functions.

Contractors can easily get bogged down in carrying out the reform functions that should normally be the responsibility of the host country government. A fine line must be drawn between facilitative activities that promote institutional development such as monitoring performance and tracking program objectives as opposed to the process of assisting with the definition and implementation of outcomes. The Niger experience with agricultural reform (ASDG II) suggests that the technical role provided by an outside contractor can easily be overextended in assuming tasks of project monitoring and implementation that ordinarily should be undertaken by the host government. An internal Mission report notes that "USAID would be unwise to make a T A team[s] responsible for performance and impact monitoring. USAID must recognize that putting a contractor in the role of reporter on performance can endanger his working relationships with government counterparts (the "spy" issue)." The report concludes that USAID must take the primary role in impact monitoring since it "carries the burden of proof of program impact for Congress."

The dual role of the technical assistance team as both facilitator and implementor is documented in health sector programs in Niger and Kenya as well. Much of the monitoring function of host country progress in meeting reform benchmarks was transferred to the technical assistance unit. This served as a detriment to the "position, role and effectiveness of the technical assistance team as resources to the Ministry of Health"<sup>17</sup>.

## **5 Broad-based support and ownership in implementing reform requires substantial time**

Mission experience with program implementation consistently reveals that broad-based support and engagement in the reform process takes considerable time, generally exceeding the time horizon forecast for implementation of program objectives. The consensus needed to bring about ownership and popular demand for government accountability in affecting structural economic change commonly surpasses the 5-10 year NPA timeframe envisioned by Agency planners in attaining overall reform goals. Lessons from reform efforts in Madagascar, Senegal, and Niger all suggest that domestic political strategems and macroeconomic performance directly affect the implementation phase of reform and often impede the timeframes established for the achievement of program benchmarks. A more longitudinal optic, particularly during implementation, is required on the part of Agency administrators if the reform process is to genuinely move from local participation to full-fledged, popular ownership.

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<sup>17</sup> Setzer, James C. and Molly Lindner

1994 *The Use of Non-Project Assistance to Achieve Health Sector Policy Reform Experiences in Africa*. Human Resources Analysis for Africa Paper No. 3, Health Financing and Sustainability (HFS) Project. ABT Associates, Inc. AID Contract No. DPE-5974-Z-00-9026-00

#### IV. PARTICIPATION IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Recent NPA guidance focuses on demonstrating 'people-level impact,' that is, quantifiable measures of program effect on the ultimate beneficiary or customer. This is mandated in a resource-poor environment in which many African institutions do not possess highly developed information systems capable of tracking verifiable indicators or measures of impact. Thus, the intent of many sectoral reforms is to introduce or upgrade data monitoring systems capable of providing the information necessary to demonstrate quantifiable relationships between targeted interventions and outcomes. Establishing attribution of direct impact to a particular reform measure is problematic and assumes a generous leap of faith. Numerous factors may intervene in the continuum from policy design to implementation to impact. Establishing direct linkages or correlations from beginning to end point is a difficult undertaking.

The state of severe indebtedness of many African economies is clearly one major factor that complicates the process of attribution in correlating program impact with input variables. In the Financial Market Development (FMD) program in Madagascar, reform efforts to measure increased women's savings and access to financial intermediation services through the national postal savings program are confounded in a macroeconomic environment of spiralling inflation and budgetary decline. In such a bleak fiscal context, the potential for savings, regardless of gender, is eroded significantly.

Policy dialogue in Africa has expanded in recent years, extending beyond the dyadic boundary of donors and host government officials. Access to empirical data has become a new instrument for policy advocacy among groups such as the free press, civil society organizations, and nascent institutions challenging the dominant political and economic paradigms of the state. Use of such information for policy debate has emboldened nongovernmental institutions and is creating a new political space that allows such groups to leverage for effective change in government policy and legislation that affects local communities.

##### A Participatory Strategies of Monitoring and Evaluation

Often, proxy measures must be adopted when direct participation among large numbers of rural and urban residents is infeasible due to constraints in time, cost, logistics, or other related reasons. Survey methodologies are commonly employed as a means to derive both *quantitative* and *qualitative* data that may accurately reflect processes, trends or views that are otherwise difficult to obtain when broad levels of opinion or consensus are required.

Strengths and weaknesses can be found in any given survey method. Quantitative measures allow for statistical or probabilistic analyses that may give an accurate numerical reading of a particular phenomenon while qualitative strategies provide vital contextual information that may be essential to the appropriate interpretation or reading of a given set of figures. Thus a judicious mix of both approaches may often be required in order to arrive at

the most accurate evaluation of a given situation. Examples of quantitative survey methods employed by the World Bank, USAID, and the UNDP include Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS), Social Dimensions of Adjustment Survey (SDA), and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). Well known qualitative surveys include Intensive Anthropological and Sociological Methods (IASM), Rapid Appraisal Methods (RAM), and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). Two hybrid methodologies that capture both quantitative and qualitative information include the sentinel site surveillance (SSS) and knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) surveys.

Surveys not normally undertaken by national ministries, particularly those that capture contextual or qualitative information, have been employed in the monitoring and evaluation systems supported by USAID's Education Sector Support (ESS) program. In Mali, Uganda, and Guinea, USAID has supported surveys that explore those factors influencing girls' participation, treatment, and behavior in primary schools. This information is used to plan strategic interventions that will enhance girls' performance. In Ghana, achievement testing of five percent of sixth grade students was supported by the Mission in order to assess whether sectoral objectives were being achieved. Longitudinal case studies of 660 students were conducted in Ethiopia to determine the impact of educational reform, and in Mali, baseline data on a range of information such as availability of instructional inputs, demand for education, and teachers' pedagogical practices were obtained from a representative sampling of schools.

Our normative understanding of evaluation assumes a reporting procedure that occurs only twice during the lifetime of a program or project: at mid-term and completion of activity. In a new re-engineered era of growing demand for more demonstrable measures of 'people-level' impact, coupled with congressional concerns about the performance of foreign aid programs, evaluation procedures will need to become less punctuated and designed as a more systematic, constant feature of the program package. Several examples from the ESS program illustrate how the evaluative process can become a more participatory, ongoing feature that operates throughout the life of the program cycle. In this manner, policy dialogue becomes a more iterative process, as evaluative procedures constantly feed back into analysis, consultation, and program adjustment. The potential for evaluation to be designed as a diachronic tool is excerpted from three ESS programs in Africa.<sup>18</sup>

- \* In Namibia, evaluation was planned to occur concurrently with program implementation. An evaluation contractor was selected at the beginning, and regular visits were scheduled over the life of the program. The idea was to "front-load" the evaluation process so that the evaluative questions could be

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<sup>18</sup>Excerpted from DeStefano, Joseph, Ash Harrell, and Karen Tietjen. 1995. *Basic Education in Africa: USAID's Approach to Sustainable Reform in the 1990s*. p. 170. Technical Paper No. 14, September 1995. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development.

identified at the same time that the people involved in the reform were beginning to assimilate and clarify its purposes. The evaluators, who remained constant throughout the exercise, were viewed as facilitators and mediators of a policy dialogue rather than as judges of program success or failure. To develop sets of indicators, the evaluation team worked with technical teams in the Ministry of Education, and supplemented these talks with discussions in other government ministries, the teachers' union, school personnel, and parents to determine how "successful" educational reform would be defined.

- \* In Mali, the Mission developed its plan for mid-term evaluation based on broad stakeholder participation. The evaluation team consisted primarily of local experts (four Malians, two expatriates), and data collection and analysis was preceded by three days of team building. Interviews included parents, parent-student association members, and local school personnel.
- \* In Ghana, the evaluation team included an "evaluation facilitator," who was not assigned to a technical area, but was charged with fostering linkages and dialogue among mission staff, the Ministry of Education, and the evaluators. Fortunately, this person was retained in a long-term capacity, and this has facilitated feedback and incorporation of recommendations into both the Mission's and the government's programs. The recommendations from the evaluation are integrated into the annual evaluation schedule which tracks follow-up on recommendations.

Weak institutional capabilities exist on the part of many African countries to effectively implement national monitoring systems that accurately track socioeconomic indicators relating to poverty, food security, health and nutritional status, etc. Even when such systems are in place, the capacity to fully exploit or analyze these data for policy purposes is often lacking. Caution is in order when assessing the quality of information obtained from national statistical offices (NSOs).

Systems for monitoring the reform process at community, regional, or national levels may be highly specialized and designed to measure impact of a small representative sample of intended beneficiaries, or much more broad-based in terms of the audience that it seeks to inform. The output of monitoring and evaluation systems that quantify or measure desired outcomes, may be used more broadly as a strategy of communication and information exchange, as occurs through various channels of modern media including radio, television, newsprint, and computer technology.

Several sectoral programs are supporting the emergence of a transparent private sector media in Africa. These initiatives illustrate the capacity of modern information technology to expand policy dialogue and to potentially revolutionize the nature of public participation through mass communication and the exchange of valuable information on markets, political events, etc.

A prime example of local empowerment through access to information is illustrated in the Malawi Agricultural Sector Assistance Program (ASAP) in which a Mission-funded computer tracking system of production and sale of burley tobacco enabled small farmer associations to refute more powerful estate interest claims that smallholder production was of inferior quality

Agricultural sector reform programs such as the Cereals Market Restructuring Program (PRMC) in Mali have enabled producers, merchants, consumers, and government officials to make critical market decisions on the timely purchase and sale of cereals according to reliable pricing data that is broadcast over national radio. The benefit to these stakeholder groups of accessing such information is the result of a new price tracking Market Information System (SIM), that involves statisticians and economists in the collection and analysis of market data

An emerging commercial radio media is rapidly becoming a powerful tool in facilitating national dialogue among a broad range of stakeholders in Senegal's Rice Structural Adjustment Program (RSAP). Alternative radio and print media sources are gaining public support in challenging state channels of communication and diffusion of political and economic information. Recent debate concerning the withdrawal of rice transport subsidies on a new private FM radio station in Dakar generated considerable interest and discussion among local listeners. Similar programming could catalyze increased public participation in policy reform issues and serve as a unique public policy instrument in gauging local response to reform initiatives promoted by the state

DFA legislation mandates the documentation of people-level impact in all USAID programs and projects. It specifically calls attention to disadvantaged groups such as women who have historically been marginalized and seen only modest gains in the development process. Thus, information tracking systems, disaggregated by age, gender, class, caste, ethnicity, or other relevant socioeconomic variable, should be an integral component of any monitoring and evaluation methodology

Examples of the need for information systems that track gender disaggregated data include the Trade and Investment Program (TIP) in Ghana. A strategic evaluation pointed out that firms participating in the promotion of non-traditional export crops such as pineapple do not demonstrate differential levels of participation and 'people-level' impact by gender<sup>19</sup>. Critical information on female and male participation rates, employment, size of firms, and geographic location of participants is absent from reporting documents. This masks dynamic processes of resource access, allocation, and interaction among men and women, and the

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<sup>19</sup> see Morris, Gayle A

1994 *A Strategic Evaluation of Gender and Trade and Investment Programs: The USAID/Ghana Trade and Investment Program and Its Implications for Small Enterprises*. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development

extent to which groups or individuals may be advantaged or disadvantaged in relation to new market opportunities

Monitoring of environmental processes that differentially affect women and men has been explicitly incorporated in the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) of Uganda. District level environmental guidelines address (i) methods to increase women's participation in the planning process, (ii) means of disaggregating environmental information by gender, and, (iii) additional methodologies to ensure that women's role in NRM is properly analyzed in the District Development Plan (DDP) and the District Environment Action Plan (DEAP). This environmental plan reflects foresight in understanding how policy formulation at the national level can influence social variables and processes operating at district and local levels.

Other tracking systems that have proved highly effective in monitoring local level processes and have the capacity to feed information back into policy dialogue include Early Warning Systems (EWS) and the Policy Analysis Matrix (PAM). EWS has been used in many African countries to monitor risk against food insecurity or related phenomena that may threaten the wellbeing of the poorest segments of a population<sup>20</sup>. PAM is being used in grain market reforms such as the Rice Structural Adjustment Program (RSAP) in Senegal and the Kenya Market Development Program (MDP) to track fluctuations in supply and demand, wholesale and retail prices, and consumer-producer response to liberalization of grain markets. This system as well has the potential to stimulate ongoing policy dialogue and readjustments in the market according to data collected at local levels.

## **B Ground Truthing and Tracking of Cost-Effective Indicators**

The challenge to erecting an operational system capable of tracking program indicators that cycle back to policy dialogue is the perennial problem of time and cost of implementation. Such systems, in order to have any lasting utility, entail recurrent costs that must be 'owned' and assumed by host country institutions, whether at the local, regional, or national level.

Host country ownership of monitoring and evaluation systems is most likely to occur when local analysts and researchers participate in the analysis of data. This requires funds for training and when combined with the infrastructural development and implementation of monitoring systems can be a costly endeavor. Monitoring research and analysis capabilities are almost always initiated through outside donor support, thus calling into question the

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<sup>20</sup> At least five different systems have been developed to track data of this kind. These include FEWS (Famine Early Warning Systems), SAP (Système d'Alerte Précoce), GIEWS (Global Information and Early Warning Systems), subregional EWS, and indigenous national systems (egs, the Botswana Interministerial Drought Committee, Ethiopia Relief and Rehabilitation Commission).

pervasive problem of technology transfer and appropriateness of resource capacity

There is also presently an over-abundance of data that are under-utilized in Africa. This requires good judgement when deciding whether or not to initiate new monitoring systems. It may often make sense to find a judicious balance between large-scale national surveys and smaller scale data sets that more closely measure the target indicators of a given sectoral intervention. One review of methodological approaches to monitoring and evaluation for policy impact concludes that "periodic national surveys should be done in combination with more rapid turnaround, regular monitoring surveys and thematic or ad hoc subnational studies and surveys on a limited number of priority poverty-related policy issues"<sup>21</sup> "

A final observation is that new monitoring and reporting systems are being thrust upon host country institutions at a time when macroeconomic measures have forced a reduction in numbers of public sector personnel. It is somewhat paradoxical that African governments are being called upon to increase human resource capacities at a time when budgets are shrinking and staff sizes are declining. Sensitivity is in order in fully assessing current data collection, retrieval, and analysis capabilities prior to designing or installing new information systems that may require significant amounts of time to learn, operate, and maintain. A ministry unit can be easily overwhelmed by new reporting requirements imposed from the outside, particularly when donor efforts are poorly coordinated and result in an overlay of multiple information systems.

## V CONCLUSIONS

A recurrent theme throughout this report has been the primacy of the political and macroeconomic environment as variables critical to the success and longevity of the reform process. Donors have optimistically assumed a level of host country institutional capacity to own and sustain the reform process that has been profoundly absent in many African countries. International resources will need to concentrate more heavily on capacity development that is carried out as a medium to long-term investment strategy. This must occur in tandem with continued financial support and commitment to the sectoral reform agenda. True domestic ownership of the reform process will not manifest itself in the short term, but rather will require a slow, sequential structural transformation of host country institutions and decision-making processes. Thus, donor insistence on African commitment to the reform canon will require a sustained commitment of development resources on the part of the international aid community as well. Sectoral grant support -- combining program and

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<sup>21</sup> Kingsbury, David, et al

1995 *Alternative Survey Methodologies for Monitoring and Analyzing Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Study for the SPA Working Group on Poverty and Social Policy* p 81  
Report funded by USAID under the Macro and International Economic Analysis Indefinite Quantity Contract No. AEP-5451-I-11-2059-00

projectized assistance -- that enhances host institutional capacities and extends beyond the normal 5-10 year NPA funding cycle will serve as the primary instrument in guiding this process

Several key observations may be drawn from a review of Africa Bureau experience with participatory dimensions of the sectoral policy reform cycle

- \* Institutional capacity building must begin at the very earliest stages of program design and pre-design assessment and be consistently reinforced throughout the life of program. This requires that donors fully engage African institutions in policy dialogue, acting however as facilitator and catalyst for internal domestic debate rather than as arbiter and enforcer of an externally prescribed reform regimen

- \* Africans must become more proactive in defining and implementing participatory approaches to reform. A donor prescribed or imposed agenda of participation should not be the motivating force driving fund disbursement

- \* Compliance with conditionalities should reflect not only the 'letter' but the 'spirit of the law'. A qualitative assessment of compliance is often lacking. Political and macroeconomic factors often hinder the successful attainment of reform benchmarks and mask positive efforts toward genuine reform on the part of individual host country institutions

- \* Conditionality must become a more reciprocal process of dialogue and negotiation between the host country government and foreign donor. While USAID has worked hard to foster a participatory approach with African stakeholders in identifying conditions precedent, much work remains to be done early on during pre-design assessment to elicit a more candid appraisal by national officials regarding realistic timeframes, attainable program objectives, political and macroeconomic constraints, and institutional capacities to genuinely assume ownership of the reform process. This will require greater input and participation by technical level staff alongside or parallel to dialogue with higher level political officials if a truly realistic assessment of proprietorship of reform outcomes is to be determined

- \* Greater host country involvement in the conceptualization, design, implementation, and monitoring of program objectives will most likely require an increased period of gestation for program implementation due to weak institutional structures and the need for capacity strengthening. In the meantime, more innovative strategies that meet balance of payments deficits and expenditure gaps will be required<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> This is one of the most important conclusions of a recent SPA working group report on economic reform in the context of political liberalization held in Washington DC in early 1995. See report entitled *SPA Working Group Meeting on Economic Reform in the Context of Political Liberalization, Washington, DC, January/May 1995 Report to the SPA Plenary*,

\* Greater attention should be placed on pre-design assessment that incorporates a thorough analysis of all aspects of national capacity to own and sustain policy reform - social, political, economic, environmental, and institutional. In order for this exercise to be effective and accurate in gauging local capacity, host country participation should involve a balanced mix of public, private, and non-profit institutional stakeholders -- government politicians and technocrats, scholars with specific sectoral expertise, commercial group interests, and non-governmental civil society representatives from rural and urban communities.

## **A. Policy Recommendations**

### **1. Sequencing of Stakeholder Participation**

The phasing in of key stakeholders at critical junctures of the program cycle is key to the achievement of reform objectives. Policy reform, engaging a range of public interest groups, is an inherently political process that impacts differentially upon various segments of the population. Invariably, there will be winners and losers. Thus, participation as an all-inclusive process is not necessarily appropriate. As one study notes, "Participation is not cost-free, and more participation should not be the automatic solution for successful policy reforms"<sup>23</sup>. Rather, the lesson from previous reform experience suggests that stakeholder interests, motivations, and political agendas should be thoroughly taken into consideration when devising participatory strategies of engagement. Some groups seriously risk sabotaging or derailing program outcomes depending on the timing of their inclusion or exclusion in policy dialogue. One example from the Madagascar Financial Market Development (FMD) program clearly illustrates how inclusion of a particular stakeholder constituency early on in reform negotiations on the national postal savings bank could have undermined the outcome of the program.

### **2 Local Ownership of Conditionality**

Case study evidence reveals that external donor support of economic and political liberalization through excessive use of conditionality distracts host governments from internalizing reform objectives and assuming control of and responsibility for the reform process. Energies become focused on compliance and satisfaction of conditions rather than on underlying processes of participatory dialogue and consensual decision-making. Experience from the Education Sector Support (ESS) program, drawing from twelve sub-Saharan reform interventions since 1989, cautions the use of and motivations for conditionality by concluding, "Conditionality can sometimes be misconstrued as a proxy for reform

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*June 6, 1995*

<sup>23</sup> Bankerhoff and Kulibaba (1994)

implementation, with the emphasis on legalistic details rather than the intent<sup>24</sup> " Conditions that are overly-prescriptive and involve a minimum of participants in their definition will almost invariably fail

It is also paramount that conditions not be writ in stone for the life of a program. The initial setting of major reform objectives based on sound dialogue with a range of key actors is critical. However, conditionality (ie, annual) must be tailored and flexible enough to reflect the pace and nature of reform. An ongoing rather than periodic process of review and formulation of conditionality with host country participants must be built into systems of monitoring and assessment.

### **3 The Disaggregation of People-Level Impact**

The heterogeneous composition of communities that are stratified socially and economically by gender, age, ethnicity, or other distinguishing characteristics should be a central feature reflected in the analysis, design, implementation, and impact monitoring methodology of sectoral programs. Otherwise, reform objectives of poverty alleviation, income generation, and resource equity will neglect the needs of the most disenfranchised segments of society.

Measures of people-level impact that differentiate gendered access to and control over critical resources is emphasized in the DFA legislation. Gender disaggregation is a key feature built into the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) of Uganda. This environmental plan provides a good illustration of how national planners have linked local level processes with broader national policy objectives.

A caveat is in order in understanding that poor performance of national economies may severely hamper attempts to objectively assess gender or other critical socioeconomic variables in the design and implementation of policy reform. As a result, such variables may not always be the most appropriate unit of analysis in assessing the economic efficiency, gains or losses in a reform. In the case of the Madagascar Financial Market Development (FMD) reform of the national postal savings program, the saliency of gender is not immediately apparent in an environment of severe macroeconomic decline. The capacity of the national population to participate in a formal institutional program of savings and investment is greatly compromised, regardless of gender, in an environment of spiralling inflation, domestic political instability and economic uncertainty.

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<sup>24</sup>DeSefano, Joseph, Ash Hartwell, and Karen Tietjen  
1995 *Basic Education in Africa: USAID's Approach to Sustainable Reform in the 1990s*. Technical Paper No. 12. September, 1995. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development.

#### **4. Participation in Economic Reform as a Catalyst for Political Change**

Effective economic policy change may be encouraged even under closed or autocratic political systems when skillful sectoral planning and analysis is undertaken to address institutional constraints. The Malawi ASAP, by means of effective donor coordination by USAID and the World Bank, was able to successfully engage an authoritarian government initially reticent to change, in a campaign of market liberalization of the burley tobacco sub-sector. Economic reform of this sector was instrumental in accelerating political reform and a broader process of transparency throughout the government.

#### **5. Enhanced Partnering of Public-Private Sector Interests**

Public-private sector partnerships, when well conceived and designed, have the capacity to bring communities and the government closer together and to bridge a vast divide that has existed between the state and the poor majority of the population. Examples of effective partnering of state and community efforts include educational sector programs in Benin and Mali. The Benin Children's Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF) program and the Mali Basic Education Expansion Program (BEEP) are illustrative case studies of state and private sector partnering in support of community-based schools that are privately financed with local means. In Benin, communities receive state support in the form of teacher training and pedagogic materials while expanding the role of parents of students' associations. In Mali, non-public village schools are funded through local means while receiving pedagogical, institutional, and legislative support from the state.

#### **6. Generating Policy Dialogue Through Data Collection and Analysis**

In cases where direct consultation on a broad scale is not possible due to constraints of time, cost, logistics, host country politics, or related reasons, public views on policy may be ascertained indirectly by systematizing the use of impact surveys, opinion polls, focus groups or similar polling procedures. Local research institutions such as national universities have been engaged many sectoral programs to collect data, monitor, and evaluate the outcome of reform objectives as they are being implemented. This increases the sustainability of the policy formulation process. Management information systems that can track data on verifiable program indicators such as market price fluctuations, student-teacher ratios, curriculum user fees, mortality and fertility rates, intrahousehold revenues and expenditures, etc, serve as a power tool in gauging public response to specific reform measures. Data from efficient, well-designed information systems have the capacity to then feed back into policy dialogue stimulating further refinement or correction of targeted interventions as they are implemented.

#### **7. Increased Local-Foreign Collaboration in Policy Analysis**

Better political and institutional analysis is needed in order to inform upon more appropriate design measures that anticipate policy obstacles that may occur along the way.

This is the conclusion of a 1991 USAID summary evaluation of six economic reform programs in Africa (Liebersohn 1991). Such analyses, frequently conducted by Mission staff or foreign consultants, could be more insightful in predicting policy outcomes by engaging African policy experts more directly in this analytic exercise. Local perspectives on political and institutional change serve as an effective cross-reference to outside views that may not necessarily capture the nuanced features of social, cultural, and political reality within a given country. Such a collaborative approach, however, requires transparent political institutions and a liberal government regime to be in place.

Previous experience with policy reform demonstrates that sustainable reform must be driven by indigenous demand and accountability. Policy dialogue is facilitated when varying stakeholder interests are able to access information and develop their own analytical capabilities. Capacity-building measures should place a strong emphasis on developing such analytical capacities through the use of electronically-generated data bases and information systems. Sound analysis is required throughout all phases of the policy cycle, from initial needs assessment to impact monitoring and evaluation. Skill dissemination must be participatory in the sense that analytical training should extend beyond the normal range of government ministries and research institutions and reach out to the myriad of nongovernmental organizations, civil society institutions, and community-based associations.

## **8 Synchronization of Program Objectives Among Multiple Stakeholders**

As stakeholder participation increases, the coordination required among diverse groups may overwhelm the spirit and momentum of the reform process. The implementation of NPA programs that are ambitious and broad in scope must pay careful attention to the number of stakeholders that can realistically be engaged in policy dialogue and establish appropriate management mechanisms (e.g., National Coordinator) to assure direct channels of communication among stakeholder groups.

## **9 Promoting Dialogue Between Civil Society and the State**

There is a strong tendency to dichotomize civil and state institutions and to view their functions in oppositional rather than complementary terms. The disengagement of the state from direct control over donor resources for community development programs implies a redefinition of the government's role. USAID missions can facilitate this transition by opening the dialogue between state agents and community NGOs through roundtables, workshops, and other fora that address the changing role of the state vis-a-vis civil society institutions. New roles for each stakeholder must build upon complementary rather than competing capacities within each institution. This transformation in state-civil society relations must be buttressed by changes in the legal regulatory environment and a major shift in cultural<sup>1</sup> thinking among a broad set of actors both within and outside the state.

## **10 Contextualized Participatory Review in Meeting Conditions**

Significant delay in the disbursement of tranching funds is sometimes due to a large number of conditions to be reviewed and an emphasis on legalistic procedures to measure desired outcomes. An absence of dialogue (besides paper documentation) with those stakeholders most directly involved at the technical level on a daily basis with implementation of the reform misses the critical context in which to evaluate compliance or noncompliance with target objectives. Satisfaction of conditions precedent should not be viewed exclusively as a legal exercise, despite the need for an objective process of review. Dialogue should be fostered between the USAID mission, the Agency legal counsel, the purported 'customers' of the reform agenda, and other implementing bodies that are closely associated with the monitoring and review process.

## **11 Independent Mechanism for Monitoring of Program Implementation**

The linkage of program and project assistance poses an inherent problem when technical contracting is called upon to engage in the 'objective' review and monitoring of program objectives (*ie*, conditionalities) where the direct interests of the technical agent are at stake. A more independent modality for tracking and review of conditionalities should be given consideration by missions so that concerns about conflict of interest are avoided by the technical implementing agent. This would also free up such assistance to engage in the more substantive process of delivering the field services needed to assure that institutional capacity building measures are being put into place.

## **12 Pre-Design and Ongoing Assessment of Macroeconomic and Political Processes**

Participants in the design, implementation, and monitoring of reform programs should pay closer attention to the broader political economic arena and those external forces that threaten to undermine the reform process. Design strategies should be informed by sound social, political, and institutional analyses that build flexibility into program components that can more easily respond to political or macroeconomic change. Conditions precedent, for example, should be subjected to ongoing review and modification in order to keep pace with changes in the larger political economy.

## **13. Delineating the Role of Foreign Technical Assistance**

Technical assistance provided by US-based firms to carry out studies, training, evaluation, and general technical support must be supplemented by an active oversight role on the part of missions. This requires frequent communication and interaction between mission staff and the technical assistance team. It is easy for a mission to rely heavily on an outside contractor to administer project assistance due to heavy work loads and short staffing within the mission.

The lack of human resources or time on the part of the mission to closely monitor

project performance, however, may ultimately result in divergent views of project performance such as satisfaction of conditionalities. Therefore, it is important that missions realistically assess human resource capacities and the time required to closely track project objectives. NPA grant programs in general are personnel or labor-intensive to administer.

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